

INSPECTION REPORT

SAINT BEDE'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Lytham St Annes

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119788

Headteacher: Mr C J Riding

Lead inspector: Mark Woodward

Dates of inspection: 15 – 18 September 2003

Inspection number: 258765

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	680
School address:	Talbot Road Lytham Lytham St Annes
Postcode:	FY8 4JL
Telephone number:	(01253) 737174
Fax number:	(01253) 731243
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr W Drake
Date of previous inspection:	15/09/1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Saint Bede's Catholic High School is a smaller than average Catholic comprehensive school, serving 680 pupils aged 11-16. It is applying for business with mathematics and computing specialist school status, received national achievement awards in 2002 and 2001 and gained the Sportsmark award in 2003. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times is below average and more apply for admission than can be accommodated. The school serves an area that is relatively advantaged; seven per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and only two pupils having English as an additional language. Around nine per cent of the pupils are on the register for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) which is below average, and nearly three per cent have statements of SEN, which is broadly average. The standards achieved by the pupils when they enter the school are above average.

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20729	James Berry	Team inspector	Science
22695	Raymond Cardinal	Team inspector	Business Educational inclusion History Religious education Special educational needs
17530	Mary Cureton	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography
17709	Alan Giles	Team inspector	Physical education
11672	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Music Drama
22723	Bob Hartman	Team inspector	Mathematics
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good school** in which pupils achieve well. It strikingly fulfils its mission statement and provides **very good value for money**. Standards are well above average and pupils' personal development is fostered very well. Teaching and learning are good and the school's work is enhanced by pupils' very positive attitudes and the good support offered by parents.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

Strengths

- Well above average GCSE results which are continuing to rise.
- Pupils' very good attitudes to learning; very good behaviour and relationships; and very high levels of attendance.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior management team.
- The ethos of the school, which strives to meet all pupils' needs through high quality care and guidance including excellent arrangements for induction.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
- The breadth of educational opportunities; for example, work experience and extra-curricular sport.

Weaknesses

- Provision for graphic products and information and communication technology (ICT); for music and drama at GCSE; and statutory elements of the curriculum in ICT and art.
- Middle managers' role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of their departments' work.
- The accommodation for physical education and those subjects housed in the ROSLA (Raising of the school leaving age) building and aspects of health and safety.
- Development planning including how developments are to be financed and the identification and fulfilment of staff training needs.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have risen and significant improvements in provision have been made; some issues identified by the last inspection have still to be resolved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
	A	A	A	A

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

The **achievement of the pupils is good**; they achieve well throughout the school. **Standards seen during the inspection were above average by the end of Year 9 and well above average by the end of Year 11**; this is reflected in examination and test results. In the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, pupils gain well above average results in English, mathematics and science. GCSE results in these three core subjects are also well above average. Pupils also achieve well in history, art, physical education, food technology and leisure and tourism. They do not achieve as well as they could in graphic products and ICT; and in music and drama in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results are well above average and rising, with the trend above the national trend. The school achieved its highest ever GCSE results in 2003 and over the past three years has consistently been near the top of the local education authority's performance tables. Girls and boys

achieve similarly, although in some years there have been differences between their examination results particularly at GCSE; however, no consistent pattern emerges. Pupils with a wide range of SEN make very good progress because they are given well-targeted support.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, are developed very well, the school building very successfully on pupils' and parents' positive attitudes. Attendance is very high and this reflects pupils' keenness to learn. Pupils behave very well and show respect for each other and for each other's possessions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Good teaching helps pupils to learn well and make good progress. Teaching is particularly effective in English, mathematics, science, history, art, physical education, food technology and business studies; it is unsatisfactory in graphic products and ICT; and in music in Years 10 and 11.

The school is very effective in promoting pupils' personal development and in encouraging positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are cared for well although improvements are needed in health and safety practices. Child protection procedures are systematic and staff have been appropriately trained. Very good behaviour and excellent attendance are achieved through the school's high expectations and very effective monitoring arrangements, together with strong support from parents. The lack of specialist indoor physical education facilities and unsatisfactory conditions in the ROSLA building reduce pupils' educational opportunities and lower standards; the accommodation is therefore unsatisfactory. A higher than average proportion of pupils continue in education after leaving school and this reflects well on the school's careers provision and its links with other schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has led the school very well since his appointment 18 months ago. He is very effectively supported by the two deputy headteachers who have complementary skills. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and offer both support and challenge to the senior management team but they have not ensured that all statutory requirements are met. The leadership and management of middle managers is variable; it is very good in English, mathematics and science but unsatisfactory in design and technology. Appropriately, one of the targets of this year's development plan is to improve the performance of middle managers, in particular by improving the sharpness of their procedures for raising standards.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have a very positive view of the school; they are pleased with the academic and personal achievements of their children. Pupils are equally positive about the school. Both pupils and parents praise the quality of teaching, the care and guidance and the leadership and management. Pupils' responses to the inspection questionnaire raised some concerns about behaviour which were not substantiated by pupils interviewed during the inspection or by the evidence of the school at work.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Raise standards in graphic products, ICT, music and drama.
- Develop middle managers' role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of departments' work.
- Improve the accommodation for physical education and those subjects housed in the ROSLA building.
- Make development planning, financial planning and staff development more systematic.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that elements of the curriculum in ICT and art meet statutory requirements.

- Improve aspects of health and safety and its management.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are above average when pupils join the school. **Pupils achieve well in all years and by the end of Year 11 standards are well above average.** Girls and boys achieve similarly although there are variations between year groups. **Pupils with SEN make very good progress. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11 including in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Well above average GCSE results which are rising
- Well above average results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9
- The achievement of pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science
- Pupils with SEN make very good progress
- The achievement of pupils in history, art, physical education, food technology and leisure and tourism.

Weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils in graphic products and ICT
- The achievement of pupils in music and drama in Years 10 and 11

Commentary

1. **Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests were well above average compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools** (based upon the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals) in mathematics and science and above average in English. Overall, pupils made better than average progress when results are compared with results in the National Curriculum tests taken at primary school. Results in 2003 were broadly similar and all targets were met. The trend in results is broadly in line with the national trend.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.4 (35.9)	33.3 (33)
Mathematics	37.7 (36.7)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	36.5 (36.3)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 135 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. **The trend in GCSE results is above the national trend.** Three quarters of the pupils gained five A*-C GCSE grades in 2003, a rise of 14 percentage points since the previous inspection. The backbone of this level of achievement is the performance of pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. GCSE results are also good in art, graphic art and physical education. Pupils' good progress is reflected by the GCSE results, which are well above average compared with the same pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9. The performance of more able pupils is broadly in line with what might be expected from them. The school substantially exceeded its GCSE targets in 2003.

3. In 2001 and 2002, pupils achieved relatively better GCSE results in English, mathematics, science, art, graphic art and physical education than in their other subjects. They achieved relatively worse results in drama, music, graphic products, French, history and geography.
4. **The achievement of pupils with SEN is very good.** In 2003 18 Year 11 pupils achieved a total of 54 A* - C passes amongst other examination results. All but three gained at least one pass at the higher grades. The majority of these pupils achieved below average standards in at least one core subject at the end of Year 9 and over one third were below average in two core subjects. A striking feature of pupils' very good achievement is the very good gains made in confidence and self-esteem made by individuals. This is due to the high quality support pupils receive and to their inclusion in every aspect of the life of the school. Individual pupils speak with pride of the progress they have made during their school career.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	68 (65)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (98)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.1	34.6

There were 136 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. **Pupils achieve well because of good quality teaching that builds on their very positive attitudes to learning.** Another major factor is the evolution of a strong drive to raise standards further under the leadership of the headteacher.
6. More able pupils achieve at a similar rate to other pupils and do best in those subjects that enable all pupils to achieve well. This is reflected in the proportions of pupils gaining A* or A grades at GCSE which are particularly good in mathematics, science, art, graphic art and physical education.
7. In general, standards seen in lessons matched the evidence from examination and test results. Standards seen in English, mathematics and science were well above average in all years and overall standards seen by the end of Year 11 were also well above average.
8. Standards seen in history reflect the higher GCSE results achieved in 2003 rather than those achieved in 2001 and 2002. Evidence suggests that provision has improved and is continuing to improve in this subject.
9. Pupils do not achieve equally well in the separate disciplines of design and technology owing to strengths and weaknesses in teaching quality. Their achievement is good in food, satisfactory in resistant materials and unsatisfactory in graphic products.
10. GCSE results in music and drama are unsatisfactory. In music this has been because pupils have not been prepared well enough to meet examination requirements. Measures have been taken to improve planning and organisation and this should have an impact for the pupils currently taking the course. In drama, the teacher has inherited groups of pupils, not all of whom have been committed to the course. This remains an issue in the current Year 11 but pupils in Year 10 are achieving higher standards and showing positive attitudes.

11. **The provision of ICT resources has improved substantially since the last inspection.** Three specialist facilities together with provision in the learning resource centre now give subjects much better opportunities to help pupils learn through the use of ICT. However, these facilities have only just become fully available and this is one of the main reasons why pupils have not achieved well enough to date. ICT resources are used very well to help pupils achieve in vocational examination courses.
12. The school's vocational provision has broadened pupils' opportunities to achieve. Over the past two years, all but one of the 30 candidates taking leisure and tourism have passed the part one intermediate examination.
13. Two pupils who are at an early stage of learning English have made good progress and are now able to take advantage of mainstream lessons throughout the school.

How well are pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities developed?

Attendance and punctuality are excellent and are much higher than the national average. Attitudes to learning are exemplary and behaviour is very good. Aspects of personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are also very good.

