

INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's RC Middle School

Highford Lane, Hexham

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122369

Headteacher: Mr A Hodgson

Lead inspector: Mr T Wrigley

Dates of inspection: 21–24 October 2003

Inspection number: 260918

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle, deemed secondary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	9–13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	344
School address:	Highford Lane, Hexham Northumberland
Postcode:	NE46 2DD
Telephone number:	01434 605124
Fax number:	01434 601575
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr Leo Pyle
Date of previous inspection:	9 November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's is a Catholic middle school with approximately 90 pupils in each of four years (5-8). There are few indicators of disadvantage, and very few pupils have entitlement to free school meals. The population is stable, with few pupils entering or leaving part way through the school. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities or for whom English is an additional language. The school contains a significant proportion of more able pupils, but also of pupils with special educational needs. Attainment on entry is around the national average, though it varies from year to year.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12482	T Wrigley	Lead inspector	Citizenship
9499	P Daruwala	Lay inspector	Personal, social and health education
15163	E Deeson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology
20629	J Bryson	Team inspector	English
22906	B Hodgson	Team inspector	Physical education
22849	R Catlow	Team inspector	Geography History
23550	M Blewitt	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15472	P Andrews	Team inspector	Music
15079	A Boys	Team inspector	Science Special educational needs
16348	J Nicol	Team inspector	Art and design
32379	R Brewster	Team inspector	Mathematics

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Limited
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school, whose pupils enjoy a high quality of teaching and achieve well. It is a welcoming community with a very good ethos. The whole staff are caring and dedicated. **The school is well led and managed, and provides very good value for money.**

The school's main strengths are:

- Teaching is consistently good, and often very good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
- Standards and progress are good.
- Pupils have a strong sense of moral values.
- Relationships are very good among all members of the school community.
- There is an inclusive attitude and very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is a willingness to pursue further improvement in line with its motto 'Striving for Excellence'.

No major weaknesses were found.

There have been good improvements since the last inspection:

- The good quality of achievement, teaching and learning and very positive ethos and sense of community have been sustained.
- The specific weaknesses identified in the last report have been resolved.
- Very good improvements in provision have taken place, including those in special educational needs and information and communication technology.
- New initiatives have had a significant impact on teaching and learning, but need a more coherent approach to extend their benefit.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6	compared with all schools			compared with similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	B	B	A	B
mathematics	A	C	A	A
science	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 2.*

Achievement is good for all ages of pupils. Pupils develop good levels of skill in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Year 6 is well above the national average for English, mathematics and science. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average in all subjects, with particular strengths in science, design and technology, art and design and French. Particularly gifted or talented pupils achieve well overall, though activities are not always sufficiently challenging. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with adults, show positive attitudes to learning, and experience a good level of personal and social development. Behaviour is good, including very good attendance and punctuality. Spiritual, moral and social development are very strong and pupils show concern for others less fortunate than themselves. Cultural development is satisfactory, but would be enhanced by a greater emphasis on the performing arts and an appreciation of other cultures.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is consistently good for all ages and subjects, and often very good, including particular strengths in science, information and communication technology, design and technology, art and design and French. This, combined with pupils' attitudes, leads to a good quality of learning for all pupils.

The school provides a broad range of worthwhile curricular opportunities. There are good opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. Some good use is made of computers.

Pupils are well cared for and supported. Pupils benefit from the positive and trusting relationships and strong sense of community, the very strong links with parents and effective co-operation between schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led and effectively managed. There is a clear vision for the future, and a strong emphasis on teamwork and partnership. Evaluation is taken seriously, including pupils' and parents' views. The governing body are substantially involved in evaluation and future planning.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed a very high level of satisfaction. Pupils are also very positive about the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In accordance with its motto of 'Striving for Excellence', the school should :

- take a more coherent approach to its various initiatives on teaching and learning, including creating development teams which can share and implement good practice;
- further improve assessment by giving pupils clearer feedback on how to improve their learning;
- develop a more coherent structure for academic and personal guidance, the promotion of personal and social development, and the provision of personal, social, health and citizenship education;
- improve cultural development, by enhancing opportunities in the performing arts, with support from the local community, and by promoting greater understanding of cultural diversity;
- find a means of providing suitable technical support, especially for teachers of practical subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are above the national average, for all age groups and subjects. All pupils make good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national average in all subjects.
- The standard of work seen was well above national average in some cases, notably in science, art and design and French.
- The percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Year 6 tests is well above the national average for English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' skills are good in the use of English, mathematics and ICT as core skills applied across the curriculum.
- Pupils of different levels of attainment are making good progress, including those with special educational needs.
- Girls' standards are slightly higher than boys' overall, but the difference is smaller than national disparity.
- Gifted and talented pupils achieve well, but this could be enhanced in some cases by more challenging activities.

Commentary

1. Pupils take national tests at the end of Year 6, after two years in the school. When compared with all schools' results nationally, results in 2002 were well above average for science, above average for English, and average for mathematics. This was despite the fact that the particular year-group, when they entered the school, was known to include many pupils with low attainment or special educational needs. Even the results for mathematics, though much lower than the previous year's, represent good progress when considering many pupils' attainment on entry. The results in 2003 were significantly higher, including 90 per cent of pupils who reached level 4 or above for mathematics. In 2003, the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above was well above the national average for English, mathematics and science.
2. Although results vary from year to year, they have normally been above the national average since the last inspection, with exceptionally high results in science.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.5 (28.2)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	29.3 (27.3)	27.0 (26.7)
science	31.3 (30.2)	28.8 (28.3)

There were 86 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Based on close scrutiny of samples of pupils' work, and observation of lessons, inspectors found that standards at the end of Year 8 are also above the national average. This judgement is supported by data from the High School, showing test results at the end of Year 9 for former pupils of St Joseph's. (See Part C below for information on particular subjects.)

4. Given that pupils' attainment on entry to the school is around the national average, pupils make good progress. Achievement is good in all subjects, with particular strengths in French and art and design. Pupils with special educational needs work hard to develop their skills and make good progress. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress overall, though in some lessons they are set tasks which are insufficiently challenging. There is no significant difference in progress for different age groups in the school, or for boys and girls. Pupils of all backgrounds make good progress.
5. Bearing in mind variations from year to year in test results, the school has done well to sustain the high standards evident at the last inspection, and in many respects improved upon them. For example, relative weaknesses identified in some subjects (e.g. physical education and mathematics for older pupils) are no longer evident, and the determination to improve teaching and standards has led to very high standards in other subjects (e.g. art and design, French and science). Thanks to developments in teaching and improved equipment, pupils are acquiring significantly higher levels of skill in design and technology and in information and communication technology.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school has a positive and caring ethos, based on Catholic principles. It is a community in which pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities are well developed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave well towards each other, to staff and other adults
- Positive attitudes to learning contribute to good levels of achievement
- Pupils develop concern and consideration for those less fortunate than themselves
- Opportunities for cultural development, though satisfactory, could be enhanced by a greater emphasis on the performing arts and an appreciation of other cultures.

