

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. BERNARD'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Barrow-in-Furness

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112400

Headteacher: Mr Eugene Tumelty

Reporting inspector: Mark Woodward
11049

Dates of inspection: 13 – 16 May 2002

Inspection number: 244865

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Rating Lane
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria
Postcode: LA13 9LE

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Fr. Gerard Dunn

Date of previous inspection: 22 April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11049	Mark Woodward	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements.</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
11041	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
24326	Moira Fitzpatrick	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
22695	Raymond Cardinal	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
19532	Elizabeth Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music	
4689	Monica Christian	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30215	Helen Feasey	Team inspector	Geography	
20716	Reginald Grogan	Team inspector	History	
30996	Anne Higginbotham	Team inspector	Mathematics	
22906	Barry Hodgson	Team inspector	Physical education	
18006	Sue Kearney	Team inspector	Science Equal opportunities	
8052	Kenneth McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

4373	Peter McKenzie	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Bernard's Catholic High School is an average-sized comprehensive school, serving 840 pupils aged 11-16. It draws pupils from the town of Barrow-in-Furness and from the local area, with some travelling several miles. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are varied; some come from relatively prosperous homes while others have experienced the impact of falling employment opportunities. Twelve per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals which is a little below the national average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with only two pupils having English as an additional language. Around fifteen per cent of the pupils are on the register for pupils with special educational needs which is a little below the national average, and two per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs which is also a little below the national average. The standards achieved by the pupils on entry to the school are above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective in helping pupils to achieve well in most subjects and to develop very good personal skills. The headteacher leads the school very well. Since his appointment, pupils' educational opportunities have improved, the management of the school has become very efficient and relationships and teamwork have been strengthened. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well in the majority of subjects; pupils with special educational needs also achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning, behaviour and relationships are very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The headteacher leads the school very well.
- The quality of financial planning and school organisation is very high.
- Pupils are given very good opportunities for spiritual, moral and social development.
- The opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive and non-competitive sport are excellent.

What could be improved

- The achievement of boys, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The provision for geography.
- Standards in art, music and expressive arts.
- The effectiveness of strategies to ensure that teaching and learning are good in all subjects.
- The provision for careers education.
- The use made of form period time.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1996. Since then it has made good progress. The trend in GCSE results is above the national trend, the quality of teaching and learning has improved and leadership and management are also stronger. Good progress has been made in tackling the key issues raised by the inspection and in improving provision in most subjects; not enough progress has been made in raising standards in geography, art, music and modern foreign languages.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	B	C	A

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

Standards at the end of Year 9 are above national standards and the achievement of the pupils is good. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests, pupils' results were above the national average in English and mathematics and well above the national average in science. Compared with similar schools (based on the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals), the results were well above average in English and mathematics and very high in science. The trend in results over five years is broadly in line with the national trend. Boys and girls achieve similar results compared with the results of boys and girls nationally.

Standards seen at the end of Year 11 are broadly in line with national standards and the achievement of the pupils is satisfactory. Girls achieve better than boys, particularly those of average and above average ability; this is reflected in recent years' GCSE results in which the proportions of boys achieving five A*-C grades were significantly lower than the proportions of girls. Compared with similar schools (based on the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals), the 2001 GCSE results were well above average. The trend in GCSE results over the past five years is above the national trend. Analyses of GCSE results compared with National Curriculum test results suggest that the pupils make satisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11. The school did not meet its 2001 GCSE targets largely because a significant proportion of the boys did not achieve as well as expected.

The achievement of the pupils is very good in ICT and good in English, design and technology, history, physical education, science and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress mainly due to the specialised teaching that they receive.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and this is a major reason why they achieve well, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The school is an orderly and pleasant environment in which to work. Around the school the great majority of pupils are polite and considerate to others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils develop into responsible and sensitive young people during their time at the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are relaxed and friendly.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils attend well and are punctual to lessons.

A minority of boys in Years 10 and 11 become less well motivated towards their learning and this largely explains the lower performance of boys compared with girls in GCSE examinations. Bullying is rare; a very impressive feature of the school is the concern that pupils show for each other which helps to prevent bullying from taking place.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Compared with inspection judgements in other schools, a higher than average proportion of lessons were satisfactory or better; the few unsatisfactory lessons had not been planned effectively. Overall, the quality of teaching is: very good in English, design and technology and ICT, and in geography in Years 10 and 11; good in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history and physical education; satisfactory in art, music and expressive arts; and unsatisfactory in geography during Years 7 to 9. The quality of teaching and learning is strongest in English, design and technology and ICT. In other subjects the teaching is more variable in quality, but evidence of some very good teaching and learning was also seen in science, history, geography in Years 10 and 11, and physical education. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes.

Literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well in English, mathematics and ICT lessons respectively. In some of the other subjects, such as design and technology, they are also taught well but this is not a consistent feature throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in the lessons where they are withdrawn from the normal curriculum and as a result they make good progress; they are also supported effectively in mainstream lessons by classroom assistants. More able pupils learn at an appropriate rate.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. It is now better balanced, offers more course options in Years 10 and 11 and includes a strong extra-curricular programme particularly in physical education. The provision for ICT is now good for most pupils, however, around a third are not guaranteed their full entitlement in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The curriculum is well planned. It balances intensive sessions where pupils are withdrawn from mainstream lessons and in-class support. Teaching methods used in modern foreign languages and geography do not enable pupils with special educational needs to learn satisfactorily.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very few pupils have English as an additional language and no evidence was found of them having difficulty taking full advantage of the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. This is a major strength of the school. Pupils are given very good opportunities to develop spiritual, moral and social awareness through the full range of the school's work. Very good leadership in this area is provided by the governors and senior management; most subjects also make a good contribution.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Through the commitment of all staff and the well-managed pastoral system, pupils are looked after with great care. Systems for promoting attendance and good behaviour are very good.

Methods of assessing pupils and monitoring their academic progress have improved considerably in recent years. They are now good and have the potential to be very good when used more consistently by all managers and teachers. Provision for careers education is unsatisfactory, as the school acknowledges; the programme is not planned well enough to ensure that pupils gain advice and access to resources at appropriate times. Parents are pleased with the school's work. Information provided for parents by the school is good, academic reports having improved significantly since the last inspection.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher leads the school very well and he is well supported by other senior managers; most subjects are also well led.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors provide a strong lead in shaping the spiritual life of the school. They are developing their involvement in monitoring the quality of the school's work and financial planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Systems have been established to improve the quality of the education offered by the school. These have not been implemented consistently and this means that some issues have not yet been tackled.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial planning is closely linked to development planning. Imaginative thinking has led to the improvement of the accommodation and learning resources which has had a significant impact on the educational opportunities offered to the pupils, for example in ICT.

A great strength of the school is the involvement of non-teaching staff in the management and organisation of the school. Very capable staff have been appointed who take responsibility for a range of administrative tasks that enable managers and teachers to concentrate on educating the pupils. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum, although recruitment has been an issue in some subjects, for example, mathematics. The accommodation is very good and learning resources are good. The principles of best value are applied well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils make good progress • Pupils are expected to work hard and achieve well • Pupils like the school • The school helps pupils to become mature and responsible • The ethos of the school that promotes positive attitudes to learning in a Catholic framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The links between home and school • The quality and quantity of homework • The information about pupils' progress

Fifteen per cent of parents responded to the inspection questionnaire and 33 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting; their views are therefore not necessarily representative. Inspectors agree with all the positive comments made by parents. The school works hard to establish good links with parents. Some variability in the quality and quantity of homework was observed between teachers and between subjects. Reports to parents about pupils' progress have improved and are now good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The standards achieved by pupils on entry to the school are above average. At the end of Year 9 standards are above average while at the end of Year 11 standards are average. The achievement of pupils is good during Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory during Years 10 and 11. The relatively lower level of achievement during Years 10 and 11 is because, overall, boys do not make as much progress as girls and this is reflected in their GCSE results. Most pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
2. Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' books by the end of Year 9 were: well above average in ICT; above average in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history and physical education; average in design and technology; and below average in geography, art and music.
3. The achievement of the pupils during Years 7 to 9 is: very good in ICT; good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history and physical education; satisfactory in music; and unsatisfactory in geography and art.
4. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, pupils' results were above the national average in English and mathematics and well above the national average in science. Over the past three years, pupils' results were slightly above national averages in all three subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining very high results (National Curriculum Level 7 and above) was well above average in science and average in English and mathematics. Compared with pupils in similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), the results in 2001 were well above average in English and mathematics and very high in science. The trend in results over the past five years is broadly in line with the national trend. In accordance with the national Key Stage 3 strategy, the school has set targets for the pupils in English, mathematics and science; these are appropriately challenging.
5. The performance of boys and girls in the National Curriculum tests has been similarly above the performance of boys and girls nationally over the past three years in English and science. In mathematics, girls did better than boys compared with girls and boys nationally in 1999 while in 2000, boys performed relatively better than girls.
6. Pupils' results in the 2001 National Curriculum test results indicated that they made above average progress in science and below average progress in mathematics compared with their performance on entry to the school. The 2000 National Curriculum tests indicate that pupils made average progress in science and below average progress in mathematics compared with their performance on entry. The school does not have the information to compare the performance of pupils in English although the results suggest that the pupils made above average progress.
7. The local education authority's analysis of pupils' performance from entry to the 2001 National Curriculum tests suggests that pupils made average progress in mathematics, above average progress in English and well above average progress in science.
8. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in the other curriculum subjects are not accurate enough to make judgements about pupils' relative levels of performance.
9. Standards seen in lessons and pupils' books by the end of Year 11 were: well above average in English; above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT, history and physical education; average in modern foreign languages; below average in geography and music; and well below average in art.

10. The achievement of the pupils during Years 10 and 11 is: very good in ICT and history; good in English, science, design and technology and physical education; satisfactory in mathematics; and unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages, geography, art and music.
11. The achievement of girls during Years 10 and 11 is good; the achievement of boys is satisfactory overall, but a significant minority do not achieve as well as they might. This is clear from analyses of GCSE results. In 2001, for example, 63 per cent of the girls achieved 5 A*-C grades compared with 40 per cent of the boys; a similar pattern was evident in the results from 2000 and 1999. The school is optimistic that there will be little difference between girls' and boys' results in 2002.
12. The unsatisfactory achievement in geography, art, music and modern foreign languages is not fully representative of the current situation in the school because the judgement also takes account of test and examination results from previous years. Much has been done to tackle the issues in most of these subjects. Teaching, leadership and management have improved in modern foreign languages and art, while in geography although teaching has improved, weaknesses in leadership and management continue to undermine the standards. Further improvements are necessary in all three subjects. The issues in music largely concern curriculum planning, assessment, leadership and management.
13. More able pupils achieve as well as other pupils in the school. Over the past two years, almost all the pupils who gained Level 7 in the National Curriculum test subjects (English, mathematics and science), succeeded in gaining A or A* grades at GCSE in those subjects.
14. GCSE results in 2001 were average compared with national results although the proportions of pupils gaining five A*-C grades and 5 A*-G grades were above average. The results were well above average compared with similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). Targets for GCSE in 2001 were not met by a small margin; this was largely because a significant proportion of the boys did not achieve as well as expected.
15. The trend of improvement in GCSE results is above the national trend. In 1997, for example, 43 per cent of the pupils gained five A*-C grades compared with 53 per cent in 2001. In the same period, the results of pupils nationally rose from 43 per cent to 48 per cent. Overall, pupils achieved results in the GCSE examinations in 2001 that were broadly in line with their results in the National Curriculum tests taken two years previously; this indicates satisfactory progress.
16. Girls' GCSE results have been significantly better than boys' results in recent years, particularly the proportions of pupils gaining 5 A*-C grades. This has been recognised by the school and strategies have been introduced to improve this situation, for example, teaching pupils in separate gender groups. The impact of this action is yet to be seen in the overall standards achieved but the school's assessments predict little difference between boys' and girls' results in the 2002 GCSE examinations.
17. In 2001, pupils performed relatively better in science, English, history and design and technology than they did in their other subjects at GCSE. They performed relatively worse in art, modern foreign languages, geography, mathematics and expressive arts.
18. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Of the fifteen Year 11 pupils on the register in 2001, seven achieved eight passes at GCSE, four achieved seven passes, two achieved six passes and two achieved five passes. All pupils achieved at least five passes. The total number of passes included 25 at grades A*-C. Pupils make very good progress in English and science. They make good progress in withdrawal lessons. They also make good progress in mathematics, history, physical education, design and technology and ICT. Progress is satisfactory in music. Progress is unsatisfactory in art and modern foreign languages, and in geography in Years 7-9 because work is not well enough planned to meet the pupils' learning needs.
19. The promotion of literacy, in subjects other than English, varies considerably but is good overall. Pupils have good reading and writing skills as a result of very good teaching in English lessons.

Very good use is made of reading in history lessons, where pupils are encouraged to read for information and to use higher level skills to evaluate the validity of sources. They are given numerous opportunities to write in a range of different styles to record their work in history, including writing imaginatively about the impact of the Black Death, the horrors of the Great War and aspects of local history. In Years 10 and 11 pupils make good use of their literacy skills to produce high quality extended pieces of writing for their coursework in both history and physical education. In science, design and technology and ICT, there is an emphasis on pupils extending their technical vocabulary and these subjects make a good contribution to this through the use of word lists and word walls. In other subjects there is little or no focus on consolidating or developing pupils' literacy skills and in geography and music this has a noticeable effect on standards. The promotion of speaking in many subjects is limited to pupils answering teachers' questions, except in science where older pupils recently entered and won a national competition for drama in science.