Strengths

- Attendance and punctuality and the procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are outstanding.
- Attitudes are excellent and pupils feel happy, keen and proud of their school.
- Behaviour is very good both in lessons and around the school.
- Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are outstanding. The school sets the highest expectations for conduct and successfully achieves them.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are very good. Pupils are sensitive, helpful and accepting of others in a caring community.
- Pupils are enterprising and very willing to take on responsibility.

Weaknesses

- Pupils' understanding of other cultural traditions is underdeveloped.
14. **The school does all it can to promote good attendance and punctuality and is very successful.** Parents and carers are very supportive and work in closely to ensure children attend school and arrive on time.
 15. Pupils are very keen to come to school and are enthusiastic about all aspects of school life. They are full of praise for the interesting lessons they enjoy and the wide range of clubs and trips they actively participate in. These extend pupils' personal development very well and instil in pupils a real desire to learn and succeed.

Example of outstanding practice

The school has very high levels of attendance, which it achieves through rigorous monitoring systems that build on pupils' and parents' positive attitudes.

Attendance is a very high priority for Saint Bede's school and the importance of attending school is made very clear to both parents and pupils right from the start during induction. Holiday taking is actively discouraged and all absences are rigorously followed up and any patterns of attendance are rapidly detected. Where attendance is beginning to falter, steps are taken to prevent any further disaffection with the school working closely with parents and supported well by the education welfare service. Excellent punctuality on arrival to school and to lessons is promoted constantly. As a result, pupils have very good timekeeping and have the important life skill of being on time.

16. **Pupils are helpful, considerate and consistently behave well.** Break-times and lunchtimes are pleasant and relaxed. At the beginning and end of the school day, pupils show

good self-discipline as they make their way to and from the buses. Pupils show reverence during assemblies and prayer and sang very enthusiastically at the Year 7 Welcome Mass; Catholic values are fostered very well.

17. **Very high expectations are set for conduct and the school rigorously implements policies to achieve them.** Bullying and racism seldom occur and are not tolerated. The exclusion rate is average for this type of school and the sanction is used appropriately.

Example of outstanding practice

The pupils have positive attitudes and behaviour on entry but the school is not complacent and staff continue to work hard to raise standards.

The school sets very high expectations for pupils' conduct and works hard to achieve very high standards and a happy and caring ethos. The pupils and parents are told very clearly what is expected at school during induction. New pupils see how well their older peers behave and follow their great example. There is a very strict uniform code that the school absolutely insists on; this sets the tone for discipline. New parents pledge to support behaviour management in joint approaches. When "imposition" slips are raised for a misdemeanour, parents are informed and any misbehaviour is "nipped in the bud" at a very early stage. Parents appreciate the information they receive, which enables them to exercise some behaviour management and support at home. "Impositions" are an excellent deterrent for the majority of pupils.

When pupils behave poorly, personal support plans are drawn up following excellent advice from staff and external agencies. Record keeping on individuals' behaviour is meticulous. Pupils who arrive at the school with poor behaviour histories, receive excellent care and attention and often show massive improvements in their behaviour and attitudes to school and to their learning. Any kind of harassment such as bullying and racism is rare but is dealt with very seriously when it occurs.

18. **Pupils' personal development is fostered very well. Relationships throughout the school are very good. The ethos is very positive and the mission statement is fully reflected in its work and practice.** Positive reinforcement of the values of respect, care for others, trust, fairness and high moral standards are strengths. This helps pupils to be considerate and thoughtful in their approaches to others and have high expectations of their own behaviour. Pupils mature into very confident and sociable young adults. The Year 11 prefects were highly praised by their Year 7 'buddies' and parents for their helpfulness in pupil induction. They also help in the smooth running of the school by carrying out a range of duties conscientiously such as monitoring behaviour on the school buses. Pupils appreciate their own cultural traditions very well. There is good use of classic literature, theatre experience and a range of music and art to inspire and enrich learning. Pupils' understanding of the diversity and richness of other cultures, however, is underdeveloped.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.3
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	1.2

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	664	39	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of the school’s educational provision is good. Teaching is good and the school makes very good provision for pupils’ personal development. Pupils with SEN are very well served and there are very good opportunities for pupils to learn outside the classroom. Pupils are well cared for and given very good guidance.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In most subjects, pupils are given interesting and challenging tasks, which helps them to learn well. The proportion of very good or excellent teaching is higher in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 104 lessons (one lesson was ungraded because the observation time was too short)

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (5%)	18 (17%)	46 (44%)	27 (26%)	7 (7%)	1 (1%)	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in the core subjects of English mathematics and science
- Teaching and learning in history, art, physical education, business studies and food technology
- Teaching and support for pupils with SEN
- Teachers’ subject expertise and insistence on high standards of behaviour
- Pupils’ work rate during lessons
- Pupils’ work is assessed well

Weaknesses

- Teaching in graphic products and ICT
- Teaching in music in Years 10 and 11

Commentary

Teaching and Learning

19. **Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11.** The inspection statistics indicate better teaching in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 but this is not reflected in the overall teaching judgements because in looking at pupils' work and in talking to pupils, a more even quality of teaching performance is evident. Pupils and parents confirm the good quality of the teaching.
20. The quality of teaching is very good in English and physical education and good in mathematics, science, history, art, food technology and business studies. In these subjects, pupils are interested in the lesson activities and are challenged to produce high quality work.
21. **Pupils learn well because of good teaching and because they have very positive attitudes.** They are keen to take advantage of educational opportunities and show this in the enthusiastic way that they respond in lessons. The result is that their knowledge, understanding and skills develop at a good pace, which is why they achieve good examination and test results. In the subjects where teachers are less effective, learning is reduced and this too is reflected in examination and test results.
22. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and this builds on pupils' very positive attitudes to create a very productive atmosphere in lessons. Pupils concentrate well and show a good level of responsibility for their own learning; for example, by completing homework on time.
23. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. Specialist teaching contributes to the standards achieved in the school and this represents a good achievement for the governors because at a time when recruitment is problematic, effective teachers have been appointed even in shortage subjects such as mathematics.
24. **The Key Stage 3 strategy has been implemented well** and this has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning; for example, teachers routinely make the intentions of lessons clear and review with the pupils how well these have been met.
25. Pupils do not make enough progress in graphic products, ICT and in music in Years 10 and 11 because of unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching of individual lessons in graphic products is often satisfactory but a review of pupils' work and their achievement in examinations reveals that they are not expected to produce work of a high enough standard. Some of the teaching of ICT is of a good standard but unsatisfactory planning and classroom management is evident in other lessons. Classroom practice in music is good but over time, pupils are not prepared well enough for GCSE examinations.
26. The headteacher has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teachers. He has seen all of them teach and has taken some very positive steps to celebrate strengths and tackle weaknesses.
27. Heads of departments do not conduct regular evaluations of the quality of teachers' work but this is appropriately included as a target in the current school development plan.
28. **Teachers have a good knowledge and awareness of the needs of pupils with SEN.** Individual education plans are well used and contain clear, relevant targets. Learning support staff are very well used and have a positive impact on pupils' learning. The relationship between pupil and assistant is typically one of constant dialogue during the lesson. Where appropriate, assistants take notes during lessons to provide a check on a pupil's work and understanding. In some lessons the assistant takes notes on a laptop to provide an additional visual aid to hearing impaired pupils. In other lessons, pupils with co-ordination difficulties use laptops successfully as an alternative to writing. Support staff are very effective in encouraging pupils to participate in lesson activities such as encouraging a pupil with communication difficulties to answer a question during class discussion. Staff ensure that pupils who are physically disabled are seated appropriately and play a full part in lesson activities.

Example of outstanding practice

Support for a pupil with special educational needs.

In one telling example of the high quality support provided, a pupil with complex difficulties works alongside a learning support assistant. He has poor fine motor skills and is greatly assisted by the provision of a laptop. He takes his own notes and keeps pace with activities during French. The assistant keeps a check on the notes on screen and intervenes to suggest that he volunteers an answer during class discussion in French. He has significant communication difficulties. The intervention boosts his confidence and self-esteem and he successfully answers one of the teacher's questions. The teacher shows good awareness by quickly choosing him when he volunteers an answer. In an English lesson the same pupil has the task of compiling questions for a "TV chat show". Although finding difficulty in joining in class discussion his understanding is very good and he can explain the difference between open and closed questions. He is fully involved in a paired activity to compile and present a "chat show" sequence, with his learning support assistant as his partner.

Assessment

29. **The procedures for assessing standards and progress are good overall.** There has been good progress in developing both procedures and practice since the previous inspection, particularly in the use of target levels and grades. A recent one-day training course for all staff on assessment was valuable; teachers and learning support staff were involved in order for all staff concerned with learning to gain a good understanding of assessment and its purpose. The provision and analysis of assessment information to monitor and evaluate inclusion, (for example the gifted and talented, those with identified SEN or groups of differing capability), is developing well.
30. Particular care is taken to ensure that staff are not overwhelmed with assessment data to the extent of being unable to use it efficiently or effectively. A basic set of relevant test, examination and other assessment data and their analysis is given to subjects. Subjects are, within school policy, encouraged to develop their own approaches to analysis. Some, particularly English and physical education, have extended, modified and built on these data to suit their own particular needs – with very good effect.
31. **The thoroughness and constructiveness of assessment in subjects is good overall.** A whole-school marking policy, recently up-dated to take account of recent national good practice guidance, provides helpful assessment guidance. Actual practice ranges from unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages and art, to very good in English and physical education. Almost all pupils are aware of their levels or grades and what they need to do to improve on them. The overall quality of assessment as a means of focusing support can be judged by the fact that in the previous year a group of about 30 pupils were identified as underachieving on the basis analysis of their assessment data. These ‘at risk’ pupils were all targeted and given mentors. All eventually achieved their target grades as a result of this identification and mentoring process.
32. Individual and subject targets are set using a combination of national, local and historical school data. Use is also made of data provided by the local education authority to compare the relative performance of subjects within the school and with the performance of particular subjects with those in other schools. Heads of subject are appropriately held accountable for their results and have formal interviews to review progress towards meeting subject targets.
33. Reporting arrangements are good. An annual report and two interim progress reports are sent to parents each year. This means that parents receive attainment and progress information across all subjects once a term. A letter is enclosed to with interim and annual reports explaining the target grades to parents and students’ progress to achieve them. Parents themselves feel that they are well informed. Parents’ consultation evenings are timetabled to follow closely on from the annual examination session for that particular year group. Annual reports provide a satisfactory quality of information about standards and what pupils need to do to improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory; it is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The school ensures that all pupils have full access to the curriculum
- The provision for pupils with SEN is very good
- Vocational courses have been developed well
- Personal social and health education is very good

Weaknesses

- ICT provision does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11
- The art curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in Years 7 to 9

Commentary

Overall the school provides a satisfactory range of curricular opportunities to cater for the particular needs of its pupils.

