

# INSPECTION REPORT

**MALTBY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

ROTHERHAM

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106952

Headteacher: Mr D Musson

Reporting inspector: Mr R Drew  
7281

Dates of inspection: 9-13 October 2000

Inspection number: 223778

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Braithwell Road Maltby Rotherham South Yorkshire
Postcode:	S66 8AB
Telephone number:	01709 812864
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Overett
Date of previous inspection:	4 March 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Robert Drew 7281	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Rosemary Burgess 9710	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Valerie Banks 4677	Team inspector	Geography	
Ronald Cohen 18447	Team inspector	Religious education	
Wendy Easterby 19586	Team inspector	English	
Anthony Fiddian-Green 14596	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
		Equal opportunities	
Alan Giles 17709	Team inspector	Physical education	
Vincent Gormally 10209	Team inspector	Art	
Veronica Kerr 21785	Team inspector	Science	
Andrew Lagden 28101	Team inspector	History	
Caroline Orr 16950	Team inspector	Modern languages	
Richard Patterson 12048	Team inspector	Design and technology	
John Ralston 1919	Team inspector	Information technology	
Alan Watson 7222	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Hamish Wilkie 3753	Team inspector	Mathematics	

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## REPORT CONTENTS

### Paragraph

#### PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Information about the school  
How good the school is  
What the school does well  
What could be improved  
How the school has improved since its last inspection  
Standards  
Pupils' attitudes and values  
Teaching and learning  
Other aspects of the school  
How well the school is led and managed  
Parents' and carers' views of the school

#### PART B: COMMENTARY

##### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

1-20

The school's results and achievements  
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

##### HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21-32

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

33-51

##### HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52-61

##### HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62-66

##### HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67-86

##### WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

87

#### PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

88-192

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive with 1427 pupils on roll, including 162 sixth form students. It serves the mining town of Maltby and a few surrounding villages. The vast majority of pupils are white: less than two per cent come from ethnic minority communities, and only one pupil uses English as an additional language.

There are 210 pupils on the register of special educational needs, which, at 11 per cent, is below the national average. However, in broad terms, the prior attainment of pupils is depressed, with nationally recognised test scores showing noticeably below-average levels. Similarly, much of the catchment area suffers from serious economic and social deprivation so that pupils enter the school strongly disadvantaged when compared with pupils nationally.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school offers its pupils a good education. It helps them to attain higher standards than those typical of similar schools, and it does so because of good teaching and management. Since spending is below average, this represents good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Teaching is good for pupils of all ages, and a significant minority is very good. Pupils learn well, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and thus make sound progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good progress in the sixth form.
- There is good overall leadership and management. The headteacher provides a very clear sense of educational direction, and financial management is particularly strong. Good or very good leadership is also found in the learning support unit, the special educational needs department and in many subjects, especially history, science and art.
- The school offers a good formal curriculum, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and enhances this with a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Good systems are in place for supporting pupils as they progress socially and academically and good provision is made for pupils' moral development. These factors contribute strongly to maintaining the good attitudes, behaviour and relationships which prevail in the school.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards of attainment in Key Stages 3 and 4 English are lower than they should be and management of this subject is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation is poor and resource levels and staffing continuity in several subjects are unsatisfactory. These factors impede pupils' attainment and progress.
- Information and communications technology provision is unsatisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and lacks co-ordination.
- While overall standards of attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 are rising, they remain below national averages and should be raised by improved monitoring of the work of heads of department, a more consistent use of the school's target-setting policy and more effective promotion of literacy and numeracy skills.

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

The school's many strengths strongly outweigh these areas of relative weakness.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in March 1996. Since then, it has made good overall improvement. It has introduced quite extensive monitoring of teaching and very good assessment and target-setting arrangements. National Curriculum requirements are now fully met in music and much progress has been made towards meeting them in information and communications technology. Within the severe

constraints of its budget, the school has also made recent improvements in resource levels and

aspects of accommodation. It has broadly maintained academic standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 in the face of severe problems with frequent changes of teachers. There remains no sixth form religious education programme or daily act of collective worship.