Commentary

6. Pupils show positive attitudes to school and are enthusiastic about their learning experiences. They work hard, behave well in lessons and are keen to improve their work. They recognise classroom procedures, settle to work quickly and generally sustain their concentration well throughout the lesson. Pupils take pride in their work and are keen to show it to others. Occasional lapses of concentration, usually a result of an inadequate task, do not disrupt the overall settled and purposeful atmosphere.
7. Behaviour is also good around the school. Movement around the school is peaceful, despite some narrow corridors and stairs; pupils play well in the playground and their behaviour in the dining hall is orderly and courteous. This atmosphere is sustained by the school's consistent expectations and emphasis on praise, rewards for positive behaviour and a clear understanding by pupils of what is acceptable. No incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour were observed during the inspection.
8. Very good relationships between boys and girls and between children and adults contribute to the inclusive and caring ethos. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to the school and feel well supported. They have caring and courteous relationships with their fellow pupils and teachers, and are well integrated. They persevere well and try hard, so that they make good progress. Pupils respond well to encouragement and are very pleased when they receive rewards for positive attitudes, good behaviour or constructive efforts. In general, pupils are considerate and respect one another, and take good care of the school building and learning resources. Teachers work hard to raise pupils self-esteem and forge good and trusting relationships with them. Pupils are valued positively and optimistically.

9. When given an opportunity to help others or organise an activity, pupils take their responsibilities seriously. They help to run assemblies and events which develop concern for others, including good support for national and international charities.
10. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, through a combination of learning in lessons, whole-school events, assemblies, extra-curricular activities and community involvement. Assemblies promote the importance of respect, values and beliefs and provide opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts, ideals and feelings. Effective opportunities are provided in lessons to discuss moral issues. Pupils learn the value of honesty, fair play and truth. They are helped to develop understanding and concern for people in other parts of the world, for example through talks by visiting speakers and lessons on development issues. Satisfactory provision is made for cultural development, and there are some good opportunities, for example the study of literature in English, and learning musical instruments. However, opportunities for involvement in the performing arts, though they involve large numbers of pupils, are not particularly frequent. Pupils develop a good sense of the local and national heritage through field visits in the local area, but there needs to be a greater awareness of a multicultural Britain enriched by ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.

Attendance

11. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Pupils enjoy coming to the school. The attendance figures for the academic year 2001–2 were well above the national average. There was no unauthorised absence. Despite difficulties of travel in rural areas, most pupils are punctual in arriving at school each morning and returning to classrooms after breaks. This has a positive impact on their attainment and progress.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2001-2)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.3	School data	0.0
National data	6.1	National data	0.3

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

Exclusions

12. The school rarely needs to exclude pupils. Last year, there were five fixed-term and one permanent exclusion involving a total of three pupils.

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	337	5	1
White – Irish	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	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 school provides a good quality of education to its pupils. There is a high quality of teaching and learning, and satisfactory assessment procedures. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with some good opportunities for enrichment, adequate resources and particularly good provision for special educational needs. Pupils are well cared for, and there are strong links with parents, other schools and the wider community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is high. Interesting tasks are set, and pupils are engaged in their learning. Assessment is systematic, but needs to be more focused on giving pupils clear advice on how to improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are consistently good in all subjects, and often very good, including particular strengths in science, French, information and communication technology, design and technology, and art and design.
- Good attention is given to the development of core skills of literacy and language use, mathematics and information and communication technology and their application across the curriculum.
- Pupils' positive attitudes contribute to good levels of achievement.
- A number of initiatives to improve teaching are beginning to have an impact, though this could be enhanced by more systematic planning of this development.
- Assessment of pupils' work is conscientious and systematic. The school is seeking to develop new approaches to assessment for learning which would give pupils clearer indications of how to improve.
- Particularly good teaching and support are provided for pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

13. Teaching was judged good or better in the vast majority of lessons. In over a third, it was very good or excellent. No lesson was judged unsatisfactory. Such a consistently high quality of teaching is unusual.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 74 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (8%)	23 (31%)	38 (51%)	7 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (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.

14. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they are teaching. They plan effectively, and their teaching successfully encourages and engages the pupils. Expectations are generally high, though in some subjects and lessons the most able pupils are insufficiently challenged. Effective teaching methods are employed, there is good use of time and resources, and high standards of behaviour are expected. Good use is made of homework. Computers are now available in most rooms, with some good use in many different subjects.
15. A number of initiatives have been introduced in recent years to improve teaching methods, including an emphasis on thinking skills, accelerated learning, support for gifted and talented pupils, and the national literacy and numeracy projects. They have begun to have an impact. In order to have more extensive impact, however, it would be wise for the school to identify the

- common features between these different initiatives, and to set up effective working teams which could exchange ideas, plan implementation and monitor and evaluate their success.
16. Particularly good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. The work provided for pupils usually stretches them appropriately and their Individual Education Plans contain suitable academic and personal targets that help the pupils to make good progress in their learning. The special needs co-ordinator carefully identifies their learning needs, and a team of teaching assistants works conscientiously to assist their learning in class. A number of pupils are also provided with separate lessons to develop their literacy skills. For some mathematics and English lessons, pupils with special educational needs and other lower attainers are taught in small classes. However, while basic skills are emphasised, the need to develop their thinking and provide interesting learning experiences is not neglected.
 17. Pupils' learning is almost always good. They conscientiously acquire skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils work hard and try to improve. They develop particularly strong abilities to work more independently and collaboratively.
 18. Assessment is thorough and systematic. Pupils' work is marked regularly and pupils are aware of the overall quality of what they have done. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' levels of attainment and progress. This information is well used to make provision which matches pupils' individual needs. There are good examples in some IT lessons of opportunities being provided for pupils' comments on their own work, and also in mathematics where review sheets help pupils to consider what they have learnt and to identify areas for improvement. In line with current research, the school is seeking to transform assessment to place a greater emphasis on assessment *for* learning, rather than merely assessment *of* learning. This development is beginning to have an impact, but it is still inconsistent and pupils generally have quite a limited understanding of how they can improve. Some teachers are more successful than others in using diagnostic comments, which help pupils to improve their work. This is often limited to basic notions of a need to work harder and be more accurate or neater, and needs to be focused more on particular actions they can take in order to acquire a clearer or deeper understanding.

