

INSPECTION REPORT

ST BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Alcester

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125755

Head teacher: Tim Sara

Reporting inspector: Grace Marriott
3674

Dates of inspection: 17th March – 20th March 2003

Inspection number: 249254

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern [non-selective]

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Kinwarton Road
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Appropriate authority: Warwickshire

Name of chair of governors: Mr P J Horsfield

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

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22423	Jon Lovgreen	Team inspector	English 11 – 16 Drama	
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2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art	
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25073	Stuart Jordan	Team inspector	History, Geography	
32231	Adrian Lyons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
32208	Derek Aitken	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well does the school care for its pupils?
15208	Anthony Briggs	Team inspector	Music	How well is the school led and managed? How well are pupils taught?
30800	Betty Colley	Team inspector	Citizenship	How good are the curricular and other activities offered to pupils?
30563	Jacqueline Pentlow	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Benedict's is a small, mixed Roman Catholic secondary school in Alcester, Warwickshire, with 557 pupils on roll. It takes children from a wide area of Warwickshire and Worcestershire and is over-subscribed. Pupils come from wide variety of backgrounds, though most are from reasonably advantaged homes and relatively few pupils are entitled to free school meals. Almost all are of white UK origin, with very few from ethnic minorities. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry is above average overall, though the school has a relatively high proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs. The main needs are dyslexia, emotional and behavioural difficulties and physical disabilities. The school has Beacon School status and is a leading literacy school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Benedict's is a highly effective school which is providing a very good all-round education for all its pupils. They enjoy school and respond well to the very good teaching. Standards are well above average. The head teacher provides excellent leadership. He is very well supported by the senior management team and they, together with staff and governors, have a strong commitment to excellence for all. They work very hard to provide the best possible environment and facilities. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make very good progress and achieve GCSE results which are well above average.
- Standards and teaching in English are particularly good.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to school and respond very well to all the opportunities.
- Pupils behave very well; they develop into mature and responsible young people.
- The teaching is very good; it leads to very secure learning and promotes high standards.
- The very strong partnership with parents makes a very significant contribution to the high standards achieved.

What could be improved

- The evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of decisions about the curriculum when planning for development could be more rigorous.
- Pupils could be given more opportunities to use their initiative within lessons and develop intellectual challenge and rigour for themselves.

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 May 1997. The improvement since then has been good. The school has continued to expand and it is now over-subscribed. It has achieved a number of awards including Beacon School status and that of a leading literacy school. GCSE results have increased markedly, from in line with national picture, to well above. The facilities have been significantly improved and the curriculum has been developed well to give pupils a wider range of opportunities. The issues identified in the last report have been systematically tackled. The development plan gives the school a secure

basis from which to continue to improve, statutory requirements for design and technology are now met and the use of assessment and target setting is effective in helping to raise standards.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE. *Similar schools means those with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.*

Performance in:	compared with				Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	C	

In 2002, the standards achieved in the tests taken at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science were well above average in terms of the national results and in terms of what these pupils achieved at the end of Year 6. The results were average compared with those of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Pupils did particularly well at the higher levels 6 and 7. Boys' results have improved significantly and there is now very little difference between boys' and girls' results.

GCSE results have improved since the last inspection from average to well above average. When the 2002 results are compared with what these pupils achieved at the end of Year 9, they are better than might have been expected, even though the school did not quite achieve its ambitious target. Pupils did particularly well in English, where eight out of every ten achieved an A* to C pass. Two thirds also achieved an A* to C pass in mathematics, which is above average. Results were well above the national standards in English, English literature, double science, French, history and design and technology. They were above average in most other subjects and only in art were they below the national average. When compared with pupils in other schools, St Benedict's pupils are doing very much better than those in schools with similar Year 9 results. They are doing as well as those in schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

The standards seen during the inspection were very similar to the test and examination results and overall pupils are achieving very well though with some differences between subjects. When compared with their standards in the different subjects when they joined the school, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving very well in English, design and technology, geography, history and physical education (PE) and achieving well in almost all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11 they achieve very well in English, music and design and technology and achieve well in mathematics, science and almost all other subjects. In modern languages and art in Years 7 to 9, achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in art is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have very good literacy skills and good numeracy skills which strongly support work in other subjects. Information and communication technology, (ICT) skills are also good and the opportunities for pupils to use these across the curriculum are at least satisfactory and are increasing. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school and their learning are very good. The high quality of pupils' personal responses underpins the standards they achieve.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is excellent.
Personal development	Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils' personal

and relationships	development is very good.
Attendance	Attendance is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very 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.

Throughout the school, it is the consistency in the quality of the teaching that enables pupils to learn very well, make good progress in lessons, and achieve very well overall. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It was satisfactory or better in virtually all lessons and almost three-quarters of the teaching was good or very good. Teaching is very good in English, design and technology, geography and history, good in science and most other subjects and satisfactory in art, though with strengths in art in the way in which teachers demonstrate specific skills.

The strengths in the teaching are in the clarity of learning objectives which are carefully explained so that pupils know what is expected and respond constructively. The work is carefully matched to pupils' needs. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understand very well what pupils need to do to achieve high standards. They assess and monitor pupils' progress and set individual targets very effectively. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their work and usually act on the advice given. Good questioning checks their understanding and knowledge. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the questioning did not probe or challenge pupils as much and they were not encouraged to take the initiative or take risks. In art the pupils with the potential to achieve the highest grades were not always challenged enough. The only unsatisfactory teaching was the result of some lack of confidence in the teaching of the scheme of work for citizenship.

Teachers in all departments use very good strategies for developing pupils' literacy skills. They work to a common format for the presentation and correction of pupils' written work, which is very successful. Good teaching in numeracy shows awareness of opportunities for pupils to use and develop their numeracy skills in a wide range of relevant contexts. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is a very significant factor in the good progress they make. Subject teachers use a good range of strategies which enable pupils to have access to the full curriculum. In English, science, music and PE, the partnership teaching between the special educational needs co-ordinator, the learning support assistants and subject teachers is especially effective in ensuring that the pupils have work which is challenging yet pitched at an appropriate level.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides a very good range of learning opportunities to meet the needs and interests of all pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The support provided enables pupils with special educational needs to make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has very few pupils with English as an additional language. They are very well catered for in mainstream lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes excellent provision for moral development, very good provision for spiritual and social development and good provision for cultural development. The school's Christian ethos

	is implicit in all its work.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of care is very good as the school sets and achieves high standards in relation to health and safety, child protection and pastoral and academic support.

The partnership with parents is very strong. Parents are kept very well informed and strongly encouraged to participate in the life of the school. The curriculum is particularly good in Years 10 and 11 where pupils of all abilities have access to a wide range of academic and vocational opportunities. Extra-curricular activities considerably enhance the curriculum, particularly in music and sport. The school makes very good use of information from assessment to set individual targets for pupils, and monitor their progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The head teacher's excellent leadership and very clear vision has steered the school forward very successfully. He and the senior management team have ensured that the school fully reflects its aims and values in all aspects of its work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a very good knowledge and understanding of the school, of recent developments and the areas of the school that require improvement. Governors ensure that the school meets all the statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school monitors teaching and learning closely but the analysis of data in terms of different groups or in terms of the overall impact of curriculum decisions is not as well developed.
The strategic use of resources	The school has managed its resources carefully to improve facilities and extend the curriculum.

The school is well staffed despite some recruitment difficulties. It has good facilities and at least satisfactory resources overall. The school has been able to fund the improvements to the curriculum and facilities, largely because of the increase in the school's size and the willingness of the senior management team to teach more than they would in most schools. The school is now full and the financial challenges now facing the management team need more detailed long-term planning to ensure the current high standards of education are maintained and improved. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily though not yet as rigorously as they could be.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress • Behaviour is good • The teaching is good • The school has high expectations • The staff are approachable with • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible • The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities • The school is well led and managed 	<p>There were very few negative responses, however some parents thought that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework could be more consistently set

The very high response to the questionnaire shows that the parents have an exceptionally positive view of the school. There were no criticisms at the parents meeting attended by over 70 parents. Only in relation to homework did the negative responses to the questionnaire exceed ten per cent of the response. Other written criticisms tended to be of an individual nature and not representative of the views of the overwhelming majority of parents. The inspection team feels that the parents' confidence in the school is justified. In general, the homework set was appropriate.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In 2002, the standards achieved in the tests taken at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science were well above average both in terms of the national results and what these pupils achieved at the end of Year 6. Compared with the results of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, St Benedict's results were average. Pupils did particularly well at the higher levels 6 and 7. Boys' results have improved significantly and there is now very little difference between their results and those of the girls.
2. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection from average to well above average. When the 2002 results are compared with what pupils achieved at the end of Year 9, they are better than might have been expected, even though the school did not quite achieve its ambitious target. Pupils did particularly well in English, where eight out of every ten achieved an A* to C pass and a much higher proportion of boys achieved an A* and A grades than did nationally. Two thirds of the year group also achieved an A* to C pass in mathematics. Results were well above the national standards in English, English literature, double science, French, history and design and technology. They were above average in most other subjects and only in art were they below the national average. When compared with other schools, St Benedict's pupils are doing very much better than those in schools with similar Year 9 results. They are doing as well as those in schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.
3. The standards seen during the inspection were very similar to the test and examination results and overall pupils are achieving very well, though with differences between subjects. When compared with their standards in the different subjects when they joined the school, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving very well in English, design and technology, geography, history and PE, and achieving well in almost all other subjects. In modern languages and art, their achievement is satisfactory. In modern languages, this is because of the limited time given to the study of French. In art, this was mainly because of some inconsistencies in the level of challenge for the higher-attainers. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve very well in English, music and design and technology and achieve well in mathematics, science and almost all other subjects. In art, pupils are under-achieving because they are not exploring and developing different approaches to their work.
4. In English, pupils handle language confidently and thoughtfully and are often lively and perceptive in their response to literature. In Years 7 to 9, higher attainers show good ability to analyse ideas and good technical accuracy. By Year 11, they are writing with considerable maturity and confidence. In all year groups, middle and lower-attainers are more likely to be descriptive rather than analytical and also show less technical accuracy. In general, however, literacy skills are very good and used very well in all other subjects. For example, in history, Year 9 written work demonstrated the pupils' very good understanding of the slave trade, their awareness of the sensitivity of the issues involved and their ability to write in an appropriate style. In geography GCSE case studies were detailed and well written. In ICT pupils were effectively combining literacy, numeracy and ICT skills when investigating the components of a weather forecast. In most subjects, pupils join willingly and thoughtfully in teacher-led discussions, but are less likely to take the initiative or to explore ideas in real depth for themselves. This limits the highest levels of achievement.

5. In mathematics, pupils apply routine methods with confidence, as for example when Year 9 higher-attainers were methodical and precise when solving simultaneous equations Year 11 pupils were equally methodical when using trigonometry to find lengths and angles of triangles. Year 7 lower-attainers made good progress in practical work on fractions. Pupils are less confident when devising their own methods of problem solving. Numeracy skills are applied well in subjects such as science, where pupils applied their skills well when plotting graphs and in design and technology when gathering information, planning and measuring. Work in geography, PE and drama also enabled pupils to use their skills effectively.
6. Pupils demonstrate good, and often very good, ICT skills in word-processing, using spreadsheets, and databases and using the Internet for research. They use these skills effectively in other subjects but particularly in design and technology and in geography in Years 10 and 11. In other subjects opportunities are satisfactory and increasing, though not extensive. In music they do not make enough use of ICT because of limited access to equipment for music technology.
7. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in relation to their individual targets. This is because the close liaison between the special educational needs co-ordinator, learning support assistants and subject teachers means that these pupils receive good support and are able to achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are even stronger than in the previous inspection, which represents very good improvement. As parents indicated, pupils have very good attitudes to school and are highly motivated to make very good use of the learning opportunities provided. In the best lessons their attitudes to learning and commitment to hard work are exemplary. When teaching offers less active involvement in work that is interesting enough to absorb them for the main part of the lesson, their attention and effort sometimes flag. They respond very well to instructions and answer a series of short questions readily. They are less ready to frame their own questions and to challenge ideas presented to them. On occasion, they accept what they are told too easily, without trying to justify what may be a legitimate, alternative perspective, for example, in offering a personal response to poetry. They are very proud of their school and speak with genuine enthusiasm about the very good range of experiences available to them to learn about themselves and different subjects in and beyond the classroom.
9. Behaviour is excellent. It is characterised by exceptional trust and an admirable lack of bullying and oppression. In almost all lessons, high standards of behaviour make a significant difference to how well pupils learn. In rare instances, restlessness results from less effective teaching, particularly when expectations of what pupils can do are not as high as they could be. Around the school, pupils are expected to show high standards of personal conduct and trusted to behave responsibly, in line with the ethos of the school and example set by others. They rise to the challenge impressively. Exclusions are very rare and used only as a last resort. The school does all it can to work with pupils in difficulty and to ensure that everyone is part of the school's success story, with help from outside agencies or a different curriculum that enables an individual to excel in a specific activity. For example, the SWIFT programme (South Warwickshire Initiative for Training scheme) has helped individuals to find a particular talent, such as millinery or motor vehicle maintenance, which has motivated them to behave better and work harder when in school.
10. Pupils' personal development is very good. Their levels of respect for others' feelings and values are outstanding, which reflects the altruism and compassion inherent in the school's ethos and life. They have very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. This is because the

school's routines and culture encourage pupils to develop an awareness of the effect of what they say and do on people around them. They are sensitive to others rights and needs so do not disrupt lessons or spoil other people's chances of enjoying activities at school. The few individuals with particular difficulties in relating to people are supported very well in most situations and helped to understand the behaviour required when working alongside other pupils. Pupils are very good at taking initiative and personal responsibility in the everyday life of the school because they know that this is what is expected. They offer a genuinely warm welcome to visitors. Prefects make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school because they are on hand to welcome everyone in the morning and to supervise what happens at break and lunchtime. In lessons, pupils are less comfortable with using their initiative to stimulate intellectual debate or to explore abstract ideas.