34. An improvement in the monitoring of the curriculum has ensured good provision for pupils aged 11 to 14. Many schemes of work have been improved since the last inspection and have been adapted to meet individual needs. Provision is improved by the strong cross-curricular links with personal, social and health education.
35. A recent and comprehensive review of the curriculum has been innovative and responsive to the older pupils' interests and aptitudes. Flexible timetabling, the introduction of modular-based studies for pupils aged 14 to 16 and an option system that enables pupils to take a good range of courses has improved standards and attitudes to work. Further improvements have been made with the provision of options in work-related business studies and ICT in 2003 to join the established course in leisure and tourism. The organisation of these courses is very creative. The timetabling of business studies and leisure and tourism at the same time as ICT enables teaching groups to be combined, when appropriate, to broaden pupils' learning experiences and understanding. First impressions suggest that this is a successful strategy but it is too early to judge the overall impact on pupils' achievement.
36. **The school does not meet all statutory curriculum requirements.** The curriculum for art is not broad enough because of a lack of three-dimensional elements in pupils' work (this was also mentioned in the last inspection report). Not all pupils have access to the full range of statutory ICT provision in Years 10 and 11 and subjects are not meeting the National Curriculum requirements for the use of ICT to promote learning. The very poor specialist accommodation for physical education is restricting standards and the expansion of the subject.
37. **The school prepares pupils very well for employment and the next stages in education.** It has developed a cohesive programme of study provided largely through the citizenship and personal and social education programmes. Close links with the Connexions agency ensure that pupils' interests are well informed about opportunities in further education and local industry and commerce. A successful work experience programme for Year 10 pupils and the excellent displays and library resources enhance this area of the curriculum.
38. The personal and social education programme also prepares pupils very well for dealing with issues that confront them in modern life. Good guidance is given on how to make informed choices; for example, the dangers of drug abuse are covered thoroughly.
39. **The school provides very good opportunities to support learning outside the school day and to increase participation in a range of activities, particularly in sport.** Subjects are using visiting speakers, outside visits, competitions and community involvement to enhance pupils' learning. Help is also given in a range of homework and revision clubs. There is an excellent range of sporting activities and fixtures on offer and a large number of pupils of all abilities take part.

Is the curriculum inclusive by ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all pupils?

40. **The school has a fully inclusive approach to learning and to the curriculum.** Pupils with a range of disabilities and complex needs are able to reach all specialist teaching areas, for example, through the use of the lift and stair lifts. All those who are underachieving, or have difficulties that hinder their learning, are mentored and disaffection seldom occurs.
41. **Provision for pupils with SEN is very good.** The school provides good levels of high quality support to pupils with a very wide range of needs. Pupils with the greatest needs appropriately receive full-time individual support and careful planning ensures that their level of support is not compromised. The school works very productively with the local authority to ensure that specialist equipment is available to individuals, including laptops for note-taking in lessons and furniture whose height can be adjusted to meet the needs of physically disabled pupils. Specialist services are purchased by the school to support individuals and groups. Pupils with significant hearing impairment receive regular individual support from a specialist. There are very good links with the school-based occupational therapist. The therapist attends school each week to support individuals and groups. The programme followed has a very positive impact on boosting pupils' confidence and self-esteem. As part of this work, ICT is very well used, a specialist software program helping to improve pupils' co-ordination. One group of pupils of different ages meets informally in a club and gives good support to each other. Provision for work experience is very good. The school is very effective at finding suitable and challenging placements for pupils with significant needs.

Example of outstanding practice

Provision for pupils with special educational needs.

The school's provision is impressively proactive when the need arises; the school strives to ensure that the right kind of support is given to each pupil. Just two weeks into the new school year an emergency case conference was held to discuss safety concerns about a new pupil. The conference (at short notice) was strongly supported by the presence of local authority staff, including expert advice. An action plan was formulated including observations by an outside specialist, a behaviour management programme and an early review of progress.

Another pupil, with a significant hearing impairment, benefits from the learning support assistant's use of a laptop during lessons, so that the pupil has an additional visual aid to understanding while a physically disabled pupil benefits from a variable height table that can be altered, for example, for writing and practical activities during science.

42. Arrangements for pupils for whom English is not their first language are good. As a result they make good progress and are fully integrated into the life of the school. Currently, there are no pupils who are unable to understand what their teachers or classmates are saying.
43. **The accommodation is unsatisfactory.** Considerable efforts have been made recently to improve existing accommodation. This has included the development of an ICT room, enlarging the pupils' main entrance and extensive refurbishment of the main block and boys toilets. There is good accommodation for science, ICT, art and the library. The provision for PE is being severely affected by the lack of an indoor sports facility. The general poor condition of building housing the humanities subjects and business studies lowers the quality of provision in those subjects. Sound travels through the partition walls and impedes the concentration of both pupils and teachers. In some subjects cramped conditions are being produced by large class sizes particularly in upper sets. Some classrooms are only accessible via other classrooms and this causes disruption to both registration and the beginning and end of many lessons.
44. **The match of teaching and support staff to the needs of the curriculum is good.** This is particularly good because of the difficulty in meeting the needs of the curriculum in a relatively small school. Class sizes are relatively high in the upper sets but in most circumstances this

does not form a barrier to learning; however, where teaching is less secure or where space is limited pupils' progress can be affected, in ICT lessons, for example.

45. Pupils benefit from the **good range of resources that support learning**. Particular improvements have been made in recent years in the provision for ICT including welcome support from funds raised by the parents' association. There are now five computer suites, including the library and technology suites, which are readily available to departments. The computer network has a good range of general and subject-specific software which is increasingly well used by many subjects.
46. **The learning resource centre is well stocked and accessible throughout the school day**, during breaks and after school. It has a good collection of fiction and information books and a suite of computers. The librarian, her assistant and her pupil assistants create a welcoming atmosphere and readily provide help as needed. The librarian, who is also the school's ICT manager, ably fulfils her responsibility to develop provision in response to pupils' and teachers' needs and interests.

Care, guidance and support

How well are pupils cared for, guided and supported?

The school ensures that the care and welfare of pupils is very effective but there are weaknesses in health and safety arrangements. The school provides very good support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development.

Strengths

- The care and guidance provided is very good and helps pupils feel secure and confident and achieve their best.
- The arrangements for child protection and for children in public care are very good.
- Pupils with a range of medical, sensory and other complex needs are supported very well.
- Induction of new pupils is very effective and individual arrangements are made to help pupils settle quickly and enjoy school life.
- Pupils have very good impartial advice which leads them towards further study or career opportunities.
- The school gauges pupils' views by channelling ideas to year councils and has recently consulted more widely on girls' uniform and sex education.

Weaknesses

- Guidance on sex education has been criticized by pupils and although a new programme has been devised, the new policy has not yet been implemented.
- The health and safety co-ordinator has not yet received training in good practice.
- The welfare room is distant from the office and sick pupils were seen in the dining hall, where there was little comfort or privacy.

47. **The care and guidance provided is a strength of the school.** The school has a fully inclusive approach to helping all those who are underachieving or have any personal difficulty. Effective academic and personal development monitoring enables pupils from all ability levels to be tracked and any underperformance detected. Those pupils are mentored and helped to resolve issues, organise their work and manage their time better and the results are impressive. Pupils who are mentored confirmed massive benefits for their learning, general happiness and self-esteem.
48. The school's supportive and caring culture is seen at its best when pupils with a range of complex needs including medical, sensory and physical disability are supported on an

individual basis to fully access the curriculum and enjoy school life. Care for ill and injured pupils is good but is hampered by the location of the welfare room.

49. The school has been notified about the statutory infringements for health and safety. Action was taken immediately after the inspection to tackle most of them and plans were put in place to deal with the remainder. The co-ordinator with responsibility for health and safety does not have a full understanding of statutory requirements and the management role. Clearly understood Internet access policies are in place and adhered to well.
50. **The arrangements for induction are very good.** New Year 7 pupils and their parents were very pleased at how quickly their children had settled and mastered the daily routines and complex campus in the two weeks they had been at school. Careers education and guidance is very good and all pupils are able to benefit from the impartial advice on further study or careers opportunities to realise their ambitions. Pupils feel that they have a voice in school and their views are listened to and form part of school improvement.
51. The new programme for sex education is well planned but it has not been implemented or approved by governors yet. It is an appropriate response to the weaknesses in provision identified by pupils.

How well does the school work in partnerships with parents, other schools and the community?

The links with parents are very good and the school is held in very high regard. Links with the local community are good and the school links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Strengths

- There is a very strong partnership with parents who are warmly welcomed into school as an important part of the school community.
- The school works very closely with parents to support learning, ensure pupils' happiness and well-being and deals with any issues in an exemplary way.
- The arrangements for transferring pupils from primary schools and moving students onto colleges of further education are very good.
- The school's links with the community are good.