The curriculum

The school provides a broad range of worthwhile curricular opportunities, and particularly for its younger pupils. There are good opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and balanced for all pupils. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 benefit particularly from expertise and resources.
- The school is well equipped with computers, several of which are available in nearly every room. They are well used.
- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- A number of interesting events, as well as lessons in science, religious education and humanities, make a good contribution to personal, social and health education and to education for citizenship. There is, however, a lack of coherence in planning and in pupils' perceptions.
- There are generally good opportunities for extra-curricular activities, including sport, but provision is quite limited for the performing arts.
- The lack of technical support particularly affects teachers in design and technology, information and communication technology, art and science.

Commentary

19. The school's curriculum is organised in accordance with normal secondary school traditions, as a set of separate subjects, though history and geography are taught by the same teacher as Humanities. In some Year 5 and 6 classes, though not all, a number of subjects are taught

- by the same teacher, which provides better personal support for pupils. There is a good emphasis on core skills, in specific English, mathematics and ICT lessons and in their application and development across the curriculum.
20. Education for citizenship and personal, social and health education are not taught as separate subjects, but assemblies, invited speakers and appropriate subjects make an interesting contribution. The process has begun of identifying these contributions and improving provision, but this is lacking in coherence and pupils would benefit from a greater awareness of their personal and social development.
 21. There is equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils, without gender bias. Gifted and talented pupils are provided with interesting opportunities including a university summer school for mathematics and a forensic science project. They are well catered for in many lessons, but on other occasions more challenging tasks and texts could be introduced. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum, apart from a small number who are withdrawn from French lessons in Years 7 and 8, in order to concentrate extra effort on their reading and writing. This has been done after full consultation with the Local Educational Authority, parents and the pupils themselves. The success of the programme will be evaluated before continuing it in the future but the results so far indicate that it has helped pupils to improve considerably their skills and enjoyment in reading and writing. Pupils at all stages on the special needs register are well provided for and the school's procedures comply with the Code of Practice. The co-ordinator and teaching assistants use their knowledge of pupils' achievements in order to plan future targets and the Individual Education Plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that targets reflect the progress made. The class teachers and teaching assistants help pupils with learning difficulties to understand their work, sometimes providing modified worksheets and other materials. Pupils with special educational needs take part in a range of clubs and activities outside the normal school day. The extent of this participation has not been monitored, so it is not possible to say whether these pupils take as much advantage of the activities offered as do the other pupils.
 22. The curriculum is enriched well by assemblies, visiting speakers, special events and a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils participate in a good range of sporting events and teams. Some pupils engage in community activities at the High School. There are valuable activities in the performing arts which engage pupils in drama and singing, but little in the intervening periods. This is unfortunate given extensive interest in music making.
 23. The staff have taken up a number of initiatives to strengthen the curriculum, with some benefits already, though they need more consistent development. (Please see the section on Teaching and Learning.) Planning for pupils' learning also benefits from extensive liaison between schools, including subject leaders and special needs co-ordinators from St Joseph's and the High School.
 24. There is an appropriate match of teachers covering different specialisms, and teachers with good specialist knowledge provide good support to their colleagues. There is a strong team of special needs assistants, under the guidance of the special educational needs coordinator. The lack of a technician leads to teachers spending time on preparation and clearing away in practical subjects, and sometimes leads to frustration in ICT. The school's accommodation is just sufficient but rather cramped. However, good use is made of this, including balcony areas in some classrooms and computer areas. Younger pupils benefit from specialist facilities which are not normally available in primary schools. There is an adequate supply of well-chosen textbooks. The library has a large fiction section, though a limited non-fiction collection. ICT equipment in the music room is particularly good.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are well cared for and supported. The principles of care, compassion and forgiveness underpin the day-to-day working of the whole school community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from the positive and trusting relationships in the school.
- There is a strong sense of community involving pupils and the whole staff.
- Teachers work hard to ensure academic success and good personal development for all pupils.
- The induction and transition arrangements and liaison between partner schools are very well developed.

Commentary

25. The school is a happy, harmonious and well-organised community, providing a safe and caring environment for all its pupils. The caring ethos has beneficial effects on pupils' achievement, as confirmed by parents' positive comments. The entire staff make a positive contribution to this ethos: the secretaries, caretaker and cleaners, caterers, special needs assistants and teachers work together as a team and are well focused on pupil care and support. They pay meticulous attention to protecting pupils from any harm and promoting their health, safety and well-being. Staff know their pupils well and respond readily to their needs. There are very good child protection procedures, a well established health and safety policy, sufficient staff trained in first aid, and regular fire drills. Pupils enjoy lunchtimes and staff work effectively to make this part of the day pleasant. Good use is made of other agencies to develop a sense of safety in and out of school, including the Northumberland Fire and Rescue team and talks by education authority staff on the dangers of drugs including smoking.
25. Teachers get to know their pupils well and have a good understanding of their emerging strengths and weaknesses. However, although pupils feel that their teachers are accessible, there is no structure below senior management to back up the form tutor in case of difficulties such as a Head of Year. Given the current dispersed arrangements for personal, social and health education, and education for citizenship, some form of personal development and achievement portfolio, maintained by individual pupils and forming the basis for personal reflection and discussion with teachers and parents, would give a sense of greater coherence and self-awareness for many children.
26. The school is very effective in identifying and providing for pupils with learning difficulties. It works well with outside support agencies, and offers a high level of support in lessons. Learning support assistants are patient and encouraging, and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. An inclusive commitment is shown to these pupils and staff are well informed and monitor their learning and needs. Methods of assessment are clearly outlined in policy documents and systematically carried out. Records are kept up to date, showing a full range of assessments which provide a rounded picture of each pupil's progress. Where necessary, the school has access to special help from the local education authority. These arrangements for assessing, monitoring and supporting their development needs help to ensure that they make good progress in achieving personal targets. The results of tests and assessments are well used to set these targets.
27. The school is increasingly paying attention to the specific development needs of particularly gifted or talented pupils. Data is used to identify high-achieving pupils, on entry to the school and following national tests in Year 6. Teachers are often aware of particular talents, though this appreciation could be enhanced by a more systematic approach including asking parents about their children's interests and a personal development and achievement portfolio. Such pupils benefit from an emphasis on new approaches to teaching and learning involving thinking skills and accelerated learning, and from initiatives such as the University of Northumbria's mathematics summer school, but there is scope for further development including a greater challenge in some lessons and further opportunities in the performing arts.
28. The school maintains effective induction arrangements for pupils, with strong liaison with the schools from which most pupils come and the high schools to which they transfer. Every effort is made to ensure the welcome and induction of pupils entering the school at other times.

