



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Cardinal Hinsley High School

Brent Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 17-18 June 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Cardinal Hinsley High School
Type of school:	Voluntary Aided
Status:	Secondary
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19 years
Headteacher:	Mrs G Freear
Address of school:	Harlesden Road London NW10 3RN
Telephone:	020 8965 3947
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Sister Dolores Lynn
Local education authority area:	Brent
Unique reference number:	101564
Name of reporting inspector:	Ms J Joyner HMI
Dates of inspection:	17-18 June 2004

Introduction

1. Cardinal Hinsley High School is a Roman Catholic comprehensive school for boys, situated in Harlesden, Brent, within the Diocese of Westminster. The local area is one of the most deprived nationally, although the school admits pupils from neighbouring boroughs as well. In September 2003 the school was federated with the Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College, a nearby school for girls. Cardinal Hinsley High School is smaller than most secondary schools, with 528 pupils on roll, including 39 pupils in the small sixth form. Twenty eight per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. The school is rich in its cultural and linguistic diversity. A high proportion of the pupils, just over a third, have English as an additional language and many of them are at an early stage of learning English. Thirty per cent of the pupils have special educational needs and 4.5 per cent have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Both these figures are above the national average. Almost a third of the pupils enter the school after the beginning of Year 7. This is a school that operates in challenging circumstances.

2. The school was inspected in February 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and it was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of February 2002. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on five occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In June 2004 three HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of February 2002.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- standards have improved over the course of the year but are still too low. The school's results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were very low compared with the national averages and the averages for pupils in similar schools. At the end of Key Stage 4 the proportion of the pupils attaining five or more higher-grade GCSE passes in 2003 was broadly in line with the figure for schools where pupils' prior attainment was similar but well below the national average. Standards attained by the small number of pupils in the sixth form were below average in 2003 but results so far this year are closer to the average;
 - the progress made by the pupils in the past has been too slow. Over the course of the last year improvements to the provision have increased the rate of progress made by pupils at all stages. The quality of learning has also improved recently; it was satisfactory or better in almost nine out of ten lessons and good or better in almost half;
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- the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall: in nearly all the lessons they were satisfactory or better; in almost half they were good; and they were very good or better in a quarter. The pupils' behaviour around the school was at least satisfactory and often good;
 - permanent exclusions have decreased by half compared to last year but are still too high. The level of fixed-term exclusions shows no improvement although the number of days lost has fallen considerably;
 - attendance is slightly below national averages but higher than a year ago and improving. Punctuality to lessons is satisfactory but punctuality to school by a minority of pupils is too often unsatisfactory;
 - the spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils is good; their cultural development is satisfactory;
 - the quality of teaching has improved markedly since the inspection in 2002 and is broadly satisfactory overall. In almost nine out of ten lessons the teaching was satisfactory or better. It was good or better in half the lessons, including one in seven lessons where the teaching was very good or excellent. The teaching is strongest at Key Stage 4. Nevertheless, there is still too much teaching that is unsatisfactory;
 - the curriculum is broad and balanced and satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is being adapted well to suit the needs of pupils with different abilities and interests; it includes a suitable range of work-related options. The school has a sound, new assessment system which is not yet being used effectively across all subjects to raise standards. The quality of marking is good. Homework is set regularly and is generally appropriate;
 - the appearance and cleanliness of the school have improved considerably since the beginning of this school year. There have been improvements to the accommodation, which now provides an appropriate environment for learning;
 - the headteacher provides very good leadership that is strong and determined. She has motivated both staff and pupils. Aply supported by an effective deputy headteacher, she has established a learning culture in the school. Other senior managers have provided loyal support and worked hard to bring about improvement. The senior leadership team has a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
 - the governing body is strongly led by an experienced chair of governors who has considerable relevant experience. Other governors are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the school and couple support with challenge as they exercise their role with growing confidence;
 - middle managers vary in their effectiveness from very good to unsatisfactory. However many are new in post and difficulties over recruitment and retention have had a considerable impact at this level of management;
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- the monitoring and evaluation by senior staff are sound and often good. An extensive programme of lesson observation has been implemented to improve the quality of teaching. The line-management system, whereby senior managers meet with middle managers, is sound. However the monitoring and evaluation by middle managers are generally unsatisfactory;
- the decision taken by the diocese, local education authority (LEA) and governing body to federate the school was bold and creative. It was acted upon swiftly and sensitively and has been entirely beneficial. The federation has contributed powerfully to the rapid progress made by the school in the last year;
- support for the school from the LEA has been generous and, while slow to have an impact at first, has helped to bring about rapid improvement since the federation and the change of leadership. The LEA correctly intends to continue to provide high levels of support for the school;
- the hard work and dedication of all the staff in the school, and recently many of the teachers at the convent, have led to considerable and swift improvement over the last year in the ethos of the school and in the quality of the teaching and learning.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- continue to raise standards across the school;
- improve the quality of teaching by eradicating the unsatisfactory lessons;
- increase the effectiveness of middle management.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. The school has worked hard and is now beginning to meet some success in achieving more appropriate standards. However, the pupils' attainment remains low. In recent years, results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been very low compared to those of schools nationally in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Compared to those of similar schools the results were also very low. There were small rises in the results in 2003 in English and mathematics, but overall the standards remained too low. Many of the school's more capable pupils made too little progress, with well-below-average proportions achieving the higher Level 6 in 2003, despite a small increase compared to the previous year. Over the course of this year however, the pupils have begun to achieve higher standards, which the school believes, based on the increasingly reliable data, will lead to improved end-of-key stage results in 2004. The work in many of the pupils' books and folders justifies this optimism, as there is clear evidence of improvement over the course of the year.

8. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has also been low. Standards at GCSE have been well below the average for all schools for the last three years. In comparison with schools where pupils' prior attainment was similar the proportion of pupils attaining five or more higher-grade GCSE passes was average in 2003, but the proportion who attained five or more passes at any grade was below average, and the proportion who attained one or more passes was well below average. In 2003 a few subject departments achieved good standards, often with small numbers of pupils; for example, in English literature, drama, Spanish and religious education. Attainment was particularly low in design and technology, French, geography and physical education. Based on reliable data, the school anticipates that in 2004 its target for five higher-grade GCSEs will be achieved and probably exceeded, and hopes that every pupil will leave school with a qualification of some kind.

9. The small number of sixth-form students attained mixed results in 2003, which overall were below average. This was partly because, in the past, students had been admitted into the sixth form who were not able to cope with the academic courses that they were offered. Students were only admitted in September 2003 if they had already achieved five higher-grade GCSEs. Most students have taken a minimum of three AS levels and those who have already been assessed have achieved at least the standards expected of them. Those taking GNVQs are achieving expected or better standards and everyone is likely to complete their courses and pass, with no one dropping out as has happened in previous years. Over the course of this year the sixth-formers have made generally good progress and, based on reliable data, the school is predicting better results for 2004.

10. Standards are now beginning to rise across the school. A variety of measures has been applied to raise the attainment of the pupils at the end of each key stage. In Key Stage 4, four groups of pupils, who are in different ways critical to the raising of standards, were identified at the beginning of the year. They have received extra support individually and in groups to ensure that they realise their potential. Although the progress made by the pupils has been too slow in the past, over the last year improvements to the quality of teaching have resulted in more rapid progress and rising standards. The work in a sample of pupils' books shows sound progress over time and how the improved marking is helping the pupils to make more rapid gains. Progress is greater during Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. The school is beginning to address the relative underachievement of black pupils and the need to ensure that pupils with English as an additional language continue to receive specific, language-related help once they appear to be fluent. All teachers are members of one of four working parties focusing on literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and special educational needs; this is helping to raise standards.

11. Standards in English are too low, although improvement over this year is apparent in classes where there has been continuity of teaching. The pupils' speaking and listening skills are improving as lessons offer greater opportunities for oral work. By the end of Key Stage 3 the more able pupils speak with confidence, expressing their ideas using interesting vocabulary and responding to the needs of the listener. They write at length using a range of sentence structures and words for effect; many are confident readers with a knowledge and understanding of a wide range of texts. The less able pupils present their written work with more care than previously, and many complete substantial pieces of a reasonable standard. Some less able pupils have, by the end of Key Stage 3, discovered the pleasure of reading and are able to discuss plot and character with a degree of confidence. There are weaknesses in pupils' basic skills, across the ability range; for example, too many are unable to use

paragraphs correctly. Work to raise the profile of literacy and to strengthen provision for it, for example the refurbishment of the library, is helping to raise standards in English.