Teaching quality at the last inspection was satisfactory or better in 88 per cent of lessons. This had improved to 97 per cent for the current inspection.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	D	C	B
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	D	

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

Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below average compared with all schools, but above average for schools with similarly disadvantaged social and economic contexts. For the last two years, test results in English have fallen well below the national average, in mathematics they are just below, while in science they broadly match national points scores. In other, non-core subjects, standards at least match national averages in history, physical education, art, music and religious education.

At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' points scores at GCSE are broadly in line with national standards for all schools. The proportion of A\* to C grades is below average, but the percentage for A\* to G grades is better. Compared with schools in a similar context, these results are above average.

Standards are well above national averages in business studies and above average in music. Several other subjects match national averages, notably history, art, design and technology, physical education and religious education. They are below average in all other subjects and well below in English.

In the sixth form, the points scores for A and AS levels are below average but rising. In GNVQ subjects, standards are above average, and this is also the case for A level history.

Given that pupils enter Year 7 and the sixth form with lower standards than are found nationally, they are making sound progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good progress in the sixth form. Their achievement is good in art, history, physical education, music and mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4; it is good in GNVQ and business studies at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and particularly good in A level history. Progress is unsatisfactory in English and design and technology at Key Stage 3 and in English and information and communications technology at Key Stage 4.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Attendance is satisfactory, pupils are generally positive about lessons and many are very committed. They get involved in extra-curricular activities in large numbers and with a great deal of enthusiasm.



Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. In the sixth form and in the majority of lessons across Key Stages 3 and 4, behaviour is very good. It is occasionally less than satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Pupils behave well in dining halls, assemblies, the playground and corridors. A very small minority brings into school an unacceptably aggressive manner and the school deals appropriately with this.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in the school are good. Staff work hard at getting to know pupils and offering them encouragement and support. Pupils' personal development is good, helped by their willingness to take the opportunities offered, especially in sport, music and visits.
Attendance	At 91 per cent, this matches the national average. Punctuality to lessons is good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching in the school is good and there is much that is very good, especially in the sixth form. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of the lessons seen, including 70 per cent in which the quality was at least good.

The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was dispersed between several subjects, but was concentrated at Key Stage 3, where it amounted to about six per cent of lessons; it was more significant in English than other subjects. In the sixth form, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and the proportion of good and very good teaching amounted to 80 per cent.

All subjects had teaching which was at least satisfactory and it was good overall in the majority of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 subjects. Teaching was very good overall in sixth form history and English.

Teachers are strong in subject expertise, especially in the sixth form, in planning and in their expectations of pupils. Pupils are generally well managed and teachers' high expectations and manner with students are particularly effective in sixth form teaching. Literacy skills are taught well and numeracy skills satisfactorily. Homework is used adequately at Key Stage 3. Both basic skills and homework have scope for improvement.

Pupils learn soundly at Key Stage 3. They arrive with markedly below-average skills and some lack self discipline, even when essentially positive about school. Learning becomes good as they progress into Key Stage 4 and amongst those staying on in the sixth form, where learning is very good, with students showing very impressive commitment.

Pupils with special educational needs learn well. All benefit greatly from well-managed provision and some also gain from the very good work of the learning support unit.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is good, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where vocational and academic courses complement each other. Aspects of design and technology provision are missing at Key Stage 3 and information and communications technology provision is deficient at Key Stages 3 and 4. There are many very good extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision in the special educational needs base. Well led and designed. Satisfactory levels of support in class.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	N/A
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Too little scope for spiritual development, but strong provision for moral and social. Satisfactory provision for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	<p>Good. The school makes a strong priority of offering time and well-organised systems, to support pupils, to set them challenging targets and to review their progress. Arrangements for child protection are excellent, and the learning support unit offers very good assistance to pupils whose behavioural problems would otherwise hinder their own progress and that of other pupils.</p> <p>The school's links with parents are satisfactory. Many avenues are open to parents, but some are reluctant to exploit these opportunities.</p>

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and other senior managers offer good leadership and manage the school well. They have overseen considerable improvement on many fronts since the last inspection. There is a particularly clear sense of educational direction and very good financial management. Many middle managers are very effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. Some statutory aspects of their report to parents and of curricular provision are not met, but there is a satisfactory knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and good strategic support from key individuals.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school now analyses its performance thoroughly and is good at taking necessary action.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. For many years, the school's budget has not enabled it to sustain the staffing and resource levels it needed. It has successfully deployed available funds, sought additional monies from new sources and pursued the case for re-allocation of LEA funding.