11. Relationships are excellent. The school has a particular quality of respect for others and oneself based on its commitment to making everyone feel part of a caring, Christian family. The qualities that it values and seeks to promote are evident in relationships that reflect courtesy, consideration, kindness and warmth. Pupils have a high regard for those who value their efforts, encourage them and challenge them to believe that they can achieve more than they first thought. Pupils get on together particularly well and are quick to notice when someone needs a friendly word, or a helping hand.
12. Attendance is very good. Levels of absence, both authorised and unauthorised, are well below those found nationally because pupils want to be in school and are very keen to achieve high standards in their academic work and personal development. They are punctual and are very quick to reach classrooms with all the equipment they need, ready for a good, successful day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. Throughout the school, the consistency in the quality of teaching enables pupils to learn very well and achieve very well overall. Almost all lessons were satisfactory or better and three-quarters of lessons were good or very good. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is particularly good in English, design technology, geography and history. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of pupils within their charge. Pupils speak highly of them and are grateful for the additional time that teachers spend with them when problems arise.
14. Teachers have developed especially good relationships with their pupils and use very effective strategies to enable pupils to learn well. The pupils respond accordingly; their behaviour is excellent and they work very well with each other.
15. The school's adoption of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies has helped to improve standards of teaching, which in turn has led to improved learning. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing and reinforcing the work of the previous lesson enables pupils to build upon what they already know.
16. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and the requirements of the examinations; they pass this knowledge on well to their pupils. In an excellent geography lesson in Year 10, the teacher's own subject knowledge and the clarity and depth of the explanations, enabled pupils to develop high level skills in interpreting population pyramids, and laid the foundations for future work. A major strength of the teaching is the consistently high expectations teachers have of the pupils and the amount of praise they give them for the work they produce. In return the pupils work very hard both in lessons and in producing a great deal of high quality coursework,

particularly in English. Teachers set pupils very clear targets and give them the skills to achieve them.

17. Teachers plan their lessons well. The work is pitched at an appropriate level for the range of attainment in the class. They give clear well-focused explanations so that pupils know what is expected and make very good progress. In a very good English lesson in Year 11, the way in which the teacher explained how a writer had created atmosphere, enabled the lower-attaining pupils to write good descriptions of their own.
18. When lessons are conducted at a lively pace, the tasks are varied and pupils have the chance to be active, rapid learning takes place. This was seen in an excellent Year 8 practical science lesson dealing with reflection. The teacher involved the pupils throughout the lesson by incorporating a sequence of tasks that ensured they were all able to draw accurate diagrams and discuss the law of reflection. Teachers carefully monitor the progress pupils make and ensure they work hard. In a Year 10 ICT lesson, the feedback and questioning helped pupils to see how they could improve their work. Teachers mark work regularly and their comments give pupils good guidance on how to improve their work. Marking is very good in English, geography and history.
19. In teaching which was broadly satisfactory rather than good, the relative weaknesses are that teachers are not always aware of the needs of all pupils, for example in art the higher attainers are not stretched enough in lessons and consequently make less progress than expected. There is also limited use of National Curriculum levels to help pupils understand how well they are doing or what to do to get better. In mathematics, for example, pupils were not routinely asked to explain their methods and in science the pace of lessons slowed when the pupils were expected to listen for too long. In some modern languages lessons, pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented pupils were not always given work that matches their needs. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching during citizenship lessons was mainly because the content and pace of the lessons did not interest pupils enough and they became bored and inattentive.
20. Most teachers play a good part in developing pupils' skills in reading, writing and everyday mathematics. Links with literacy are particularly strong in mathematics but less good in science. ICT is used well in several subjects, though not in music, to support pupils' learning. In a very good design and technology lesson, the very effective demonstration of computer-aided design enabled pupils to grasp the principles very quickly and apply them to their own work. Pupils are taught to be good independent learners by regular small group and paired work within lessons. This enhances their listening skills and enables them to work co-operatively. They also respond well to the good level of questioning of their teachers by answering questions clearly and this enhances their learning. However, teachers tend not to use follow-up questions which will really probe and extend their knowledge or understanding of topics. This means that pupils are not being encouraged to take risks in their learning or develop arguments in real depth for themselves. This lack of intellectual rigour limits the quality of discussion and pupils are too inclined to rely on teachers leading and controlling discussions and do not willingly and spontaneously enter into group discussions with each other.
21. Subject teachers use a range of strategies which enable pupils with special educational needs to have full access to the curriculum. They have very good knowledge and understanding of the range of needs of statemented pupils through appropriate whole school training and formal and informal advice provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and learning support assistants. Effective and sensitive in-class support has a positive impact on the progress made by pupils. Partnership teaching between subject teachers, the SENCO and learning support assistants is firmly established in PE, music, science and English. This enables them to provide

pupils with appropriate and challenging work. The department has sound plans to develop this approach and extend it to all subject departments.

22. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in mainstream lessons and are supported by teaching assistants. The assistants have a good range of experience and expertise, are enthusiastic and committed to working with pupils with special educational needs which results in those pupils making very good progress.

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

23. The curriculum provides a very good range of learning opportunities to meet the needs and interests of all pupils. All statutory requirements are well met including good provision for a collective act of worship through assemblies and tutor group time. The curriculum is very good in English, science, ICT, design and technology, geography, history and music. Provision in PE, art and languages is satisfactory. The time allocation to individual subjects is appropriate except for French in Years 7 to 9 which does not have enough time. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum, religious education and citizenship. In addition, pupils in Years 7 and 8 study drama. In Years 10 and 11, a range of option subjects and a similarly wide range of vocational subjects extend the learning opportunities.
24. Pupils of all levels of attainment benefit from the opportunities available on the SWIFT programme. They have access to courses in subjects such as engineering, dance, drama, and the Youth Award scheme which provides accreditation of their attainment in appropriate life and learning skills. For some pupils the programme includes extra work experience or a college placement. There is very good equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. Some classes, in practical areas and in Year 9, 10 and 11, are reduced in size to improve access; some other groups are set by ability to focus on need and achievement. Some groups, for example in Year 9 science, are taught in gender groups. Latin and dance are taught out of school time for pupils with an interest and aptitude in these areas. In music and dance, gifted and talented pupils have the option of early entry for examinations.
25. Very good planning in subjects meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and examination syllabuses. Work is planned to match and build on pupils' strengths and needs. The annual review of the curriculum enables the school to respond to national initiatives and school priorities. For example, citizenship is well established and includes a newly accredited course in Year 10. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well motivated and take advantage of the vocational courses and variety of accreditations offered by the very effective SWIFT programme. However the impact of the SWIFT provision on PE has not yet been monitored.
26. Learning opportunities in ICT are now good. Provision for pupils to cover ICT in Years 7 to 9 is good and a variety of courses is available in Years 10 and 11 but there is still some inconsistency in the use of ICT across the curriculum. The use of these skills to support the teaching and learning in all subjects is also good. In some subjects, for example French, there are very good opportunities for ICT. In art, recently acquired ICT resources are being used to extend learning opportunities. In other subjects, for example English and mathematics, use of ICT is satisfactory.
27. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities provides enrichment of the curriculum. These include activities in most areas of the curriculum. There are fewer opportunities in art, although, as in other areas, revision and subject support lessons are available. Regular annual activities include visits to support the learning in subjects such as science, history and geography. Annual visits to

retreats and residential activity weeks make good contributions to pupils' personal development. Extra-curricular provision is particularly strong in music where the school provides extra instrumental tuition and supports a range of musical groups. It is also very strong in PE where the school provides very good opportunities and encourages participation for a wide range of pupils. Although a link with Uganda has been established pupils are not generally offered the experiences and the advantages offered by foreign exchanges and/or cultural visits abroad.

28. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good because there is a very clear rationale for PSHE lessons, which are planned with a very sharp focus on pupils' need. The school builds on pupils' personal and social skills step by step, in line with changes in pupils' needs and maturity. As a result, For example, pupils in different year groups explore topics such as making and breaking friendships, puberty, peer pressure, personal decision-making and responsible parenting. The PSHE programme strongly supports the work of the pastoral staff in supporting individual development and meeting individual needs.
29. The school has a very good range of links with an unusually wide range of contacts in and beyond the local area, which it uses imaginatively to enrich pupils' experiences and raise their aspirations and achievement, and increase their sense of belonging to a community. These include successful links with 'Connexions' and Education and Business Partnerships that provide careers guidance, mentors and work experience, links with local clergy, councillors, health care staff, emergency services and the disabled who contribute regularly to programmes such as the school's citizenship course and SWIFT. The benefits of local community links are evident in the achievements and aspirations of individuals. Pupils have made a particular success of their time working with the Royal Shakespeare Company and on motor vehicle maintenance courses and equine studies. The school's flourishing links with a school in Uganda allow pupils in both countries to learn from each other through a pen pals system and visits by key staff. A small group of Year 11 pupils from this school has had the opportunity to visit Uganda to learn at first hand about the similarities and differences between the two school communities, and then share this through displays and assemblies.
30. Careers education is good. Extensive consultation takes place in Year 9 between the school, parents and pupils. In Year 10, a series of lessons within PSHE, starting in the summer term, concentrates on choices at post sixteen. In the autumn term of Year 11 pupils have work experience. Time is taken within the PSHE programme for Years 10 and 11 pupils to plan for work experience and careers. Evaluation sheets completed by pupils and the employers and included in Record of Achievement files. Pupils may receive specialist assistance from the Connexions adviser who visits the school weekly. Special focus days enable pupils to benefit from advice from outside speakers and the expertise they offer. The careers library provides a good source of information to pupils; this is accessible at all times of the school day and is well organised by the school librarian, the Connexions adviser and the careers coordinator. Information is available through a variety of sources including box files, videos and software as well as prospectuses and books. By the end of Year 11 pupils are well-informed about sixth form courses through visiting speakers and interviews. Pupils with special educational needs have extra support from the Connexions adviser on career prospects and work experience placements are often within the SWIFT programme.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

31. As at the last inspection, the school's provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This provision benefits significantly from the school's ethos and success in sustaining a "spiritually enhancing and caring community".