12. At Key Stage 4, GCSE coursework demonstrates that improvement has occurred over the last year in the quality of much of the pupils' written work. Able pupils use language appropriately and with flair for a variety of purposes, such as to write stories, arguments and letters, and to respond sensitively to literature and other texts. The less able pupils have produced written work which, in many cases, demonstrates that they can express their ideas clearly and with reasonable accuracy. Many older boys read a range of texts with understanding and are able to discuss how authors build characters or create moods, using quotations skilfully to back up the points that they make, for example Year 10 pupils sensitively discussed the theme of nature in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Too many pupils at Key Stage 4, however, do not read for pleasure. Oral skills vary, with able Year 10 pupils using words like "evocative" and "feasible" accurately, while their peers in the low ability group struggled to give speeches about not smoking, despite sound preparation and the encouragement of their teacher. Drama lessons make a strong contribution to the development of the pupils' oral skills; for example, in an outstanding Year 10 lesson about how war destroys innocence, boys described their emotions, some in role as women, and demonstrated their ability to speculate, hypothesise and debate difficult topics in a mature manner.

13. Standards in mathematics have improved and are close to average overall. By the end of Year 9, the higher-attaining pupils calculate with above-average speed and accuracy, including calculations with decimal and vulgar fractions. They solve linear algebraic equations effectively. Their understanding of space and shape is good; for example, they apply Pythagoras' theorem to solve two-dimensional problems. Their ability to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems is typical of the age group. The middle-ability pupils know a reasonable range of mathematical facts, but their capability to use them to solve problems is below average, and their accuracy with calculations is inconsistent. The lower-ability pupils achieve levels that are well below national expectations.

14. In Years 10 and 11, standards in mathematics are approaching the levels typical for the pupils' age. The most able pupils have good investigational skills, identifying patterns in numbers and using these facts to solve sophisticated problems. Their ability to calculate and solve algebraic equations is good, as is their understanding of shape and space. Most other pupils work at levels which vary from close to average to well below; too often, their calculations are inaccurate and obvious errors are not recognised. These pupils' ability to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems is below average.

15. The pupils' standards in science lessons were broadly in line with national expectations; their progress varied from unsatisfactory to good, although overall it was satisfactory. When following the good role model of some teachers, the pupils used scientific language precisely and in a structured way. In a lower-attaining Year 7 group, the pupils made good progress when they used subject-specific vocabulary well to describe the features of animal and plant cells. The progress the pupils make in their application of simple concepts in different contexts is reasonable. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, the pupils related their ideas about the sizes of molecules to their ability to diffuse into the bloodstream. However, investigational skills are underdeveloped: too much practical work is planned, directed or demonstrated by the teacher, and too little is demanded of the pupils in selecting their own approaches to answering scientific questions.

16. The standards achieved by the pupils who have special educational needs are satisfactory and at times good, particularly when they receive specialist support from teachers or learning support assistants. The regular review of the pupils' individual education plans contributes to this improved situation, as does the better use being made of them by many teachers. The pupils with English as an additional language usually make sound progress despite the fact that only very recently has a clear picture emerged of their specific needs. They are supported in their development by the wider range of teaching strategies that have been employed over the last year. The school is beginning to consider the support that pupils with English as an additional language continue to require once they have attained a reasonable level of fluency, but this is at a very early stage.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. They were satisfactory or better in 26 of the lessons; in 13 of the lessons they were good, in six very good and they were excellent in one lesson. The boys understand the established classroom routines and exhibit an increasing ability to listen and contribute positively to their work in lessons. They generally applied themselves with diligence and settled quickly to their work, completing tasks to time without fuss, and asking for assistance only when necessary. The boys took appropriate advantage of the opportunities they were given to engage in productive talk with each other, and were generally keen to contribute to discussions in large groups. The relationships between the pupils and the teachers are a strength of the school.

18. The pupils' behaviour around the school was at least satisfactory and often good: most were polite and welcoming to visitors and happy to talk about their work and the improvements to their school. They were respectful in the assembly and supportive of those receiving awards for their good attendance. There is very little graffiti and litter around the site: the boys treat their surroundings with respect.