20. Standards of numeracy of the majority of pupils are satisfactory. Pupils' numerical skills are developed effectively in mathematics particularly in some good mental arithmetic activities at the start of lessons. Pupils make a satisfactory use of number in a range of subjects. Numeracy in design and technology is good, the pupils are able to read scales, use units, draw graphs and interpret data competently. In ICT, pupils are able to do mental calculations, draw graphs from spreadsheets and interpret data from databases. Satisfactory graph drawing was seen in English and physical education, but some pupils experienced difficulty when drawing graphs in science and geography lessons. In science the pupils were able to interpret data but some inappropriate use of calculators was seen. Some basic number work was seen in modern foreign language lessons.
21. All staff have taken part in a numeracy day and further time is planned to look in more detail at the National Numeracy Strategy. Further development of appropriate numerical skills linked to the National Numeracy Strategy will enable pupils to transfer their mathematical learning to different contexts more fully.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22. Pupils display very good attitudes to the school and this is a major reason for the good levels of achievement in most subjects. During the inspection week, pupils confirmed they liked school and that staff supported their learning well; this was also confirmed by the responses given by parents in the questionnaire and at the pre-inspection meeting.
23. In most lessons, pupils behave well and display a great deal of interest and involvement in activities. In a Year 10 food technology lesson, for example, pupils worked very hard and enthusiastically to prepare a meal. In a Year 8 science lesson, pupils collaborated well together to conduct a fair test and predict the speed of a spinner. Pupils listen very attentively to teachers and are keen to answer questions and achieve well.
24. Pupils have a good respect for the feelings, values and belief of others. An ethos of care for others permeates both the classroom and life throughout the school; on many occasions pupils were observed helping and supporting each other. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into school life and take an active part in lessons; they have very positive attitudes to their work and respond well to teacher instructions.
25. The mission statement says that: "In St. Bernard's School everyone is equal in the eyes of God deserving of every respect and consideration from all members of the school". This is very well understood by the pupils; it is reflected in their very good behaviour and conduct. Pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and break is very good and, although some corridors are cramped, pupils move through them without jostling and disturbing others. At lunchtime pupils of all ages integrate well together and behave with maturity and courtesy.
26. Pupils have a good respect for their own property, other people's property and school property. The newly computerised system introduced in the library has reduced significantly the loss of

library books. Computers and ancillary equipment are treated with respect. The school has little graffiti or litter. Pupils interviewed expressed their pride in the very good accommodation provided by the school and their determination to keep it in good condition.

27. Incidents of bullying are very rare. Occasionally a small number of pupils display poor behaviour, inattention and immaturity in class. In these lessons the pace of pupils' work is slow, they lack enthusiasm and do not stay on task. These mainly occur where teaching is not well enough matched to pupils' learning needs or when lessons are not planned well enough. The school uses its exclusion provision rarely and appropriately.
28. The school promotes pupils' personal development well; the impact of this is that relationships between pupils and staff are extremely good. Pupils find the school to be a happy place where they feel secure and safe. Pupils are given a reasonable level of responsibility. The school has a council that meets infrequently and does not have a great influence on the life of the school but plans are in place to further develop its work. The prefect system works well and there are plans to extend prefects' roles to give them more positions of responsibility. The school has secured funds to send prospective prefects on a residential training course to ensure that they become fully aware of the responsibilities and duties expected of them; this is good practice. Year 10 pupils successfully attend work experience and other pupils act as receptionists, help with school productions, are actively involved in fund-raising and involve themselves in a variety of extra-curricular activities.
29. Pupils' attendance is well above average and improving. The school has installed a special dedicated telephone line to enable parents to inform school of absences and both pupils and parents are fully aware that school will only accept authorised absences. The school makes good use of the electronic registration system and office staff are extremely pro-active in contacting parents if they have any concerns regarding pupils attendance. Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. In the 132 lessons seen, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent, good or better in 67 per cent and very good or excellent in 34 per cent. This represents an improvement on the quality of teaching seen during the last inspection.
31. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is: very good in design and technology and ICT; good in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history and physical education; satisfactory in art and music; and unsatisfactory in geography.
32. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is: very good in English, design and technology and geography; good in mathematics, ICT, modern foreign languages, history and physical education; and satisfactory in science, art, music and expressive arts.
33. The quality of learning is similar to the quality of teaching in most subjects. In science some teaching weaknesses are compensated for by the strength of the head of department's planning and organisation and this enables pupils' learning to be at a higher level than some of the teaching.
34. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes; most pupils are eager to take advantage of the teaching that they are offered. In a Year 7 history lesson for example, the pupils collaborated well in small groups to investigate the Black Death. They responded very well to the stimulating material presented by the teacher and took the initiative to further their learning through research.
35. In most subjects, teachers' planning is very good. This enables pupils to learn at a good pace because activities are organised to build their knowledge, understanding and skills progressively both within lessons and through sequences of lessons. In English, for example, all teachers write

- detailed and ambitious lesson plans. The planning is shared with the pupils and so everyone in the lesson is aware of what they need to do to complete by the end of the session. This practice works very well in motivating the pupils and ensuring that they learn well. In modern foreign languages and geography, planning does not take sufficient account of the learning needs of different groups of pupils particularly those with special educational needs and the most able.
36. Strengths of the teaching in design and technology are the effectiveness of teachers' demonstrations and the use of pupils' work to show the standards that can be achieved. By demonstrating techniques clearly, teachers enable pupils to tackle tasks with confidence and this results in high quality finished work. At the same time, pupils are given a good understanding of the quality expected from their work by seeing the success of other pupils.
 37. Good demonstrations are also a strong feature of the teaching in physical education. In this subject, pupils' learning is also enhanced by the question and answer sessions that are a strong feature of the teaching. Pupils have to reflect on their progress because they are asked challenging questions about skills and tactics both during and after practical sessions. This helps them to remain focused on their work and is one of the reasons why standards are above average.
 38. The teaching of personal and social education was criticised at the time of the last inspection; it has improved. Most of the lessons seen were well taught, the teachers having prepared well; for example, an excellent citizenship lesson was seen. In this lesson, pupils were given tasks that gave them insight into the skills needed to be effective leaders and managers. The excellent relationships and trust that the teacher had built up with the pupils enabled a high level of learning to take place. Teaching in one personal and social education lesson was unsatisfactory; it showed features that were criticised in the previous report, namely a lack of subject knowledge and commitment.
 39. The quality of teaching and learning has risen since the last inspection; very little unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teaching in geography during Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory because schemes of work have not been organised appropriately, classes have had too many changes of teacher and the management of the subject has been unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is improving but it remains inconsistent. Major investment of management support is needed to secure the quality of educational provision in this subject.
 40. In some subjects, such as music, art and expressive arts, teaching is satisfactory but improvement is necessary if the pupils are to achieve as well as in their other subjects. In music, the teaching is enthusiastic and committed but not well enough organised; more support from senior management is needed. In art, standards are rising following an improvement in the quality of teaching. Owing to weaknesses in teaching over a number of years, pupils have not developed basic skills in art and this continues to depress standards throughout the school. The department does not give a strong enough emphasis to the teaching of basic skills in its planning. This is also the key weakness in expressive arts. Pupils have not developed strong enough music and drama skills and their work lacks conviction as a result.
 41. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well in the specialist lessons of English, mathematics and ICT. In some subjects, such as design and technology, they are also taught well but this is not a consistent feature throughout the school. The use made of ICT to enhance pupils' learning and to fulfil National Curriculum requirements is inadequate in geography, art and music.
 42. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs who are withdrawn from mainstream lessons is good. Lessons build well on previous learning, work is carefully assessed and a variety of methods is used well to consolidate pupils' understanding. In a Year 7 lesson, a pupil answered quiz questions to find the same combination of letters in different words and practised saying and spelling them; the learning of these word sounds was then further reinforced with the computer "speaking" different words for the pupil to identify on screen.
 43. The support offered to pupils with special educational needs in mainstream lessons is also good; support staff are well used and effective. In a Year 7 history lesson, for example, the support assistant modified a lesson task so that a pupil finding difficulty with layout and presentation

could participate fully. In the same lesson, ICT was well used with the support assistant asking questions about historical sources and a pupil keeping pace with the lesson by using a keyboard to record his answers. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, the support assistant encouraged the pupils to share ideas on how many combinations of letters with given values they could find to total 10; they were well motivated and working as a group gave them confidence to participate. In a Year 9 English lesson, the support assistant reinforced the teacher's explanation of new terminology so that individual pupils learned how the role of narrator could differ in a story. In a Year 11 science lesson, pupils used ICT for examination revision and the support assistant's own ICT skills enabled very effective individual support to be given.

44. In the most effective class teaching there is a high degree of pace and challenge for pupils with special educational needs. In a Year 10 science lesson, pupils were given a wide range of resources and moved quickly into pairs and groups to classify and identify mystery solutions; they were expected to be independent learners and responded very well to the challenge. In a Year 9 English lesson, pupils' reading skills in skimming and scanning were enhanced through group activities with pupils questioned carefully and methodically on the identification of key words in text. In a range of lessons laptops are well used to give individual pupils good access to lesson activities. In a Year 7 design and technology lesson, for example, pupils made good use of laptops to record appropriate vocabulary during a "taste-testing" lesson. In some lessons, including some in geography and modern foreign languages, whole class teaching is the predominant method and this does not enable pupils with special educational needs to gain full access to lesson activities. In art, homework tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs to offer sufficient challenge.

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

45. The school provides a good curriculum that is broad and balanced. The National Curriculum is taught, including personal social and health education, drugs awareness and sex education. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects except in ICT, where about 25 to 30 per cent of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not guaranteed full access to the statutory curriculum. The weekly teaching time of 25 hours in Years 7 to 9 meets the recommended time allocation and, at Years 10 and 11, the 26 hours taught each week is higher than is usually found in schools of this type. Since the time of the last inspection there has been good improvement overall to curriculum provision.
46. Pupils who are withdrawn from lesson for additional support in literacy benefit from a well thought out timetable that ensures they do not miss lessons in the same subject for more than two consecutive weeks; disruption to learning in the wider curriculum is therefore minimised. The school has given careful thought to the curriculum at Years 10 and 11 since the last inspection and has made a number of improvements to the provision. During Years 10 and 11, the school provides a good range of courses leading to GCSE or vocational qualifications and all pupils now study a broad and balanced range of subjects except those who may not receive their full ICT entitlement. Additionally, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 study a full course in religious education leading to a GCSE qualification. The school has developed and strengthened links with the colleges of further education and sixth form colleges in the area so that pupils have good opportunities to make links for their learning during Years 10 and 11. Pupils are able to take both GNVQ and NVQ courses in Years 10 and 11 and many continue with these in post-16 education.
47. The curriculum offers equality of opportunity and access to most aspects of learning, although lower attainers do not have the opportunity to study German in Year 8. Teaching groups are organised differently in the various subjects. In some subjects such as English, mathematics and science, teaching sets are created based on the prior attainment of pupils; these work well in providing the majority of pupils with a good degree of challenge to allow them to fulfil their potential in the subjects. In other subjects, such as history, pupils are organised in mixed ability teaching groups; these generally work well, particularly in ensuring that more able pupils are appropriately

stretched, but on occasion work is not always well enough matched to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Some teaching in science in Years 10 and 11 is organised in single sex groupings; it is not yet clear whether this has been beneficial or not. When tried in English in previous years, it was successful in raising boys' attainment, but owing to difficulties in matching staff to teaching groups, the practice was stopped.

48. The school has made a good start in identifying gifted and talented pupils. The co-ordinator for this aspect of the curriculum has produced a useful set of data on pupils identified as having particular aptitudes or talents. This increasingly will allow the school to track the progress of these pupils and to develop materials to improve their learning. The co-ordinator has made links with other organisations to provide additional extension activities for these pupils in the next school year.
49. The planning of the curriculum, to allow pupils to make progress and meet the requirements of external examinations, is good. There are some examples of very good practice, for example in English, history and physical education, where pupils achieve well above the national expectation for sixteen year olds because of the very well planned curriculum. There are currently some deficiencies in the planning for geography, where the absence of subject leadership has meant that relatively inexperienced teachers have had to plan their teaching with little to guide them.
50. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. They are outstanding in physical education where numerous events enjoy the support of teachers and the involvement of many pupils. Several subjects contribute to a range of activities including stage productions, musical events, a local history society as well as art and ICT clubs. Teachers in many departments offer additional classes after school to help pupils prepare for examinations or sort out problems with classwork. There is regular use of the library during lunchtime, however the lack of access before and after school, diminishes the efficient use of this very expensive resource. The curriculum is enriched by fieldtrips in science and by the involvement of poets and writers in English classes.
51. The school makes satisfactory links with the community to support pupils' learning. The science department has links with the local pharmaceutical company and links with local businesses provide suitable work experience for pupils in Year 10. The links with primary schools are good and are planned to ensure a smooth transfer in learning and social contacts at age 11. Several departments in the school have good curriculum links with the primary schools. Teachers from the English, mathematics, science and physical education departments have visited the primary schools. In English and mathematics, this has been to learn at first hand about the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, which are now being implemented in the secondary school. In other subjects, it is to discover the attainment of pupils and to learn something of how they have been taught as well as to share their subject expertise; this is a positive initiative. Links with further education and the sixth form centre are good; in the recent past, pupils have transferred to the sixth form centre to start their study of A-level mathematics a year early.
52. The school maintains effective links with initial teacher training Institutions, such as St Martin's. This contributes to teachers' professional development and enables them to keep abreast of current methodology and thought.
53. Curriculum provision is good for pupils with special educational needs. It is well planned to meet individual needs and includes withdrawal lessons to enhance literacy skills and vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. A key feature of the good provision is the deployment of support staff, with support teachers used to give specialist individual help and support assistants used to help pupils take full advantage of mainstream lessons. The good range of provision results in some pupils missing parts of other lessons, for example when withdrawn for individual help and when attending college courses; this is an appropriate strategy as it offers more benefits than drawbacks for the pupils.
54. Provision for pupils with special educational needs within subject areas is variable. In some subjects, including English and mathematics, setting enhances provision by enabling planning to focus on the needs of particular groups. In English, planning is very good; for example, in ensuring

the appropriate choice of texts. Planning is good in design technology, for example with the provision of "starter" resources. There is a lack of planned provision in art, music, modern foreign languages and geography. In history resources are not always well enough matched to pupils' needs.