Weaknesses

- Homework is inconsistently set across the ability sets for each year group.
 - Parents' views are not regularly gauged as part of school improvement.
52. **The school works very effectively with parents to support pupils' learning.** Parents feel a strong sense of partnership based on mutual trust and place great confidence in the school across all aspects; support for the wide range of school activities is very strong. Parents are actively involved when there are any particular behaviour, attendance, medical or other educational needs and the joint approaches to support and help pupils work very well. Some parents' views are taken into account to bring about change, like the recent poll on girls' wearing trousers but parents are not extensively consulted to help push the school forward. Any complaints are dealt with very sensitively and quickly and parents are delighted about this. There is good sharing of information about pupils' learning and how pupils can be supported at parents' evenings.
 53. **Links with the local community are good.** There are particularly strong links with local parishes and the clergy are regular and welcome visitors to enrich pupils' spiritual development. Pupils regularly take part in local and national events, such as the huge number of sporting activities and the public speaking competitions. There are strong links with external agencies to support pupils with complex learning needs. Good links with the Business

Education Partnership and local businesses ensure that the Year 10 work experience programme and the Young Enterprise Scheme are successful.

54. **The school works in close co-operation with local schools and colleges.** There are very good links with contributory primary schools and these ensure that pupils' transfer to Saint Bede's goes very smoothly and pupils settle really quickly and happily. The taster days, projects and activities were highly commended by pupils. The parents of new Year 7 pupils were full of praise at how well their children had settled. The transfer arrangements to post-16 colleges including vocational training courses are very good. The school has developed a wide range of formal and informal links with Cardinal Newman sixth form college, where most pupils go onto, and with other local further education colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The **leadership and management of the school are good** and the **leadership and management of the headteacher and senior management team are very good. Governance is satisfactory.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The leadership of the headteacher
- The contribution of the two deputy headteachers
- Leadership and management in English, mathematics and science
- The day-to-day management and administration of the school
- Relationships between senior management and staff
- The leadership and management of SEN provision

Weaknesses

- The leadership and management of design and technology
- Middle managers' monitoring and evaluation of departments' work
- The precision and focus of development plans
- Statutory requirements in ICT, art and health and safety are not fulfilled

Commentary

55. Christian values guide the action and style of the school's leadership and pupils are given broad opportunities to develop both academically and personally.
56. Eighteen months before the inspection, the headteacher inherited a school that was performing well; in a short space of time he has improved it further. He quickly became aware that issues raised by the last inspection had not been fully resolved and he has taken very positive steps to tackle them. The accommodation and resources for ICT have improved substantially and the performance of design and technology has come under close scrutiny. Also, by watching all teachers in the classroom he has quickly gained an understanding about their strengths and weaknesses. This too has led to action, for example in music and design and technology where advice has been sought to improve the preparation of pupils for GCSE examinations.
57. **The headteacher has a clear vision for the development of the school** and to this end is preparing a bid for specialist status in business with mathematics and computing specialist status. Most importantly the vision aims to build on the existing strengths to raise standards and educational opportunity further.
58. **The two deputy headteachers provide strong support for the headteacher** and are effective managers. One manages the very strong monitoring and support structures that

promote pupils' welfare while the other has developed a good structure for monitoring the quality of departments' work.

59. A good example of the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school is shown in the improvement of pupils' conduct on the buses. Following concern about unruly behaviour, new systems were introduced which involve controlling the flow of pupils as they leave school and supervision by Year 11 pupils on the buses themselves. Pupils and parents report that this action has dramatically improved behaviour; it has also given opportunities for older pupils to take responsibility.
60. **Since the last inspection, standards have risen.** One of the principal reasons for this has been improvements in the performance of the senior management team. Roles are now clearly defined and better focused on raising standards of academic performance and personal development.
61. The senior management team take much credit for the sharp rise in GCSE results in 2003. The improved focus on raising standards in subjects has had an impact as have strategies such as identifying and supporting underachieving pupils.
62. While the senior management team have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, these are not fully outlined in the whole-school development plan. In addition, the targeting of money and staff training to meet development plan targets is not as precise as it should be. Subject and pastoral development plans vary in quality but generally do not have targets and success criteria that are clear and precise.
63. English, mathematics and science are well led and managed and this is one of the reasons why standards in these subjects are well above average. Schemes of work are up-to-date and well organised; assessment is accurate and purposeful; and there is a strong commitment by the teaching teams to improve the quality of their work.
64. **The evaluation of subjects' performance by heads of department is an area in need of improvement.** Observation of lessons and the analysis of pupils' progress through the monitoring of work is not established practice in most subjects; this is an area appropriately identified in the current whole-school development plan.
65. Governors provide good support to the senior management team and share the same educational values; they are not fully aware of all their statutory responsibilities.
66. **The day-to-day management and administration of the school is very effective.** Information systems are efficient; relationships between teaching and support staff are very good; and parents and pupils are handled professionally and sympathetically.
67. Arrangements for financial management are satisfactory. Day-to-day financial affairs are managed very effectively but educational priorities in the development plan do not always include detailed financial projections. The school has a healthy balance that has been carried forward to support a range of initiatives including a three-year refurbishment programme. Good use is made of new technology to aid the management of the school and regular reports are prepared and presented to the governors' finance committee. The school applies the principles of 'best value' well.
68. **The management of the school's provision for pupils with SEN is very good.** At the heart of this provision is a team of committed learning support assistants who provide high quality support. Pupils' achievement is very good. Pupils and parents have confidence in the provision made. The school makes a very strong commitment to a multi-agency approach through the use of its own funding. It works very well with the local authority who offer strong support in terms of both advice and funding. Its commitment and action to achieve a whole school approach to SEN is excellent.

69. The local authority are very supportive in responding to requests for additional resources for pupils with SEN. There are very strong partnerships between the school, the local authority and other support services.
70. **Progress from the last inspection in developing provision for pupils with SEN has been very good.** The school now admits, and successfully provides for, pupils with a much wider range of needs including those who are physically disabled, those with significant hearing impairment and those with complex learning difficulties.
71. **Provision for staff development is quite limited.** Teachers attend short courses, particularly in response to national initiatives but also to needs identified during appraisal interviews. Whole-staff training days have been well used. However, some important modes of staff development do not have high enough priority, such as teachers learning from each other by observing lessons, by observing good practice in other schools or by studying for higher degrees. Staff development is not closely enough linked to priorities in the development plans.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,846,095	Balance from previous year	65,270
Total expenditure	1,763,672	Balance carried forward to the next	147,693
Expenditure per pupil	82,423		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- An interesting and well planned curriculum
- Well above average GCSE results in Language and Literature
- Very good teaching, which encourages thoughtful response
- Significant progress in literacy skills, including that of pupils with SEN
- Effective assessment that helps pupils understand what they need to do to improve
- A strong contribution to pupils' social and cultural development

Areas for improvement:

- In some classes, pupils need more opportunities to use spoken English, such as formal presentations, drama or simulations.

Commentary

72. **Pupils achieve very well in English and have an enjoyable learning experience. Standards are well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11.** Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in English are well above the national average for boys and for girls, and have improved significantly in recent years. Pupils with SEN improve their skills, and make very good progress, achieving commendable GCSE passes. All pupils are entered for GCSE English literature, where results are also well above average. More able pupils are well challenged, and produce interesting and thoughtful writing. Pupils' spoken English is good; they are articulate though many lack confidence in giving more formal presentations, and need more opportunity for informal drama within English. **Literacy standards are well above average**, both within the subject and across the curriculum.
73. Pupils are hard-working, interested and engaged. The ethos and relationships in lessons are outstanding; pupils co-operate well and respond to challenges. Teachers communicate well with pupils, in a clear and lively manner.
74. **Teaching is generally very good.** Activities are relevant, challenging and carefully designed to promote active learning and good progress. Pupils are assessed very well and given very good guidance on how to improve the quality of their work. Good use is made of the library/resource centre; media education has an important role in English and drama opportunities are included in schemes of work. Children entering the school with difficulties in literacy improve their skills through interesting and well-planned activities that bring out their knowledge and understanding. Pupils are introduced to challenging literature, and develop a thoughtful response. Teachers are very skilled at encouraging pupils to think for themselves, for example in analysing texts, and at using literature extracts as models for their writing.
75. **The department is very well led.** Teachers co-operate well and a culture has evolved in which they learn from each other. Pupils are assessed well and given very clear guidance on how they might improve the quality of their work. The thoughtful use of targets encourages

pupils to maximise their progress. The curriculum has been well planned, schemes of work skilfully integrating linguistic and literary themes into topics. The English department makes a significant contribution to pupils' social and cultural development, and offers a wide range of special events and opportunities such as theatre workshops, visits and debating and so on.