29. The School Council is being fostered in ways which enable pupils to develop an understanding of democratic processes. Pupils' ideas have been implemented, including redesigning the playground and repainting the toilets in their choice of colours. There is a clear and democratic procedure for election, and pupils develop skills and confidence in working with each other and presenting their concerns. The council has its own budget to implement plans.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very strong links with parents and other schools. It has established some purposeful links with the local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is held in high regard by parents.
- The school provides effective communication to parents.
- The processes to support the transition of pupils between different stages of education are very good.

Commentary

30. The school's partnership with parents is very good. A high number of responses to the parents' questionnaire were received and showed a high level of support for the school. Where concerns were raised, these were usually by a single individual or a small group of parents, and in virtually every case concerned issues of which the school management was aware and striving to improve. In general, parents are pleased that their children enjoy school, behave well and make good progress, and that the school is approachable and has high expectations. The inspection team found substantial evidence to support these views.
31. The school is successful in establishing a strong, positive and purposeful collaboration with parents. Parents feel welcome and are encouraged to play an important part in supporting their children's work at home. At the beginning of each term, they are provided with details about what each class will be taught. Most parents are appreciative of the fact that they can approach individual teachers or the headteacher or deputy, and that issues or concerns are resolved promptly with care and consideration. The school secretaries contribute well to this accessibility.
32. A good quality and range of information is provided, including administrative and pastoral arrangements. There are regular formal and informal meetings. Policies such as homework and behaviour, rewards and sanctions are published in the pupils' homework diary, which helps parents support children's learning. Detailed and comprehensive reports inform parents about their children's academic performance and development, and this includes some degree of self-evaluation by the pupil.
33. The school has good arrangements for involving and informing parents whose children have special educational needs. Policies and procedures are made clear; they are invited to all review meetings and most choose to attend. They are kept well informed of progress and can speak to staff informally at any time and are alert when problems occur. There is good liaison with other schools when pupils arrive at St Joseph's and when they leave.
34. The governors' annual report provides them with information about the school. The prospectus is a clear and comprehensive document, informing parents of the school's aims and curriculum, the intended ethos and its basis in Catholic values, health and welfare, and pupils' achievement.

35. Strong links with the local community, including those with local churches, contribute to pupils' learning. The school raises money for the diocesan charity, and various community groups use school facilities. Some parents and other local people have contributed to pupils' learning and development, including music, crafts, and talks on environmental and world development issues. The headteacher has plans to draw more extensively on such local expertise.
36. A committed group of parents organise through the Parents and Teachers Association to raise funds for the school. This has provided substantial benefits, such as the school library and computers, particularly in the light of the school's low budget levels. Various social events help to develop positive relationships.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led and effectively managed. There is a clear vision for the future, and a collegial approach to forward planning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and senior staff have a thoughtful approach and communicate good ideas for the school's development.
- The governing body is substantially involved in evaluation and future planning.
- There is a strong emphasis on teamwork and partnership, including close cooperation with neighbouring schools.
- There is constant striving for improvement, though some initiatives have proved difficult to implement extensively.

Commentary

37. The governing body is closely involved in maintaining a good quality of education in the school, and in helping to shape the direction of development. The governors help to formulate the school's values and aims, in line with its Catholic mission. They check that statutory duties are fulfilled, and provide a combination of challenge and support for the senior staff.
38. The headteacher and other key staff are extremely thoughtful in their approach to the school's future development, and maintain an ongoing dialogue with their colleagues. Good ideas emerge, partly as a result of inter-school co-operation and discussion. There is a network of leadership which helps to sustain a high quality of education and take the school forward. Among other duties, the deputy headteacher contributes to maintaining good relationships between pupils, staff and parents. The work of the whole staff team is well focused on the achievement, welfare and inclusion of all pupils.
39. Subject leaders play an important role in managing teaching and developing schemes of work, effectively supporting colleagues with less experience in that particular subject. The school takes seriously its partnership with parents, responding well to their views and indeed to those of pupils. There is good use of self-evaluation, including assessment data and lesson observation. In addition to statutory testing, additional tests are used to provide a clear picture of achievement. Analysis of test results and other information forms the starting point for an evaluation of the progress of individuals and of different groups of pupils, and interventions are well targeted.
40. The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides very good leadership and management for teachers and support assistants. The policy gives a clear rationale for the school's procedures and clarifies roles. Pupils receive the support they need, planning is good and records kept up to date. Appropriate staff training takes place, based on clear priorities. Very effective teamwork has been established.

41. Improvement has been good since the last inspection. The weaknesses which were identified then have been resolved; the good quality of achievement, teaching and learning and very positive ethos and sense of community have been sustained; and important improvements in provision, including in special educational needs and information and communication technology, have been successfully carried out.
42. The school is clearly oriented to improvement, and has as its motto 'Striving for Excellence'. Priorities for development are strongly focused on improving teaching and learning; a number of important initiatives have been adopted, including thinking skills, accelerated learning, provision for particularly gifted or talented pupils, literacy across the curriculum, and assessment aimed at giving pupils clear advice on how to improve. These have had some impact, but as separate initiatives they are proving difficult to act upon and implement extensively. Ways need to be found of creating appropriately sized teams which can share and implement ideas in a coherent manner, bearing in mind the common features of these various initiatives in promoting more thoughtful, challenging and active learning.
43. Good systems of performance management have been established, which are effective in identifying development needs. Staff development is well managed, based on clear identification of priorities and using intelligent approaches including observing and sharing good practice between schools. Care is taken to recruit good new staff when vacancies arise, to develop the skills of existing staff, and to ensure the well-being of the entire staff team. There is a very positive spirit of co-operation between staff with different roles.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	733,208	Balance from previous year	43,999
Total expenditure	667,428	Balance carried forward to the next	65,780
Expenditure per pupil	1923		

44. The school's income per pupil is relatively low by national comparisons. Effective management of finance and resources ensures that the school's limited budget is used to best effect, including deliberately accumulating sufficient savings from the annual budget in order to improve accommodation. Additional funds raised by parents have helped to improve facilities. Careful planning and spending, based on a clear educational vision, mean that the school provides very good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English is taught to all pupils throughout the school, and other subjects also make a contribution to the development of oral communication and literacy. French is taught to all pupils, including Years 5 and 6, although, after consultation with parents, a small number of pupils are temporarily removed from French lessons for additional work on literacy skills.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Standards of work are above average and pupils make good progress.
- The subject is well managed and led.
- More monitoring of teaching and learning would help teachers and pupils to improve.
- Pupils should be given clearer guidance on how to improve their work.