55. Time for personal and social education is limited to one lesson per fortnight, which restricts coverage of topics, but efficient organisation by the co-ordinator and a well-planned programme ensures that best use is made of the available time. The focus is on study skills, health issues and sex education, relationships and careers, plus a citizenship module in Year 11. Staff now choose the module they will teach to classes within a year group. This has greatly improved the quality of teaching, so that, in the majority of lessons observed, it was very good. Sex education is taught particularly well within the context of strong moral and Catholic guidance. Pupils are also able to receive advice from the school nurse; this is very valuable. Time for careers education is inadequate; modules are not always taught at the most appropriate time.
56. Requirements for citizenship education will place extra pressure on personal and social education time in September 2002. Planning for the introduction of this course has been thorough. A comprehensive audit of subject contributions has been conducted, which has identified gaps in provision. These mainly concern the role of central and local government institutions, and the implications for citizens of the different religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom. There are many opportunities for pupils to debate issues that should concern future citizens. Recently, the school gained a distinction in a competition for its play on embryo research, which was used in personal and social education to discuss the morality of designer babies. The Christian ethos of the school encourages pupils to accept their responsibilities as citizens of the world towards people in need. Christian charity (CAFOD) projects raise pupils' awareness of global issues and the school's own Bernaid responds quickly to disaster appeals.
57. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. There are no school or department policies but the good quality of teaching and the headteacher's vision that the gift of life comes with responsibilities show the value that is placed on the achievement of individuals. In assembly the headteacher very skilfully exemplified his vision by relating the emotions Jesus felt at leaving his disciples to that of a parent seeing a child become independent. Prompted by the study of genetics in science the drama teacher wrote a play, 'Jodie', which was performed in school and toured to Glasgow and London. This gave the whole school an opportunity to consider in depth the moral and social issues involved as well as deepening spiritual awareness of the dilemmas the family faced.
58. There are very good opportunities, particularly in history and English, through literature, for spiritual development, where pupils consider the state of mind and feelings of others in for instance the plight of Jews during the Second World War. Opportunities for reflection are also provided in other subjects. For example, in a science lesson where pupils were studying the nature and impact of an eclipse. The religious symbols in classrooms and public areas are a reminder of the Catholic faith, which is central to the school's ethos. There is also encouragement to consider other faiths through Faith Days that have a multi-faith dimension. However, this very good provision is not consistent across all subjects; modern foreign languages and music are subjects where spirituality is not well developed.
59. The very good provision for moral development is underpinned by the school's values and the clarity of the moral code it promotes. Teachers are very good role models and the high degree of respect for the individual is very evident in the way relationships are upheld. There are many opportunities through lessons, particularly in personal and social education and religious education, for pupils to debate ethical and moral question; for example, pupils being asked to consider some of the moral problems in the use of ICT in society today.
60. The very good opportunities for social development go beyond the school day to include visits in this country and abroad, especially by the modern foreign languages, drama and music groups. The Retreat at Castle Rigg is another very good element of provision which is well supported by priests as well as staff. Older pupils take part in the day-to-day running of the school and, as Year

11 leave, Year 10 apply for their positions as prefects. In lessons, working together in groups gives pupils the chance to develop collaborative skills with their colleagues. Pupils are also made aware of their social responsibilities through the charitable giving and fund-raising in which they take part.

61. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Local heritage is preserved in the 'Karafolkie' group which appears regularly at school events, playing traditional folk music. Visits to The Brewery Arts Centre also provide a focal point for extending pupils' cultural horizons. Opportunities to study the traditions and cultural values of other races are restricted by the lack of immediate role models, but the religious education and PSE departments build the values of other faiths into their teaching. The imminent World Cup was used very well in geography to explore perceptions and fascination with a remote country. The Japanese connection is also present in design and technology in the study of clothes. In modern foreign languages the cultures of France and Germany are not presented strongly enough in the teaching.
62. The school offers careers advice and support to all its students but the overall level of provision is unsatisfactory. Although the careers guidance scheme of work is well structured and good use is made of the Connexions Service, who attend school on a regular basis, Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 are taught at the same time and this means that only one class can use the careers library or computer suite. Another core issue is that pupils do not necessarily receive lessons at appropriate times; for example, not all pupils receive lessons to prepare them for work experience

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

63. The school's procedures for ensuring pupils well-being and health and safety are good; it appropriately regards health and safety as a high priority.
64. Child protection procedures are good. The child protection officer carries out her duties effectively and well. She has received appropriate training, which is shortly to be updated and the school is to arrange cascade training for all other members of staff. Records of pupils on the child protection register are meticulously kept and liaison with the social services department is good.
65. The school's arrangements for first aid are very good. The school has a large number of staff (12) with up-to-date first aid qualifications. Excellent records of accidents are kept and the administering of medicines by staff is well recorded.
66. The school's health and safety officer has arranged for regular health and safety audits to be carried out on a departmental basis; these are thorough. In addition, each department regularly carries out risk assessment procedures appropriately. The fire alarm is tested at regular intervals and regular fire drills are held. All the above are carefully recorded.
67. The school ethos of care and support for its pupils is built on the Catholic faith. Because of the high level of support given by school, pupils are able to learn well and develop personal skills confidently. Educational and pastoral support and guidance are good; the school has a very effective pastoral system and relationships at the school between staff and pupils are very good. However, the performance of form tutors is variable. Most fulfil their roles well but a minority do not make effective use of form period time each day. Pupils appreciate form tutors moving up the school with them. The system whereby each pupil has both an academic and pastoral mentor works extremely well and helps pupils to learn. Pupils' achievements, difficulties and any problems are discussed regularly, in detail and targets are set.
68. Heads of year liaise very well with form tutors who they manage. They work hard together to offer assistance and guidance to all pupils. Regular meetings are held at which pupils' progress is discussed and monitored and, as a result, pupils with difficulties are speedily identified and offered support. A small minority of pupils display challenging behaviour. All staff work extremely well together to help and guide, not only these pupils, but all pupils in their care.

69. The school has good arrangements for promoting pupils' personal development. Good use is made of the Connexions Service, which provides a professional adviser for one and a half days per week to help pupils with emotional and behavioural problems, and in addition a volunteer counsellor attends school on a regular basis to assist with problems. The personal and social education programme and extra-curricular activities enhance pupils' opportunities for personal development.
70. The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and the elimination of oppressive behaviour. All pupils understand the system of reward and sanction. Sanctions are used sparingly but are effective in reducing fixed term and permanent exclusions. Pupils who misbehave enter the highly effective isolation unit for a fixed length of time and rarely re-offend. The behaviour policy is well understood by staff and is consistently applied. Incidents of bullying or oppressive behaviour are rare but are dealt with effectively by staff when they occur.
71. The school has good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. The school uses an electronic marking system and up-to-date records of attendance are available to all staff. The office staff monitor attendance very well and contact parents of non-attenders on a first day absence basis. Collaboration with the education welfare officer is excellent, she visits the school regularly and carries out home visits if necessary. She also takes a valuable lead in helping to support pupils at risk of becoming disaffected with school. The school has installed a dedicated telephone line to enable parents to contact the school at any time to report their children's absence; this is very good practice. Good attendance is rewarded by certificates and prizes. As a result of the school's pro-active measures, unauthorised absences are declining and attendance is improving.
72. The school makes appropriate use of information from primary schools to plan provision for pupils with special educational needs and in addition has very good screening procedures for pupils on entry. Both whole year group and individual testing procedures are used very early in Year 7 and the results are very well used to plan curriculum provision. Individual education plans and review procedures appropriately reflect the requirements of the revised code of practice. In some cases plans outline strategies and targets for withdrawal work very well but the absence of any cross-curricular targets limits their usefulness to all staff in terms of informing planning and involvement in reviews.
73. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' work and progress. The procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are now good. The assessment policy and procedures have been developed in the last two years. This is to ensure that the mass of data going out to departments can be used consistently and effectively and can be shared with pupils and parents. Pupils now have a clear idea of their own progress and understand what they need to do to improve.
74. All pupils meet twice yearly with their academic tutor to share information about their progress based on assessments of National Curriculum levels achieved and effort and homework grades in each subject; this is a very successful initiative that is valued by pupils, parents and teachers. Development targets for each subject are entered in the pupil profile booklets. Subject teachers deal with issues arising from this process. As a result, parents receive the grades on a report card on two occasions each year and a record of achievement at the end of each year. Records of achievement list the aims of each course and the necessary skills for each attainment target.
75. In science and design and technology very good assessment systems are in place. In science it is newly developed and has the potential to be an excellent means of helping the department to become even more effective. Good assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress were observed in English, history, ICT, mathematics and, for some years, in physical education. In music, art and modern foreign languages there was some unrealistic assessment of National Curriculum levels. In geography and music there is no policy in place and National Curriculum level assessments are neither secure nor realistic.

76. A strength of the assessment system is the collection of data from the time the pupils enter the school. Each pupil's level of attainment in primary school in English, mathematics and science is recorded along with tests on joining St Bernard's. National Curriculum levels are subdivided in order to make monitoring more meaningful. Pupils and parents are now much more aware of pupils' progress. The quality of reports to parents is good.
77. Whilst the procedures for and monitoring of assessment are good, the use of assessment data in curricular planning needs to be developed further.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS?

78. St. Bernard's school is the first choice of very many parents and is over-subscribed. Parents are positive about the school's work as the pre-inspection questionnaire and the pre-inspection meeting feedback indicated (although only 15 per cent of parents returned the questionnaire and 33 parents attended the meeting). Inspectors agreed with parents that their children make good progress and are expected to work hard. They said that the children like school and that the school's positive ethos helped them to learn and to become responsible adults. A small minority criticised links with the school, the information they received about pupils' progress and the quantity of homework. Inspectors agree with parents about their positive comments. The school works hard to provide good information to parents, including about pupils' progress. Some variability in the quality and quantity of homework is evident; it is good in most subjects but unsatisfactory in art and music, and in geography in Years 7 to 9.
79. The school is very supportive of parents and takes great pains to give them good information about their children's academic and pastoral progress. The school is very pro-active in contacting parents promptly if they have cause for concern and also to keep them informed, on an on-going basis, of actions taken and progress made. Parents are encouraged to contact school at any time to see either form tutors, heads of year or senior managers, if they have any concerns they wish to discuss. The homework diary is well used by parents and provides a constant means of communication between home and school; parental comments are well responded to by staff.
80. In Year 7, the school arranges three parents' evenings per annum: one prior to pupils' admission, one shortly after admission to discuss how they have settled in and one in the spring term after the pupils' academic review evening. Years 10 and 11 have two parents' evenings per annum and Years 8 and 9 have one parents' evening per annum. Annual reports provided in the summer term have been greatly improved since the previous inspection. They give informative information on a subject-by-subject basis; good explanations of grades achieved and target setting. Pupils also comment on their own perception of their progress.
81. The school provides high quality information for parents. The Prospectus is extremely well produced, attractively presented and contains all necessary statutory information. Although regular newsletters are not at present provided, plans are well advanced for Year 10 pupils to produce and distribute a newsletter each half term for parents, giving information on proposed activities, and news and views of pupils. An additional guide is provided for parents of Year 7 pupils, which is given to them prior to their admission and gives valuable information of the school's ethos and facilities. The Governors' annual report is detailed and gives a good deal of information on the work of the school but does not give details of progress towards the school's action plan, details of admissions of pupils with disabilities or GCSE targets.
82. The level of direct involvement in the school by parents is limited. The parent teachers association has been disbanded through lack of support and has not been reformed. A small number of parents do come into school to help and when they do so, their work is much appreciated. They help with sports events, working in the learning support department and act as escorts on school trips or residential visits. The response to parents' evenings, the fortnightly Mass held at school and award evenings is very good. During the inspection week a music concert was held which was well supported by parents.
83. In addition to very good informal links, parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept very well informed of pupils' progress through the issue of additional reports for all pupils receiving extra support. Planning for reviews of progress includes good opportunities for parents to contribute.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

84. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress. Over the past five years, National Curriculum test results have risen in line with the rise in national results while GCSE results have risen at a faster rate. The accommodation has been developed well and learning resources have improved considerably, particularly in ICT. Procedures for assessing pupils and checking their progress are now more accurate and this has improved the quality of the school's analysis of its own performance. The key issues from the last inspection have largely been tackled. The school has continued to improve, development planning is better although further work is necessary in this area, the curriculum is better balanced for pupils in Years 10 and 11, reports to parents are more informative and financial planning and control are now very good. Around a third of pupils are still not guaranteed their full entitlement of ICT tuition in Years 10 and 11.
85. Improvement since the last inspection has been: very good in English, design and technology and ICT; good in mathematics, science, history and physical education; and unsatisfactory in geography, art, music and modern foreign languages.
86. The headteacher leads the school very well. He was appointed at a difficult time in the school's history and he has been very successful in restoring confidence among staff, pupils, parents and the wider community in its work. He is very skilful in managing pupils and adults, maintaining very good relationships whatever demands are placed on him.
87. The senior management team has been under strength in recent years partly due to issues beyond its control. Two capable deputy headteachers are now in post who support the headteacher well. They are soon to be joined by an assistant headteacher who has proven skill in managing as a head of department. The senior management team has the respect of staff and has been effective in moving the school forward. To make further progress, more emphasis needs to be given to senior managers' work in supporting and monitoring departments' performance.
88. Leadership and management are: very good in English, design and technology, ICT and physical education; good in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history; satisfactory in art; and unsatisfactory in geography and music. Leadership issues in geography have yet to be resolved and this is having an adverse impact on standards. Good work in supporting and evaluating the quality of teaching is being carried out in English, design and technology, ICT, modern foreign languages, history and physical education.
89. A major achievement of the headteacher is his appointment of a skilful team of non-teaching staff. He appropriately has full confidence in their abilities and gives them the opportunity to manage as well as administer. This gives them a great deal of job satisfaction and they rise to the challenges very well. ICT is used very well in the management and organisation of the school. A range of software helps ensure that information is readily available to managers about, for example, finance and pupils' progress. The school is very well organised.
90. The governors give very good spiritual leadership. They are developing their roles in monitoring the school's performance and in financial planning. Most statutory requirements are met except for the provision of ICT in Years 10 and 11 and in aspects of the governors' annual report to parents. The chair of governors has given considerable service to the school over many years. His knowledge of the communities served by the school is invaluable in understanding the learning needs of the pupils.
91. The aims and values of the school are very well reflected in its work. The school has a strong Catholic focus. This is evident in the whole life of the school not just at times of worship. Pupils are also encouraged to achieve well and to develop into confident, skilled and successful citizens. The very positive relationships between pupils and staff reflect the school's commitment to encouraging respect for all.
92. The development plan for 2002/3 and beyond has not yet been finalised. Long-term plans are not yet firmly established although the governors have agreed for the school to apply for specialist

science status and to move to a three year planning cycle. There is some inconsistency between priorities identified in inspection documents and the outline development plan; these - have not been reconciled. At present, the 2002/3 development plan targets are not in appropriate priority order with, for example, the issue of raising boys' attainment at item 11.