76. **Since the last inspection the department has made very good progress.** Standards are higher and the most able pupils are given more challenging work. Pupils' very positive attitudes have been maintained as has the strong leadership of the department.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Lesson planning
- Motivation of pupils
- Effective teamwork

Areas for improvement:

- Girls' performance in GCSE examinations
- Independent learning
- The use of assessment
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning

Commentary

77. **The achievement of pupils is satisfactory in all years.** In 2002 and 2003 two out of five pupils gained grade A*-C in their GCSE examinations. This is an average level nationally for boys, but well below average for girls. Standards seen in lessons are better than this, as pupils benefit from a strong emphasis on speaking skills and a concentration on extended writing. Listening skills are good, since pupils are able to extract key points from dialogues spoken at near normal speed. Although comprehension skills are sound, there are too few opportunities for the more talented pupils to read extended texts critically. **Overall, standards of work are average at the end of Years 9 and 11.**
78. **Teaching is satisfactory overall** and, in the case of one teacher always good. The variation in the quality of teaching explains why pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. All teachers plan thoroughly using the well-constructed schemes of work as a framework. Whole-class question and answer sessions are conducted successfully in French. They are usually stimulating, although in the one unsatisfactory lesson observed, questioning failed to engage pupils productively. Pupils are usually placed in sets and work is generally pitched at the right level. In a very good lesson in Year 11, a group of lower attaining boys contributed fully throughout the imaginative tasks presented by the teacher. The elements of fun and attention to detail combined to generate understanding and confidence. Most pupils cope admirably when practising a particular structure in isolation. However, in Years 8 and 9, many are tentative when encountering slight variations from a model. Average and above average pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the maturity to manipulate language and make themselves understood.
79. **Attitudes are almost always very positive**, although sometimes pupils 'go through the motions'. This occasional passivity is mirrored in the restricted use of language by pupils in Years 8 and 9 in particular, where the benefits of extended and independent writing tasks are not fully explored. Older pupils clearly enjoy it when offered opportunities to write at length. The use of role-play is a significantly successful feature of provision.

80. Teachers make good use of resources. All pupils in Year 7 receive – and use – a substantial dictionary. The overhead projectors and video recorder are used to good effect and the interactive whiteboard in one of the rooms adds a dimension that helps to reinforce prior learning. Assessment in Year 7, using the new course book, is on track to provide solid information about progress at regular intervals. However, **current arrangements for assessment in other years are unsatisfactory**. They do not update progress regularly enough nor provide information that helps pupils to move up to the next level or grade in all skill areas.
81. **Leadership and management are satisfactory**. Teachers work well as a team. Examination results are analysed thoroughly and provide pointers for the future. However, monitoring and evaluation procedures to assess the quality of the department's work, including the quality of teaching and learning and the degree of success in meeting development plan targets, are not rigorous enough. The head of department has the desire and commitment to bring about change effectively. This will be an important asset as teachers adjust their planning to cope with the reduction in time for the top sets in Years 8 and 9. The challenge to maintain standards with only one period each week is formidable. **Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory**. The development of independent reading and learning remains an issue. Pupils of all abilities are making appropriate progress and the department has begun to use modern technology to support learning.

German

82. The focus in the inspection was on French, but German was also sampled. The status of German has been raised this year. It is now compulsory for all pupils in the top two sets in Years 8 and 9. In recent years, the uptake in Year 10 by pupils who undertook a 'taster' course in Years 7 to 9 has been low. In 2003, only four pupils continued with the language, to be joined by others who opted to start from scratch at the beginning of Year 10. This fragmented background has resulted in variable patterns of results on the GCSE examinations, reflecting the ability levels of those entered.
83. Two lessons were observed, one with beginners and one in the Year 11 examination group where attainment is above average. Basic grammatical principles are well understood. The serious approach adopted by all pupils in the group contributes significantly to the **good progress** being made. **Teaching is satisfactory**, being well organised, although there is a lack of authentic materials to stimulate initiative.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

84. By the end of their school careers, pupils have well above average standards in language and literacy. When they arrive at the school, standards are above average. Good progress is made in English and through other subjects in the curriculum as pupils are given good opportunities to develop their reading, writing and speaking skills. In business studies, for example, teachers encourage pupils to give presentations and this enables them to experience the pressure of preparing a talk and performing in public. Good planning has resulted in the modification of the English scheme of work to meet guidelines in the National Literacy Strategy. Planning in other subjects is more variable but the outcomes indicate that pupils' literacy needs are well met.
85. The learning resource centre enhances the development of pupils' literacy skills. It has been substantially improved since the last inspection and is now well-stocked with books and other reading and research materials such as newspapers.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Teaching and teachers' commitment to develop pupils to their full potential.
- The subject knowledge and understanding of teachers.
- National Curriculum test results in Year 9 and GCSE results in Year 11.
- The leadership and management of the head of department.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes which, coupled with good teaching, result in a high level of achievement.

Areas for improvement:

- Greater use of ICT to support learning in mathematics.
- The creation of more opportunities for independent learning, supported by, for example, use of the Internet and library.
- The development of opportunities to involve pupils more actively in their own assessment.

Commentary

86. **Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average** and have been for several years. This is shown by pupils' performance in the National Curriculum tests and by work seen in lessons and pupils' books. Boys' standards are slightly higher than girls', which is similar to the national situation. Test results are rising at broadly the same rate as those nationally.
87. **Standards achieved at GCSE, have, over the last few years, been consistently well above average.** Similar high standards were evident during the inspection. The GCSE results for 2003 show a dip that was probably due to staffing difficulties - which no longer apply. The overall trend in results over time matches that seen nationally. However, there is no clear picture regarding the differences in standards achieved between boys and girls; in 1999 boys achieved significantly higher standards, but the reverse was the case in 2002. Over the last five years, girls appear to be improving at a slightly greater rate than boys.
88. An analysis of national test and examination results shows that **pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve well.** This is corroborated by direct observation during the inspection. It is the result of a combination of good, challenging, teaching together with pupils' very positive attitudes. The department is very inclusive. All pupils are given good opportunities to achieve. Pupils feel secure and confident in class which encourages them to take risks when answering questions. They persevere, knowing that help is readily available when needed. Their interest and rate of work is sustained by the good pace of teaching. This ensures that **good quality learning** takes place. Pupils pay attention in lessons, almost invariably complete their work in good time and concentrate well. These positive attitudes could be capitalised on to give pupils greater opportunities to develop their independent learning skills.
89. **Teaching is good** and all teachers have a very good understanding of how pupils learn; they use this well to offer support and guidance and to tackle common misconceptions. Relations between pupils and teachers are very good and based on mutual respect. Rare instances of less than very good behaviour or lapses in concentration are dealt with in a firm but friendly manner, and accepted with good grace by pupils.
90. **Assessment practices are good** and are used to good effect. Work, including homework, is marked regularly with constructive comments. Regular tests allow for the rapid identification of any underachievement and for appropriate steps to be taken. In several conversations with

pupils it was clear that they knew how well they were achieving and what was needed for improvement. Pupils are aware of their target levels or grades, but could be more involved in assessing their own work, thereby further developing further their critical skills and self-knowledge.

91. **The curriculum is satisfactory.** The prime weaknesses are the limited and missed opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning. Much of this is a result of the difficulty of accessing computers. There are developing plans to remedy this limitation in the curriculum. Pupils' literacy is encouraged by displays of mathematical word lists in classrooms, writing up mathematical investigations and occasional opportunities to read aloud. The department is successfully implementing the National Numeracy Strategy and the underlying good practice. This is ensuring a smooth transition from primary schools.
92. **Leadership of the department is very good.** It is open and democratic. Discussion of teaching methods and of ways to improve standards is encouraged. There is a clear and reasoned vision as to how the department should develop. Indeed, carefully thought through decisions about staffing taken in the recent past are now beginning to bear fruit and should continue to do so. **Management of the department is also very good.** Teaching, marking and homework are regularly monitored – both formally and informally - and a system of mutual lesson observation is soon to be begin. Schemes of work have recently been revised and will be continuously updated in the light of teachers' evaluations. The department runs efficiently, with teachers making good use of their time, support staff and resources.
93. **There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.** All issues identified in the last report have been analysed and addressed. Overall standards, which are well above average, have been sustained and continue to rise in line with those nationally. The quality of teaching has improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

94. **Standards of numeracy are very good.** The high level of numeracy skills acquired in mathematics support pupils' progress in other subjects. Pupils show a very good recall of basic number facts and are able to use calculators appropriately and efficiency. Pupils in all year groups have the opportunity to apply some numeracy skills. In science, for example, pupils of all capabilities interpret a wide variety of tables, charts and diagrams and confidently use algebra when required. In physical education a wide range of measurement and statistical techniques are successfully applied.
95. The planned provision for numeracy and the teaching of numeracy skills within subjects other than mathematics is still developing. At present, because of staffing considerations, the head of mathematics is responsible for co-coordinating whole-school numeracy, but has insufficient available time to monitor numeracy provision within all subjects. A day-long whole-school training session on numeracy across subjects is planned in the very near future.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Very good leadership and management provide an effective framework that enables pupils to achieve well.
- Good teaching by all members of the department results in good learning.
- The high standards and good achievements of the pupils.
- The quality of the science network.

Areas for improvement:

- The time allowed at the end of lessons to thoroughly check the new learning.
- The amount of use made of ICT in the laboratories for practical work and teaching.

Commentary

96. **Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average.** Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, were well above the national average. There was a slight decline in 2003, but standards have been rising faster than the national average over recent years. Boys and girls perform equally well. When compared to similar schools standards are above average. Standards seen in lessons and pupils' work were also well above average. The pupils' **achievement is good** and better than might be expected from the results gained in the National Curriculum tests taken in Year 6.
97. **Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average.** The proportion of A* to C grades in the 2002 GCSE examination was above average. It rose sharply in 2003, as did the percentage of pupils gaining A* and A grades. Girls have performed better than boys in the last two years. When compared to similar schools standards are above average. **Standards** seen in lessons and pupils' books were also well above average. Pupils' **achievement is very good** and better than might be expected from the results gained in the national tests when they were in Year 9.
98. **The quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well.** The more able are achieving very well and a high proportion of them are gaining very high results in the National Curriculum tests and in the GCSE examination. This is due to the good, and often very good, well-informed teaching they receive helped by the setting system that enables lesson to proceed at a good pace. Teachers have a very good command of the subject, have very high expectations of the standards of pupils' work and this results in pupils learning very well.
99. **Pupils with SEN are also achieving well.** Teachers are well aware of their needs and use this information well to modify their approach, together at times with specially tailored written work. Support from the SEN department is very effective, enabling many of these pupils to make as good progress as their peers. In general there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls, especially at the higher levels. However, at GCSE in the last two years, the standards of the girls have been rising faster than those of the boys.
100. Good attention is paid to developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Keywords are emphasised, pupils are encouraged to glean information from books, the science network and the Internet, then to write in their own words. They can draw and use graphs and handle formulae with increasing confidence. Apart from in the laboratories, where issues concerning equipment are at present being resolved very good use is made of ICT. The splendid science network is a mine of interesting and useful information and a credit to those who set it up and maintain it.
101. **Leadership and management are very good** and provide an effective framework that enables pupils to achieve well. The new strategy for teaching science has been well implemented leading to a more active involvement of all pupils in their learning, although more time needs to be allocated to checking the new learning thoroughly at the end of lessons. **The curriculum is good** and underpinned by well-crafted schemes of work and a programme of visits, such as that to the Lakeland Wildlife Oasis, together with participation in challenges such as the Salter's challenge. **Assessment is good** and well used to inform pupils about how well they are doing in relation to their expected targets. The laboratories are good and well equipped, but on the small side for the large numbers they are sometimes required to accommodate.