Commentary

45. Standards of work and progress are good. In 2002, despite many pupils who had problems in English when they entered the school, the end of Year 6 national tests indicated that pupils' attainment was above average. In 2003, Year 6 results improved significantly, and the percentage of pupils at Level 4 and above is well above the national average. As in most schools, the performance of girls has been consistently better than that of boys. The department has introduced a range of strategies including boy-friendly tasks, leading to good improvement in boys' performance.
46. Standards of work seen in Year 8 are above average and pupils' achievement and progress are good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, but the progress of gifted and talented pupils could be greater if teachers provided additional intellectual challenge and support.
47. Teaching and learning are good overall, and frequently very good in Years 7 and 8. Implementation of the Key Stage 3 literacy framework is at an advanced stage, and provides guided activities suited to pupils' abilities. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Homework is used effectively to support learning. ICT is used effectively in all years for research, drafting and redrafting work.
48. The marking of exercise books is inconsistent across the department. Assessment does not always provide pupils with a clear picture of the standards they have reached. Comments are often vague about what pupils need to do to improve. Consequently, many pupils do not respond positively enough by redrafting work to improve its accuracy and content.
49. Leadership is generally good, and the co-ordinators are creating an effective team. They are creating policy documents that are clear and well focused on raising pupils' attainment. The English co-ordinators have introduced very good schemes of work which, in addition to subject content, present a wide range of teaching and learning styles and guidance on how work can be presented for different groups of children. There is also helpful guidance on elements of citizenship and application of ICT. However, there is insufficient formal monitoring of teaching and learning to provide guidance on how to improve, and further attention now needs to be given to formative assessment (see above).

50. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection, and the collective strength of the team, plus good leadership, give grounds to believe that the capacity for further improvement is very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

51. Overall, the level of competence is above expectations throughout the school. The school has an effective strategy for teaching the basic skills of literacy, and teachers recognise their responsibility to develop literacy in lessons. Speaking and listening skills are well developed.
52. There are examples of good practice in most subjects. For example, teachers in art and design, design and technology, geography, history and mathematics emphasise the correct use of technical language. In French, teachers highlight the application of correct grammatical structures. Art and design teachers provide writing frames to help pupils produce extended writing.
53. The development of writing skills has been identified as a whole school priority, and strategies are being developed to improve pupils' writing. However it is clear that greater consistency between teachers is needed.
54. Literacy, including the implementation of the national strategy, is not monitored across the curriculum, and subject-specific guidance could bring further improvement.

French

Provision overall in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach a high standard and make very good progress.
- Teaching is very good, providing challenge and creating a positive climate for learning.
- Differentiated materials are used, enabling all pupils to reach their potential.
- Effective implementation of the literacy strategy results in very good learning.
- Pupil involvement in target-setting and self-evaluation, and a more structured approach to assessment, would help raise standards further.

Commentary

55. Work seen in lessons and in books is of a very high standard in Years 5 and 6. In Years 7 and 8 standards are above average compared to those expected of pupils of similar age. Achievement is very good overall. In Years 5 and 6, very good progress is made in the one hour allocated for beginner French. In all years pupils understand spoken French and answer confidently. Pupils with special educational needs progress well.
56. Pupils use French spontaneously to ask for things or to state fact e.g. "J'ai fini." They are used to thinking about how the language works and have a very good working knowledge of grammar, eg sentence structure, adjectival agreements, verb conjugation and negatives. As a result, answers in both oral and written tasks are extended and made interesting by the accurate use of more difficult vocabulary, descriptive words and clauses. Imaginative and creative work is encouraged. As a result of effective teaching, high expectations and the implementation of the literacy strategies, pupils are making very good progress in all years. Pupils are keen to learn more and respond to challenge. Year 5 pupils sang a song with feeling about greeting people and introducing oneself. There were no inhibitions and boys volunteered readily to perform. Whole-class involvement and high expectations drive the learning forward.
57. Teaching is very good overall. All lessons observed were very good or excellent. The teachers plan lessons carefully with step by step tasks and reinforcement strategies, so that learning

seems natural and lessons are enjoyed. Spurred on by success, there is a desire to learn more. Differentiated materials enable all to progress according to ability. At the end of a task, there are opportunities to discuss answers, to look at how groups have reached answers and to give opinions and find out how to improve. Pupils have the opportunity to use information and communication technology. Many pieces of work are on display, including graphs from a survey, showing that numeracy skills are being taught. Homework is regularly set and marked and there are regular assessments. Greater awareness of attainment levels and pupil involvement in target setting would help raise standards even further.

58. The subject is led with drive and enthusiasm, and with clear priorities for improvement. Resources are very well chosen to meet all learning needs. Lessons are monitored and initiatives evaluated.
59. Since the last inspection, very good improvement has been made. Differentiated materials are regularly used, with positive results. Thinking skills are firmly embedded into lessons, contributing to the very good progress.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work, progress and teaching are good throughout the school.
- Behaviour and relationships are good, and pupils work well together.
- Assessment, including advice on how to improve, helps pupils to achieve.
- Special needs staff make an important contribution to pupils' involvement and progress.
- Regular investigations develop thinking skills and challenge even the most able.

Commentary

60. Standards of work are good across the school, and pupils make good progress. The most recent test marks for Year 6 are high and continue the trend of improvement over time. Although results were disappointing in 2002, this can be traced back to a large number of pupils in that year group whose difficulties in mathematics were identified even before they entered the school; although these pupils made good progress, they did not quite reach the target levels for their age group. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Year 8 pupils reach above average standards, as shown by lesson observation and other data. Basic numeracy skills, which are well taught, are above average.
61. Teaching across all years is good and often very good. It is lively and lessons are conducted at a good pace. Staff have a good rapport with pupils and control their classes well. Teaching, particularly by non-specialists, is aided by a detailed scheme of work matched to classes of different abilities, though further development of differentiated materials within classes would enable the most able to be challenged more consistently. Special needs staff who work closely with mathematics teachers ensure that pupils experiencing difficulties are fully engaged and progress well. Pupils' thinking skills are developed by a good choice of daily activities; in addition, regular investigation sessions, in mixed ability groups using team teaching, provide extra challenge for all pupils, including the most able, who also take part in external competitions and an annual course at the University of Northumbria.