19. The system for discipline and rewards is firmly underpinned by a code of conduct for the pupils and the staff. Emphasis has been given to positive incentives and rewards to encourage good behaviour, including the distribution of merits, postcards home to inform the parents about incidences of good behaviour and work, and regular subject prizes to recognise achievements. An appropriate range of sanctions is used sensibly, to establish guidelines for acceptable behaviour.

20. The number of permanent exclusions, although still too high, has decreased significantly from 18 last year to nine this year. The level of fixed-term exclusions has shown no improvement since last year, although the number of days lost to exclusion has fallen considerably from 1062 to 715 this year.

21. The pupils' rate of attendance this year, at 90.6 per cent, is a little higher than the figure of 90.1 per cent for 2002-3, but is slightly below the national median. The school has successfully reduced the rate of unauthorised absence from 1.3 per cent in 2002-3 to 0.9 per cent for the period since September 2003.

22. The punctuality of the pupils to lessons is satisfactory. However, punctuality to school in the mornings on the part of a minority of pupils is too often unsatisfactory: on the second morning of the inspection 35 pupils came onto the school site during registration.

23. The school has effective policies and procedures to encourage and celebrate good attendance; those who do not attend regularly enough are suitably challenged through persistent contact with their parents. A collective responsibility for good attendance is encouraged through regular prizes for the best tutor groups in Key Stages 3 and 4; additionally, individual pupils are rewarded by certificates. Lateness is discouraged through daily detentions, although there are a small number of persistently late pupils for whom this sanction has not been effective.

24. The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Their cultural development is satisfactory. However, the school makes good provision for all of these areas: art and drama lessons make particularly strong contributions to the boys' social and cultural development. Sound contributions to their spiritual and moral development are made through the assembly programme that follows themes planned in conjunction with the school chaplain around the church calendar. During the inspection, the pupils entered quietly, listened attentively and withdrew sensibly from a Year 8 assembly; there was an appropriate moment of quiet reflection, observed with respect by the boys. The chapel is available to the pupils throughout the school day; a small but significant number of them go there during lunch and break times to speak with the chaplain and to pray. Key themes of Christianity are promoted in the school through the boys' involvement in charity work; for example, the school's link with a Roman Catholic school in Uganda.

25. The pupils are given suitable opportunities to exercise responsibility for the community of the school. They have an effective voice through the school council: it meets regularly and has been instrumental in securing improvements in the catering and leisure facilities. The council has been involved in some policy review; for example, it made a significant contribution to a survey on bullying. There are a number of ways through which the older pupils are encouraged to care for their younger colleagues. Some of the sixth-form pupils carry out paired reading with the pupils with English as an additional language; a similar scheme runs with Year 10 and Year 7 pupils.

26. The school provides a variety of extracurricular activities that make significant contributions to the social and cultural development of the pupils, including competitive sports clubs, visits to theatres, museums and galleries, and visiting speakers on a wide range of subjects.

The quality of education

27. The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the February 2002 inspection and is broadly satisfactory overall. In almost nine out of ten lessons the teaching was satisfactory or better; it was good or better in half of the lessons, including one in seven lessons where the teaching was very good or excellent. Nevertheless, there is still too much teaching that is unsatisfactory. Teaching was better in Key Stage 4 than elsewhere in the school. Outstanding teaching occurred in drama and art, and very good teaching in some lessons in English and geography.

28. The teaching had many strengths. In the best lessons, for example in art and drama, the exposition was of a particularly high quality that inspired the pupils' interest and helped them make very good progress. The learning tasks were challenging, allowing the pupils to attain high standards. Their passion for their subjects enabled the teachers to inspire their pupils. The recently completed schemes of work are helping teachers in their planning. In

most lessons, the teachers talked knowledgeably about their subject, sometimes assisted by good use of interactive whiteboards. The pace of lessons was mostly satisfactory and sometimes good. Expectations of the pupils' involvement with their work were good; the challenge of the work varied, but was broadly satisfactory overall. The management of behaviour was good and most teachers created a settled learning environment in their classrooms. The quality of display varied widely, with the best giving the pupils advice and models to help them improve their work, but some rooms did not provide a stimulating learning environment.