93. The headteacher is leading a process to determine the direction the school should take in the future. He has stated his own views about the ethos of the school in a powerful way in a draft vision statement and has identified a number of opportunities to shape curriculum development. The draft vision statement has been opened up for discussion among staff, governors and the wider community. This is an important process that is being managed well and needs to move forward rapidly.
94. The development plan for 2001/2 appropriately starts with a review of the previous year's plan which is realistic and mostly evaluative. Success criteria are identified but in some cases they are too vague. Subject plans include a column identifying 'Educational Benefit'; this is a good way of focusing middle managers' attention on the key purpose of the development planning process.
95. Senior management has developed a system for analysing the performance of the school which is effective in identifying issues and recognising strengths. Action to tackle issues has been effective in some areas, such as in art, but in other areas, such as music, not enough has been done to support teachers in developing the subject. Formal meetings between senior and middle managers to monitor the action taken to tackle development issues are not regular enough. This means that where middle managers are not skilled in pursuing development agendas in a systematic way, the pace of change is too slow.
96. The governor responsible for special educational needs provision is appropriately involved in planning and development. The governors' annual report to parents contains information on the school's provision with additional detail in the prospectus; the details published do not place sufficient emphasis on the implementation and effectiveness of the provision. The school is making good progress in incorporating the revised code of practice for special educational needs into its procedures. There are good links between the special educational needs co-ordinator and staff with the co-ordinator meeting regularly with key groups including representatives of each department. Leadership and management are very good with very good planning to identify pupils' needs and future priorities and to evaluate current practice. There are very good multi-agency links to support the needs of individual pupils. Progress from the last inspection is good.
97. There is a good equal opportunities policy and the school is proud of its success in its implementation. The mission statement clearly identifies the rights of all individuals as enshrined in the Christian beliefs of the school and states that all pupils will live demonstrating the Gospel values of respect, love for God and neighbours. There is no formal monitoring of the policy and the governors have not reviewed it since it was written in 1994. However, the evidence around the school is of a community that cares for all individuals, in which relationships are very good and where learning is significantly enhanced by these positive features.
98. The school's educational priorities are reflected in its financial planning. The priorities established in the school development plan form an integral part of financial planning proposals presented to governors. The governors have approved a very good scheme for delegating financial decisions, which is regularly reviewed. Concerns expressed in the most recent audit report have been fully addressed and the outcomes reported to governors.
99. The bursar provides excellent information and support to the headteacher and governors by presenting and explaining budget models and in monitoring the progress of the budget during the financial year. She also leads the team which provides a similar service to the entire family of local Catholic schools, which helps develop a relationship of great value.
100. The headteacher has successfully led the school through a difficult process of overcoming the budget deficit, reported at the last inspection. The school is now in surplus and has contributed the 15% share to capital projects in both of the last two financial years.

101. The high quality work of the headteacher and bursar has been responsible for restoring the balance in the school's financial situation. Although regular reports are presented to, and approved by the finance committee, governors do not have a full understanding of all the financial issues; for example, with regard to the application of best value principles. However, governors have approved a 'best value' statement which is now operational in the school.
102. Arrangements for the monitoring of specific grant are very good and the grant is appropriately used. The school places a high value on staff development, learning resources and the learning environment. The money allocated to support pupils with special educational needs is leading to good provision and learning; it provides good value for money.
103. In consideration of the funding available to the school, the standards achieved and the educational provision, the school provides good value for money.
104. Although the pupil:teacher ratio in the school is above average and the time that teachers spend teaching is high, the match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good. The school is beginning to find difficulties in recruiting teachers and supply teachers are currently supporting mathematics, modern foreign languages and geography. In the case of geography, the long-term absence of the head of department has led to the unsatisfactory situation of classes being taught by more than one teacher; standards of work have suffered as a result. In modern foreign languages, there is no specialist German teacher.
105. Technical support to departments is good, except in design and technology, where it is inadequate, and in art, where none is provided. Four learning support assistants give good support in special educational needs. The administrative and clerical staff provide high quality support. The library assistant provides a valuable service.
106. Staff development is good, except in music, where it is not linked to performance management targets and is consequently not identifying appropriate professional needs. Across the school, staff development has a high priority and attracts a high level of investment. Opportunities are prioritised to enable whole school, departmental and performance management targets to be met more effectively. Knowledge gained by teachers from courses is generally shared well and courses are always evaluated. Much training is done within the school particularly within departments.
107. Performance management is in place and working effectively, except in geography where it is in abeyance. The quality of performance management in music is unsatisfactory; it has not been effective in supporting the teacher nor improving standards. Across the school, the first cycle is not yet fully complete. Observations have taken place in almost all departments and interim reviews have been conducted. performance management is not yet available to support staff.
108. The school has a partnership with St Martin's College, Lancaster, in initial teacher training and provides opportunities for students on a regular basis. It also participates in the EDP retention programme. The professional mentor operates a very good induction programme for newly qualified teachers, which meets government requirements and provides new teachers with support. Support for other newcomers to the school and for supply teachers are both managed at department level and are variable according to the size of the department. A new head of department in a small curriculum area may be disadvantaged by this arrangement.
109. The accommodation is very good overall. It is in good condition and well maintained. In a few subjects aspects of the accommodation cause problems; for example, the ICT room is noisy, in modern foreign languages the classrooms are small and badly shaped which makes teaching difficult, and one classroom in the history department is too small.
110. In recent years the school has raised a considerable sum (£366,000) for refurbishing its accommodation. A building programme including the provision of a new roof and facilities for people with physical disabilities is underway. In addition, the school has submitted bids to the

department for education for refurbishment of the dining hall and the completion of a programme for replacing the flat roofs.

111. The building of a chapel and associated counselling room is a major improvement since the last inspection. Pupils now have a place to worship and to find tranquillity; this adds a considerable dimension to the educational provision.
112. There are good levels of resources in departments and in the library to support teaching. Spending on resources has been increased considerably in the past year to enable departments to provide new textbooks and other resources, as well as increase the number of computers throughout the school. This has been a good response to the last report when resources for learning were barely adequate.
113. In modern foreign languages all teaching rooms have overhead projectors, and television and video recorders are readily available. Improved resources in art increase pupils' opportunities to do two- and three-dimensional work. In physical education the four newly acquired video cameras are particularly useful for pupils evaluating each other's work in GCSE.
114. The increase in the number and quality of computers has been significant, and the ratio of computers to pupils is better than that in most schools nationally. Some departments now have their own computer suites and the library provides pupils with further access to computers during lessons and at lunchtimes. There have been improvements in library provision, old stock has been removed and new stock in both fiction and non-fiction now provides up-to-date and suitable material for pupils in all years of the school. The library is not open before or after school; an extension to the libraries opening hours would give pupils more opportunities for research and independent study.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

115. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, governors and staff should:
 - Improve the achievement of boys in Years 10 and 11.
(paragraphs: 1,5,11,14,16,92,117,123,129,149,160,168,179)
 - Improve the provision for geography by:
 - Ensuring that the quality of teaching is as consistently good in Years 7 to 9 as it is in Years 10 and 11;
 - Developing curriculum plans for Years 7 to 9 that meet National Curriculum requirements;
 - Improving the leadership and management of the department.
(paragraphs: 2-3,9-10,12,17,18,31-33,35,39,49,75,78,85,88,104,165-170)
 - Improve standards in art, music and expressive arts by:
 - Developing pupils' basic skills in the subjects more effectively;
 - Improving schemes of work so that they build pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills progressively;
 - Integrating ICT into schemes of work;
 - Using assessment and target setting to motivate pupils to improve the quality of their work;
 - Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning more effectively and devising support strategies to improve performance.
(paragraphs: 2-3,9-10,12,17,18,31-33,40,75,78,85,88,149-156,187-196,205,207)
 - Improve quality assurance procedures by:
 - Ensuring that teaching and learning are regularly monitored and effectively supported in all subjects;
 - Making sure that all subjects make full use of assessment and progress monitoring information.

(paragraphs: 12,87,92-95,106-107,155,165-170,175,186,195)

- Develop the provision for careers education by:
 - Increasing the curriculum time given to careers education;
 - Ensuring that all pupils are given good guidance on how to use the careers library;
 - Ensuring that all pupils receive work experience preparation lessons prior to going on work experience;
(paragraphs: 55,62)

- Ensure that form period time is used productively.
(paragraph: 67)

In addition, governors should ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement to ICT tuition in Years 10 and 11 and that the annual report to parents meets statutory requirements.

(paragraphs: 45-47,81,181-186)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	132
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	54

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	36	43	41	2	1	0
Percentage	7	27	33	31	1	1	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	840
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	102

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	129

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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 Years 7 to 9 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Years 7 to 9 for the latest reporting year	2001	85	84	169

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	63	72
	Girls	72	64	70
	Total	129	127	142
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (62)	75 (71)	84 (67)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (23)	47 (47)	53 (29)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	66	71
	Girls	75	67	70
	Total	133	133	141
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (71)	80 (80)	83 (72)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (39)	46 (44)	47 (30)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Years 10 and 11 (Year 11)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Years 10 and 11 for the latest reporting year	2001	84	105	189

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	34	77	79
	Girls	66	98	102
	Total	100	175	181
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	53 (51)	93 (96)	96 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.6 (42.2)
	National	39 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	20
	National	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	833
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	19	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	45.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	262

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Years 7 to 9	24.7
Years 10 and 11	21

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2330245
Total expenditure	2425112
Expenditure per pupil	2891
Balance brought forward from previous year	215156
Balance carried forward to next year	120289

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	840
Number of questionnaires returned	125

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	48	4	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	49	48	2	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	56	4	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	63	10	2	0
The teaching is good.	35	56	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	52	7	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	30	6	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	33	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	34	48	14	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	48	40	2	2	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	43	2	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	38	8	0	6

Other issues raised by parents

All other issues raised by parents are indicated in the main body of the report.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved by the pupils
- Leadership of the department.
- The quality of teaching and commitment of the teachers to raising standards.
- Relationships and the ethos for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the opportunities for higher attainers to plan aspects of their work.
- Improve the attainment of boys so that it more closely matches that of girls, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop speaking in formal and informal settings.

116. At the end of Year 9, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are above average. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools (based upon the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). Overall, the results of boys and girls in recent years have been similarly above the results of boys and girls nationally. In 2001 the results were similar to those in mathematics and lower than those in science. Pupils achieve results that are higher than expected given the standards they have achieved on entry to the school.
117. At the end of Year 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are well above average. GCSE results are well above the national average in both language and literature and well above the average of similar schools. All pupils achieved a grade in the A* - G range in 2001 in both language and literature. By the time they are sixteen, pupils achieve better in English than they do in mathematics and science. GCSE results have remained above the national average for several years. A good proportion of pupils achieve results at GCSE, which are above what would be expected from their results in national tests when they are fourteen. While boys' results are above those of boys nationally, they are significantly below those of girls in both language and literature.
118. Standards in speaking are broadly average. Pupils answer questions audibly and enter into discussion in small groups with confidence. Many pupils are reluctant to enter discussion in a whole class context unless drawn in by the teacher. Few pupils give extended answers to questions, though most will develop the answers of others. Teachers are skilled in allowing pupils time to consider their answers to questions and have established very good levels of respect among all pupils for the speaker. As a consequence, pupils listen patiently while their peers explain their ideas. Listening is well developed and standards are above expectation by the time pupils are fourteen. All pupils follow teachers' explanations carefully, answering and asking questions which show they have followed closely. The advantages of their good listening are evident at the start of lessons when teachers begin with a recap of previous learning and pupils have very good recall of detail.
119. Pupils' standards in reading are above the expected level. They are assessed very well when they enter the school and good provision is made to help them improve. There is a very good focus on teaching reading skills systematically from Year 7 onwards and all teachers ensure that pupils read regularly and keep a log of their reading. Pupils read widely in fiction, non-fiction and media texts because teachers insist that they cover a range of genre and subjects in their reading each year; planned visits to the library and careful monitoring of reading logs by teachers ensure that pupils adhere to this regime. The result is pupils have a better than usual knowledge of authors and styles in literature and their vocabulary is enhanced by their exposure to regular reading.

120. Standards in writing for pupils who are fourteen are above the expectation for their age. The majority of pupils write with very good structure for a wide range of purposes. They learn how to use different language for effect, as in Year 7 when they identify the different conventions for formal and informal writing and follow the conventions in their own letters of complaint. The development of writing longer pieces is well managed by teachers, who provide very clear frameworks for writing which give pupils the support they need to write mini-sagas in Year 9. Again the very sharp focus on teaching language and expanding the pupils' vocabulary, makes a strong contribution to the good quality of writing that the vast majority of pupils produce. Pupils have good strategies for spelling and are accustomed to using dictionaries to check and research the spelling of unfamiliar words. Their punctuation is at least at the level expected for their age. The quality of finished work is usually of a high standard reflecting the pride that pupils feel in their achievements.
121. By the time they are sixteen, pupils' listening skills are very good. They sustain concentration very well during complex discussion about texts they read. They follow teachers reasoning closely and are able to answer challenging questions. This demonstrates that they have been listening actively and considering what is being said; their very good listening means they remember information well. This was especially noticeable in lessons where Year 11 pupils were working on the revision of texts for their final examinations. In classes across the ability range, the notable feature was the detailed recall that pupils had of their learning; for example, they were able to offer precise examples to support their ideas about characters in "The Lord of the Flies" and to discuss significant events vividly. Standards in speaking are broadly average. While some higher ability pupils are confident enough to speak at length and develop an argument in class discussion, this is not common. More opportunities to speak formally and present to different audiences are needed to bring standards in speaking up to those of other aspects of pupils' work in the subject.
122. Standards in writing for pupils who are sixteen are well above average because of the very well planned teaching and the high expectations that all teachers have of their pupils. Pupils are taught writing skills thoroughly, through both the analysis of different texts, which helps them establish the features of writing for different purposes and audiences, and through the careful modelling of writing by their teachers. These methods ensure that all pupils are able to write independently, using appropriate style in essays and stories. Pupils are also taught to make good use of their deep knowledge of texts that they study to write literary essays of good quality. While this approach to writing is working very well in preparing pupils for the challenges of the final examinations, higher ability pupils would benefit from more opportunities to plan their work independently. The written work of the older pupils has a pleasing freshness in the samples of personal writing seen. For example, the autobiographies written by Year 11 pupils contain many lively and memorable descriptions which make them a pleasure to read. Essays written on literary texts show very good insight because of pupils' high level reading skills. These are well-structured pieces of writing. The work of some higher attainers is notable for the very cogent arguments they produce that are well supported by close reference to the text. Lower ability pupils write at length and control their writing well.
123. Pupils achieve well in all years because of the high quality teaching they receive, although the achievement of boys is not as high as girls in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is very good overall, with some excellent teaching seen in Years 8 and 9. Teaching is consistently very good in the GCSE classes, where teachers' very high expectations keep the pace of lessons and the pupils' work rate, brisk. All pupils respond very well to the high levels of challenge they are set by teachers. Pupils arrive at lessons prepared to work hard. In Year 11, where pupils were having revision classes for their final examinations, teachers presented them with challenging tasks based on "The Lord of the Flies". Pupils were delighted to demonstrate their knowledge and enjoyed teachers' probing questions as they were asked to explain how key events or characters linked to the author's purpose in writing the novel.
124. A strength of teaching in all classes is the quality of planning for lessons. Teachers write detailed lesson plans which they often share with pupils as the lesson progresses. The planning ensures

that tasks are related and progressive, so that pupils quickly build on their knowledge and skills. Because teachers include so much in their lessons, they must move at a rapid pace. Pupils are well prepared for this and rise to the challenges very well, with good concentration and a rapid response to changes in activity. In an excellent drama lesson in Year 8, pupils created very good improvised scenes, then explored the background to characters they had invented, and finally reflected on the consequences of hasty words and actions. They made excellent progress in developing their skills and understanding because of the teacher's tight planning, high expectations and his ability to get the very best out of pupils quickly. Another strength in the teaching, which is shared by all members of the department and is a hallmark of the provision, is the impact of the very good relationships upon pupils' learning. Pupils have very high levels of respect for their teachers because of the example that teachers set in their own relations with pupils and each other and because of the care that teachers take to provide challenging and enjoyable work. In all lessons, the co-operative and supportive atmosphere makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievements, as teachers and pupils work closely together to move learning forward.