62. Behaviour and relationships are good, and pupils work well together in a safe, stress-free environment. They have a good attitude to work and react positively to their teachers' high expectations. Pupils' skills in ICT enable them to use it as an aid to learning mathematics, though this should be further encouraged. Lively plenary sessions are much enjoyed by the pupils, and reinforce learning objectives. There is good use of homework. Assessment is very well used, including advice for improvement, and aids teaching and learning.
63. Leadership is very good, with a clear vision of how to raise attainment and the determination to bring it about. The head of department, well supported by the second in mathematics, has high expectations of the pupils. Teaching is monitored to enhance quality, with appropriate feedback. Regular in-service training develops teaching and learning. Pupils' standards and progress are carefully monitored and appropriate action taken. Close co-operation with the first schools and the High School help to maintain continuity and progress.
64. The teaching of mathematics is improving well, and there was certainly no evidence of the difficulties mentioned in the last inspection report.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. The co-ordinator has successfully raised staff awareness and developed a consistent approach to the use of basic numeracy across the curriculum. A detailed policy document has been developed as a result of a whole-school training day and subsequent meetings. Good co-operation with some of the main feeder schools led to a successful numeracy workshop for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 and their parents. Examples of numeracy being used at good levels of attainment were observed in art and design, science, ICT and design and technology, showing above average skills. Progress so far has been good but there is still scope for development within some curriculum areas.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is very good.
- Pupils behave very well and have very good attitudes to learning.
- There is very good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- More consistent use of feedback would help pupils to further improve their work.

Commentary

66. Both the work seen during the inspection, and test results for Year 6 pupils, provide clear evidence of very high standards. In 2003, almost every pupil reached the target level, and three-quarters of them reached higher levels. All pupils progress well, and there are no significant differences between boys and girls.
67. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of basic scientific concepts, and can discuss and explain their work effectively because these skills are well developed in lessons. Year 8 also show a high standard of knowledge and understanding, a good recall of facts, and an ability to explain and make sound predictions.
68. They have good practical skills and handle equipment carefully and safely. Their scientific learning is well supported by skills in mathematics, language and ICT, and these skills are promoted in science lessons. The school is well equipped with suitable computers and pupils

use spreadsheets, databases, graphing programs and data-loggers. A digital camera has also been used to record findings.

69. Teaching is of a high quality, as a result of good subject knowledge, effective planning and skilful class management leading to very positive attitudes among pupils. Tasks are generally very well matched to the pupils' needs, with particularly good support being given to pupils with special educational needs, through the use of modified materials and very good support from the teaching assistants. A wide variety of teaching methods helps to motivate and interest the pupils. Pupils are very well prepared for tests. They are regularly assessed and targets set. Marking is supportive, but, especially for younger pupils, does not always provide clear guidance on how to improve.
70. The science co-ordinator provides very good leadership to colleagues and manages the subject well. Suitable priorities for development have been identified to raise attainment still further. A clear emphasis on developing scientific understanding has been established and shared. Teaching methods from the national strategy to raise attainment in Years 7 to 9 have been successfully adopted. The lack of technician support means that teachers have to clear away equipment; consequently, it is not possible to run an after-school science club on a regular basis, though pupils have opportunities to participate in a wide range of other activities that add variety to their science curriculum.
71. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection, improving standards and teaching still further, and including the appointment of specialist staff.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to high levels of skill development.
- There is good provision of equipment and it is available around the school.
- Pupils share in the assessment of their skills.
- The lack of technical support wastes teacher time and leads to frustration.
- There is inadequate monitoring and coordination of ICT use in different subjects.

Commentary

72. Throughout the school, pupils have good skills in the use of computers and communications in comparison with national standards, across a wide range of applications; word processing (including personal publishing and presentation software), spreadsheets, database management, computer control, and internet access. All pupils make good progress, with little difference between boys and girls. Younger pupils, including those who enter the school with little experience, achieve very high standards, and work hard to gain good levels of skills. For instance, many in Year 6 can insert a range of appropriate images into their word-processed text, and few waste time with unnecessary decoration. Older pupils can draw on more and more techniques for good communication, though they need to consider audience expectations more. Pupils' understanding of specialist language, of real life uses of computers, and of product design for specific purposes is relatively weak.
73. The quality of teaching is almost always good or very good. A particular strength is teachers' up-to-date knowledge of the subject, its applications, and the impact on society. Sometimes, however, too much knowledge is transmitted for pupils to follow, so they learn only a tiny fraction and not necessarily the most important parts. Generally, however, the high pace of lessons is a strength of teaching in this subject, as is the attractive and appropriate use of a wide range of resources including the data projector (though the interactive whiteboard is not yet well used). A greater use of worksheets designed to meet different pupils' needs would

support the learning of pupils experiencing more difficulty, provide greater challenge to others, and lead to a more equitable use of teachers' time.

74. Leadership is good, and both the teachers who give specialist lessons have a clear vision for development and provide good models for their colleagues, for instance through the high quality of displays and by developing the children's expertise. Management is satisfactory but there is a need for more systematic monitoring and co-ordination of ICT in different subjects and outside of lesson time. The lack of technical help for most of the week takes up the energies of the specialists and leads to others' frustration when things go wrong.
75. Even when measured against rising national expectations, there has been good improvement since the last inspection in terms of resources and pupils' skills.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. The school is well equipped, and in particular pupils in Years 5 and 6 have much more equitable access to computers than in most schools. The recent introduction of broadband will lead to more trouble-free and efficient use. Almost every classroom has some networked computers, and there are several small suites. Almost all the teachers are trained in the educational use of ICT and most are interested to develop this. As a result, there is some use of ICT as a tool for improved teaching and learning in most subjects, and improved strategies for ensuring that all pupils develop their skills. The best practice in quality and quantity is in design and technology, English, French, mathematics and science. Further work is needed in charting the needs and opportunities in the different subjects, in order to ensure that pupils receive all their entitlement.