29. Remaining weaknesses in the teaching, found not only in the unsatisfactory teaching but to a lesser extent in some of the teaching judged to be satisfactory overall, included: insecure management of behaviour; weaknesses in subject knowledge; a lack of clarity in exposition; and a failure to catch and hold the interest of the pupils.

30. Thorough training programmes are helping to improve the quality of teaching. The need for staff development is great, as the school has admitted a high proportion of new teachers during its time subject to special measures; many of the new staff have been trained overseas or are newly qualified or untrained. Some managers have been appointed to their posts earlier than would normally be the case, because of recruitment difficulties. Training is tailored to suit the particular needs of individuals, with, for example, special programmes for overseas-trained staff who are managers. All new staff have mentors, who are usually experienced teachers.

31. The quality of learning was satisfactory or better in almost nine out of ten lessons, and good or better in almost half of the lessons. Learning has improved over the past year. The pupils generally used their time well and persevered with the tasks set by their teacher. They listened carefully and many answered questions readily. The pupils' ability to solve problems varied widely, with the most able showing a good degree of independence in learning; nevertheless, too many pupils required considerable help from adults to make adequate progress. The pupils showed pride in their work; for example, through presentation that was above the quality typical for boys of their age. Where the learning was unsatisfactory, it reflected teaching that was dull and inadequately organised.

32. In some lessons, learning support assistants worked alongside the teacher, usually with pupils who have special educational needs. Their contribution varied widely in quality; in some lessons and tutor groups the assistants worked effectively with individuals or small groups, making a significant contribution to the pupils' learning. However, in other lessons the assistants' work was not adequately planned with the teacher; they were too frequently passive and were left to use their own initiative about where to focus their contribution. Teachers and learning support assistants are making increasingly good use of the pupils' individual education plans and the suggested strategies to support good progress.

33. The quality of marking is good. Marking is regular and includes written comments that identify errors and provide guidance on how the work can be improved. Homework is set regularly and is generally appropriate. Target National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades are set in each subject for the end of each key stage. The pupils know these, but they have too little influence on their learning. Shorter-term targets to help the pupils judge their own progress are not yet established practice, although the increasing use of the target stamp by teachers in their marking is helping pupils to understand what they need to do next to improve.

34. The assessment system is sound, but is not used effectively to raise standards across all subjects. The school has started tracking the pupils' progress, but the data from the assessment system is collated too infrequently and, after a year, it is difficult to judge whether the pupils are making adequate progress. Nevertheless, the school has identified some pupils that needed help in Years 9 and 11, to raise their attainment just before they took public tests and examinations.

35. The curriculum is broad and balanced and satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is being adapted well to suit the needs of pupils with different abilities and interests; it includes a suitable range of work-related options.

36. The provision for the small number of boys in the sixth form has been improved greatly by the federation. Close liaison with the large and successful sixth form at the convent has increased the range of courses and expertise available to them. The management of the sixth form has been strengthened, as the person responsible at the convent line-manages the head of the sixth form at Cardinal Hinsley. The improvements to the provision have resulted in a fourfold increase in the number of applications from boys in Year 11 to enter the sixth form.

Leadership and management

37. Until July 2003 the school was led by a headteacher who had been in post for several years. The present headteacher took up her position at Cardinal Hinsley when the federation was established. She is also headteacher at the convent, where she has been for several years.

38. Leadership and management are improving and are good overall. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good. Since the federation of the school with her successful school nearby she has led strongly, with determination and a clear focus on the removal of the causes of special measures. She has used the resources of one school to improve the other. Keeping the needs of the pupils at heart, she has tirelessly pushed for improvement at an appropriately urgent pace, given the slow progress that the school had made initially. She has motivated staff, won the pupils over and established a learning culture in the school. When first appointed she rightly made improving the appearance and cleanliness of the school a priority; this was much appreciated by staff and pupils and it sent out an important message to the community. Since then high expectations and the sharing of good practice have been the main means of raising standards. Recently improvement has been rapid.

39. The governing body is strongly led by an experienced chair of governors, who has considerable relevant expertise. Other governors are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the school and they couple support with challenge as they exercise their role with growing confidence. The linking of governors with the key issues that the school has been tackling, together with increased visiting and regular updates, has been particularly successful. Following the federation, governors from both original governing bodies combined harmoniously under the leadership of the chair of governors from the convent. This process has strengthened governance at the school and it is now good. In spring 2006 the federation is to be reviewed by all parties, but the school is to benefit from the arrangement until then, as it consolidates and builds upon recent improvement.