32. The school fosters spiritual development very effectively. Its commitment to deepening pupils' spiritual awareness is evident in the life of the school. Pupils are at ease with their faith and not self-conscious about taking time for personal prayer and reflection in the chapel. The school nurtures pupil's spiritual life exceptionally well in terms of Christian values. Where opportunities are taken in lessons, as evident in work on First World War poetry, they help to stimulate intellectual curiosity, interest in philosophical questions, what it means to be human and the gift of life, but sometimes these are missed.
33. The school's provision for moral development is outstanding because its approach to teaching moral principles is so clear. It emphasises discipline that is firm but fair, and the use of 'praise, encouragement and caring to foster responsiveness and responsibility'. The school has very high expectations of pupils and of traditional politeness, helpfulness, warmth and thoughtfulness. It keeps rules to a minimum, relying on example and a high degree of trust, to make clear what is and is not acceptable. As a result, their understanding of right and wrong is particularly good and they accept personal responsibility for their mistakes with maturity beyond their years.
34. Within the life of the school, social development is encouraged very successfully. Pupils have a very good range of opportunities to take roles of responsibility, particularly in Year 11 when they can become prefects. The prefects, led by the head girl and boy and their deputies, have key roles in organising activities and managing behaviour outside lessons. The house system, with elected house captains, is the basis for significant social development through competitions, teamwork and charity initiatives that involve many different groups and social skills. Retreats enable groups of pupils to spend time together and learn to value each other's ideas.
35. The school provides well for pupils' cultural development. It is very well aware of its responsibilities to ensure that pupils appreciate and value cultural diversity, particularly in the context of a Catholic school committed to tolerance and compassion in an area with relatively few people from other cultures. The school has built strong links with a school in Uganda, which a small group of staff and pupils visited last year, with a further visit planned for this summer. Other pupils are involved as pen pals and in raising funds for computer equipment for the school. This and sponsorship of a boy from Kenya and a girl from Sierra Leone have started to build better understanding of other cultures. In lessons, teachers make good use of material from within the National Curriculum to teach pupils about their own and other cultures. For example, in music, they learn about European, Indian and African musical traditions and, through 'the Blues project', about the cultural heritage of Black Americans. In English, texts from other cultures are studied, although this is not a particular priority, leaving scope for further use to foster richer appreciation of other people's experiences. The contribution of art to cultural development is not as strong as might be expected. Pupils gain good understanding of their own heritage. For example, the school makes very good use of its proximity to Stratford-upon-Avon to give pupils invaluable first hand experience of the British theatre.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Overall, the quality of care is very good as the school sets and achieves high standards in relation to health and safety, child protection and pastoral and academic support. The school sees its purpose as the all-round education of its pupils. Its success is borne out by the large numbers of staff whose children are, or have been, educated at the school and the large turnout for school reunions.
37. All aspects of health and safety are fully reviewed and updated regularly. A very recent, comprehensive report conducted by the local education authority commends the school on the high quality of its practices in the area of risk assessments and its efforts to create a safe learning

environment. The school is constantly thinking ahead to identify potential difficulties. Once identified, these are dealt with swiftly. Fire practices are carried out termly and records kept. The identification of fire risk has been catalogued at departmental level, but not yet at the level of the whole school. Each of the main teaching blocks of the school has at least one qualified first-aider based in it. Their qualifications are regularly updated. There is, however, no designated place where pupils taken ill during lessons can rest. Staff are kept fully informed, and are well aware of their responsibilities for health and safety matters. Year 11 pupils, the vast majority of whom are prefects, play an important role in supervision during lunchtime and on school transport. Their duties are well organised through the house system. Provision for disabled pupils is good. They are assisted on arrival in the morning by the caretaker and by the thoughtful actions of fellow pupils during the school day. A lift allows them easy access to the upper floors. Areas of minor concern relate to the lack of space for play for more active pupils and the provision of safe areas for the less active during lunchtime.

38. Arrangements for child protection are based on an enlightened, long-term view of the whole child which takes emotional problems fully into account when considering why learning difficulties may have arisen. The pastoral co-ordinator and her colleague, who direct provision in this area, have detailed knowledge of procedures and external agencies with regard to consultation and onward referral. There is close liaison with the special educational needs co-ordinator. Together strategies for individual pupils are adopted and targets set which are reviewed monthly. This approach encompasses analysis of patterns of attendance where neglect may be an issue and scrutiny of Internet material, as well as dealing with the more customary forms of abuse. Ground-rules for dealing with individual cases are clearly established: pupils know that their word will be trusted, but equally that full confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Pupils who have particular pastoral needs have a support plan which fully involves the relevant members of staff and the pupils' parents or carers. All teachers are aware of the internal 'reporting chain' headed by the designated senior member of staff and new colleagues are fully informed of their duties in this area.
39. Pastoral and academic support are very effective. This is particularly evident at the transitional points in pupils' education. The school enjoys strong formal and informal links with its feeder schools. This enables it to get to know its new intake of pupils and their parents and to allocate pupils to suitable groups in Year 7. In allocating staff as form tutors, the school seeks to provide within each year group a good balance of male and female teachers, experienced and less experienced colleagues and Catholic and non-Catholic staff. At the same time the expertise of individual teachers is well deployed to support pupils. In Year 9 pupils receive very good guidance to ensure that they proceed to the appropriate courses in Years 10 and 11. The small size of the school enables all pupils to have an interview with the deputy head teacher and a pupil-friendly curriculum guide clearly details the choices available. This coincides with the options consultation evening. Parents are encouraged to discuss their child's suitability for courses at any time. At a later point in Year 9 the head teacher talks to parents about the implications of pupils' choices and the high expectations that have to be nurtured to help pupils succeed. At the end of Year 11, all pupils leave school with a school, college or job placement. Pupils come from a wide geographical area and this is reflected in pupils' choices for further education and training. Pupils are well informed regarding sixth form choices through a series of meetings, interviews, careers talks and visiting speakers. The high quality of pupils' work experience placements and the skills many acquire in the 'Swift Programme' open up further avenues for pupils to succeed in later life.
40. Overall the arrangements for assessing pupils' academic performance are good and the school monitors pupils' progress effectively. The teachers know individual pupils very well and provide them with much helpful marking and guidance. Arrangements are particularly strong in English, geography and history for example, where pupils receive detailed feedback about how to improve

their work. Across subjects, the quality of guidance varies, at best stating clearly what pupils need to do to achieve higher standards, and at its weakest providing comments such as ‘pleasing’ or ‘good effort’. Pupils themselves understand the school’s policy of recording a mark out of ten and a grade for effort, but are not always aware of how to reach particular levels or examination grades.

41. The school sets each pupil target levels or grades based on tests taken in Years 7 and 9, and regularly monitors progress towards these. Teachers record current standards against these targets and helpfully share this information with parents through reports and profiles. Appropriately, the school is refining how assessment procedures can better support pupils’ learning and, for example, planning to introduce formal mentoring for individual pupils. However since the last inspection, the improvements in assessment and target setting have contributed to raising overall school performance.
42. The main strength in assessment is the way the school focuses on helping individuals to achieve well, and this is the main focus of the detailed policy document. Although satisfactory, the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is less well developed. The school checks how some groups of pupils achieve, such as the relative progress made by boys and girls, but analysis is otherwise limited. The school recognises the need to use performance data more thoroughly to support strategic decisions about course planning.
43. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. Pupils’ individual education plans (IEPs) are reviewed regularly and support specified in statements is monitored. Pupils and parents are fully involved in the review process and very good arrangements ensure that parents are kept informed of their children’s progress through contact with the SENCO. Statutory requirements for statements are met. Targets on IEPs are practical and are helpful in enabling subject teachers to meet the individual needs of pupils. However, there is inconsistency as yet between teachers on the extent to which these targets are used for planning work at an appropriate level. The SENCO is aware of this and has plans to extend the current examples of good practice.
44. The procedures for placing pupils on the special educational needs register and for identifying support are effective and consistent. For example, good liaison with feeder schools and base-line tests for Year 7 pupils are used to identify pupils for literacy support. Tracking data is analysed by the SENCO to identify needs and to plan intervention. However, data is not yet analysed to monitor the progress made by different groups of pupils with special educational needs. The good systems for exchanging information through weekly meetings between the SENCO, learning support assistants and pastoral tutors ensure very close monitoring of pupils’ needs and flexible and appropriate intervention to enable problems to be resolved quickly.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The partnership with parents is very strong, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Parents think that the school is doing a first rate job. They are exceptionally pleased with almost all aspects of its work, with a smaller proportion than usual expressing reservations about homework. The school has very effective links with parents based on its very warm welcome to all and genuine belief that their role is as equal partners in their children’s education. This partnership works exceptionally well in terms of supporting personal development and a sense of ‘can do’, particularly among children whose talents are still hidden. Parents are very appreciative of all that the school does to give those pupils who might otherwise see themselves, or be seen, as ‘failures’ a chance to succeed.

46. The school provides parents with a very good range of good quality information, much of it given informally by telephone because the school believes in a quick word of praise or prompt effort to nip problems in the bud. In addition, there are regular, lively newsletters and helpful letters about trips or events. Parents receive summary reports twice a year, in addition to the detailed annual report on progress, which is enhanced by the self-assessment written by each pupil. In some instances, this self-assessment sketches out a telling summary of progress and what the pupil needs to do to improve. In other cases it is not as useful because information given by subject teachers is not always focused sharply enough on the specific steps that the pupil should take to ensure solid, or even rapid future progress.
47. As the school values parents' contributions highly and keeps them well informed about its life and their children's work, they are extremely supportive and very well involved with all that happens. This has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development and academic standards. The St Benedict's hardworking PTA provides very good support and advice for the school as well as the more usual fundraising and social activities.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The good previous inspection report has not resulted in complacency. Governors and senior managers have been very self-critical of the education provided to their pupils. They have been innovative in their commitment to continuous improvement and to ensuring that all pupils achieve well. The result of this approach can be seen in the improvements in examination results, the quality of teaching and the very positive attitudes of the pupils. In addition the school has gained Beacon School Status. This has resulted in the head and senior managers spending time passing on their expertise to a number of other schools within the area.
49. Since the last inspection, the school has improved in all respects. The head teacher's excellent leadership and very clear vision has steered the school forward very successfully. He has ensured that the school fully reflects its aims and values in all aspects of its work. The head teacher maintains a constant presence around the school, monitoring what goes on and personally promoting the school and its aims.
50. The strong partnership at all levels of management comes from the shared belief that the school succeeds because everyone is committed to providing a very good all round education for all pupils in an atmosphere of mutual trust. The management of the head teacher and key staff is very good. The head teacher has firmly established a culture of high expectations and trust, rather than an overemphasis on checking to ensure accountability. There is a very good level of delegation to senior managers in school. The other members of the senior management team share the head teacher's determination to improve; they carry out their roles very well. The high expectations and very good management have ensured the necessary rigour to develop all subject areas through a drive for perfection and unwillingness to accept less than the best.
51. Monitoring of teaching and learning is carefully integrated within a very good performance management system and has led to standards rising throughout the school. Of equal importance and value is how the school responds to the outcomes of its critical self-evaluation, which has certainly contributed to the improving standards. However, planning for the future development of curricular issues has not linked closely enough to financial planning. The governors and senior managers have not been applying the principals of best value rigorously enough to everything they do. They consult well on the changes they propose and they contracts are competitive, but are less strong at the strategic level of predicting and planning for the cost implications of changes they

propose, largely because the school has, in the past, been expanding and in the fortunate position of being able to secure additional funding. The financial challenges now facing the school need more accurate long-term planning to ensure the current high standards of education are maintained and improved. For example, to enable the school to implement developments, the planning assumes that senior management team will take on additional responsibilities and an increased teaching commitment. There has been no real evaluation of the possible impact of this and there is already pressure on management time because senior managers already have significantly higher teaching loads than in many schools. Similarly the effectiveness of the single gender teaching groups has not yet been evaluated.