102. **Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.** Almost all the issues have been very effectively resolved together with many other improvements. This is a dynamic department with effective leadership and a strong team, which deservedly achieves high standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory. There is currently no guaranteed provision of the required programme of study as part of the National Curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and some of the teaching of ICT is unsatisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. However, the school has recently undertaken significant investment in its infrastructure and is fully implementing the national strategy for the subject in Years 7 to 9. The use of ICT across the curriculum is well developed in some subjects but is currently patchy elsewhere.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- The environment for teaching in well equipped ICT rooms using networked computers and high speed Internet access;
- The adoption of the national strategy for teaching the subject in Years 7 to 9, which is introducing an exciting and challenging programme of study for pupils together with expert professional support for teaching staff;
- Good management of the subject provision in Years 7, 8 and 9;
- The range of resources, both hardware and software, that the school now uses following the use of significant government grants;
- Access for pupils to computers especially in the resources library;
- Vigilant arrangements to protect pupils while using the Internet.

Areas for improvement:

- To ensure consistent good teaching for all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9;
- To provide a legal programme of study for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not choose an examination subject including ICT.

Commentary

103. **Standards are average by the end of Year 9.** Through the taught activities of the national strategy, pupils who began the scheme in Year 7 are producing complex work with considerable flair and to a good standard. Pupils taught ICT while they were in Years 8 and 9 demonstrate similar enthusiasm but having had less opportunity to follow the national programme, do not reach the same level of performance. In Year 10 a new course has only just been introduced of ICT with business studies and no judgement on examination standards is yet possible. Observed work of pupils indicates that **standards in Year 11 are average.** As a result of weaknesses in the curriculum and in the teaching of the subject, **achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory.**
104. The teaching of ICT in the first three years is **unsatisfactory.** Some lessons observed were well planned and expertly delivered. Pupils responded enthusiastically, learned rapidly and produced work of a high standard. In other lessons teaching was less effective. Pupils were not engaged or challenged and the pace was slow. Mild misbehaviour and inattention in class drastically reduced the rate of learning and achievement in these lessons was unsatisfactory. **The teaching of ICT in Year 10 is satisfactory,** with pupils making the progress expected at the start of their examination course studies.

105. **The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory.** The planned curriculum follows the national scheme which provides a rich experience through tried and tested approaches to teaching; the quality of individual lesson planning is more variable. The school will need to ensure that all planned activities are possible including appropriate access to secure email for pupils when required. The major weakness in the curriculum is for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not choose to study ICT. They gain experience when computers are used in their other subjects but **this currently does not guarantee them a legal programme of study** and will not develop their standards of work or understanding in ICT to the level now expected.
106. Pupils' work in ICT is regularly and carefully assessed. Their individual portfolios show the quality of work and the levels attained. Pupils' work is marked regularly but teachers should give additional guidance on how standards could be higher.
107. **The leadership and management of ICT in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory.** The management of its now complex networks and technical support is good and there is good support for staff in other subjects in their choice of hardware and software for teaching. **Currently no one has overall responsibility for ICT throughout the school and there is no strategy to guarantee provision for every pupil in Years 10 and 11; this is unsatisfactory.**

The school has made significant and important progress since the last inspection. Including:

- Major improvements to school ICT infrastructure, teaching rooms, networking and full 10 Mbit/s broad band Internet provision from the Lancashire Grid for Learning;
- Significant purchases of computers with government target ratios exceeded;
- Very good arrangements for network management and technical support;
- Specialist training for the ICT subject leader and for other subject teachers through the New Opportunities Fund programme;
- Adoption of the national strategy programme for ICT in Years 7 to 9;
- Clear designated responsibility for the management of ICT in Years 7 to 9;
- The purchase of digital resources for many areas of the curriculum;
- Growing use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum including the use of interactive white boards.

108. St Bede's school is well placed to take full advantage from its recent planning and substantial investment in ICT. There is the potential for pupils to achieve excellent standards given attention to the areas for improvement that have been identified.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

109. **The use of ICT to promote learning in subjects across the curriculum is growing but it is currently unsatisfactory.** This situation is changing. The school has been able to purchase an increasing range of resources using government funded electronic learning credits and subject departments are trying out a range of new materials and techniques. Use of ICT is already well established in design and technology, communications aids are provided for pupils with SEN and the physical education department uses digital cameras, video and data bases to enrich teaching. There is burgeoning use of the Internet to access teaching resources. The broad band Internet service has transformed the speed of access to the world wide web. Recent improvements to computer rooms now make possible access to computers for subject lessons and subject departments need to develop their use of ICT in line with the expectations of a modern curriculum. The excellent computer facilities in the library offer the opportunity for pupils to use ICT for their research and to produce their course work to a higher standard.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- The provision of good quality books and printed materials which help pupils to learn.
- Provision for pupils with SEN.
- Assessment of pupils' work.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of ICT to promote learning.
- The variety of activities available in lessons, particularly the number of planned opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in class and to work independently both in and out of school.

Commentary

110. **Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are broadly average.** In 2001 and 2002, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in GCSE was significantly below the national average and pupils did less well in geography, on average, than in their other subjects. However, in 2003, results improved significantly, including the proportion of pupils gaining A* and A grades. All pupils entered for the examination achieved a grade. Over the years, there has been no significant statistical difference between the performance of boys and girls.
111. **The achievement of all pupils in both key stages is satisfactory.** Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are developed steadily owing to well-organised teaching. **Teaching is consistently satisfactory.** Class management is of a high order, but, pupils sometimes do not have enough opportunities for active participation in their learning which would improve standards further. Lessons are brisk, business like, efficient and well supported by a range of well chosen textbooks. Pupils with SEN are helped in their learning by a range of carefully graded worksheets. The use of ICT in the department is, however, still underdeveloped because of limited access to school computers. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning and teachers work effectively with support assistants to ensure that pupils with SEN have equal access to the curriculum. Good quality, accurate assessment and thoughtful oral feedback leaves pupils in no doubt as to what they must do to improve.
112. **The department has not improved enough since the last inspection.** The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C is no longer consistently above the national average, although some scripts are being re-marked this year and results are expected to rise slightly. Teaching is now satisfactory in all years rather than good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, as seen in the last inspection. The "whole class" approach still predominates. A good range of fieldwork takes place but more opportunities for collaboration and investigative work would improve the curriculum further. Oral feedback to pupils, mentioned in the last report is now a strong and notable feature of departmental assessment.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- The standard of teaching is good overall, including the small amount of non-specialist teaching.
- Pupils have good opportunities to consolidate their learning.
- Assessment is thorough so that pupils know how they can improve.

Weaknesses:

- There are too few opportunities to use ICT in lessons.
- There is insufficient planning for the needs of higher attainers.
- Self-evaluation in the department has too narrow a focus.
- The accommodation provides an unsatisfactory learning environment.

Commentary

113. In work seen **standards are above average** and this is reflected in the 2003 GCSE results. In 2002 GCSE results were above average for boys and below average for girls. The proportion of girls and boys entered for the subject matched national figures. In 2001 and 2002 pupils had under-performed at GCSE in relation to their other subjects. There was a significant improvement in results in 2003 from similar numbers of boys and girls entered compared with the previous year; boys and girls achieved equally well.
114. **Pupils' achievement is good.** Literacy skills are strong and make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. Younger pupils quickly acquire knowledge of key words in history and their use. Economic factors and how they affect people's lives is a weaker area in pupils' understanding. By Year 8 all pupils, including those with SEN are able to organise their ideas in a recognisable sequence in extended writing although only higher attainers write well-reasoned conclusions. By the end of Year 9 skills in evaluating historical sources are good. Pupils keep well-organised and detailed notes and this good practice extends into Years 10 and 11 so that exercise books are a good foundation for examination revision. The ICT skills of many pupils are good throughout the age range and they often choose to present individual project work in this form. A significant proportion of pupils are confident in their use of Internet sites and in selecting relevant information, for example in a study of medieval knights in Year 7 and trench warfare in Year 10. Investigation skills are good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject and this is apparent in the care taken in the presentation of project work. Source evaluation skills again develop well in Years 10 and 11. Some weaknesses in examination technique are apparent in questions requiring more extended writing with some pupils losing marks through their choice of material and its relevance to the questions set.
115. **Teaching is good.** Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and pupils respond positively. The good range of textbooks is used selectively to reinforce learning. Lessons are well planned and there is a good link between lessons and homework tasks, including project work. Teaching is thorough in addressing National Curriculum and examination requirements. Pupils' learning is reinforced well by providing different learning experiences outside lessons. Pupils respond very well to the challenge of project work; this gives them good opportunities to develop skills in investigation including the use of ICT.
116. **Assessment is good.** Pupils' work is regularly assessed and pupils receive clear guidance on how to improve. The most effective teaching is characterised by a challenging pace with lesson content combining relevant detail with the "big picture" so that learning always includes the wider historical context. In some of the teaching lessons lack such pace and do not achieve the right balance between detail and historical context. In the best teaching questions

are used to probe and extend pupils' understanding. In some of the teaching, there is an over-emphasis on providing an explanation rather than testing understanding.