125. The quality of the curriculum in the subject is good throughout the age range. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from a well-planned scheme of work which places very good emphasis on developing reading and writing skills. The provision for drama extends the curriculum and goes some way to providing pupils with experiences to develop confidence when addressing a larger audience as well as equipping them with drama skills. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress and their attainment are very good and teachers make good use of them to ensure that what they teach is well matched to pupils' needs. The involvement of pupils in marking and moderating their own and others' work is a very good device, which informs them about their own standards and how they might improve.
126. The leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has very good subject knowledge and expertise and is committed to achieving very high standards for all pupils. He is skilled at developing the expertise of his colleagues and generous in sharing his own expertise with them. He has succeeded in creating a strong team that works hard to reach his high professional expectations. Since the last inspection there has been a very clear focus on raising standards. To achieve this, the head of department has written a new scheme of work for Years 7 to 9, which ensures very good development of reading and writing skills. The organisation of classes by ability works very well because teachers ensure that work is challenging for pupils in all groups. The commitment to getting the best results for pupils at GCSE has led the department to re-arrange teaching groups in its search for ways of raising boys' attainment. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection and is very well placed to maintain its high standards.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning.
- The enthusiasm, commitment and teamwork of the department.
- Good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.
- Assessment data is used effectively.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The development of the use of ICT.
- The development of the National Numeracy Strategy and numeracy across the curriculum.

127. Pupils enter the school achieving standards slightly above average in mathematics.

128. In 2001, results in the National Curriculum tests were above the national average; they were well above the average for similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). The results were similar to those achieved by the pupils in English and lower than those in science. Except for 1999, results have improved each year and have been above the local education authority and national averages over the past five years. Achievement of the majority of pupils between age 11 and 14 is good. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. Boys and girls perform equally well.
129. Results in the 2001 GCSE examination were broadly average, with girls gaining better results than boys. Pupils performed less well in mathematics than they did in their other subjects, including in English and science. The great majority of pupils who achieve Level 7 in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 succeed in gaining A* or A grades at GCSE; however, the overall proportion of A* or A grades is below the national average and below the school average.
130. At the end of Years 9 and 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work, are above average. The achievement of the pupils is good during Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The school has experienced staffing difficulties in mathematics over recent years and this may explain the difference between the standards of work seen during the inspection and the results in GCSE examinations. Pupils produce a good quantity of work in the lessons because of their positive attitude to work. Pupils with special educational needs are mainly taught in sets comprising lower attainers and are making good progress.
131. A strength of the department is the quality of pupils' investigative skills. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, lower ability pupils were able to understand the value of tables as a result of the teacher's good explanations and the worksheet's clear instructions. In another Year 9 lesson, many higher ability pupils were reaching National Curriculum Level 7 standard when working on a jigsaw problem because the teacher allowed them to find and use formulae on their own while judiciously supporting those pupils who found the task too difficult. Pupils' work shows good evidence of the National Numeracy Strategy being applied in Years 7 to 9. By Year 9, almost all pupils are working at National Curriculum Levels 6 to 8
132. Pupils in Year 11 are on course to gain a full range of GCSE grades; higher ability pupils are achieving well and a number are on course to gain A* grades. Lower ability pupils are mostly expected to gain grades in the upper levels of the foundation paper. They find solving some of the more challenging elements of the course difficult, such as solving simultaneous equations difficult but good teaching enables them to learn well.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout Years 7 to 11 despite the problems of recruitment that the school has suffered. Teaching is a strength of the department. All lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. However, these need to be shared with the pupils more fully. In a Year 8 lesson a higher ability group of pupils were learning the properties of angles around parallel lines using geometry software were fully engaged and making good progress. A group of Year 9 pupils were challenged in an investigation to look for patterns and generalise their findings. In a Year 10 lesson the pupils were beginning their statistics coursework and were looking at data to enable them to draw out information and use their statistical knowledge for practical purposes. Pupils were using graphical calculators in a Year 10 lesson to help them with an investigation. As a result of the use of these calculators they were able to draw graphs speedily and minimise the area of metal needed to make a can of given volume accurately using decimal search
134. Two Year 11 revision lessons were well -prepared and helpful to the students, who appreciated the teacher's help with their revision. The development of the three-part lesson is becoming normal practice and there were some good starter exercises. In a lower ability Year 8 group the teacher had devised a game of pairs using angle facts that engaged the pupils. An investigation was used effectively as a starter exercise in a Year 9 lesson and the pupils were able to see the importance of starting an investigation with simple cases; the pace of the lesson was well matched to the learning needs of the pupils. Teachers made effective use of questioning during group work and pupils were able to explain their answers and solutions to the rest of the class. Good support is given to the pupils when they are undertaking work on an individual basis. Homework is regularly

set, marked and returned to pupils to correct their mistakes and make progress. The teachers keep good records of individual pupils' progress.

135. As a result of effective teaching, most pupils acquire knowledge of basic concepts and skills which enable them to work on their own to improve their understanding. The pupils have a positive attitude to their work in mathematics, they settle down to work quickly and behave well in lessons. Pupils answer fully the frequent questions they are asked during group work and their mental skills are good. Relationships between pupils and with the teacher are very good.
136. The department has an enthusiastic, hard working and committed team of teachers who work well together. The teachers have high standards and high expectations of the pupils; they are well led. The department development plan is a detailed and practical document with important areas for development outlined. It is closely linked to the school development plan. Links with feeder primary schools are well developed.
137. The mathematics curriculum is good and meets the statutory requirements providing equal access and opportunity for all pupils. Teachers are well qualified and have a secure grasp of the subject and its requirements. The quality of teaching and learning could be further improved by the sharing of good practice between the teachers. The National Numeracy Strategy is being used in Years 7, 8 and 9. This needs further development now to ensure that all pupils are given more opportunity to take part in more ICT work and more enrichment work. Literacy skills are improved by the use of correct mathematical language and good questioning in the lessons. Displays of key words connected to the topic being studied could be displayed in all classrooms. The department rooms provide a pleasant working environment with wall displays of pupils' work, puzzles and posters. Resources are now good and recent funding has enabled new resources to be purchased which have improved the quality of learning.
138. Improvements since the last inspection are that the facilities for, and use of, ICT are now better. The leadership and management of the department is now good. The range and use of the resources is more appropriate. There has been an improvement in examination results. There has been an improvement in teaching owing to the quicker pace and better lesson content. Formalised assessment and recording together with the use of assessment data in planning have all improved.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**

Strengths

- Procedures for assessing pupil's progress are very good
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress
- Approximately one third of teaching is very good
- Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning
- Leadership and management is good

Areas for improvement

- Raise the quality of teaching to the level of the very best
- Improve the monitoring of all areas of the subject
- Review schemes of work to support the development of pupils' skills, particularly in literacy, numeracy, practical investigation and the use of ICT

139. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the proportion of pupils awarded Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7 was well above the national average for all secondary schools and in the top 5 percent of similar schools (based upon the proportion of pupils' eligible for free school meals). These results were a significant improvement on the previous two years where results

were in line with the national average. In 2001 pupils performed better in science than they did in English and mathematics. Boys' and girls' results are similar.

140. In GCSE examinations in 2001 the proportion of pupils awarded grades A*-C in science was above the national average and was well above average compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils awarded the highest grades A*/A was in line with the national average and all pupils entered for the examination were awarded a grade. The proportion of boys awarded the higher grades A*-C was nearly 10 percent lower when compared to the performance of girls. In the single award science course the proportion of pupils awarded grades A*-C was well below the national average reflecting the prior attainment of the pupils. Examination results in both science courses at GCSE have remained above the national average over the last three years. GCSE results in science were broadly similar to results in mathematics over the last three years but below the results in English.
141. At the end of Years 9 and 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are above average. Pupils in all years have high levels of technical knowledge across all areas of science. They recall factual information and use scientific terms very well. For example, higher ability pupils in Year 8 studying the effects of pollution on lichen were able to provide spoken and written responses to questions using a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. Lower ability pupils in Year 10, some with special educational needs, could interpret data on the acidity of solutions and knew the correct conditions for a neutral solution. Some pupils, particularly in Year 7, have very high standards of literacy. In one of the few practical lessons seen during the inspection, Year 7 pupils explained with great confidence the process of dissolving solutes into solvents, using vocabulary such as condensation, distillation, saturated solution, evaporation and chromatography. However, the development of pupils' literacy skills is weak across the subject with many of the responses to oral questions no more than knowledge recall demanding single word answers and few pieces of extended writing in pupils' work books. The department has a policy for the development of pupils' numerical skills that is in the early stages of consultation and is not yet having sufficient impact on raising standards. Some pupils find great difficulty with the mental agility required in the work that they do and are over-reliant on the use of calculators. For example, a very simple multiplication in a revision session on potential and kinetic energy left a higher attaining group of Year 11 pupils reaching for their calculators with no attempt made to manipulate the equation mentally and no estimation of the final figure produced. Pupils' work indicates that some pupils have difficulties with the graphical representation of data. Anomalous data and lines of closest fit are not well understood, although pupils do generally record their experimental data in tabular form more frequently and to a better standard.
142. There were only four lessons seen during the inspection week that involved pupils in their own practical investigations and these were mostly in the lower years. In these lessons pupils were able to identify pieces of equipment correctly, to assemble practical arrangements sensibly and showed a good awareness of safety procedures. Work in pupils' books indicates regular opportunities for them to carry out practical investigations with well organised records of results and procedures. However, the standards of practical work recorded in books is inconsistent across different groups of pupils. GCSE examination coursework completed by Year 11 pupils shows disappointing standards with some pupils failing to reach their overall target grade in this part of the examination. When pupils are encouraged to use computers to enhance their work in science the standards attained are in line with expectations. For example, pupils in Year 7 were able to access the Internet to research solar and lunar eclipses while Year 11 pupils used a similar facility to revise for their GCSE examination. Posters displayed in some rooms show that pupils are able to word process and use publishing packages to an appropriate standard. There is little evidence of computers being used by Year 11 pupils to enhance their coursework in GCSE, nor of the use of ICT to analyse and present experimental data.
143. The achievement of the majority of pupils is good. The progress of all pupils is well supported by a rigorous and very effective assessment system that allows both teachers and pupils to track individual progress across all years. Data is collected from regular and frequent testing of modules of work as prescribed in the scheme of work for each year. These records are carefully checked against National Curriculum levels and the school has introduced a higher level of refinement that

provides greater accuracy to the data. This is a very robust system that supports the co-ordinated approach to teaching by teams of teachers in Years 10 and 11, and is beginning to have a similar impact on the progress of pupils in lower years. It has a significant impact on the pupils with special educational needs who are making very good progress supported by the effective deployment of classroom assistants and some very good teaching.