52. The school has made very good provision to ensure equality of opportunity and has been active in tackling areas of relative weakness. For example, there has been considerable focus on ensuring that boys achieve as well as girls. This has been very successful in several subjects, for example, in food technology boys now achieve higher standards than girls. Senior managers have been prepared to take difficult decisions, for example, the change in the structure of the school day and the shift to single sex groups and smaller than average groups for some subjects. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed. The SENCO deploys learning support assistants effectively to support the wide range of pupils with special educational needs and to maintain communication with subject teachers and pastoral staff. Learning support assistant receive appropriate training and support for their work with pupils and departments. The current departmental action plan provides an appropriate focus on the further development of accommodation and resources to meet pupils' needs.
53. The governing body has a very good knowledge of the school. Governors are very well informed about the school's strengths and involved in discussion about the key areas for development. They hold the head teacher accountable by setting him suitably challenging targets and through regular monitoring of his work. The highly respected chair of governors has been very successful in helping the school to improve facilities. Governors have very effective links with individual departments and many make regular, focused visits to monitor the work in subjects and gain first hand information. They are effective in ensuring the school meets all the statutory requirements.
54. The governors and the school's management team use resources well. They seek every opportunity to increase their resources so that they can continue to provide for pupil needs, for example the lottery bid to develop ecological areas in the school grounds. The recent audit shows good procedures for day-to-day financial management and all recommendations have been acted upon. Grants for specific purposes, such as the Beacon School funding, are used very well and are monitored carefully. The recently appointed chair of the Finance Committee has a good understanding of his role in financial planning. He is most appreciative of the open relationship between the governing body and the school.
55. Leadership and management by subject leaders is very good overall, with particular strengths in English, mathematics, science, design technology, history, geography and citizenship. There are however weaknesses in the management of art which affect standards at GCSE. Department heads monitor the teaching and learning within their areas well. However they tend to rely too much on the senior management team for providing information, for example the analysis of subject performance in examinations that they could analyse for themselves.
56. The school is well staffed. The match of qualified teachers to their curriculum responsibilities, and non-teaching staff to the various demands of the school and its curriculum, is good in nearly all departments. Recruitment problems, beyond the control of the school, are having an impact for example, there were very few applicants for the position of head of English and no applicants at

all for the temporary music teacher post recently advertised. The school has effective links with Warwick University and Newman College which assist recruitment.

57. Induction and support for newly qualified teachers and for staff new to the school are generally good. The school supports its newly qualified teachers by running sessions specifically for them and funding their attendance at courses. Their teaching is observed by senior staff and Local Education Authority inspectors though recently this has not ensured that all newly qualified teachers are observed within their first term. The impact of this is lessened because they are well-supported overall. The support offered to experienced staff new to the school is less formal but they settle down very quickly because the staff team is small and there is a culture of openness that allows teachers to feel secure in asking for help or advice. Performance management review systems are comprehensive and very effective. Targets for improvement carefully develop the key areas identified by individual staff.
58. The range and quality of resources to support learning across the whole curriculum are generally satisfactory. Provision is at least satisfactory in all subjects, except for special educational needs department where resources are unsatisfactory. This is because the range of ICT software and networked computer hardware which should form an essential part of the learning and the support for development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is limited. Limited storage space in the special needs area makes the management of resources more difficult. The book provision is good in most subjects and satisfactory in mathematics, music, PE. The most significant improvement lies in provision for ICT. The ratio of pupils to computers is now better than the national average, though there are still problems of access to ICT in mathematics and music.
59. Since the previous inspection, the library has been refurbished and extended. The school librarian runs the library very effectively, helping pupils to carry out research. Pupils have access to the library before school, during break and lunchtimes. The range of books is good and it is a welcoming, attractive environment where pupils can browse, to change books and to use the range of networked computer resources, including access to the Internet.
60. The accommodation overall is good overall, with significant improvements since the previous inspection. Access for pupils with disability is good. The school has benefited from a new sports hall, performing arts area, purpose built technology department, additional classrooms to replace the older huts and the new chapel is valued highly by staff and pupils. The caretaker and his staff manage the buildings well and make a very effective contribution to the good standard of maintenance and safety procedures observed in the school. The increase in the size of the school has put pressure on space and some lessons have to be taught outside their specialist areas which can limit what is taught, and a few lessons have to be taught in the foyer. Drama has no specialist teaching area which restricts what can be done, and the lack of soundproofing in the music department is a significant drawback. The accommodation for special educational needs is not satisfactory but work on re-furbishment and on improving resources is in hand.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. In the context of a very good school which has a strong commitment to excellence, the head teacher, staff and governors should:

1. Evaluate more systematically the impact of strategic decisions about the curriculum, such as the provision of single gender groups, viable group sizes, or the introduction of additional subjects or courses, through using the principles of best value and analysing the available performance data more rigorously;

Paragraph 51

2. Further develop teaching to encourage pupils to develop more intellectual rigour and challenge in their own questioning and thinking, through more open ended and probing questioning, providing activities which encourage pupils to learn from taking risks and making mistakes.

Paragraph 20

Minor issues

1. Ensure that the teaching of art promotes higher standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Paragraphs 94,95,96

2. Review the teaching load of the senior management team in the light of changing circumstances and additional responsibilities, both actual and planned, to ensure that they have sufficient time to carry out their management roles;

Paragraph 51

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	105
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 –11							
Number	4	35	37	27	2	0	0
Percentage	4	33	35	26	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 –Y 11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	553
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	14
Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	91
English as an additional language	
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
Pupil mobility in the last school year	
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.2

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2001-2002.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	53	55	108
National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	47	47
	Girls	51	46	45
	Total	94	93	92
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (76)	86 (69)	85 (85)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	54 (43)	62 (49)	55 (35)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	48	49
	Girls	52	49	41
	Total	100	97	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	92 (83)	89 (72)	83 (83)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	61 (58)	64 (46)	50 (37)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	57	45	102
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	36	52	55
	Girls	31	43	44
	Total	67	95	99
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (73)	93 (99)	97 (99)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2001.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	48.2
	National	39.8

Figures in brackets refer to 2001

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
500	1	0
11	0	0
10	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
7	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

The 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)	33.04
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	289

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.9
Key Stage 4	19.6

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	1409441
Total expenditure	1311439
Expenditure per pupil	2354
Balance brought forward from previous year	19557
Balance carried forward to next year	98002

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
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Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	537
Number of questionnaires returned	415

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	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	48	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	43	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	48	12	1	1
The teaching is good.	54	43	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	46	9	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	31	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	25	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	43	6	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	70	29	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	32	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	43	3	1	2

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4 ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Pupils make very good progress and their results are well above national average in Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations.
- The teaching is very good, achieving an excellent balance between improving literacy skills and encouraging pupils to respond personally.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can and should do. Pupils rise with confidence and diligence to the challenges set.
- In all years pupils study a wide range of literature and learn to appreciate its quality, and its relevance to their own experience.
- Marking is highly consistent in its frequency, detail and helpfulness.

Areas for development

- Class discussion, when teachers do not use a wide enough range of stimulating questioning techniques.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation for teaching drama.

61. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have risen dramatically over the last three years. In 2002 they were well above national average, and well above those achieved in schools with a similar intake. Pupils did better in English than they did in mathematics and science. The gap between boys' and girls' results was much narrower than nationally. The proportion of pupils getting higher grades increased to well above the national average. Teacher assessments were a little generous.
62. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is well above average. This is very good achievement from their standards when they join the school in Year 7, which are just above average. Higher-attaining pupils adapt language to purpose, balancing control and imagination. They show skill and maturity in their study of literature where they can see, and empathise with, emotion. Average attaining pupils use language thoughtfully, express opinion confidently, and show good knowledge and understanding of texts. Whilst capable of lively and perceptive expression, they can be careless with spelling, and their ability to analyse ideas is limited. This is also the case with lower-attainers pupils. In contrast they are competent when in more factual writing reports and letters. Their literature work shows an ability to refer and respond to texts.
63. GCSE results have improved since the last inspection. In 2002, almost all pupils took examinations in both English language and English literature. All gained pass grades, and the A* to C pass rates in both subjects were well above national average. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest A* and A grades was higher than in almost all other subjects. Boys and girls did equally well in English language. Until last year girls had done better than boys in literature. In 2002, however, boys made better progress than in any other subject, while girls did less well.
64. The evidence of pupils' work and lessons observed showed that attainment in Year 11 is well above national average. This is very good achievement, especially in terms of reading and extended writing skills. Lower-attaining pupils analyse and weigh an argument, make points clearly and appropriately in letters, and structure and punctuate work. When writing about literature, they tend to explain in too cumbersome a fashion. Average-attaining pupils work accurately under time pressure. They use quotations but do not sufficiently explain their full significance. They respond to literature well, and show sensitivity and skill when writing from a character's viewpoint, but more formal essays can lapse into extensive summary. Higher-attainers show great skill, maturity and confidence in their writing, which is exceptionally well

structured. They make astute use of quotation. Work on media and discursive writing is less strong.

65. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because teachers are very familiar with their needs and personalities. The very good support they receive ensures that they understand tasks, have good awareness of how to plan and develop work, and the confidence to tackle it. Setting, and the use of more demanding texts and tasks, enables gifted and talented pupils to make very good progress with written work.
66. Overall, the teaching is very good, and pupils' books and files show that this has been the case for some time. Teachers know pupils' potential and have high expectations of what they should do. A GCSE class studying poetry made rapid progress in analysing poems because the teacher asked searching questions and drew out the parallels with other works studied. Pupils study good quality literature, including Shakespeare, in all years. They learn to appreciate a wide range of works as expressions of the human spirit, with a relevance to their own emotions and experience, and as texts to be studied and analysed. Thus a Year 10 boys' class responded very well to the teacher's moving reading of the Owen poem 'Disabled'. A relative weakness in class discussion is when they are mainly question and answer sessions between the teacher and individual pupils. Initial answers tend to be accepted with comparatively little further probing of pupils' ideas and opinions or broadening of the discussion. This leads to unstimulating sessions, and the lack of real discussion results in some inattention.
67. The focus in teaching and learning on literacy, and on the requirements of tests and examinations, gives pupils the skills and strategies to succeed. Clear explanation and a very good focus on technical language helped Year 7 pupils understand how imagery, juxtaposition, short sentences and unanswered questions created suspense in a narrative. A lower-ability Year 11 class were able to write atmospheric descriptions using detail and personification because the teacher skilfully drew out how atmosphere was created in an extract from a novel. This gave the pupils a structure and a strategy for their own work. Homework is thoughtfully and consistently set, being very effectively used to extend work done in lessons, or to prepare for future topics. The quality and usefulness of marking is unusually high and is a key factor in the progress pupils' make with written skills and their willingness to work hard at home.
68. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are committed to achieving to the best of their ability. Their very good relationships are evident in the ability to work very effectively in pairs and groups. Many show independence and can decide on the best way to tackle a task, then pursue it without being over-reliant on the teacher for direction or ideas. This feature was prominent in an effective lesson where boys were studying the Duffy poem 'In Mrs Tilscher' Class' and realised how the child's perspective was created and used by the poet. These excellent attitudes and behaviour contrast with a minority who can become whisperingly inattentive in class discussion. Pupils of all ages and abilities have excellent attitudes to written work. Books and files invariably show exemplary neatness and effort, and homework is promptly and conscientiously completed.
69. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Attainment is much improved, particularly that of boys. The use of both single and mixed gender sets has been important in this. The teaching is better, notably in terms of a literacy focus, catering for higher-attaining pupils, and encouraging more awareness of the need for Standard English in speech and writing. Very good leadership and management over a period of time have been, and continue to be, responsible for these developments. The department is well organised, and committed to high standards, whilst being flexible and imaginative. It has rightly recognized the need to review schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 to make sure that pupils receive a more planned and balanced experience of media,

discursive writing, drama, and ICT within English. Although marking is very good, pupils in Years 7 to 9 would occasionally benefit from more comments linked to National Curriculum skills.

70. **Drama** is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 and 8, where limited time is given within a carousel arrangement. The lack of time for drama in Years 7 to 9 is to some extent compensated for by 'hot-seating' and role play in English lessons. However, pupils in these years do not get a consistent experience of drama where they can progressively learn and develop skills. As a consequence, achievement is satisfactory rather than good. A number of pupils choose drama as a GCSE option. Recent examination results from relatively small groups have been close to the national average. The standards of the current Year 11 group are above national average in creating and evaluating improvisations, and their awareness of how to make an impact on an audience. Teaching is very good leading to confident, energetic and well planned lessons. Pupils learn to balance physical and vocal expression, performance and evaluation, and to achieve a good balance between their own contributions and that of others in the group. The accommodation for teaching drama is unsatisfactory. In the hall time is lost through interruptions, noise, and other uses, and there are no facilities for blackout, lighting or sound.