HUMANITIES

Pupils are taught history and geography within a combined Humanities course, which also contributes to education for citizenship. Since each class is taught history or geography at particular times in the year, it was not possible for inspectors to observe each subject for each age group.

Religious education was separately inspected by a diocesan inspector, and is not included within this report.

Geography

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching results in pupils' good achievement.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Fieldwork extends the learning in the classroom.
- Resources are used effectively.
- Assessment does not give pupils clear guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

77. Standards in geography are good overall. Even in the current Years 5 and 8, which include many pupils who entered the school with particular difficulties, standards are above national norms. Most pupils are making good progress, though higher attaining pupils frequently need greater challenge, both in the tasks and in the texts they are asked to read.
78. Pupils have a good knowledge of the physical and human environment, as seen in a Year 8 lesson on the effects of tourism in an alpine valley in France. Pupils demonstrate an increasing

skill with the use of computers and work well in groups to discuss their ideas. Middle and lower attaining pupils in Year 5, often with support, are able to look at their local area and suggest improvements that could be made for consideration by the local warden.

79. The quality of teaching in geography is good and sometimes very good. A strong feature of the teaching is the challenging start to each lesson followed by the use of a range of activities using specially prepared resources. Most abilities are challenged to think about the effects and changes to the environment and can explain their ideas well to either their peers or a visitor. Pupils can write well on a given topic. Thinking Skills are having a particularly strong impact in this subject as in history.
80. The leadership of geography is good. The co-ordinator has a clear vision about how she wishes to develop the subject. The strong teamwork is raising standards and giving all pupils an opportunity to make good achievement. Fieldwork is helping to extend what is learnt in the classroom. The key issues for improvement from the last report have been dealt with.

History

The provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and result in good achievement.
- Teachers set tasks which require pupils to think, examine evidence and solve problems.
- Specialist teachers have a very strong subject knowledge.
- Pupils are positive and enthusiastic about their work.
- Higher-attaining pupils would benefit from more challenge.
- More frequent use of analytical marking would help pupils improve their work.

Commentary

81. Standards and achievement are generally good throughout the school. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in the current Year 6 and Year 7 were above national expectations. Pupils show an increasingly good knowledge and understanding of events over time, as seen in a Year 6 lesson on the evacuation of children from cities in Britain during the Second World War. Pupils in Years 6 and 7 demonstrate an increasing skill in handling historical source material and are beginning to come to terms with the possibility of bias. Most pupils can analyse well and discuss historical issues, though more able children would benefit from more challenging tasks and texts.
82. The quality of teaching and learning in history is good and sometimes very good. Good resource materials and innovative teaching are strong features, including the considerable impact of Thinking Skills activities. In lessons about World War II evacuees, the analysis of photographs encouraged pupils to reflect on an event involving children of their own age and to empathize as they left home without their parents. Studying the murder of Thomas a Becket sharpened pupils' investigative skills as they imagined they were policemen at the scene of the crime. Pupils can write briefly and at greater length on given topics and less able pupils use computers well to write reports, thus receiving support for spelling.
83. Subject leadership is good and encourages strong team work which helps all pupils to achieve well. Visits to historical sites greatly extend what is learnt in the classroom. The key issues mentioned in the last report have been dealt with. More frequent observation of lessons would ensure that the best methods and ideas are shared.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology (DT) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards of work are high using various materials, and they show a good grasp of underpinning technological and scientific principles.
- Teaching is of a high quality, with helpful assessment and good subject coverage.
- Teachers are encouraged to introduce new ideas.
- A wide range of resources is used, including digital technology.
- Opportunities are taken to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, citizenship, and literacy.
- There is a lack of technical support, and of space in the specialist rooms.

Commentary

84. Standards of work in technology are high throughout the school. Almost all pupils develop particularly good skills with a range of materials and unusually clear knowledge and understanding of the relevant basic ideas in design and technology and science. The work seen involved developing designs with paper, card, fabrics and computer control, and, in Years 7 and 8, wood and plastics; in all cases, standards were higher than national norms. The curriculum also includes food technology and there are plans to include designing and making electronic products. Because the pupils enter Year 5 from a large number of first schools, they start with variable experience of the subject. In Years 5 and 6 they achieve very well as they strive to meet the staff's high expectations. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls, while pupils with special educational needs generally achieve as well as others in this subject, even without special learning support.
85. The quality of teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8. Particular strengths are:
- the teachers' deep and up-to-date knowledge of technology in theory and practice;
 - their very careful (but flexible) planning;
 - the effectiveness of their various teaching methods;
 - their encouragement of the pupils, sometimes leading to excitement, even inspiration;
 - good use of a wide range of resources, including computers and links with the outside world;
 - the pace of lessons.
86. A particular strength is the system for assessing how well pupils are doing, both from moment to moment and at the end of a unit of work. An unusual quality for this subject is the teachers' encouragement of pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural, literacy and citizenship development. There is a need to develop further and share with other colleagues the practice, often already good, of active whole-class discussion and focused practical work; among other benefits, this helps to identify and meet individual needs effectively.
87. Leadership of the subject is excellent, with strong vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations, great commitment to design and technology and its teaching, and much innovative thinking. There is very effective monitoring and evaluation and decisive action to overcome shortcomings. There have been substantial improvements since the previous inspection, particularly due to the quality of leadership and management. Both specialist teachers work extremely hard to focus and develop their schemes of work at a great pace. Unfortunately,

they have to spend time on tasks which could be carried out by technicians, thus reducing time

for teaching and limiting children's learning. Neither of the two rooms mainly used for technology has enough space for the large classes, especially to allow flexibility between practical, computer-based and desk work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The school teaches music and art and design in all years. There are no separate drama lessons, but this forms a part of the subject English.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high, and pupils make very good progress.
- There is a high quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils develop practical skills and an appreciation of different periods and cultures.
- Assessment shows pupils how to improve.