144. Over the last five years pupils have entered the school with standards that are above the national average, as determined by their results in national tests at the end of their primary schooling. The test results in science at this stage have been consistently higher than in mathematics and English. These high standards are reflected in the attainment of the current pupils in Year 7 where a significant proportion of pupils has well above average attainment. The progress of pupils in Year 7 depends primarily on the skill of the teachers in being able to cater for the different requirements of pupils who are learning at very different levels. For example, in one lesson seen pupils had reading ages that ranged from the equivalent of eight years to nearly fourteen years. Where teachers are planning well for these differences, pupils are making good progress but the quality of teaching is not consistently high across all groups and some pupils do not learn as well as they could. Once pupils enter Year 8 they are organised into groups that more closely reflect their abilities and teaching is directed more specifically to their needs. While this arrangement is helpful, it is only used to best advantage by some teachers.
145. The rate of learning seen in lessons in Year 8 is variable. For example, in a lesson with higher ability pupils studying the effects of pollution on animal life in different habitats, pupils' learning was very good. Pupils were able to interpret numerical data across a wide range of variables, in graphical form; to read confidently and fluently, extended text about stream environments; to make clear and accurate links between sample records and acid rain pollution; to recognise the validity of different sampling techniques and to discuss articulately what they had found out for themselves during recent fieldwork activities. These inconsistencies in pupil progress continue into Year 9 where a higher ability group of girls, with the benefit of a very well planned activity, made very good progress. They further developed their skills in preparing for an assessed scientific investigation showing a mature and informed approach to the task. In contrast, the learning of a group of pupils of average ability was unsatisfactory when the teaching lacked focus because of poor planning. Even though the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were good, their progress was negatively affected by unsatisfactory teaching. The provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 supports good achievement for most pupils with specialist teams of three teachers covering all the requirements of the National Curriculum for each group of pupils. Pupils with GCSE target grades C/D made very good progress in a lesson where there was systematic reinforcement of previous knowledge, regular and effective use of textbooks, a wide range of teaching strategies to keep pupils motivated and involved and a class practical on electrolysis which they all enjoyed. The department operates some classes of single sex groups and in three lessons observed, there was significant under-performance by some pupils. Analysis of assessment data provided by the school for all pupils in Year 10 confirms that more than half the year group achieved two or more grades below the grades predicted in the recent GCSE practice test; the department is taking steps to tackle the issue.
146. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In more than a third of lessons seen teaching is very good. However, in the majority of lessons the quality of teaching is satisfactory. These inconsistencies across the team of teachers reflect the need for more rigorous monitoring of classroom activity and the work produced by pupils. In the very best lessons, teachers make careful preparation giving clear thought to the effective use of the time available, the utilisation of a wide range of equipment and teaching strategies to support learning. The development of the literacy and numerical skills of pupils are an important part of the planning encouraging pupils continuously to provide extended responses to oral and written questions and providing appropriate frameworks for pupils to work with. A strength of teaching is the very good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils with frequent humour and sensitivity to pupils requirements. Learning is considerably enhanced by this feature and by the very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils the majority of the time. For example, a lesson with Year 7 pupils studying eclipses terminated with a demonstration by two pupils using a tennis ball and a drawing pin to represent the earth and the moon. The whole class was visibly excited by the concept and

realisation of distances involved in the phenomena and the atmosphere in the room was relaxed but stimulating. This positive response was reinforced by a well-planned homework that asked pupils to write about how people felt during the eclipse of 1999. Such positive features, however were absent from the majority of lessons. In the weaker lessons, planning was unsatisfactory, feedback to pupils was cursory, expectations were low and time was not well managed. Scrutiny of pupils' books and diaries and talking to pupils confirms that some work is not regularly marked and homework arrangements are not consistent across the department.

147. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has been in post three years and during that time has significantly improved the assessment systems to enable her to track the progress of individual pupils and the performance of groups of pupils. The school has improved the level of resources so that equipment, textbooks and computers are very good. The science rooms are new and provide a very good environment for learning with display work in some rooms contributing effectively to the overall positive image of the subject. All staff are suitably qualified and the technicians support the department very well.
148. There has been good improvement since the last inspection with a significant increase in examination results in 2001. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is now very good and there has been some review of schemes of work and the department policies. However, several of the issues identified in the last inspection report remain. The quality of teaching across the department is still very variable and there is insufficient monitoring of the overall quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum arrangements in Year 7 and in the single sex groups in Year 10 need review. Not all schemes of work cover all aspects of learning such as the development of literacy, numeracy, the use of computers, provision for higher ability pupils and pupils with special educational needs. There is a lack of rigorous monitoring of how well policies are implemented particularly in marking and homework. Currently, although there is informal awareness of the development needs of the subject, the department development plan is not sufficiently focused on the achievement of different groups of pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour
- Teachers' knowledge, planning and their management of pupils
- The leadership of the department and the shared commitment to succeed

Areas for improvement

- Statutory requirements relating to ICT
- Standards of work
- The teaching of basic skills and the use of sketchbooks
- The use of assessment data for target setting and to remove weaknesses in the curriculum
- The rigour of the monitoring of teaching and learning

149. At the end of Year 9, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are below average. Teacher assessments for those pupils aged 14 in 2001 show that average numbers meet or exceed national expectations. These assessments are generous and reflect the lack of standardisation available nationally. Pupils performed poorly at GCSE art in 2001; the results being on average two grades lower than the same pupils' results in their other subjects. While the girls' results were better than those of the boys, the difference was no greater than the national difference. These results were less good than in 2000 and significantly poorer than at the time of the last inspection.
150. The work seen during the inspection indicates that while standards are slowly improving they remain well below average. Pupils are familiar with a wide range of European and multi-cultural art and artists but little in their work indicates that the school is in Barrow, a town between the Lake

District and the sea with long religious and shipbuilding traditions. A particular exception to this is a set of printed compositions of the sea in different lights making very good reference to the coastal location of the school. Their sketchbooks provide evidence of their experimenting with materials and texture. Portraits have compositional and painting skills of the expected standard but poor drawing skills are limiting the success of the work. Pupils' self-evaluation of their work increases their knowledge but there are insufficient opportunities for them to develop their speaking and listening skills through discussion of their work. Too many pupils download images and passages of text from the Internet without making critical comment. There are good examples of pupils producing collages in the manner of Picasso's "Three Musicians" painting. Pupils use found objects such as string, leaves and tinfoil to make relief images on card to create effective prints and rubbings. There are particularly good examples of expressive ceramic heads in the style of biblical characters demonstrating good quality investigation into methods and materials but their value is lessened due to inadequate drawing and development work. There is no evidence of the use of ICT to generate or manipulate imagery. Pupils arrive in school having had varied, often limited experiences of art in their early years but their continued low standards in observation and recording-through-drawing is slowing progress and leading to unsatisfactory achievement by the age of fourteen.

151. At the end of Year 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are well below average. Most pupils do not understand the possibilities offered by drawing for different purposes and there is a lack of a common thread of discovery running through their work. Some work illustrates good methods of working from observation, then using a computer to enlarge sections to create a painting, sometimes as large as eight feet wide. But there is much derivative work using a scanner to copy photographs and an overhead projector to create, uncannily lifelike drawings in coloured pencils. In these cases the pupils' technical skills are impressive but the creativity required is very limited and again the lack of development work slows progress. Pupils make good use of repeated images in the style of Andy Warhol, using photocopied monoprints onto a range of coloured papers. There is large scale, ambitious ceramic sculptural work, often in the form of heads, with an emphasis on expressive gestures. Although standards are improving, the pupils' underdeveloped basic skills and their inability to carry an idea from a starting point through a variety of processes into a number of alternative solutions causes the achievement of these older pupils to be unsatisfactory.
152. Those who have special educational needs also make unsatisfactory progress, again due to underdeveloped basic skills. The caring relationships generated by their teachers allow these pupils to derive enjoyment from art. A boy with severe physical disabilities, unable to work on a Pop Art based lino-print, was learning at an equal rate to his classmates by working on a painting in the style of Roy Lichtenstein. Those who are gifted and talented make unsatisfactory progress in art and none were awarded the highest grade in recent GCSE examinations.
153. Teaching and learning in art are satisfactory. The quality of teaching is improving but the failure to teach the basic skills is limiting learning to satisfactory in every year group. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in lessons that are well planned and characterised by good classroom management. The teaching of critical studies has improved since the last inspection and pupils are adept at making connections between their own work and that of famous artists. A group of Year 8 pupils effectively investigated the use of textures and the methods of the Surrealist artist, Max Ernst, going on to create original images using found materials. In a good lesson, Year 7 pupils made good progress using the methods of Chinese artists to create perspective in landscape, providing an interesting alternative to the methods employed by European artists. In a good Year 10 lesson, pupils benefited from an impressive computer generated presentation demonstrating the quality and characteristics of an edition of prints before going on to make their own edition. The value of their work was reduced because the original imagery was copied from comic books rather than their own drawings translated into comic book style. Not all of these pupils were using the lino-cutting tools in the method demonstrated by their teacher, some finding the process difficult and risked cutting themselves. The failure to use sketchbooks for planning or research and their unhealthy reliance on copying from photographs is by now preventing them knowing how well they are doing or how they might improve. There is little independent learning and they are heavily dependent on their teachers for direction. Homework is

not sufficiently well designed to challenge the least or the most able pupils or those who perhaps feel inhibited by the gaze of their classmates at school.

154. The curriculum in art has improved and is broader than at the last inspection. Year 10 and 11 pupils are increasingly using computers to scan images into their work but the school lacks the specialist software to allow pupils to generate or manipulate artwork.
155. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject's credibility is being rebuilt following a long period of decline caused by staff illness when temporary teachers taught art; this is the reason why standards are so low. The new head of department has introduced strong leadership, teamwork and the capacity to succeed but there is still much to do. The monitoring of teaching and learning requires more rigour. Statutory requirements relating to the use of ICT in Years 7 to 9 are not being met. The assessment of pupils' work is not yet used effectively to set short-term targets for pupils or to recognise and remedy weaknesses in the curriculum. There is a lack of consistency in the department relating to pupils having access to their projected GCSE examination grades. Nevertheless the increasingly good relationships that exist have created a climate in which teachers' expectations are high and standards are rising. Resources for learning are improved since the last inspection, giving pupils many more opportunities to work with a variety of processes and media. Displays of pupils' artwork in the public areas of the school add to the reflective atmosphere in the school. The ceramic panels illustrating the Stations of the Cross increase the awareness of the beliefs of all who walk through the school, while the paintings produced by a former teacher and a pupil, both recovering from serious illness, are thought-provoking and inspirational, inviting onlookers to review and reassess their values.
156. The department has made unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards by the end of Year 11 have fallen from below to well below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. As at the last inspection, pupils enjoy art. They are courteous, helpful and supportive of each other and work well together in group work, responding with enthusiasm when the work is stimulating. Pupils' understanding of different and changing cultures through time has improved but the more able pupils continue to be less successful than expected. Lesson planning is much improved and pupils have a clear understanding of what they are required to do. Curriculum time has improved in Years 7 to 9. The department is in good hands.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology (D&T) is **very good**.

Strengths

- Leadership is very good, the department targets have been achieved and there has been very good progress since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is very high and secures very good learning.
- Pupils gain more A grades in GCSE than seen nationally and standards overall are above average, especially in Years 9, 10 and 11.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject and their behaviour are very good.
- The quality of display throughout the department is very good, motivates the pupils and shows the high standards of work that they can attain.

Areas for improvement

- The timetable allocation for D&T in Years 7 to 9 is below minimum recommendations and lesson times are too short in food studies for pupils taking GCSE to plan extended work.
- The school needs to consider how accommodation can be rearranged to provide for the needs of the department.
- The use of ICT should be extended to include more spreadsheet work, mainly to help pupils with costing.

157. When pupils enter the school their standards in D&T are below average although most pupils experienced making things in previous schools. At the end of Year 9, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are average and by the end of Year 11, standards are above average. This represents good achievement, which is an outcome of very good teaching. Pupils behave very sensibly and have very good attitudes to D&T which also contributes to their achievement and progress.
158. The results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed a slightly lower proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 and above than seen nationally. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average throughout Years 7 and 8, but above average in Year 9. The scheme of work is well constructed to build up pupils' skills in working with a wide range of tools and materials on short tasks before they begin self-generated designing and making activities. Pupils in Year 9, for example, are currently creating storage units, boxes with electronic warning devices, putting fabric embellishment on soft furnishings, conducting sensory analysis of main meal dishes and improving design drawings by using computer software. Designing is good. Pupils fill in their project booklets properly, draw carefully, make clear explanatory notes, follow the set sequence from designing to making and evaluate their results honestly. This theory work adds suitably to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
159. Practical work is good, and shows attention to detail, such as smoothing edges, ending off machining properly and presenting food attractively. Pupils' overall progress from Year 7 to 9 is good, including that for pupils with special educational needs, although these pupils make greater progress in practical work than they do in theory, because they have difficulty with words and number. Pupils who are gifted and talented are encouraged to set themselves greater challenges in their work to ensure they make the good progress expected of them.
160. Overall, in the 2001 GCSE examinations, the proportions of pupils gaining A* or A grades and A* to C in D&T were above the national average. Girls outperformed boys but the gap was smaller than found nationally. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A* to G was also above the national average. There were differences in the results between the material areas and in the number and gender of pupils taking the various options. The best results were in systems and control, girls attained highly in all areas, boys attained best in resistant materials, but worst in food. Over the past two years, results have been consistent. They are among the highest in the school and usually boys achieve their best results in D&T. In work seen during the inspection, pupils know that designing and making are linked and understand the value of research before development. Most pupils conduct surveys and devise questionnaires to determine needs and opinions and usually find a sensible solution to a practical problem. Most pupils take care with their portfolio sheets, show good quality lettering for headings, use of the computer, neat drawings and appropriate selection of examples. They also evaluate their work honestly. Even the lowest attaining pupils justify their comments and extend answers beyond a few lines showing sound literacy skills. Although pupils compare their results with those made commercially, they need to do more work with spreadsheets to make them more aware of costs. Pupils know the safety rules and use tools and equipment carefully. They cope well with computer-aided equipment, such as the vinyl stencil cutter and the sewing machines. High attainment is usually secured by good attention to detail and pupils know about careful measuring, marking and checking to get accuracy in fit and consistency. Pupils in Year 11, for example, have all produced practical work to show their skills in construction, creativity and suitability for purpose.
161. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject. They know that they have to work hard in lessons and appear keen to get to work. They listen to instruction, like watching demonstrations, set about tasks quickly and complete a good amount of work in the time allowed. Behaviour is very good. Pupils respect adults, speak politely, heed advice and often thank them for their help. They concentrate hard and persevere, even when they meet difficulties. The higher ability pupils spot error easily and can correct it themselves, but a few of the lower ability ones have to rely on their teachers for suggestions. Relationships are very good, as pupils get on well together and group work is particularly harmonious. Pupils in Year 9, for example, worked well when brainstorming a problem in textiles and also during a food tasting session, where they waited turns patiently and

shared fairly. A few of the confident pupils often try to help each other if the teacher is busy, and many pupils point out others' good work, showing increasing maturity and genuine friendship.