Literacy

71. The school has realised that paying attention to literacy skills is a key factor in improving pupils' learning. Strategies for developing literacy are very good, because they are clear to pupils, and teachers in all departments are committed to using and developing them. This level of awareness and consistency is unusual. Teachers work to a very successful common format for the presentation and correction of pupils' written work. Audits result in agreed focus skills for pupils, such as for Year 7: the correct use of key terms, being able to write in more complex sentences, and planning and proofreading with an eye to who the reader is, and the intended reaction. Pupils enter the school with good levels of literacy; by Year 11 their literacy skills are very good.
72. All teachers emphasise the value and importance of pupils using correct and accurate vocabulary. In music, this allowed them to discuss atmosphere in music – anger and serenity – alongside terms for technical analysis. In history, pupils were able to identify and explain specific terms such as 'The Divine Right of Kings'; their understanding of the concepts of conjugation and stems enabled Year 8 pupils to make good progress in French. Very good opportunities for discussion were noted in some lessons, especially in science. A relative weakness is for extended class discussion to be over-reliant on a few pupils answering predictable questions from the teacher. Opportunities for the majority to debate, explore, question, and refine ideas are few.
73. Reading skills are good, and pupils are often expected to make notes or research issues for homework. In design technology pupils' skills in making notes from textbooks, undertaking Internet research and analysing data are strengths. Most pupils can quickly understand the meaning of a text, scan to find specific examples, and show understanding and expression when reading aloud. The library has been extended and is now a very good support to literacy. It is large, welcoming and well organised with good stock and good access to computers. The library is well used before and after school and throughout the day. The extension allows full classes to use it without detriment to other groups. Activities such as Reading Week, Carnegie book shadowing, and book quizzes are well supported. Library skills are taught to Year 7 pupils through English and history lessons, as well as in the citizenship programme.
74. A strong focus on written skills is a significant factor in pupils' progress. Subjects such as design technology teach varied styles such as factual reports, sequential instructions and analysis. Varied tasks requiring extended writing are a regular feature in all subjects. Correct spelling and technical

language are expected. There are imaginative uses of frameworks to support writing, as in a Year 8 history lesson where a Venn diagram was also used to classify causes of the Civil War.

MATHEMATICS

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well overall and results have improved considerably
- Pupils have very good attitudes and work hard
- Leadership and teamwork in the mathematics department are strong.

Areas for development

- Further develop teaching methods that enhance the learning.

75. In 2002, the mathematics results at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average, and pupils achieved very well in relation to their attainment when they joined the school. The Year 9 results have risen significantly over the last three years, in a similar way to English and science. GCSE results have also improved considerably in the last three years, with the proportion of pupils achieving grade C or above increasing by twenty five per cent, from 41% to 66%. In 2002, the results were above average when compared with all schools nationally and better than might have been expected from their results in Year 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, especially those of middle and lower ability, are achieving well. Overall there is little difference in the achievement of boys compared with girls, which is an improvement since the last inspection when boys achieved less well than girls.
76. The standards of pupils' work seen during the inspection reflected the examination and test results. Overall standards are at least above average in all years, and the majority of pupils present neat and accurate work. Pupils are best at applying routine methods they have been taught to answer questions in number, algebra, shape work and data handling. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 were methodical and precise in following algebraic methods to solve simultaneous equations, as were those in Year 11 using trigonometry to find lengths and angles in triangles. In a lesson on fractions, most of the lower-attaining Year 7 pupils made good progress in learning about halves and quarters because the work was practical. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress, particularly when taught using a variety of resources. Pupils are less strong in the exploration of mathematical ideas or devising and explaining their own methods, although standards in these aspects are satisfactory, as seen in pieces of investigative coursework.
77. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was good in all years. None of the teaching was less than satisfactory and most was good, with some that was very good. This is a similar picture to the last inspection.
78. Very good features in the teaching include the teachers' high expectations that pupils produce good work at a challenging level. Teachers demonstrate solutions and explain methods clearly, so pupils learn securely how to answer questions. Relationships are very good and teachers support individual pupils very well. This leads to pupils concentrating, trying hard, and behaving very well. Lessons are well planned and make good use of time, with brisk oral and mental starter activities, effective direct teaching and reviewing what has been learnt. Teaching often makes good use of the overhead projector, as seen in a lesson the transformations of shapes when the teacher used prepared diagrams to demonstrate the geometrical ideas involved. Regular mathematics homework is a well-established routine that contributes to learning. The teachers are successfully

developing literacy within mathematics, evident also in the department's discussion about how best to define and make use of key words in mathematics.

79. A relative weakness in teaching is that teachers' questioning helps pupils to learn the necessary facts and skills and become confident in using mathematics, it does not sufficiently promote curiosity, exploration or inventiveness which would promote the highest levels of achievement. For example in the lessons seen, pupils were rarely asked to discuss ideas in pairs or to explain their methods or thinking, in order to improve understanding. Where teaching was satisfactory the challenge and mathematical rigour might be improved. Some teaching did not insist on exploring all possible solutions, labelling diagrams precisely, or checking numerical answers made sense. In the teaching of lower-attaining pupils, the use of practical resources was not consistent and might draw on good practice in primary schools. Marking, feedback to pupils and assessment are satisfactory but these are under review to further improve pupils' learning.
80. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They listen attentively and tackle exercises industriously. The effort and hard work of the pupils contributes significantly to their achievement in mathematics.
81. The school provides a good mathematics curriculum that draws on the national strategy in Years 7 to 9 and is enriched in a range of ways. For example, Year 7 pupils all follow the Alcester mathematics trail, Year 9 pupils have a day visit for mathematics and science, and pupils can enter national mathematics competitions. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils and offers them some additional opportunities. The department recognises that the use of ICT to enhance the learning of mathematics is at an early stage of development, but aims to improve resources and use these more effectively.
82. Leadership and management of mathematics are very good. Leadership is driving up expectations and is raising the profile of mathematics in the school. The mathematics department is staffed with experienced specialists who work well as a team. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Numeracy

83. Pupils' numeracy skills are well used and developed in mathematics and other subjects. This strength results from a whole-school approach, in which good teaching shows awareness of opportunities for numeracy in a wide range of relevant contexts. In design and technology and in science, for example, pupils are expected to measure and to calculate competently. Good practice seen in geography includes pupils calculating an index, and thus gaining a good understanding of its meaning. In an orienteering session in PE, pupils used scales and distances, and confidently used angle skills with a compass. A good numeracy example seen in a drama lesson involved pupils walking in time to a song from a Shakespeare play, turning through 90 or 180 degrees in response to the punctuation. The teaching checked that pupils understood these ideas and the activity reinforced pupils' skills. The school provides pupils with six periods a year of numeracy in the Year 7 carousel of short courses. Although the value of these individual sessions has yet to be fully evaluated, this illustrates the appropriate status that the school attaches to numeracy.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average overall
- Pupils achieve well
- The teaching is good
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good
- The management of the department is very good

Areas for development

- Work which ensures the right degree of challenge, especially in mixed ability groups
- Further development of ICT within lessons
- More rigorous use of data to help curriculum planning and pupil tracking
- Improvements to the accommodation

84. In 2002, results of the national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average. When these pupils entered the school, their Year 6 results were above the national average. Boys did better than girls in 2002. Pupils performed at a similar level in science, English and mathematics, except at the highest level, where science results were below those of mathematics and English. Over the last three years, results have improved annually. When compared to similar schools, results were average.
85. Standards seen in lessons in the current Year 9 are above average and in Years 7 and 8 are well above average and pupils are achieving well overall. Their attainment is consistent with what they had previously achieved. Pupils recalled factual information well and could explain and apply their understanding of science. In a lesson with an all-girl group on moments of forces, girls worked collaboratively to investigate aspects of the lever law. They were able to express their understanding in words and mathematically. Higher-attaining pupils were able to write well and explain their science clearly. They could plot and interpret graphs and balance chemical equations. Middle and lower-attaining pupils presented their work well but had more difficulty explaining what they had understood. Opportunities to use ICT are relatively limited.
86. In 2002 examination results were above the national average overall, though a smaller percentage of pupils achieved the highest GCSE grade than did nationally. Standards seen in lessons in Year 11 were also above average and pupils are achieving well. In a biology lesson seen, higher-attaining pupils were achieving well above average standards as they revised and extended their understanding of excretion processes and control mechanisms in the body. They had very good oral skills and concentrated hard and with obvious interest as the lesson progressed. In the written work seen, higher and middle ability pupils presented their work well and had the capacity to explain their work very well. Lower-attaining pupils struggled more with their writing, nevertheless, their work was well presented showing that they valued it. Pupils make good progress in science at both key stages. Value added data demonstrates this, but also shows that middle and lower-attaining pupils make better progress than the higher-attainers.
87. Overall, teaching and learning in science are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that allows them to plan carefully structured lessons to make ideas accessible to their pupils. They are very good at teaching the literacy skills needed for science through the use of key words, and in promoting study skills and providing opportunities for discussion and research. They also conduct brisk question and answer sessions to check pupil knowledge and understanding. They are aware that they need to make much more use of ICT to develop pupils' knowledge and skills in science. They respond well to pupils, and adapt their plans quickly to their emerging needs. Relationships are very good and create a supportive and enjoyable learning environment. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils with special needs were very well focused on ways of presenting data. They had enjoyed collecting their information and support staff were used well to help them apply their mathematical knowledge to producing course work. Some excellent teaching was seen. Year 8 pupils in a mixed ability class enjoyed a mirror reading task to set off their lesson on

reflection. The teacher had planned activities that required extremely careful listening to turn statements into diagrams. The pupils were totally involved in the lesson and at times you could hear a pin drop as they watched and thought about the law of reflection. Some lessons were satisfactory rather than good because the teacher dominated the lesson too much and the pace of learning dropped. These lessons needed a greater variety of activity to provide a more rigorous challenge.

88. Pupils behave very well in science. They are courteous and helpful to each other. They are sensible about safety matters and move carefully in laboratories. For example, in one lesson, the boys lined up, without being asked, in order to measure their height. They behaved really well so that the activity was completed quickly and safely in a small room. Pupils are very attentive in most lessons, concentrating well and showing interest in their work. They look after and value their books. Pupils respond well to challenge and enjoy fast moving lessons that are well planned. In a Year 7 mixed ability lesson, they enjoyed sharing their knowledge about the eye and were amazed at the idea that the pupil in the eye was a hole, and were wondering how a hole could get bigger and smaller.
89. The good teaching and learning results from the department being very well managed. The degree of consistency in science classrooms shows how well the three newly qualified teachers have been integrated into the team. All issues raised in the last inspection have been tackled. Good schemes of work are now in place and currently under revision. Assessment procedures are good and information is used well by the department in order to monitor individual progress. The department has group performance and value added data, but a more rigorous analysis of this is needed to focus its development in the future. The impact of single sex groupings has not yet been evaluated. The team of technicians provide a very good service to the department. All staff is well monitored and appropriate training is made available to teachers and technicians. The accommodation remains satisfactory. One laboratory is quite small and one requires refurbishment, which is planned for later in the year. However, the current timetable organisation means that about 16 science lessons are taught outside laboratories, restricting the range of activities.
90. Since the last inspection, standards in lessons have improved, GCSE results have improved and results at the end of Year 9 have improved over the last 4 years to their former high level. Progress has improved and all the issues identified in the last report have been tackled, thus improvement has been very good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Quality of teachers' demonstrations of different techniques
- Pupils' use and development of a subject specific vocabulary
- The scheme of work that includes the development of ICT and citizenship

Areas for development

- The quality of work in sketchbooks in Years 7 - 9
- Achievements in GCSE examinations
- The use and quality of teacher assessments in Years 7 - 9

91. The 2002 teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 were very high compared with those reported nationally. Standards of pupils currently in Year 9 are lower, broadly in line with expectations and closer to previous years. This shows satisfactory achievement, as pupils' attainment in art and design was below expectation when they joined the

school. However standards vary between the Year 9 classes. In some classes a greater proportion of pupils are working at higher levels.