117. **Leadership and management are good.** Positive action has been taken to tackle the underachievement by targeting individuals and a significant improvement has been achieved as indicated by the 2003 GCSE results. The department reviews its effectiveness well, for example in terms of the use of particular resources. It is not sufficiently reflective of best practice in teaching methodology. Assessment procedures are well established and thorough. Curriculum planning is good so that pupils learn through a variety of experiences. Schemes of work are in place but there is insufficient planned provision for challenging higher attainers and for providing all pupils with opportunities to use ICT in lessons.
118. **Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory** although ICT was identified as an area for development then. The department has worked hard to achieve a positive ethos for the subject in a difficult situation regarding accommodation. Adjacent rooms provide a positive environment with a good standard of display although **the rooms themselves are unsatisfactory** from the point of view of acoustics and temperature control.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory overall**. It is good in food, satisfactory in resistant materials and unsatisfactory in graphic products.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Good coverage of the National Curriculum from Years 7 to 9.
- Good use of ICT with a digital camera in food technology; computer aided design and computer operated machines in the resistant materials and graphical products courses.
- Improving food technology results at GCSE.
- Enthusiastic and committed teaching staff.
- Good quality accommodation.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve the leadership and the management of the subject
- Raise the success rate at GCSE in graphic products.
- Raise expectations of the quality of work that pupils can produce.
- To produce an integrated, cohesive development plan that focuses on raising standards.
- To increase the standard of presentation of folder work and the skills in engineering techniques.

Commentary

119. **By the end of Year 9 standards are average.** This indicates that **achievement over the Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory** considering the attainment levels on entry. Standards in food technology are higher than in other areas. The factual content of the pupils' folders is satisfactory. Making skills are also satisfactory but there is little work that shows real talent or flair. Achievement is enhanced by the good use of computer-aided design and computer operated machines. The demands of the National Curriculum are met well.
120. **By the end of Year 11 standards are below average and the achievement of pupils is unsatisfactory.** In the 2003 GCSE examination, food technology achieved results close to the national average but resistant materials results were below average and graphical products well below average. The department chose to change the GCSE exam board and the

teachers estimates of success were wide of the mark. Pupils do not develop their designing and making skills well enough, particularly in graphic products. Presentation skills are too low as are the skills of sketching and drawing with instruments.

121. **The last inspection said that standards were unsatisfactory but little consistent progress has been made.** Standards are improving consistently in food technology and some increase was noted in the results in resistant materials but not in graphical products. A scrutiny of the work seen in Years 10 and 11 shows continuing improvement in standards in food technology in the present Year 11. The practical tasks attempted in the other two areas of the subject are limited in difficulty and so the pupils will find it very difficult to reach the higher grades at GCSE. The department has reacted well to the criticism in the last report concerning curriculum change.
122. In the majority of lessons teaching is good or very good. However a scrutiny of the pupils' work shows that pupils are not consistently asked to produce work of a high enough standard. **Teaching and learning are therefore satisfactory overall. They are good in food, satisfactory in resistant materials and unsatisfactory in graphic products.** Learning is better in Years 10 and 11 and the presentation skills of girls are better than those of boys. Pupils with SEN learn as well as their peers but it is difficult to distinguish the most talented pupils in a class, as tasks do not stretch them enough. There is good support for pupils with SEN in some classes but not in all; this help is needed especially in Years 7 to 9. The new assessment scheme is a good step towards improving standards.
123. **Pupils' attitudes are very positive** and they show very mature attitudes particularly during lessons when they are making products. There is adequate time allowed on the timetable in Years 7 to 9 but insufficient in Years 10 and 11.
124. Both **leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory.** The subject leader is keen and enthusiastic but he has not been able to improve GCSE standards sufficiently. Many innovations have been introduced including electronics, mechanisms and systems but there is not yet in place a cohesive development plan, which links these changes together with a strategy for improving standards. As many of the issues were raised by the last inspection, improvement has also been unsatisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Drama

Two lessons were seen in drama (in Year 10 and Year 11).

125. Drama is firmly established in the Year 10 and 11 examination programme; **standards vary, and although the 2002 GCSE results approached the national average, they were significantly weaker in 2003.** The Year 10 group is potentially strong, but the Year 11 group much less so. The lack of development of drama skills in Years 7 to 9 has long-term implications. Drama in Years 7 to 9 is the individual English teacher's responsibility, and is variable in content and frequency. A clear programme of entitlement has been drawn up by the head of English with skill development and drama experience built in. It is ready for departmental approval and establishment as department policy in the next few weeks, and needs to be monitored with respect to its effectiveness.

Art

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Very good results at GCSE.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve well.
- High standards of finished work.
- Teachers have high expectations of the quality of pupils' work.
- Pupils' work is celebrated through displays around the school.

Areas for improvement:

- The department does not provide opportunities for three-dimensional art.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their creativity.
- Sketchbooks are not universally used.
- There is very little use made of ICT.

Commentary

126. Since 2001, results of teacher assessments in Year 9 have been consistently above the national average with a yearly improvement in the number of pupils achieving the highest levels. Results show no difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Work seen supports these results; **standards at the end of Year 9 are above average**. Higher ability pupils produce work that is well above national average (up to National Curriculum Level 8) with lower ability pupils achieving Level 5 standards. These high standards are the result of teachers expecting pupils to produce high quality work. **Pupils of all abilities achieve well in Years 7 to 9.**
127. **Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average as shown by the consistently well above average** GCSE results and standards seen in lessons and pupils' work. Pupils gain results in art that are significantly better than their results in other subjects; over a grade higher on average in 2002. **The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good.** Girls do slightly better than boys but the gap is much smaller than that experienced nationally. Finished work of higher ability pupils is consistently of grade A or A* standard with lower ability pupils producing grade C standard work. Standards are underpinned by good drawing, strong use of colour and tone within well-composed large-scale work. The content of much work is also made interesting by interplays between image and text, fine art and graphics as well as effective use of a range of two-dimensional media interwoven into the work.
128. **All pupils achieve well** in lessons. This is a result of good teaching where pupils are given appropriate and interesting work which helps pupils of all abilities to achieve successful outcomes. Pupils benefit from good whole class skill demonstrations followed up by individual support throughout lessons. There are high expectations of all pupils.
129. The **standard of teaching is good**. Some very good teaching was seen; both teachers demonstrate high levels of expertise, knowledge and understanding of the subject. A clear emphasis is placed on the teaching and on-going development of the basics skills of drawing, composition, use of colour and using a variety of two-dimensional media. Pupils are given too little scope for personal, expressive or imaginative responses because outcomes are often overly prescribed. There is not enough encouragement of pupils to use sketchbooks to develop personal ideas and record individual research. Pupils are able to discuss their work with confidence and can use a limited art vocabulary. However, little evidence was seen in lessons seen of explicit efforts to develop literacy or numeracy. Very little use is made of ICT in all years for either research or making art. **Learning is good**. Pupils of all abilities respond

well and clearly enjoy the subject. Both teachers have a very good rapport with pupils. Mutual respect and a very good working atmosphere exist in all lessons. Behaviour in the classroom is very good.

130. **The curriculum in all years is unsatisfactory** in that it is limited to two-dimensional work, despite a National Curriculum requirement that there should be a balance between two and three-dimensional work. Not enough reference is made to the work of other artists and pupils do too little work on them. Consequently, pupils are not fully exploiting a rich source of inspiration and technique available. Visits to local or national galleries are not currently organised.
131. **Leadership of the department is good.** The department is led energetically with a strong commitment to pupils' achievement and improving standards. There is a clear vision about how the subject should be taught and considerable pride in the standards achieved by all pupils. **Management is satisfactory.** The department is well organised and resources well managed. There is a good working relationship between the two very experienced teachers, with effective team teaching evident in many lessons. However, departmental development and action plans need to be more clearly articulated to address the areas of development identified.
132. **Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.** Standards have continued to improve; in particular higher ability pupils are now experiencing more demanding and challenging work. This is reflected in more pupils attaining higher National Curriculum levels in Year 9. However the following issues identified in the last report have not been addressed.
- There remains a lack of encouragement of pupils to explore personal ideas and show creativity and inventiveness.
 - Pupils remain deprived of opportunities to work in three dimensions.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Relationships in the department.
- The teaching of listening skills.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of ICT in all years does not satisfy statutory requirements.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 needs to reflect National Curriculum levels and programmes of study and link into self assessment.
- Curriculum coverage in the GCSE course.

Commentary

133. **Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average.** Standards as recorded by the department (well above average) are inaccurate. **Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9** from low standards on entry. They make good progress in developing listening skills but the lack of enough opportunities to make music together restricts progress in performing and composing.
134. **Standards of work seen in Year 11 were average.** However, GCSE results are consistently below the national average and very low in 2003 and therefore **the achievement of pupils on the GCSE course is unsatisfactory.** The main reasons for this are that pupils

do not complete enough work of an appropriate standard and that they do not have enough access to technology for composing. The teacher has now developed a much more systematic process for ensuring that course work is completed and the range of ICT resources is improving. Further planning is needed to ensure that pupils are guided to sing or perform pieces that reflect their capability.