162. The quality of teaching is very good across all year groups and brings about very good quality learning. During the inspection, teaching quality in lessons ranged from good to excellent. The teachers are all highly skilled, good humoured and enthusiastic, which motivates the pupils. The greatest strengths in the teaching stem from the very high expectations, which teachers have for their pupils. They set very high standards by demonstrating competently, showing pupils skills and techniques, and they display pupils' assessed work prominently to show others what can be achieved. This informs pupils about standards, but also raises self-esteem, as pupils of all ages and abilities do the work on display. Planning is very good. The teachers have worked hard to produce course booklets for the younger pupils to increase independence and help them follow a set sequence of work, which does not over-face them with words and instructions. As pupils' behaviour is very good, teachers do not have to waste time in sessions getting order and discipline, so pupils have maximum time for work and produce a good amount of work. Modules are well timed to ensure pupils can complete their work. Teachers give very good one to one help in lessons, which ensures all pupils are learning and making progress and added help from the support assistant and the technician is invaluable, especially for the pupils who work slowly and for those who need more attention.
163. Leadership and management are very good and the department has made very good progress since the last inspection. The head of department gives very good support to the new and less experienced colleagues, relationships within the department are very good and the team works very well as a unit, with shared commitment and pooling of ideas. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and, as teachers teach to their strengths, there are now no weaknesses in aspects of the subject. The amount of progress which pupils make has increased, mainly owing to a rewrite of the schemes of work wherein modules of work, coupled with course booklets, are motivating the pupils. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and especially ICT, now feature prominently in all modules. Standards in all years have risen and the department targets for attainment at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE have been exceeded. Assessment procedures have improved and pupils are now more aware of how they are doing in both practical and theory.
164. Some of the work areas have been refitted, but the arrangement of space in the workshops needs attention. The ICT area is cramped and there are limited storage areas for materials and pupils' work. The technician's room is too small and has no ventilation and his hours of working are too few for the demands of a large department. Timetable arrangements whereby pupils have one hour lessons, creates difficulties for pupils taking food studies GCSE as they have insufficient time to plan extended assignments and the overall allocation of time is below recommendations for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

GEOGRAPHY

The overall quality of provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**

Strengths

- Current teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- Resources are good and much improved since the time of the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. For example:
 - i) Planning is inadequate and does not cover the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9.
 - ii) There are no departmental systems for assessing pupils' progress over time.
- Teaching, learning and pupils' achievement are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because of long-term and unresolved staffing difficulties.
- Standards of work are below average.

165. Standards of work in geography are below the national average. During their first three years in this school, most pupils fail to extend their understanding and skills sufficiently. Programmes of study have not been planned in logical sequences or in accordance with the requirements of the National Curriculum. Acute staffing difficulties have resulted in sudden changes in the allocation of teachers to classes, causing disruption in the continuity of pupils' learning. There is currently no overall management or monitoring of the work covered by supply teachers in a significant number of lessons in Years 7 to 9. As a result, pupils are sometimes set tasks that they have already completed and there is no provision for pupils' individual needs within these classes. Pupils' progress is therefore unsatisfactory.
166. At the end of Year 9, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are below average. In the current Year 9, pupils enjoy topical investigative work, for example on aspects of Japan, with teachers who have recently taken responsibility for their lessons. Skilful planning of tasks and very good methods of introducing pupils to new learning enables them to examine their own perceptions of distant cultures. As their understanding develops they are then able to reflect on, and to redefine, their original ideas. In an outstanding lesson in Year 8, pupils developed their decision-making and problem solving skills very rapidly through the excellent variety of resources and activities provided for them. Pupils with special educational needs are helped to make satisfactory progress when they have the benefit of support staff in lessons and when teachers provide for their individual requirements. However, no systems have been developed within the department to track individual pupils' progress efficiently, to share this information with all teachers and then to adapt the curriculum within lessons to meet the needs of pupils with a wide range of prior attainment. The most capable pupils in a Year 7 lesson on weather forecasts quickly discovered that there was very little challenge in the tasks, whilst those who found the work difficult were not given clear strategies to enable them to record their ideas accurately. Overall, because of the background in the department of disrupted and poorly planned work, there are serious gaps in pupils' general geographical knowledge and in their comprehension of essential skills such as the construction and interpretation of climate graphs.
167. In 2001, and at the time of the last inspection, results in the GCSE examination at the end of Year 11 were below the national average for all pupils. In 2001, girls achieved a greater proportion of passes at the higher grades than boys but all pupils performed less well in geography than in their other subjects. In 2000, results were better than this, particularly for a small group of girls, and were in line with the national average.
168. At the end of Year 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are below average. This small group of pupils, mostly boys, made unsatisfactory progress throughout their first year of the GCSE course because the coverage of the syllabus was inadequate and they did not develop the necessary skills for success. New teachers have made strenuous efforts to overcome these shortcomings and have succeeded in developing pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject and in helping them to complete essential coursework on local urban issues. Very good revision lessons before the final examinations are improving pupils' confidence and reinforcing their understanding of basic concepts and specialist vocabulary. Those pupils in Year 10 who have had uninterrupted specialist teaching this year are achieving well and making good progress. In one very good lesson observed, pupils with widely differing levels of attainment conducted a lively debate on the destruction of rain forest resources. They collaborated successfully in small groups as they assembled information and then argued persuasively from different viewpoints. The teacher's understanding of the theory and practice involved in developing pupils' literacy was significant in raising their achievement.
169. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, largely resulting from the absence of leadership and the lack of a consistent group of specialist, experienced teachers. Consequently, the quality of lessons observed ranged widely. One excellent and one very good lesson were seen. However, many lessons in the first three years are taught by inexperienced or non-specialist supply teachers who do not have enough information about their pupils or enough expert help in structuring lessons with sharply focused objectives to advance the learning of all pupils. One of these lessons observed was unsatisfactory because work was not well matched to

pupils' needs and there was a lack of challenge for higher ability pupils. Analysis of pupils' books shows that marking is often over-generous and lacks constructive comments to enable pupils to improve their work. In contrast to this, both lessons observed in Years 10 and 11 were very good. These high standards of teaching and learning are contributing significantly to pupils' enjoyment of geography and to its improved popularity throughout the school. The best features of these lessons are the very good use of ICT in lesson planning, the extremely good relationships with pupils that encourage and develop their enthusiasm and the wide variety of teaching methods that lead to rapid learning and sustained concentration. The inclusion of topical issues in lessons is valuable in engaging and motivating pupils, particularly boys. There is now no sign of the lack of interest and apathy amongst some pupils that was noted at the time of the last inspection.

170. The management of the department is unsatisfactory. Systems do not exist to provide schemes of work adapted to differing needs, to establish pupils' level of understanding in geography when they enter the school or to track their progress so that suitable targets, shared with pupils, can be set. There is a lack of shared vision for the future direction of the subject and no departmental monitoring or support of teachers in the development of their work. Despite the committed efforts of existing staff, improvement has been unsatisfactory since the last inspection.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and they respond to the challenge, achieving high standards at GCSE.
- Pupils enjoy the variety of activities in lessons and many choose to study history for GCSE.
- Rigorous assessment procedures, linked to National Curriculum criteria for history, are used effectively to set pupils targets for improvement.
- The department has very good resources for teaching the subject, including its own suite of computers.

Areas for improvement

- Adapt learning materials and tasks to meet the needs of lower ability pupils in the mixed ability classes.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to undertake fieldwork to support their learning in class.

171. Standards in history are above average at age 14 and at age 16. In two of the last three years, including 2001, results at GCSE have been well above the national average at grades A* to C. Last year, the number of candidates was a third higher than the previous two years and all 91 pupils gained at least a pass grade. Boys and girls performed equally well and did better in history than in the average of all the other subjects they sat, by almost half a grade.

172. At the end of Year 9, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are above average and the achievement of the pupils is good. High levels of literacy enable most pupils to achieve well in the subject. This was evident in the quality of the Year 9 projects on early factories, where pupils used historical sources effectively to produce facsimile inspectors' reports on working conditions. Pupils research topics well, as in recent project work on the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party, where they showed good ability at using the Internet for extra information and successful use of desktop publishing and presentation software to show their findings. In a recent unit test, the majority of pupils showed good understanding of the long and short-term causes of the First World War, higher ability pupils linking causes and evaluating their relative importance. Most pupils benefit from the challenging activities in lessons, but lower ability pupils sometimes struggle to keep up, finding difficulty scanning information or sorting through historical sources. Tasks and materials need to be adapted to suit their needs.

173. In general, Year 9 pupils use historical sources well and achieve a good standard of critical analysis. In one lesson, most pupils were able to sort through a large number of anti-Jewish laws passed by the Nazis and assess their effects. Higher ability pupils could classify the legislation into social, economic and political categories. Lower ability pupils struggled with the amount of information they had to sift through. In general, the use of group activities and in-class support is helping pupils with learning difficulties to raise the level of their work and make good progress, but complex tasks need simplifying. Historical skills are well developed in each year. For example, Year 8 pupils were able to assess whether historical change necessarily meant progress in their study of the effects that horses had on the lifestyle of North American Indians. One skills area that is not so well developed is accounting for different historical interpretations.

174. At the end of Year 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are above average. The standard of coursework is particularly high; for example, in the use of sources to investigate workhouse conditions and in essays evaluating the contributions of the Liberal and Labour parties to the creation of the welfare state. Pupils have been well trained in examination technique through regular practice and revision exercises; this is one of the reasons why GCSE results are high. In tests they show good factual recall of information and well argued critical analysis of historical sources. Pupils are highly motivated and confident that they have been well prepared for the examination. They have covered the course thoroughly in their notes, and revision booklets and lessons have consolidated their understanding of the historical knowledge they will need for

the examination. High expectations over the course have served to raise the performance of all pupils in the mixed ability option groups, enabling all to make good progress on the course. Lower attaining pupils have received valuable extra help from the learning support team and the Certificate of Achievement qualification caters for the needs of a small number of pupils, whose written work is below GCSE standard.

175. In general, pupils are enthusiastic in their attitudes towards history, many of them choosing it for GCSE. They enjoy the opportunities for collaborative learning in pairs and small groups. They take the lessons of history seriously; for example, Year 9 pupils studying Nazi persecution of the Jews reflected, in memoriam, on Niemoller's words about the consequences of not standing up to injustice. Behaviour is good, pupils enjoying friendly relations with their teachers and acting responsibly, with minor exceptions, such as calling out answers to questions. Year 11 pupils have enjoyed the course and the perspective it has given them on life today. They are confident about their learning and appreciative of the tutorial help teachers have given them.
176. The quality of teaching is good. The two experienced teachers have built up considerable expertise at preparing pupils for examinations and a new teacher has brought to the team a good knowledge of local history. Teachers' expectations are high and they are successful in building up pupils' confidence on examination courses that they can achieve high standards. Lessons are intellectually challenging, focusing on skills as much as subject knowledge and making pupils think for themselves. They make effective use of a range of methods to engage pupils actively in learning. In a dramatic Year 7 simulation of how medieval communities reacted to the outbreak of the Black Death, group investigation of the causes and treatment of the disease became an urgent matter of survival.
177. Teachers make very good use of homework to extend pupils' writing in a range of forms and to research information for projects. Fieldwork in history was affected by the closure of the countryside last year due to foot and mouth disease. There are plans to revive it next year which would enhance pupils' educational opportunities in history considerably. The formation of a local history club is a promising initiative.
178. The department has just installed a bank of computers. Teachers are now building opportunities for using ICT within lessons and this has considerably enhanced pupils' learning opportunities.
179. The subject is managed well and there is good teamwork among the teachers, sharing ideas and materials for the benefit of pupils. A particular strength of the department is its rigorous assessment system, which is directly related to the National Curriculum levels in history. It is used effectively to set targets for pupils and drive up standards. The subject is very well supported with textbooks, videos and computers, and the fine displays of pupils' work in both the teaching rooms create a stimulating subject environment for learning.
180. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection to create more opportunities for collaborative work in pairs and small groups, and to give scope for pupils to develop independent learning through project work and the use of computers. High standards have been maintained and the development of a wider range of learning styles has strengthened the subject's popularity in the school.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Provision for pupils who follow ICT courses, in all years, is **very good**.

Strengths

- Attainment in ICT courses
- Teaching in ICT lessons in all years
- The management of the main subject provision for ICT

Areas for improvement

- More planned opportunities to use ICT to enhance teaching and learning in the subjects of the curriculum
- Provision for those pupils who do not take an ICT examination course in Years 10 and 11

181. At the end of Year 9, standards as seen in lessons and pupils' work are well above average. All pupils have ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9. Learning is very good; pupils make very good progress in Years 7 and 8 although pupils make less progress in Year 9 because lesson time is reduced to one hour every 2 weeks. Pupils develop a good level of skills in the use of spreadsheets and databases to record, sort and analyse information. They use the Internet effectively for research and to access learning resources. They also create their own Web pages. All of this work provides a very good basis upon which embark upon ICT examination course in Year 10.
182. Results in the short course GCSE have shown a steady improvement in recent years and in 2001 were well above average for A*C grades. Results of assessments towards the full and part 1 GNVQ examinations, which have now replaced the short course, are well above average.
183. At the end of Year 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are above average. Pupils are adept at using a range of software and most have good keyboard skills. Information handling skills are well developed and spreadsheets and databases used to good effect. Many particularly good examples were seen of communicating information through desktop publishing. In addition "Web authoring" software is used to create imaginative and informative Internet pages for specific audiences with appropriate use of text, graphics and animation effects. Pupils have a very positive attitude in ICT lessons; they work diligently and with enthusiasm. Pupils are keen to contribute to whole class activities and to the frequent question and answer sessions, which are used to clarify and reinforce learning. The daily, supervised, ICT sessions outside lesson times are very popular and well attended.
184. The levels of attainment, learning and pupils' involvement in ICT lessons are a reflection of the quality of teaching, which is very good in all years. Schemes of work from Years 7 to 11 are detailed and provide appropriate levels of challenge to enable pupils to achieve their full potential. A good knowledge of pupils' abilities enables teachers to provide well-focused support for individuals during practical activities. Clear aims are shared with pupils and classroom management is very good. Pupils are required before to plan their work thoroughly before they begin practical activities and this is usually linked to the regular homework which is set. The marking and assessment of work on the part 1 and full GNVQ ICT courses is rigorous. Verbal diagnostic comments are provided throughout practical sessions but more detailed comments on written and printed work in Year 7, 8 and 9 would be appropriate to help pupils improve further. All of the ICT courses are facilitated by the better than average number of computers. Technical support is very good; ICT resources are reliable and well maintained. Learning is underpinned by a fast "broadband" link, which enables teachers to use the Internet effectively for whole class teaching.
185. Leadership and management of the subject are good. ICT provision overall has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly in relation to the discrete ICT courses. There have been improvements in the use of ICT in many of the subjects of the curriculum, especially where clusters of computers have been installed in subject areas. There are opportunities for pupils to use ICT for control in design and technology and to use sensors in science lessons. However, the use of ICT in several subjects is still very limited and in the majority there is still a great deal more scope for using ICT to enhance teaching and learning. The co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is in need of improvement.
186. Pupils can follow a voluntary CLAIT skills course which is run after school but the 25 to 30 per cent of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take a timetabled ICT course are not guaranteed their entitlement to an appropriate ICT curriculum. If the level of ICT used in the subjects of the curriculum was planned and co-ordinated systematically it could help to compensate for the reduced ICT teaching time in Year 9 and ensure that all pupils receive their full ICT entitlement in Years 10 and 11.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES – French and German