92. Pupils' attitudes to the subject vary, but overall they are good and pupils behave responsibly. In a Year 7 lesson, they responded well to teachers' questions and the demonstrations of different techniques. They were keen to experiment and showed obvious enjoyment using paint and collage to create their compositions that reflected the work of Paul Klee and Kandinski. Pupils could explain terms like 'abstract' and 'composition', and their work demonstrated this developing understanding. The homework tasks, including some research and background reading, have enabled pupils to make good progress since the start of the year. Pupils in Year 8 demonstrated their creative thinking and problem-solving skills when they began their proto-types for a container to hold stationery and other small desk-top equipment. The teacher provided a very clear explanation of the task and learning objectives and intervened where necessary to remind pupils of the need to reflect, review and modify their decisions. This encouraged a high level of concentration and pupils made better informed decisions as a consequence.
93. In Year 9 the standard of work, and pupils' attitudes to the subject, though satisfactory overall, varied in the different classes. In one lesson, where pupils demonstrated their reluctance to take-on the challenges the teacher gave them, standards were lower than expected at this stage of the year. In another class pupils were more positive. They showed a basic familiarity with work by Pablo Picasso and Francis Bacon and when questioned closely gave more in-depth observations and explanations that deepened their knowledge and understanding. They used these observations well in their work, thoughtfully experimenting with distortion, selecting some images and rejecting others. The work in portfolios and in sketchbooks indicates that some pupils are reluctant to apply themselves fully and as a result are underachieving. Higher-attaining pupils, boys and girls, are not being sufficiently challenged to enable them produce the standard of work that reflects their potential. Lower-attaining and pupils and those with special needs are achieving as expected in relation to their starting points. In Years 7 to 9 the quality of presentation and use of sketchbooks is underdeveloped and should be improved. Many pupils who opt to take art at GCSE begin Year 10 with weak drawing skills and a limited range of experiences on which to build more ambitious work.
94. In the past three years results in GCSE examinations have fluctuated, from well below to well above average. In 2002 although more pupils than in previous years gained the higher grades results remained below the national average. Results indicate a downward trend. Boys as well as girls did less well in art and design than in their other subjects.
95. Standards seen by current Year 11 pupils were also below average. Pupils' preparation for the examination lacked personal involvement and curiosity. Sketchbooks, in both Year 10 and 11, had much down-loaded information from the Internet and images collected from magazines. They show insufficient evidence of first hand experiences, use of primary source material and experimentation. There is a tendency for pupils to remain with their original idea rather than explore and develop alternative approaches. A number of Year 11 pupils lack the confidence to make decisions themselves and are ill prepared for the unaided examination task. Pupils are under performing and achievement is unsatisfactory.
96. In the lessons observed teaching and learning were satisfactory overall. In Years 7 - 9 much of the teaching seen was good or had very effective features. Teachers have good specialist skills and expertise and used these well to demonstrate different skills and techniques, and to question and develop pupils' subject specific vocabulary. Lessons were carefully planned but occasionally the practical activities over-ran and there is not enough time to review the learning. A weakness in pupils' learning in Years 7 - 9 is that they do what is asked of them but are not taught the skills that enable them to become independent learners. Learning objectives and assessment criteria are

not routinely shared with them, so pupils are unclear about the longer-term purpose of the tasks, how well they are progressing and what they can do to improve. Higher-attaining pupils are not always set work that has added challenge. At Key Stage 4 though the teaching seen was satisfactory, the standard of pupils' work indicated that, over time, it has been unsatisfactory and resulted in underperformance. Expectations of pupils are not as high as they should be and independent learning is not well developed.

97. Since the last inspection there have been satisfactory improvements to the breadth and relevance of the curriculum. The scheme of work now includes appropriate reference to citizenship and use of computers. Computers are regularly used for research purposes but currently there is insufficient software for pupils to exploit their creative potential. The overall provision in art is satisfactory because in Years 7 to 9, where all pupils take art, the standards, teaching and learning are all satisfactory, though with weaknesses in the use of sketchbooks and in monitoring and assessing pupils' progress against National Curriculum levels. A relatively small proportion of pupils take art in Years 10 and 11, and here the provision is less than satisfactory. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory because action has so far not resulted in significant improvement in GCSE results. The monitoring and reviewing of teaching is underdeveloped, notably to reflect on what works well and to share good practice.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall the quality of provision in citizenship is **very good**

Strengths

- Pupils have opportunities to participate in activities and share responsibility within the school which will prepare them very well to become good citizens
- Pupils discuss controversial and topical issues which assist their understanding of the community
- Very good, well integrated schemes of work
- Overall management, planning and organisation are very good

Areas for development

- Consistency in the quality of teaching, including opportunities for discussion
- Monitoring and assessment of the course
- Provision and coverage within other areas of the curriculum

98. Citizenship is a new requirement of the National Curriculum and the school has made a very good start in providing a specific course and in identifying where other subjects can contribute. Citizenship lessons were seen in every year group and in general standards are good. Pupils taking the GCSE short course are working to above average standards and are achieving well. There is, however, some inconsistency between classes and in the progress of different groups. Overall, high-attaining pupils make the best use of the many opportunities available to them. They prepare well for visiting speakers, take a wide interest in extra-curricular opportunities and take on the responsibilities offered; for example as part of the school council. Some low-attaining pupils, mainly less well-motivated boys, underachieve, and do not take up the advantages offered by the course. Pupils with special educational needs often do well because they contribute to discussion in groups and because form teachers include them well. In groups where pupils did not have the same opportunities to discuss or where there was little variety in the teaching, standards were not as high and pupils did not achieve as well.

99. Discussions with pupils in Year 9 show that the course is valued and helps pupils to understand politics as well as providing opportunities to discuss the possibilities of conflict, for example war with Iraq. They also see the relationship between the work done in citizenship and other subjects and that this aids understanding of, for example, drug and alcohol abuse. Most pupils in Year 11 enjoy the opportunity to discuss and question, though a minority of pupils in Year 11 do not value the course as much.
100. An extensive audit has taken place to identify areas where citizenship will be taught and this forms part of the scheme of work for each year. For example, in addition to specific citizenship lessons on resolving conflict, this may also be taught in PE where rules are necessary to determine fouls and in history, where the consequences and causes of two world wars may be used to exemplify the need to resolve differences and understand the effect of persecution. Such topics are also related to Gospel values in religious education, tutor group time and assemblies. However, pupils in Year 10 said that in most other subjects the contribution to the learning in citizenship was not made clear. The coverage of the key components is sometimes incidental and there were missed opportunities when pupils did not make links between the topic being studied and citizenship, and did not record such work in their portfolios.
101. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In specific citizenship lessons teaching varied widely. Where teaching was enthusiastic and knowledgeable and allowed well-led discussion or a variety of learning techniques were employed learning was good and sometimes very good. Good discussion, questioning and strategies to include all pupils were a feature of these lessons, for example, gifted and talented pupils have opportunities particularly in discussion and reading out sections for the full understanding of others. The emphasis on literacy and numeracy was also apparent in one Year 10 lesson where pupils learned how to manage their money and use correct banking terms. Where speakers from the community were involved, lessons were especially good when pupils had prepared well. This was very evident in a Year 8 lesson where a local councillor drew on his knowledge of real events and council resolutions, to involve pupils in a decision making exercise where they expressed their ideas and voted. Pupils then made comparisons with the actual council action. Pupils learned how councillors were elected, the levels of responsibility held by different councils, how decisions were reached and what factors were taken into consideration. Pupils discussed and questioned well and were fluent in expressing their views. Teaching and learning is not as good in lessons where classes are not given sufficient opportunity in discussion. Teaching was satisfactory in subject lessons where citizenship was implicit but not a clear focus.
102. Overall, the leadership and management of the subject are very good. Schemes of work have been developed, staff have been trained and all year groups have embarked upon a suitable course though assessment has not yet been standardised. A school council has been re-established so that pupils experience a democratic system of representation within an open and shared decision-making body. Pupils have benefited from the formalisation of previously more informal systems which encouraged them to become responsible citizens. They still need to be more aware of the contribution from departments and further strategies are needed to ensure the teaching is more consistent. The library has good supporting material in different subject sections, but there is no facility for storing other resources.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Strengths:

- GCSE results are well above average and pupils achieve very well.
- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- Teachers provide very good individual support for pupils in lessons and as a result they learn very well.
- Very good relationships between pupils and teachers create very good conditions for learning.

Areas for development:

- Further develop the marking and assessment to link more closely with the National Curriculum and targets for improvement and share this with pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Raise attainment in resistant materials and graphics.
- Increase the opportunities for staff to share good practice across the department.

103. Teachers' assessment of work at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 confirms the well above average standards seen during the inspection. When they join the school in Year 7, pupils have average skills in the subject and their achievement overall in design and technology by the end of Year 9 is very good. Standards are higher in food than in other specialist areas within the subject.

104. In the work and lessons seen during the inspection, pupils build their range of skills rapidly in Year 7. Pupils in Years 7 to 9, acquire basic skills in a good range of materials including food, resistant materials, textiles, graphics, and electronics. The projects covered are interesting and motivating for pupils and this leads to a good level of enthusiasm amongst pupils to do well. Teachers introduce pupils to the design process at this early stage in Year 7 and they quickly use this process as a basis for their own designing and making. They clearly show the various stages of how their products have been developed. However, the standard of boys' writing and drawing skills in resistant materials and graphics, lowers the overall standard of their work. Boys perform better in food and textiles where the application of the design process is more rigorous and structured and where teachers use a wider range of strategies to help boys to achieve very well.

105. Pupils regularly achieve better results in design and technology than in most other subjects. GCSE results in 2001 showed that proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades was well above the national average in all aspects of design and technology. The results improved further in 2002 and in this year they were better in food and electronics than in resistant materials and graphics. In Years 10 and 11 they maintain the well above average standards they reach at the end of Year 9. In general, girls do better than the boys, though the reverse is true in food. In all specialisms, pupils design products of good quality and continue to build their very good range of practical skills, though in resistant materials and graphics pupils' design portfolio work is often not good enough for them to achieve the higher grades. In some of the work seen this was because pupils missed out valuable parts of the design process. For example they did not show how they analysed their research or show what aspects of their research they used to develop their own ideas. In the subject as a whole, pupils refine their design and making skills in Year 11 and show greater awareness of industrial processes. In food, pupils work to high standards and they show a higher level of detail and depth in both the designing and making stages of their coursework.

106. The vast majority of pupils use ICT well to research information, handle and present data in most material areas. They also use it well to improve the overall quality and presentation of their final coursework. With the introduction of computer-aided designing, pupils in resistant materials and graphics are beginning to develop a broader range of skills. The application of these skills in their design coursework is improving the accuracy and quality of work. However, lack of resources, limits the opportunities for pupils to experience sufficient work in computer-aided manufacture.

107. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. In very good lessons, teachers structure the work very well and provide clear objectives to guide and support pupils in their learning. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and provide very good opportunities for pupils

to extend their range of skills in all materials. In food, pupils benefit from very good guidance and individual support in all years. ICT is also used well to support teaching, and this is having a good impact on raising standards. Effective use includes desktop publishing to present information, use of spreadsheets to handle and present data and to analyse the nutritional content and sensory analysis of food. In a lesson on designing a camera, the teacher's good use of the data projector to demonstrate the use of software for computer-aided design, enabled pupils to develop their confidence rapidly and apply the techniques very effectively to their own work. In GCSE groups, teachers created opportunities for individual discussion with pupils which provided very good support and enabled all pupils to make very good progress.

108. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and this creates very good conditions for learning. Pupils respond very well in lessons and are very keen to do well. They show very good attitudes to their work. They are confident to ask questions and ask for additional help when they need it. There are very good examples of marking where the teachers provide useful information to pupils on how to improve, but this is inconsistent within the department. In resistant materials pupils were not monitored rigorously enough, for example to meet interim GCSE coursework deadlines. Marking in Years 7 to 9 needs to link more closely to the National Curriculum in order to provide information for pupils on how well they are doing.

109. Teachers use a good range of strategies to develop skills in literacy. The design process provides pupils with the opportunity to write in a variety of ways. This includes brainstorming, note taking, developing a sequence of statements or instructions to explain how products are made, and written evaluations of their work which identify strengths and weaknesses and how to improve. Numeracy skills are also above average and pupils work accurately to gather information on surveys and work to their planned measurements and weights when they make their own products.

110. The leadership and management of the department are very good and overall the improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The head of department leads by example and sets high standards of planning. Working relationships amongst staff are very good, team spirit is very good and all staff maintain high levels of efficiency. Monitoring of both teaching and learning have had a good impact on raising standards. The strategic development plan is linked to the school development plan. Further work on the pupils' achievement and the performance of boys in resistant materials is a priority. A textiles course is part of the curriculum in Year 7 and will be extended to Years 8 and 9, and a GCSE course is being introduced in September 2003. Although the technician support is limited in hours, the support given is very good. Technicians are well qualified and offer a good range of skills to enhance the work of the department. There are concerns however, about the effectiveness of the dust extraction on machine tools particularly the unit attached to the circular saw. This unit is now out of use until improvements are made and this severely limits the preparation of materials. The limited space to prepare large pieces of wood, present additional difficulties for the department.