40. The recently appointed deputy headteacher is very able and works effectively with the headteacher, setting the tone and driving improvement. Other senior managers have

provided loyal support and worked hard to bring about improvement, supported by an associate senior leader placed in the school by the LEA; they vary in their effectiveness, with the best practice contributing significantly to the progress the school has made. Members of the senior leadership team have a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, largely because of an extensive programme of lesson observation. They monitor and evaluate well. Senior staff hold regular line-management discussions with middle managers; these are minuted and action is clearly identified and picked up at the following meeting. The senior managers maintain a visible presence around the school, helping to preserve the orderly atmosphere.

41. The effectiveness of middle managers is variable, ranging from unsatisfactory to very good. Monitoring and evaluation of the areas for which they are responsible are generally unsatisfactory. Most middle managers are not making sufficient use of assessment data. However, many are new in post and difficulties over recruitment and retention have had a considerable impact at this level of management. For example, there has been a lack of continuity in the management of English, which has very recently been placed in the hands of new staff, who are enthusiastic and good practitioners but inexperienced in management. This lack of continuity has in part been compensated for by good support from the LEA over the last two years. Subject leaders have often had to work with a high proportion of overseas-trained, newly qualified and unqualified staff in their departments. Useful training is being provided for managers, funded by The London Challenge.

42. Strategic management is sound. There are suitable plans to consolidate and build upon recent improvements. The extent of the large budget deficit only became apparent over the course of the year. The LEA has been very supportive and a suitable financial plan has been agreed to ensure that the school can operate with an unenhanced budget within three years. The school now operates within its means, and day-to-day financial management is sound. Problems with recruitment and a falling roll, exacerbated by the opening of a new academy with a state-of-the-art building, just around the corner, have compounded the budgetary problems.

43. Throughout the time it has been subject to special measures, the LEA has made a clear and accurate assessment of the school's progress and what remains to be done. Generous support has been provided and, while slow to have an impact at first, this has helped to bring about rapid improvement since the federation and the change of leadership. The LEA has correctly identified the need to continue to provide the school with support. The decision taken with the diocese to federate the school was bold and creative. It was implemented swiftly and sensitively and has been entirely beneficial to the school.

44. The hard work and dedication of all the staff in the school, and recently many of the teachers at the convent, have led to considerable and swift improvement over the last year in the ethos of the school and in the quality of the teaching and learning.

Implementation of the action plan

45. The inspection report of 2002 required the school to address six key issues. These principally related to: raising standards; improving the teaching; strengthening the pupils' basic skills; planning schemes of work; monitoring progress, attendance and exclusions;

improving the support for new teachers; and improving the resources and the environment for learning. Overall, good progress has been made but there is still work to be done.

46. The induction, support and professional development of teachers have been improved considerably. The LEA and a range of consultants have helped the school with this process. Schemes of work have been produced for all subjects. Monitoring processes have been clarified and made more rigorous. These actions have improved the quality of the teaching and good progress has been made.

47. Reading has recently been given a high profile within the school with the refurbishment of the library, a literacy focus in lessons and reading time in registration periods. All the teachers serve on one of four working parties raising standards in literacy, numeracy, ICT and for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers' plans incorporate ways of improving the pupils' basic skills. Assessment information is beginning to be used to track pupils' progress and to ensure that the activities are matched to their needs. These actions are beginning to raise standards.

48. Resources have been improved steadily while the school has been subject to special measures. Interactive whiteboards have recently been installed in several classrooms, to good effect. Over the last year the accommodation has been transformed in most areas of the school. The school as a whole is much cleaner and tidier. The entrance has been enhanced with a new path, flowers and displays inside the building. The repositioning of the entrance to the boys' toilets has improved the foyer immensely. Good progress has been made in this area.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in February 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in September 2002, in January, May, and October 2003, and in February 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of February 2002.

In June 2004, three HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty eight lessons or parts of lessons, one assembly and five registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff and a range of middle managers. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. Year 11 pupils and many of the sixth-formers were not in lessons because of examinations. The convent was visited in order to observe provision and a lesson for the boys in the sixth form. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of February 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.