135. There is no evidence of significant differences in achievement between boys and girls and all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. **Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9**, building on excellent relationships which make pupils feel secure. Pupils are prepared well for composing assignments by being given opportunities to hear music written by others in the same style. The teacher involves classes well in discussions about music and this helps to build their confidence. **Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11** because pupils do not make enough progress in meeting the requirements of the examination syllabus. In all years, the teaching of listening skills is very effective.
136. The curriculum is good in principle, but there is an imbalance between learning about music and learning through music; pupils do not spend enough time making music together. Some topics - such as the gamelan project - are limited by the lack of lower pitched tuned percussion instruments. The very recent input of computers for the department is a major step towards resolving the issues of statutory compliance and support for pupil composition.
137. Senior managers are giving very good support to improve the **unsatisfactory leadership and management of the subject**. The teacher is enthusiastic, has very good relationships with the pupils and has the potential to become very effective.
138. There has been **unsatisfactory improvement in provision for music since the last inspection**.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Very good teaching
- Above average standards of work, including very high examination results
- Pupils' application to work and their enthusiasm for the subject
- Very good assessment practices

Areas for improvement:

- Very poor internal specialist accommodation that significantly disrupts continuity and also the breadth of learning

Commentary

139. Overall **standards of work are above average at the ages of 14 and 16** when compared to schools nationally. The department has consistently increased the number of pupils achieving the higher GCSE grades over the last three years. In 2002 these results were well above the national average and the 2003 results had a higher percentage of A*-C grades. The present Year 11 examination pupils are on course for even better results and are presently delivering very high standards of work. **Almost all pupils achieve well** when compared with their prior attainment.
140. Present achievement is higher in a range of games than it is in dance and gymnastics. **Very good standards of teaching** ensure that challenging tasks are given, for example, in football,

netball and hockey. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to improve the quality of their techniques and to apply them to relevant games situations. There are high expectations for pupils to evaluate theirs and other pupils' work. These tasks are begun as soon as pupils arrive in school and this is a significant reason why standards rise so quickly. Teaching methods and group arrangements are based on **very good assessments of the pupils' achievements**. Along with relevant planning for lessons this ensures that work is demanding for all abilities. Careful consideration and whole-school communication helps the teaching of those pupils of low ability and those with SEN. Similarly the most able, including the gifted and talented, are challenged in lessons and through extra-curricular provision. Very good teacher knowledge of gymnastics, dance and volleyball is beginning to bring standards in line with those in games.

141. Excellent teaching in Year 11 examination classes is engaging and extending pupils' answers to consider the use of advanced skills when planning and adapting strategies in football and netball. Pupils of all abilities make considerably better than expected progress on this course and recent and present achievements at GCSE grade A*/A standard are significantly higher than the national average. The school has recently provided additional time for all pupils aged 15. This allows a more in-depth focus in programmes of study started earlier, maintaining the **very good learning** into later years. Innovative curriculum planning is improving achievement further by allowing pupils opportunities for accreditation in a range of topics.
142. **Good leadership of the department** has been successful in its strong drive for improvement in recent years. The team share a common purpose that is reflected in principled aims and policies for their work. They have been successful in establishing a very good ethos where activities are exemplified by **pupils' very good attitudes to learning**. The department provides an excellent range of club activities and a very wide range of fixtures. They are committed to an open access policy and a large number of pupils participate. The enthusiasm and productivity of staff and pupils resulted in the department being awarded the national Sportsmark. Although the department is conscientious in auditing its needs, action plans need to be refined to include relevant targets, staff development programmes and rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures. For example, a more in-depth study of modules (using the extra time recently allocated) and more use of ICT would improve the standards of the older pupils still further.
143. The school recognises the problems arising from the **very poor internal specialist accommodation** for physical education. Further improvement in the work of pupils is restricted because the continuity in their learning is heavily disrupted and because of the regular unavailability of this space. Pupils are also deprived of a wider breadth and balance of activities that would further enrich and improve their skills because of the limitations of this indoor space.
144. Despite the lack of progress in improving the accommodation, **improvement since the last inspection has been very good**. Standards and the pupils' levels of achievement have risen substantially.

Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well in examinations
- The organisation of the subject alongside ICT provision
- The modular approach to the curriculum

Commentary

145. A review of the curriculum provision was conducted together with the observation of one lesson.
146. The achievement of pupils taking GNVQ leisure and tourism is good, given their starting points. Over the two year period since its inception 30 out of 31 pupils passed the examination with higher than average proportions gaining merits or distinctions. A knowledgeable course leader has helped the pupils successfully embrace a modular-based structure of learning in the course work. The community-based aspects of the work, where pupils are involved in researching the thriving local tourism industry, is making a distinct contribution to the school's effort to improve work-related learning.
147. The strands of ICT that run parallel to the course are having a beneficial effect on learning. Recent fieldwork has researched local leisure attractions, services, facilities and products and has been well-documented using computers. In an observed lesson pupils confidently discuss these research findings. Challenging tasks are motivating pupils to independently come to conclusions. These tasks are very well adapted to suit pupils with SEN.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- GCSE results rose in 2003
- The quality of teaching is very good
- Curriculum planning is imaginative

Weaknesses

- The accommodation is unsatisfactory

Commentary

148. Two business studies lessons were observed; both were very successful in gaining and sustaining pupils' interest and enthusiasm owing to the skill, very good planning and enthusiasm of the teacher. **Standards seen were above average**, particularly in Year 11, where a number of pupils gave confident presentations about a range of business issues. Girls tended to speak more fluently and clearly than boys. Taking into account the most recent examination results and pupils' progress in lessons, the **achievement of pupils is good**.
149. Classroom management is excellent. In both lessons, the teacher created a stimulating atmosphere by engaging well with the pupils and demanding high quality responses. Lessons are planned very well. Activities are challenging, stimulating and varied. In the Year 10 lesson observed, the pupils conducted a taste test using chocolate that was then to form the basis of a marketing study. This approach very successfully enabled pupils to have fun while concentrating their minds on important issues.
150. The curriculum is planned in an imaginative way. Teaching groups for vocational ICT and business are combined during some sessions so that they can benefit from each other's studies. For example, the ICT group followed up the chocolate tasting lesson by analysing the data that was generated, while the business studies group pursued the marketing issues.

151. **The subject is very well managed.** The handbook shows clear evidence that the head of department has analysed performance well and adapted practice creatively.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Leadership and management of the subject.
- Evaluation and development of the subject within the school.
- The very high quality of some of the teaching.

Areas for improvement:

- Standard of teaching and learning in lessons is variable.
- The poor quality of written work in the subject.

Commentary

152. **Pupils make satisfactory progress** in their knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens in response to a good curriculum. Knowledge of human rights is a particular strength. Skills of enquiry and communication are developed as pupils are encouraged to ask questions as part of a perceived democratic process in which they have their say. Tabloid newspapers, taken by the library, help pupils' knowledge of the wider world and a notice board, the contents of which are changed weekly, further helps their familiarity with local and international issues. Skills of participation and responsible action are effectively developed as pupils are encouraged to participate in charitable activities and empathise with those less fortunate than themselves. As they take increasing responsibility for their own actions, they become capable of exercising a responsible and ethical influence on those about them. Written work at both key stages is of poor quality and must be seen as a serious weakness. Standards have yet to be monitored.

153. **The quality of teaching and learning in lessons varies very widely; it is satisfactory overall.** Teaching in the subject has yet to be routinely monitored. The school realises that further staff training is required, and planning for this is at an advanced stage. The very good recording and assessment procedure produced for the subject has yet to be introduced. Reporting to parents has, however, been good.

154. **Leadership and management of the subject are good.** The introduction of the subject has been well planned and the curriculum is good. Very good opportunities for active and independent learning are a strong feature of provision designed to support political awareness and personal decision making.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent teaching in citizenship

An example of outstanding teaching in citizenship was seen in which the whole of Year 11 were taught in the hall. Pupils learned very effectively the value of human rights by pondering what might occur in their absence. This lesson had been planned in some detail. A compelling introduction also served as recapitulation. Pupils were enabled to give their ideas on what are basic human rights. Pupils listened intently to what others had to say. The teacher communicated with the pupils with the skill of a performance artist as he provided an arresting commentary while volunteers engaged in role-play to show the way human rights can be violated at personal, national and global levels. He

used the image of a frail balloon as an effective symbol of a human rights state which can easily be destroyed. Group work was well used in this lesson, so that pupils became highly involved in discussion. An exercise in which groups had to judge the truth of statements, and, if true, to say in which country they occurred, left pupils outraged and more politically aware.

P.S.H.E.

155. The curriculum provides very well for pupils' personal, social and health education, which is well integrated across the curriculum, particularly in the subject of citizenship. Staff are confident and committed to teaching what they see as a valuable curriculum. Staff development, self evaluation and personal target setting are significant curricular strengths. Lessons aim to equip pupils for further education and adult life. Provision is imaginative and accessible. Before Christmas, for example, the scenario of a party is used to teach aspects of drug and alcohol abuse and sexuality to pupils in Year 11. Time management techniques, examination revision, adopting a safe and healthy life style and developing confidence and responsibility for making the most of pupils' abilities are key to provision in Years 10 and 11. Managing and making safer choices, bullying, racism and respecting differences between people as pupils develop their own sense of identity dominate the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Pupils are left in no doubt as to the dangers of drug abuse. Not all teachers are comfortable with teaching aspects of sexuality in Year 10. This is undertaken by an experienced nursing team, and developed sensitively within a Catholic framework. The governors have yet to approve the school's sex education policy. The school is involved in the Healthy Schools programme. The school makes excellent use of experts and outside agencies to support its provision. The good standard of co-ordination is principled and dynamic. There is a drive for improvement and a strong sense of direction which is beginning to enthuse staff and pupils alike. The subject did not form part of the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	1
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).