GEOGRAPHY

The quality of provision in geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching that results in very effective learning
- The marking of pupils' work is excellent
- The improving attainment and achievement of pupils
- The leadership and management of the department
- Very good behaviour, the positive attitudes of pupils and their relationships with teachers

Areas for development

- Opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility for their learning
- The availability of resources when non-specialist rooms are used.
- Assessment information is not analysed sufficient to inform planning.

111. This is an improving department. Pupils now join the school with above average knowledge and understanding, though with very variable competence in geography skills. Standards have risen, and in 2002, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed pupils' attainment to be well above national expectations with the attainment of boys and girls being similar. Results have improved since the last inspection.

112. The standard attained by pupils currently in Year 9 is above national expectations for this stage in the course and pupils are achieving well. In general, pupils have good knowledge and understanding of places and themes, and satisfactory knowledge of the other of geography. In a lesson on population, pupils recalled factual knowledge well in response to questioning and used technical language appropriately. They appreciated how processes and relationships can affect the environment and offered explanations to support this when discussing the distribution of population and the impact of growth in less economically developed countries. Pupils draw on a wide range of skills to complete their enquiry work and demonstrate a developing ability to interpret questions and support their conclusions with evidence and examples. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress, despite the lack of learning assistants, as teachers are aware of their needs, give very good support and select appropriate tasks and resources.

113. GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection. In 2002, the proportion of pupils who attained grades A* to C was slightly above the national average. Boys outperformed girls by a considerable margin, the opposite of the national pattern. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieved at least a pass grade. Pupils did as well in geography as in most subjects.

114. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make very good progress and are achieving very well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course. The standard of work in Year 11 is well above national expectations, a result of the improvement in teaching. Pupils build upon the knowledge, skills and understanding achieved in Years 7 to 9. Improving literacy skills remains a priority with the result that pupils' written work is particularly good, for example their detailed case studies. They respond very positively to the challenge of enquiries when they can practise their very good ICT skills. At times, pupils had too few opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and show initiative. For example, in a lesson on development and the conflict between economic and environmental needs, pupils did not have enough time to discuss and reflect on the implications of such exploitation. However, scrutiny of pupils' previously completed work shows that they have the skills and opportunities to work independently.

115. The teaching and learning observed were very good with a particular strength in the acquisition and application of subject skills and the use of geographical terms as seen in an excellent lesson when Year 10 pupils interpreted population pyramids. This is because teachers have excellent subject knowledge and understanding of course requirements. They have high expectations for their pupils. Lessons and topics are very well planned to allow pupils to consolidate work done previously and to build upon this. In this way their understanding of the relationship between

process and change is developed. For example, pupils study plate tectonics at increasing depth and breadth from Year 7 to Year 11. The quality of the marking of pupils' work is excellent. National curriculum levels are used to inform pupils so that they know what they should do to improve. Teachers keep full records that allow them to monitor academic progress very effectively. A relative weakness is that assessment information is not analysed sufficient to inform planning for groups of pupils.

116. Teachers have very good classroom and pupil management skills. Relationships are very positive and pupils respond with interest to the very good teaching. Behaviour in all classes was very good. Pupils are courteous. They value the support of their teachers and, so, are very willing to involve themselves in lessons. The contribution made to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a further strength as pupils view the world from a geographical perspective and gain understanding of world concerns, as in an excellent Year 9 lesson on population growth. Regular homework supports classroom learning and encourages use of the library. Pupils have many opportunities to practise and apply their numerical skills. For example, Year 10 pupils plot the age of rocks against distance from the mid-Atlantic Ridge to achieve a good understanding of sea-floor spreading.

117. The head of department provides enthusiastic and focused leadership and manages the department very well. The resources provided are good, but accommodation is less satisfactory as a number of lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms, distant from the resources. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The department has the commitment and capacity to improve still further.

HISTORY

The quality of provision in history is **very good**.

Strengths

- The very good teaching and learning that result in attainment well above national expectations
- The enthusiasm of teachers which excites pupils interest in history
- The very good behaviour and attitudes of pupils and their very positive relationships with teachers
- The contribution made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for development

- Pupils' judgements in the evaluation of sources are not always written-up in their books
- Insufficient use is made of the assessment data in planning

118. Pupils' attainment when they join the school is above average in terms of their knowledge and understanding. In 2002, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above national expectations and pupils are achieving well. As nationally, girls did better than boys. The evidence of lessons observed and pupils' work confirms these assessments.

119. Pupils make good progress in developing their subject skills. They work independently, using sources to secure evidence. For example, in a lesson on the First World War, pupils selected information from an Intranet site holding biographies of soldiers from a local village, who died on the Western Front. However, judgements made regarding the usefulness and reliability of sources are not always recorded in their books. In a lesson on the Civil Wars, Year 8 pupils demonstrated the knowledge and understanding necessary to describe features of the period and the relative importance of events and individuals. With the support of their teacher, they were able to draw comparisons with the monarchy and parliaments of Tudor times, recognising some of the reasons for changes, and the results. Pupils' work, for example on the Reformation, shows an awareness that events, people and changes can and have been interpreted in different ways and they suggest

possible reasons for this. A particular strength of their learning is the quality of written work, one such example being the 'Slave Trade Story' that they write in Year 9.

120. GCSE results for 2002 were very high when compared with national averages, a very significant improvement since the time of the last inspection. All pupils achieved grades in the range A* to G. Attainment in history was above the school average for all subjects. There is no set pattern to the relative performance of girls and boys.
121. In Years 10 and 11, pupils who have chosen history as an option, continue to work at a standard which is well above average. They achieve very well. In a very good lesson on the history of medicine, Year 11 pupils achieved a very clear understanding of the reasons for, and results of, developments in the fight against infection. They classified different developments in order to establish a priority and identify the most successful means by which such scientific advances were made. In examining the claims of the different scientists they showed a sophisticated understanding of historical interpretation. The higher-attaining pupils are very good at selecting and organising information to produce well-structured essays. For example in work on European and Arabic Medicine they drew upon their knowledge and understanding to make links across different periods and cultures. In preparation for their local study, Year 10 pupils were able to view the development of the Redditch needle-making industry in terms of both the wider industrial developments in Britain and in the context of the world of the 19th century. Pupils are aware of the importance of evidence in supporting their findings and showed very good literacy skills as they analysed a primary source.
122. The teaching and learning of history are very good. The enthusiastic teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and understanding of National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. This enriches their explanations and encourages pupils' interest in the subject, as for example in a Year 11 lesson on 20th Century medicine. They have very high expectations for work and behaviour, and their class management skills ensure good behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils show a very good understanding of technical terms in both their written work and oral responses. Very good planning allows pupils to develop and practise their skills as they move through the school. Teaching methods and the work set invariably meet the needs of all pupils. This is particularly important as pupils are taught in mixed ability groups. Pupils with special needs make very good progress because teachers have the information necessary for effective planning. For example, in a Year 8 lesson giving pupils key words and prompts encouraged improved written and oral work to classify the causes of the Civil Wars.
123. Teachers encourage their pupils to deal sensitively and objectively with controversial issues, for example slavery, this ensures that the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and citizenship, though occasionally pupils are not aware of the connection with citizenship. Pupils' work is marked regularly and to a high standard. They are aware of their level of attainment and what they should do to improve. Homework is set well before the end of lessons so that all pupils understand what is required of them.
124. The department places a strong emphasis on the development of literacy skills. Pupils are encouraged to listen carefully, they have frequent opportunities to practise their reading and writing and to describe and explain their views. Very good use is made of the school library and County Library Service. Pupils frequently use their information communication technology skills, especially in researching topics, but there are few opportunities for them to practise their numerical skills.
125. The head of department provides good leadership and manages the department effectively. The improvement since the last inspection has been good. Curriculum planning is strong and includes a

very good range of visits. Resources are good, but there is insufficient specialist accommodation. The response of the department to the areas for development included in the last report was positive, existing strengths have been maintained and progress made in areas identified as weaker. The department has the commitment and capacity necessary to achieve further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- The teaching is very good
- The range of curriculum meets the different needs of pupils
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and behave very well
- A good level of informal support for colleagues in other subjects
- Computer resources which are above the national average

Areas for development:

- More formal structures to monitor and support newly qualified teachers
- Time to support subjects across the curriculum in developing the use of ICT in their teaching
- More equipment to enable teachers to develop further the use of ICT in their teaching

126. Pupils begin Year 7 with a wide range of ICT experiences but overall, their standards are in line with national expectations. Teacher assessments suggest that by the end of Year 9, the attainment of the majority of pupils is above national expectations, with no significant variations in the standards attained by boys and girls. In Years 7 to 9 ICT is taught as a separate subject, and most pupils in Year 10 and 11 take the subject as an option. By Year 9 standards seen are above expectations. Pupils make good progress and their achievement is good. After a period of staff instability the department is now settled but this has not yet had time to have an impact on GCSE results which have been in line with the national average. Current standards of work in Year 11 are above average and pupils are achieving well. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good, and they behave very well. Pupils respond well to tasks set and listen attentively to whole-class teaching. They co-operate well with and offer one another assistance. Relationships are very good and productive both between teachers and pupils and between pupils.

127. In Years 7 to 9, teaching was very good overall. The Key Stage 3 strategy is having a positive impact on teaching and is leading to improved progress. A trainee teacher delivered one lesson where very clear teaching made explicit links to geography and science, requiring pupils to work independently in investigating the components of a weather forecast using the World Wide Web. Pupils were able to switch easily between the web site and the word processor where they were writing up their findings. In another lesson pupils were actively engaged in developing a model to calculate the best deals on mobile phone tariffs. This provided an excellent real-life context for the application of numeracy skills. In all lessons, pupils made good progress through the teachers' good subject knowledge and clear demonstrations. Teachers provide a good level of individual help. Planning is thorough and appropriate for the level, providing a very good structure for learning within each lesson.

128. In Years 10 and 11, teaching was also very good. Pupils worked very productively and quickly with a lot of adult support to meet the high expectations of the knowledgeable teachers. Pupils co-operated well with one another and there was a real hum of positive activity. Whole-class teaching focused on the requirements of the course and what pupils need to do independently to achieve higher grades. Where teaching was occasionally less effective, a small number of pupils dominated the teacher's attention, restricting the opportunities to support individual work. Overall, teachers have very good subject knowledge and there is very good planning and pupils are well informed on their progress.

129. The subject has changed significantly in scope and nature since the last inspection and the provision has improved considerably, despite a long period of staffing instability. The head of department has provided good leadership and management. He is a good role model as a teacher and has a clear vision, which is leading to further improvement. Subject specialists now teach ICT and the GNVQ course is meeting the needs of more pupils. The changes to the GCSE courses to take account of pupils' interests and abilities should also lead to improved results. The department is currently reviewing the Key Stage 4 courses. The number of pupils opting for ICT in Years 10 and 11 has substantially increased and all pupils have the opportunity to leave school with an externally validated certificate. The introduction of "ICT guarantees" from subjects across the curriculum is a good attempt to ensure that pupils receive their entitlement. Links with other subjects, such as the work on statues in art and support for science week, are having a positive impact. However, support for colleagues in other subjects has been informal, though effective and there is a need for time to be made available for this. The support for newly qualified teachers is not yet systematic enough. While the number of computers per pupil in school is above the national average, more equipment, such as data projectors and laptops, is needed if subject teachers are to increase the use of ICT in their teaching.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision for modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Results over time in Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average.
- Present standards of work in the Year 11 GCSE classes.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for development

- Increasing the range of topics covered in Years 7 to 9
- Increasing the opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to develop pupils' oral skills.
- Ensure greater uniformity in the quality of teaching.

130. Results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average in 2001 and the rise in 2002 was due to an improvement in boys' results. Generally girls outperform boys in line with the national averages. Rather more than a third of the year group take GCSE examinations in French. In the last few years the number of boys has increased, while the number of girls has decreased. Standards were well above average in 2001 and remained well above average overall in 2002 with a preponderance of B and C grades. Generally girls outperform boys by more than the national average, although girls' results fell in 2002

131. Overall, current standards in Year 9 are average because the time devoted to the teaching of French is relatively low and as a result, pupils have not covered a wide range of topics. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. In lessons, standards are average, but the written work showed above-average standards. In the work scrutiny they are above average. In all years there is a strong focus on developing pupils' understanding of language and competence in grammar. This enables pupils even by the mid-point of Year 9 to gain practice in the tenses and different parts of speech needed to reach Level 5 and, for the higher-attaining pupils, Level 6. Comprehension skills are well developed, since teachers are careful to check understanding throughout lessons. Pupils do not, however, have enough opportunities to use spoken French productively and creatively within or outside the classroom.