Commentary

88. The standard of work seen during the inspection, and pupils' achievement, are good in Years 5 and 6, and very good in Years 7 and 8. This level of achievement is the result of high quality teaching and pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour. All pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and those who are particularly talented in the subject.
89. From a relatively low level of skill when they enter the school, pupils reach a standard beyond national expectations in Years 5 and 6, and a very high standard by the end of Year 8. They progress well in practical activities, and gain a growing appreciation of art and design and artists from a variety of periods and cultures.
90. Very good relationships exist between the teacher and the pupils. Pupils concentrate well and are well motivated. There are well-established classroom routines, including the sharing of learning objectives with pupils and a good mixture of information, demonstration and open questioning. These, together with individual support and challenge during learning activities, ensure that all pupils make good progress.
91. Teaching and learning are good in Years 5 and 6 where the scheme of work is designed to support continuous progress. Pupils' work shows a growing understanding of the formal elements of art and design: line, tone, pattern, texture, form, colour, shape and space, which are positively influencing the consistently rising standards. Along with good planning, effective assessment procedures, shared with pupils, ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the things that they do well, and those which need improvement. In Years 7 and 8, the outstanding teaching builds on this foundation, fostering the development of ideas and imagination and ensuring a firm understanding of the design process.
92. Leadership and management are very good. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. The positive steps to improve the art and design curriculum and assessment procedures have raised standards and improved the quality of learning.

Music

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sound and consistent teaching enables all children to make progress.
- Pupils enjoy music and are engaged and enthusiastic.
- The department has excellent resources.
- Around 25% of pupils take instrumental lessons.
- Highly able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.
- Accommodation is crowded.
- There are insufficient opportunities for high quality extra-curricular music ensembles.

Commentary

93. Pupils' attainment levels in music are, overall, above average when compared with national norms. There is a wealth of musical talent in the school, and pupils are in general very receptive to and appreciative of their musical education. As they progress through the school their achievement is basically good, and their levels of musical knowledge, understanding and skill continue to be above average when compared with national norms. However, many talented pupils are capable of significantly higher levels of attainment.
94. The good achievement of the majority is a direct result of the pupils' enthusiasm and the sound and competent teaching. Very good classroom management, kind and supportive relationships with children, and an interesting breadth and variety of learning activities are its strengths. The music teacher makes good use of her fine singing voice and her keyboard skills in her teaching. Good instrumental teaching and excellent resources strengthen learning, creating a stimulating musical environment in which pupils make progress, learn new skills and feel enthusiastic about music.
95. The underachievement of more able pupils is a consequence of the lack of depth, differentiation and rigour in some of the teaching. In several lessons, all children were given the same task, which some could accomplish with little interest or challenge. More able pupils would benefit from greater opportunity to talk about, internalise, and thereby improve their musical thought processes and learning.
96. The day-to-day management of the department is orderly and efficient. A much-needed review of schemes of work is expected later this year. Observation and performance management should be focused on raising achievement for all and improving the quality of teaching, and ways sought to include visiting instrumental teachers in this process.
97. Around 90 pupils, one quarter of the school's population, take instrumental lessons on a wide range of Western classical and jazz instruments. Many more children love singing; there have been two major school productions in the past four years, and one more is planned for January 2004. There is a weekly orchestral rehearsal, a recorder club and a folk music ensemble. However, the school does not maximise the considerable potential in this large pool of eager young musicians. Opportunities for high quality ensemble playing are very limited, and there is no regular choral singing. The school could draw upon the rich local musical traditions to nurture its pupils and foster the further development of their talent.
98. Since the time of the last inspection, good practice has been sustained and consolidated, but the school has not developed in line with the best practice elsewhere, and further developments are needed if pupils are to fulfil their considerable musical talent.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Pupils are very interested, with very positive attitudes.
- Standards are high in the major games.
- The school should seek to ensure that all pupils in Years 5 and 6 are able to swim the required distance of 25 metres and have confidence in the water.
- Units of work need to be sufficiently long to ensure better progression in activities.
- Improvements in assessment are needed to support progress.

Commentary

99. Standards of work are good throughout the school, and above those expected for pupils of a similar age. In Year 5 netball, pupils understand the basic footwork rules, and can pass and receive the ball with some control. In soccer, pupils of the same age are developing basic dribbling and passing skills. In Year 6 there are good standards in rugby, as pupils pass and receive the ball well on the move. Pupils in Year 7 have above average standards in soccer, hockey and netball. In hockey pupils attempt to use the reverse stick when dribbling; some higher attaining pupils use the reverse stick pass, a high level skill for their age. In netball pupils know positions and formations. In Year 8 gymnastics standards are satisfactory, as pupils are able to perform a variety of skills in short sequences with rolls and balances. Paired work is good, as pupils synchronise movements well, though the quality could be improved.
100. In all lessons pupils of all attainment levels, including those with special needs, make good progress, as they learn new skills and improve and refine existing ones. Achievement is good as pupils build on skills year on year and reach their potential.
101. Teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables them to give clear explanations and demonstrations to pupils, helping them learn new skills and increase their knowledge and understanding. Some lessons are very good or excellent, as a result of their pace, and the very challenging practices and very positive attitudes, which lead to pupils making significant progress in their skill development and understanding. Older pupils could be given more responsibility at the start of lessons by taking charge of their own warm up. There are very good relationships in all lessons, and the good work rates in lessons contribute to pupils' good progress and achievement. Although teachers know pupils' capabilities, better use of National Curriculum levels, for example, would help pupils understand how well they are doing, and teachers could clarify what they need to do to improve their standards.
102. The subject is well led and managed. There is a commitment by the teachers to provide pupils of all attainment levels with very good experiences in physical education. This is done through lessons, school clubs and school teams, which provide opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, particularly in soccer, rugby, netball, gymnastics, dance and athletics. Progression in some activities is restricted because units of work are too short.
103. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. Standards and the quality of teaching have improved significantly.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Current provision is generally **satisfactory**, but further development is due.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of visiting speakers to supplement the expertise of staff.
- There is a strong focus on giving pupils the knowledge they need for their welfare and to develop as citizens.
- The School Council provides a valuable exercise in democracy.
- The current approach is lacking in coherence, and steps need to be taken both to extend provision and to ensure that pupils have a better sense of their own development.

Commentary

104. Personal, social and health education is taught not through a separate course, but through whole-school and year events, assemblies, occasional talks by visitors, and through some subjects (particularly religious education).
105. Similarly, there is no separate course for citizenship, which is also taught through school activities and events and particularly in Humanities lessons. The process of auditing current provision has begun, covering assemblies, visiting speakers, seasonal activities including the Lenten charity, and topics within Humanities. There is effective planning in liaison with the High School to ensure continuity.
106. There are advantages to this form of dispersed provision, though it needs to be well managed to ensure good coverage and quality. There is also the danger that pupils may not appreciate how different events are related. Discussion is currently taking place to introduce some form of personal record or portfolio, which will help pupils to value and evaluate their own personal and social development and form a basis for discussion with teachers and parents.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
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	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).