Provision for modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Leadership and management
- The capacity for further improvement
- Standards in Years 7 to 9

Areas for Improvement

- Provision for gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs
- Curriculum arrangements for provision of German
- Standards achieved by boys

187. All pupils learn French from Year 7. German is made available to higher ability pupils from the beginning of Year 8. Pupils choose to continue either or both languages from Year 10. Only two pupils are currently studying two languages while 23 pupils are not studying modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
188. At the end of Year 9, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are above average as are levels in French as indicated by teacher assessments; they have risen since the last inspection. Standards in Years 7 and 8 represent a good level of achievement. Standards observed in German are average in relation to national standards at the end of Year 9. The achievement of pupils in German by the end of Year 9 is excellent. Pupils attain average standards in two years, despite inadequate teaching time.
189. At the end of Year 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work in both languages are average, which is higher than suggested by recent results. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in French has declined steadily over the last four years and was below national averages in 2001. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C results in German has fallen more sharply and was well below national averages in 2001. The proportions of pupils gaining A*-G grades in both languages have been consistently above average in the same period. Girls' results continue to be higher than boys' by much more than national trends. In 2001, the results in French were below pupils' results in their other subjects; in German the results were well below pupils' results in their other subjects.
179. More able pupils produce good examples of extended writing which is an improvement since the last inspection. Less able pupils make many more errors as they build up sentences from by thinking in English rather than in the foreign language. All pupils understand the written and spoken word well although many prefer to show this understanding in English. Speaking standards are less well developed, especially in French. Little speaking is instinctive. Pupils use writing as prompts too much, often speak hesitantly and answer in single words; their accent and fluency suffer as a result.
180. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and this is reflected in the improving standards, compared with previous years' GCSE results, being achieved by the pupils currently in the school. Lessons are planned well; teachers provide a good variety of activities which are supported by well produced resources. They also conduct lessons at a good pace and challenge the pupils to produce high quality work.
181. Good teaching ensures that pupils' learning is also good. Within the sets, which often have an imbalance of girls and boys, there is no significant difference in learning by gender; however, the number of girls is far greater than boys in higher sets. Many boys in lower sets are not well-motivated. Learning is unsatisfactory for pupils with special educational needs because they rarely have in-class support and support materials are not often provided. Similarly, specific tasks and materials are not available to fully extend the most able pupils. Pupils do not fully appreciate

the role of language for genuine communication and too many cannot respond instinctively to questions in French or German.

182. While teaching is improving considerably there are some areas that need to be tackled. The emphasis on teaching and learning single words, reported at the last inspection, is still evident in a significant number of lessons. Similarly, teachers' demands for accuracy in writing are sometimes at the expense of encouraging the use of language as a means of communication. All teachers make significant use of French and German in their teaching but the impact is reduced if they then check meanings or explain structures in English. Good practice was seen in a number of lessons; for example, a Year 7 French lesson, conducted entirely in French, gave pupils a variety of opportunities to speak French and reinforced grammatical accuracy through using the language; this inspired pupils' enthusiasm for communicating in French. In another Year 7 French lesson, the teacher explained much of the work in English. Pupils spoke very little in the French language; they discussed it in English. All the pupils did the same writing task. Some completed it quickly and accurately; others barely began and clearly did not understand.
183. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils' behaviour is very good in Year 7 and in higher sets in other years. Pupils' attitudes are more variable; they work well together in groups and pairs but sometimes forget that they should be speaking German or French. They take part in learning games in a responsible way. A few less able pupils do not display commitment to language learning.
184. Curriculum provision in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory. The time allocation for the learning of German is far too low. This results in only the most able pupils being offered the opportunity to study two languages, a high-pressure course in Years 8 and 9 and too few pupils choosing to study German from Year 10. The development of improved provision for the teaching of a second modern foreign language is a priority.
185. Accommodation for the teaching of modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory because two rooms are a poor shape and far too small. This restricts teaching activities and places undue stress on teachers working in these rooms with large classes. Staffing in modern foreign languages is also unsatisfactory: there is currently no German specialist. Standards are maintained by the head of department, who is not a German specialist, but whose teaching has had a significant impact on the standards seen.
186. The leadership and management of the department are good. After several years, in which the targets from the last inspection were not progressed, the new head of department has set a challenging agenda for improvement. The impact of this work is beginning to be seen but much remains to be done. Policies are in place but not all are yet being met. In particular, consistency in teaching methodology and marking need to be achieved. There is clear evidence of capacity within the team to continue the progress that has been made.

MUSIC

Overall, the provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils enjoy extra-curricular activities
- Enthusiastic teaching

Areas for improvement

- Standards in all years
- Schemes of work for all years to support well-planned lessons linked to rigorous assessment
- The support and monitoring of the department's work

187. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment in music. At the end of Year 9, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are below average; the achievement of the pupils is satisfactory. Teacher assessments in 2001 judged all pupils to be working at least at the expected level (Level 5) but as there are no assessment procedures to support this view, the results are not reliable.
188. Pupils have not developed basic musical skills such as being able to play to a steady pulse; these deficiencies are not tackled early enough. This was also noted at the last inspection. As a result, pupils are unable to convert the good ideas that many have when composing into effective performances.
189. Achievement is best in Year 8 where new units of work are being tested with some success. Their variations on 'Frere Jacques' are imaginative and show how they have applied techniques used by established composers, particularly Mahler, to make their own arrangements. Year 9 are not working at the same level and at the end of their formal studies in music are not drawing on all their learning to produce work which is at the expected standard. In lessons, they were more intent on exploring keyboard effects than applying musical techniques to create a short signature tune to a television programme. Good ideas were in evidence but there was a lack of drive to develop these into finished pieces.
190. Pupils work well together in groups and share their ideas sensibly. As all pupils are given the same instructions any differences in achievement are in the quality of the finished product. Lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs create work, which is generally of a similar standard to other pupils. The more musically able only rarely rise to the challenge of producing standards of work that reflect their abilities. Their knowledge of musical terms is better and they have a good command of the terminology to describe music. No singing was heard during the inspection and this was one of the areas for improvement noted at the last inspection.
191. At the end of Year 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are below average. Very few pupils have taken GCSE music in recent years. Compared with their results in other subjects they have done slightly better but no results from earlier testing were available to make a true assessment of how well they are achieving in music. The present Year 11, six pupils took part in a Mini Spring Concert during the inspection when they performed their examination pieces. Standards of performance are average and this is consistent with work seen in a lesson where they were completing a listening exercise. They have built well on the musical vocabulary learnt in earlier years but they lack the knowledge and understanding to tackle the more challenging GCSE listening paper questions. As most of the pupils were achieving above average standards at the end of Year 9, they are not achieving as well as they should. No examples of composition or pupils' use of ICT were available.
192. Judging by the small number of pupils who choose GCSE music, and who have extra instrumental lessons in the school as a whole, the commitment to music is not strong. However, those who do take part in these additional activities do so with dedication and spend much of their free time rehearsing for concert tours and local performances. A very positive initiative is the melodion tuition. This has attracted the interest of a number of pupils who are well taught by an enthusiastic teacher. Two Year 9 boys are making good progress; after a relatively short time playing the instrument they can play a range of tunes with good style.
193. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. At the heart of it is good musicianship. Lessons are taught enthusiastically and are conducted at a brisk pace from the very start. They begin with a lively warm-up, which pupils respond well to, although the energy of the pupils is not always channelled into productive work and they do not listen carefully enough to what the teacher or their classmates are saying. Lessons are planned well to integrate listening, performing and composing.
194. The assessment of pupils' work lacks rigour. Information about the standards pupils have achieved in the past is not used to make work demanding enough especially for higher ability pupils. As a result, pupils do not know how well they are doing and whether the standard of their work is good enough. Not enough is done to present work to pupils in a way that reflects their individual capabilities. Clear expectations about the quality of work, especially for the more

musically able, are not spelt out. Consequently boys demand too much of the teacher's time in having the work explained over again while the girls are often left to organise themselves and are given less guidance.

195. Leadership and management of music are unsatisfactory, as is the progress made since the last inspection. The main issue from the last inspection – to put in place arrangements for recording and assessing pupils’ work – has not been addressed. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 enables pupils to study a good range of music; however, it is not planned well enough to ensure that pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills efficiently and not enough opportunities are given for pupils to extend their learning through the use of ICT. While the GCSE syllabus is appropriately covered, the scheme of work is not formalised. This means that planning does not take into account pupils’ individual learning needs well enough.
196. New instruments have been purchased for classroom use but a wider tonal range would help pupils to explore sounds more imaginatively. Music is part of the expressive arts faculty and a new head has been in post for a little over a year. The relationship between head of faculty and head of music has not been thought through and at present there is no direct line of communication to senior management. Teaching and learning in music have not been carefully monitored for some time, the result being neglect of essential professional development to keep the department fully up-to-date.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the provision for physical education is **very good**

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department
- Good teaching and learning
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good
- Pupils’ attitudes towards physical education
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities

Areas for improvement

- Range of accredited courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11
- Further develop assessment criteria so that pupils know how well they are doing and how they might improve
- Review the curriculum with specific focus on the time spent on activities to ensure better progression

197. At the end of Year 9, standards, as seen in lessons, are above average. Teachers’ assessments of pupils’ attainment in physical education at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were also above the national average. In Year 7 cricket, pupils are able to use a long barrier to field the ball, and have satisfactory batting and bowling skills for their age. Year 7 pupils have a wide range of tennis skills. All pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of how to play a doubles match with correct service sequences and higher ability pupils are able to serve with the correct technique and play extended rallies. Pupils in Year 8 know the rules for bowling in rounders, and have good batting and fielding skills. In tennis in this year there are some higher ability pupils. The overall standard of tennis in Year 8 is better than that seen in most schools for pupils of their age. Pupils in athletics in Year 9 have satisfactory technique in both long jump and hurdling.
198. At the end of Year 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils’ work are above average. In Years 10 and 11 there are average standards of performance in tennis and cricket; in rounders, standards are well above average with pupils having very good knowledge of the game, and high levels of performance skills in bowling, batting and fielding. Pupils taking the GCSE course in Year 10 have a good understanding of the concept of the ‘perfect model’, and can use this effectively in their evaluation of practical performances. Year 11 pupils have completed their major studies prior to their examinations. These studies show a wide range of pupil interest and attainment with topics such as soccer, basketball, rugby and swimming. Pupils make good use of ICT skills to improve their presentation using word processing, and desktop publishing.

199. GCSE results in 2000 and 2001 were well above national averages. Over a quarter of the pupils gained A* or A grades in both of these years and the pupils performed better in physical education than they did in most of their other subjects.
200. The achievement of pupils of all ability profiles, including those with special educational needs, is good. In athletics in Year 7, for example, pupils who have had no experience of relay running are able to pass the baton in competitive races by the end of a very well-structured lesson. Where progress is less than might be expected it is because of disjointed learning experiences, particularly in athletics, and where the time allocated for units of work has been reduced due to external factors such as the weather.
201. The quality of teaching and learning is good; in some lessons it is very good or excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which helps them to give clear explanations and demonstrations to pupils, helping them learn new skills and increase their knowledge and understanding. In all lessons teachers make good use of question and answer sessions, which give pupils the opportunity to evaluate their own and others' performances; this is effective in helping them to consolidate their learning. Pupils are given some control of their own learning at the start of lessons by taking charge of their own warm-up, but this does not happen in every lesson. Lessons are well planned and prepared with a range of tasks providing sufficient challenge to pupils. Good use is made of a range of resources and a variety of practices in tennis in Year 8, which leads to pupils making good progress. Classes are always very well managed and pupils behave well. There is good marking of pupils' GCSE work, which helps pupils understand how to improve the quality of their work. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and among pupils themselves are major factors in successful lessons.
202. Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and have very positive attitudes. There are very good participation rates, and pupils are active and responsive in all lessons. Year 11 pupils in their last week in school showed particularly good attitudes; they were all in full physical education kit, were very responsive to teachers, and continued to improve their skills, working with interest and enthusiasm.
203. The department is very well led and managed. There is a commitment by the department to provide pupils of all attainment levels with very good experiences in physical education. There is excellent provision in extra-curricular activities, in which the department is very well supported by other members of staff. This provides many opportunities for all pupils to reach their potential; it is also the means by which higher ability pupils achieve very high standards by competing at higher levels. Many pupils have represented Cumbria in a variety of sports and a number of pupils have become professionals. Standards in rounders are excellent; 10 pupils have represented England and the Under 16 team are the reigning National Champions. In winter team games there are strengths in soccer, hockey, rugby and basketball. The Under 13 boys' soccer team are county champions, whilst the under 15 team were runners up in the county cup.
204. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. The good standards of pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching have been maintained. The curriculum has been improved and GCSE has been successfully introduced with very good results. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 could be given more opportunities to take accredited courses. Assessment is being well developed, but pupils need more information on how well they are doing in the subject, and how they might improve the quality of their work.

Expressive Arts

Overall, the quality of provision in expressive arts is **unsatisfactory**

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work, particularly pupils' basic music and drama skills

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The quality of assessment• Leadership and management |
|---|

205. At the end of Year 11, standards, as seen in lessons and pupils' work are below average. For the last two years about 30 pupils have taken the expressive arts GCSE examination. There is no national figure to make comparisons but in 2001 pupils did less well in expressive arts than in their other subjects. There was no work available in school of the current Year 11 but a Year 10 lesson was observed. Basic skills in drama and music are not well developed and this results in devised performances that lack conviction and focus. Only one piece of work has been assessed this year and the marks awarded are consistent with the standards in the lesson seen, which were below average. No written work or working notes on their coursework were available during the inspection. The previous attainment level of the group as a whole is average so this represents unsatisfactory achievement. However as no drama is taught in Years 7 to 9 satisfactory progress is made in transferring skills from other areas of learning.
206. Teaching is satisfactory with teachers demonstrating good knowledge of both arts forms represented. However too little attention is paid to assessing work, which results in pupils not having a clear picture of their level of attainment.
207. The management of the course falls within the expressive arts faculty but there is no systematic monitoring of its work. There is no scheme of work to show how the examination syllabus is translated into the progressive development and application of skills during the course.