132. Standards in the GCSE groups are above average due to the high quality of teaching the pupils have had over two years and substantial coverage and practice in all the skills including the use of past examination papers. Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils are tested frequently and have been

able to prepare well for a range of extended writing tasks by using very useful worksheets in Year 10. These provide them with an appropriate measure of support, and also give them opportunities to sharpen their skills in acquiring and practising vocabulary and grammatical structures. As a result, most pupils are quietly confident about their progress and know what they have to do to consolidate or improve their grades. Smaller numbers of lower-attaining pupils are being entered this year for the first time for the Certificate of Business Language Competence. Some pupils are making good progress as the teaching is supportive and attuned to their needs in class, but for others progress is limited since they lack motivation and their low level of retention is exacerbated by the infrequency of the lessons, and in some instances, by lack of homework. As a consequence, some pupils, mainly boys, come to lessons without the appropriate equipment. Overall, however achievement is good.

133. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are well structured and teachers have high expectations for their pupils. Pupils' written literacy skills are well developed as they are taught how language works. Teachers regularly check their understanding and pupils are given sufficient opportunities to assess their own work in lessons. As a result, all pupils, including the lower-attainers, are able to pick out a pleasing amount of details from listening and reading tasks and record them with the necessary accuracy. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to work with dictionaries to consolidate their written work. Oral work in Years 7 to 9, however, is too often limited to teacher-pupil questioning and textbook exercises. As a consequence, pupils tend to be passive learners and not fully focused during oral activities and this is reflected in their pronunciation. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 with the more homogeneous groups. In a very good GCSE French lesson on environmental problems pupils had ample opportunity to develop all their skills, including ICT. While pupils were working on computers the teacher was correcting written answers and providing feedback. Tasks were inter-linked well and pupils were working at a brisk pace. Consequently, they were able to combine new vocabulary and structures to construct effective dialogues.

134. In the satisfactory teaching there are some inadequacies in the preparation of pupils for tasks and unimaginative use of textbook sources. Pupils with special educational needs generally make progress at a similar rate to their peers as their teachers know them well, encourage them and are careful to include them in questioning. However, strategies to meet their learning needs fully are not always applied consistently. Sometimes not enough consideration is given to the requirements of gifted and talented pupils. Teachers are starting to put ideas into practice to try to raise the attainment and motivation of boys in Years 7 to 9. This is having a positive effect, but at some cost to the participation of girls who are reticent in class. The new head of department is leading the way in developing pupils' ICT skills, although this is impeded in part by difficulties of access to sufficient computers. Homework is regular, but marking is inconsistent in quality. The department is now starting to place more emphasis on assessment to guide and support pupils' learning, but pupils in Years 7 to 9 are insufficiently aware on a day-to-day basis of targets to improve their work.

135. Leadership and management are good and potentially very good. Within six months the new head of department has not only acclimatised to a different educational system, but also fully rewritten schemes of work and overseen the revision of textbook provision. This is enabling staff to direct pupils' learning in a more organised way. She is determined to raise standards and has a thoughtful and creative approach to evaluating areas of perceived weakness and in devising strategies to remedy them. At present, the department has no formal arrangements for teachers to observe each other, which would promote a greater evenness in the quality of teaching. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. All of the issues highlighted as areas for development in that report relate to teaching and learning. These issues remain today for the newly reconstituted department to tackle, but some progress is starting to be made.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards of music throughout the school
- The rich musical experience is provided for all pupils
- Pupil's enjoyment of the subject and their eagerness to learn
- Pupils gain good musical skills because of the high quality, enthusiastic and very effective teaching

Areas for development

- The lack of opportunity for all pupils to use music technology equipment
- The poor soundproofing of teaching rooms which hinders learning

136. By Year 9 standards are above average. This represents a good level of achievement given pupils' average attainment on entry to the school. Pupils' attainment in music compares very well with their other subjects. Pupils who receive instrumental and vocal tuition, from the visiting tutors or privately, achieve very high standards of performance. Higher-attaining pupils have produced work of exceptional quality, with two Year 9 pupils already having passed their GCSE examination gaining A grades. Pupils are encouraged to incorporate their instrumental skills within the classroom, often resulting in high levels of performance. In one Year 9 lesson two girls produced a well developed piece based on 6 notes for flute and piano portraying the mood of serenity and incorporating close imitation and sequential melodic lines. They performed this to the rest of the class, who listened with interest.

137. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were significantly above the national average and pupils are achieving very well. This has been the trend for the last three years with boys and girls doing equally well. Nine Year 11 pupils took their GCSE examination a year early and gained very high marks. Higher-attainers are very good performers and use their skills to produce imaginative compositions. For example, one boy produced a complex piece for two guitars and drums, recording the rhythm and lead guitar parts by double tracking. The piece contained improvisation over a simple chordal accompaniment. Year 11 pupils are achieving better standards in performing and composing than in the more theoretical aspects of the course. Lower-attainers have only a limited understanding of music from cultures other than western. They struggle to identify the musical characteristics of Bhangra and Salsa music. Higher-attaining pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of features of gamelan and raga. Pupils tend to answer teachers' questions with short responses and do not freely enter into discussions about the music they hear. The more advanced musical analysis discussions do not take place during lessons because pupils rely too much on the teacher to lead their discussions. Attainment in instrumental lessons is generally good.

138. Pupils learn well because the teaching they currently receive is good, though over time the quality of teaching has been better. Because of staffing problems there has been some disruption to pupils learning, resulting in lower standards in Year 9 than in previous years. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show excellent attitudes to their work overall. They enjoy music lessons and extracurricular activities because they are interesting and challenging. They respond very positively because lessons are highly organised and very well planned. In the best lessons, pupils are told what they are going to learn and why at the outset, and the lessons end with a clear summary to reinforce learning. Teaching is geared to making pupils aware of, and progressively responsible for, their own learning. Teachers build pupils' confidence with regular and effective use of praise. They circulate round the groups well to ensure that they are working hard. Lessons are always highly musical, with very good management of pupils. Pupils are taught to listen to and respect the views of others. They are supportive of each other and work productively at a good pace.

139. The access to computer equipment with music software for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is limited because the department has only two computers. This prevents pupils from creating and developing their own compositions. Literacy skills are well developed with lots of opportunities to use musical vocabulary and other specialist language. For example in one Year 9 lesson pupils created music to represent particular emotions and used descriptive words such as anger and serenity. However, numeracy skills are less well developed.
140. The leadership and management of music are good, but currently have some weaknesses. The department has been through a difficult time over the last year due to the changes in staffing. The head of music is very well organised and through her clear vision the department has a very positive impact on the ethos of the whole school. Documentation and schemes of work are good and assessment procedures are effective with all pupils aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The more talented pupils are challenged by entering them for the GCSE examination up to two years early. This works very well and has ensured very high standards are maintained. It is difficult for the head of department to manage effectively because she is part-time and does not have any formal time to monitor the quality of teaching or ensure continuity within the department. Teachers do not currently communicate enough and this results in information vital to lessons being omitted.
141. Overall the department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have risen. The quality of the accommodation has improved significantly but the main teaching room is not soundproof and this allows frequent interruptions from the noise of the adjacent practice rooms. For example one Year 11 lesson on African drumming was disrupted by the sound of a 'medium rock beat' performed on the drum kit as a pupil had a drum lesson in the practice room next door.
142. Music makes a very good contribution to extra-curricular activities and pupils are encouraged to use their musical skills throughout the school. For example, a Year 11 guitarist and violinist gave an exciting and highly musical performance of a piece of Irish music in a whole school assembly celebrating St Patrick's Day. The variety of musical ensembles provides good opportunities for social development. Over a quarter of the pupils in school have instrumental lessons; this is significantly higher than most schools. The Arts Centre activities after school give pupils opportunity to improve their personal and performance skills whilst creating strong links with pupils from the partner primary schools.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The high standards especially in football and netball
- The availability and wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Aspects of teaching in particular the challenge to and management of the pupils
- The participation levels with excellent attitudes and behaviour

Areas for development

- The use of data to target areas for improvement
- Complete the schemes of work, especially the core course in Years 10 and 11
- Make a greater use of focused marking that tells the pupils exactly what to do to improve.

143. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average, and are well above average in football and netball. This confirms the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, when a number of pupils attained the highest levels. Pupils have good co-ordination skills that allow them to play small and full games effectively and they show a high degree of tactical awareness. Pupils evaluate the work of others well when asked to do so, and often spontaneously give advice on ways of improving the skill. Pupils often take responsibility in lessons, for example leading the different

parts of the warm up activities and organising their small games to incorporate a tactical skill. Skills in rugby, hockey and gymnastics are slightly less well-developed, but pupils transfer to these games the tactical awareness developed in netball and football. In gymnastics pupils have confidence in trying out movements and show good balance and spatial awareness. Pupils use technical terminology accurately in lessons. Pupils make very good progress in most lessons and this represents very good achievement. All groups of pupils make similar progress.

144. Due to the timetable structure no lessons of the core course in Years 10 and 11 could be seen and so no assessment of standards can be made. A small number of pupils of all abilities follow the full GCSE course. They show a high level of practical skill and make good progress. The numbers taking GCSE are too small to make a valid statistical comparison but the last two years all pupils obtained grades C and above, although very few obtained A* or A grades. Other pupils follow the short GCSE course. The comparative data available suggests that they are reaching levels above the national average. At present no analysis is undertaken to compare actual results with those predicted or to compare how well pupils did in PE, relative to their other GCSE results.
145. Behaviour in, and attitudes to, PE are excellent. Pupils arrive with appropriate kit and during the inspection, all pupils participated in the lessons. Participation in extra-curricular activities is high, with a wide variety of activities on offer and a comprehensive programme of inter-house matches. A number of individuals and teams have achieved success at local, county and national levels. In all lessons, pupils work well in pairs and in groups. Pupils appreciate and encourage the efforts of others. The very good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves encourage a positive environment in which the pupils feel confident in trying out new ideas.
146. Overall the teaching of PE is good, and very good in Years 7 to 9. Staff use their very good knowledge and understanding of the subject to interest and motivate the pupils. The management of the pupils and the relationships, the challenge in the lessons and the high expectations all lead to good and sometimes very good learning. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support, and those showing a particular ability in sporting activities are encouraged to take part in extra activities. A weaker aspect in teaching is the tendency of staff to develop pupils' answers rather than drawing the ideas out from the pupils by further questioning. Sometimes an activity has too wide a brief to enable pupils to focus enough on areas of improvement. In the GCSE course the marking does not give enough guidance on how pupils could improve their work. This was also mentioned in the last report. In the GCSE courses pupils know the level they are working at and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The procedures for assessment give a level at the end of each unit. However, further development of this is required to help the pupils to monitor their own progress.
147. The curriculum meets the National Curriculum requirements, although with a bias towards games. It is further enhanced by the very good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils have opportunities to develop numeracy skills well through using angles with compass bearings and literacy skills in using technical terminology and developing oral answers. ICT is used as appropriately. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 however, has a number of weaknesses. Pupils have an element of choice, but those pupils opting for the 'SWIFT' course do not have a formal PE lesson and not all take part in the extra-curricular or house events. This means that some do not take part in the health and fitness aspect of PE. The schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 have not yet been completed to assist the large number of non-specialists teaching the subject and or to incorporate the roles of officials, coaches, umpires and referees. Teaching three GCSE courses within one lesson is causing difficulties in providing suitable work for all pupils and this is contributing to the lack of higher grades in the examination results.

148. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory, with a number of good areas. All members of the department share their enthusiasm for the subject and are good role models as team members. However a number of areas, such as the analysis of data, need developing. Monitoring of the teaching and learning in the department is minimal with what is carried out being undertaken in an informally. The departmental documentation is incomplete. The new sports hall is a valuable addition to the facilities but the multi use of the main school hall, affects standards especially in relation to time lost in the lesson after break. The bright informative displays in the corridor areas attract pupil interest and raise the profile of the subject.
149. The strengths mentioned in the last inspection have been maintained and all areas identified for improvement, except the marking of written work, have been improved. This represents satisfactory improvement and the department has a very good base from which to improve further.