Best-value principles are successfully applied in all aspects of the school's work. Day-to-day financial management is handled extremely efficiently by the school bursar.

The headteacher and other key staff have achieved considerable improvement in the structure of the senior management team, the systems for monitoring and reviewing pupils' progress and have sustained staffing levels, all during a period of significantly poor funding for a school of this size.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtually all believe the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Parents find the school approachable.</li> <li>• They believe their children make good progress.</li> <li>• A very high proportion think that their children like school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant minority has concerns about behaviour and homework.</li> <li>• A significant minority does not think that the school works closely with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection team fully agrees with the positive views of parents and has identified many other strengths in the school.

It agrees that at Key Stage 3 there is some scope for improving the consistency with which homework is used, though the school's current performance is broadly in line with national practice. The team notes that misbehaviour does occur, and that some of it is very serious. This involves a minority of pupils, is contained by the procedures set up by the school and is heavily outweighed by the good, frequently very good, behaviour of the vast majority.

The school makes all reasonable efforts to establish good working relationships with parents. Its range of letters, documents and events for parents, while not perfect, is better than average.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. The school's overall attainment standards are below average when compared with those for all schools. This represents satisfactory progress, since pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills somewhat further below average. Given the school's seriously disadvantaged social and economic context, these standards are above average for comparable schools.

2. Pupils begin Year 7 with some aspects of prior learning close to national averages, such as the recent Key Stage 2 tests in English, mathematics and science. However, reading age scores show them to be, on average, a full year behind national levels, and a well-established set of ability tests indicates that pupils are well below average.

3. At the age of 14, pupils' combined results in English, mathematics and science tests are below, but not well below, national standards. In 1997 and 1998, the points scored in all three subjects broadly matched national levels, but standards in English have dropped to well below average for 1999 and 2000, depressing the collective result. Science results remain in line and mathematics results are just below average. Compared with similar schools, these results are better than average.

4. When work observed during the inspection in non-core subjects is also considered, the balance is more favourable, even when judged against national standards for all schools. In geography, design and technology, information and communications technology and modern languages, standards are just below average. However, national standards are equalled in history, physical education and music, while in religious education standards are above average. The school's literacy policy is having a beneficial impact on pupils' standards, but numeracy skills across the curriculum are not yet satisfactory. Taking all the subjects together, girls attain higher standards than boys at Key Stage 3 by a greater amount than is typical nationally, but the gap is being narrowed by the attention teachers are giving to this issue.

5. Given the noticeably below-average starting point for pupils beginning this key stage, these standards represent satisfactory overall progress. In several subjects, progress is good, notably in art, history, mathematics, music and physical education. Only in English and design and technology is progress unsatisfactory. In both of these, subject co-ordination and leadership have shortcomings.

6. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment for the school as a whole are just below average. This is true of the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades - 36 per cent in 1999, compared with 47 per cent nationally. It is also the case for several subjects with large numbers of candidates. However, examination results also show that the school's performance at five A\* to G grades is slightly above the national figure, while the average points scores broadly match national ones. Since the last inspection, GCSE and GNVQ standards have risen from 31.6 points to 35.1 points in 1999, a marginally better increase than the national one. Results in 2000 confirmed this improving trend.

7. Several subjects consistently produce results which are above the school's own average, including art, design and technology, history and business studies. Indeed, the last of these enables a significant number of pupils to take two GCSEs, with A\* to C grades accounting for over 80 per cent of entries. Standards in examinations in several other

subjects depress the school's overall position. In 1999, this was particularly so in English, Spanish, religious education and geography. Results were also below national averages in mathematics and science.

8. On the basis of work seen during the inspection, standards amongst current Year 11 are above average in business studies, GNVQ courses and music; they broadly match averages in history, art, design and technology, physical education and religious education; standards are just below average in the remaining subjects, apart from in English where they are well-below average.

9. Pupils make sound progress overall across Key Stage 4. However, in some subjects, achievement is very marked, as in business studies, or clearly good, as in the case of history, art, physical education and music. Progress is satisfactory in science, mathematics, geography and design and technology, but unsatisfactory in English and information and communications technology.

10. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They receive very good support in the special educational needs base, and in other lessons there is useful help from special needs assistants. It is not possible to provide such help every time it is needed. Some of these pupils, and others with behavioural problems, are given high-quality support in the learning support unit.

11. For all pupils, the progress made and standards reached are very heavily influenced by teaching quality. This is consistently effective across those subjects with standards matching or exceeding national norms. In addition, some subjects have had good continuity in staffing for several years, combined with strong management. The benefits of these factors are evident in the pleasing standards found in art, physical education and history at all key stages. When subject leaders or their colleagues have also gone to great lengths to interpret course requirements to pupils and to establish coherent schemes of work and assessment procedures, the results are amongst the most impressive, as seen in GCSE business studies, A level history and English and in the GNVQ subjects. Conversely, lack of co-ordination adversely affects information and communications technology and design and technology, both of which have gaps in provision at different key stages and lack consistency in the way teaching is monitored. In English, the low standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 partly reflect the low base from which pupils start and the serious discontinuity in staffing in recent years. The unsatisfactory progress is also the outcome of too little consistency in the use of schemes of work, assessment approaches and procedures for ensuring that essential tasks get completed when staff changes are frequent. In information and communications technology, the current absence of a co-ordinator is having an adverse impact on standards already affected by limitations in resourcing and previous leadership.

12. Standards at the end of post-16 are broadly average. Since the school's students have, in many cases, lower prior attainment than is generally found in sixth forms, this represents good progress. Observations in lessons confirm that students regularly make marked gains in knowledge, study skills and understanding. In A and AS level subjects, examination results show a below-average points score, though one that has risen noticeably in the last two years. In GNVQ courses, the proportion of completions and passes at merit and distinction is above average. Work seen during the inspection matched these high examination standards in GNVQ courses and in A level history. Inspectors judged that all other A and AS work in Year 13 is broadly in line with national standards, except in design and technology, where it remains just below average. These improvements in attainment and the already good progress are the outcome of consistently good and very good teaching and equally positive attitudes to work from students. In addition, they reflect strong leadership of the sixth form, which has helped to create a culture of improvement: staff constantly seek to

interpret course requirements accurately to students and to achieve the best match of student to course; academic progress in subjects and key skills is monitored closely and positively; and the students' morale is kept high by supportive approaches to their social and personal needs. As a result, students feel valued, involved and highly committed, both academically and socially.

13. Pupils who have special educational needs, working in their base, achieve well and make good progress towards their targets. In order to help them retain their learning, special needs teachers give very good support and use a variety of methods, using targets that are appropriate for the pupils' needs and development. Throughout the subjects of the curriculum, pupils who have special needs make satisfactory progress towards their targets. In the learning support unit, pupils make good progress towards the targets agreed with them. Much of their success is due to the patience and skill of the teachers and mentors, who work very hard to provide appropriate work and challenges.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

14. Overall, pupils' attitudes to school are good. Students who stay into the sixth form are well motivated and most have a strong self-belief in what they can achieve, although for a few their reluctance to meet challenges hinders their learning. At Key Stages 3 and 4, most pupils are motivated by teachers' good use of praise and assessment, so that they understand how they are getting on and what they need to do to succeed. Pupils in Year 11 were involved in and interested by a challenging personal, social and health education lesson on coping and communication skills. In some lower-attaining sets, pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory: they are reticent to volunteer opinions and take little responsibility for their own work. Pupils interviewed during the inspection gave a positive picture of their life in school. They particularly appreciate the many extra-curricular opportunities provided, especially in sport, music and residential trips.

15. Overall, standards of behaviour are good. In most lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4, behaviour is good or very good. In the sixth form, it is consistently very good. Some instances of poor behaviour in lessons were seen during the inspection, mainly in Years 8, 9 and 10. These often occurred amongst lower-attaining pupils who were inattentive to teachers who occasionally had low expectations. Some pupils occasionally become aggressively disruptive. Generally, however, there is an absence of oppressive behaviour, and when bullying is reported, it is dealt with effectively. Pupils reported that the amount of bullying has declined. Pupils are excluded for short, fixed periods for aggressive or violent behaviour that disrupts the learning of other pupils, but exclusion is not used excessively. Behaviour in the dining room and at break times is usually good. Generally, pupils are polite and friendly around the school site, although staff supervision is needed to maintain order outside, and a few pupils are unnecessarily impolite to staff and visitors.

16. Relationships in the school are good. In the overwhelming majority of situations, there is mutual respect between pupils and teachers, which fosters a good learning environment. In lessons, pupils work well in groups and pairs. They listen responsively to each other and show respect for others' feelings. This was evident in a Year 7 history lesson, where pupils were able to discuss the events of the Battle of Hastings in pairs, and to reflect upon events and discuss their own feelings and experiences. In a Year 10 guidance session on teenagers and the law, pupils showed that they were prepared to listen to others' views and volunteered to express their own feelings.

17. Pupils' ability to exercise personal responsibility is good. Equipment is generally well cared for and in music, for example, pupils show great respect for the very expensive instruments entrusted to them. Year 10 art students are able to work independently, using a

variety of resources, including the incorporation of their own experience in their work. Pupils contribute to the school community in many ways, especially through their participation in extra-curricular activities. Pupils in all year groups respond well to opportunities given to represent their school.

18. Attendance is in line with the national average, which is just satisfactory. Unauthorised absence, where no satisfactory reason is given, is slightly above the national average. Each year group has a number of individual pupils with poor attendance records, which the school is working to improve.

19. Generally good standards of attitudes, behaviour and attendance have been maintained since the last inspection.

20. Teachers in the special needs department have established very good relationships in the lessons given in their base, and pupils respond accordingly and behave very well. They are keen to learn and they respect the work being done for them very well. In general, the attitudes and behaviour of pupils in the learning support unit are good. The adults attached to the unit, who have established firm but fair rules and expectations, offer every encouragement. The pupils have mostly experienced difficulties in mainstream lessons, and the teachers and learning mentors in the unit are able to improve their attitudes to lessons, and to school as a whole.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

21. Teaching in the school is good and a considerable proportion is very good. Largely as a result, pupils learn well, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

22. For the school as a whole, nearly 97 per cent of the lessons seen during the inspection had teaching which was at least satisfactory. This included 45 per cent which was good and 23 per cent which was very good. A small proportion - about two per cent - had teaching which was excellent, while just over three per cent had unsatisfactory teaching. This represents a significant improvement on the quality of teaching reported in the last inspection, when the proportion deemed satisfactory or better was 88 per cent.

23. At Key Stage 3, the teaching pattern mirrors the whole-school picture quite closely, but there is more unsatisfactory teaching - about six per cent in all. Overall, however, the key stage remains dominated by good -quality teaching. Pupils enter the school with some significant deficiencies in literacy, numeracy and essential study skills. Nevertheless, learning is satisfactory overall, because staff work hard to help pupils to organise themselves and to adjust to the pace and demands of secondary school life. While much is already being done, the teaching of literacy, numeracy and other basic skills is not as strong as most other aspects of teaching. In Key Stage 3 lessons as a whole, staff show secure and detailed subject knowledge and good communication skills; they plan well; they set high expectations and show good management skills in motivating and directing pupils' energies. Their use of assessment and of homework is in line with national standards, but lacks the consistently good quality of the rest of their practice.

24. At Key Stage 4, teaching is again predominantly good. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching - just 1.3 per cent - and marginally more that is excellent. Learning is now good, reflecting the fact that pupils have adjusted more fully to the school's requirements: they are more productive and work at a better pace than at Key Stage 3. This is also the outcome of teachers making better use at Key Stage 4 of homework and assessment and a slightly wider range of teaching methods: these factors help to improve pupils' self-discipline, motivation and involvement in lessons, along with their awareness of how well they are doing and what is required if they are to improve.

25. Teaching in the sixth form is also good overall, and a large minority is very good. No excellent and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers show particularly strong subject knowledge, and the ability to communicate it well. They also set very high expectations in lessons and build very good relationships with students. Partly as a result, students' learning is also very good: they are very adept at acquiring new skills and knowledge; they show very strong commitment to study; and are very good at working collaboratively or independently. Another major aspect of this success is the positive attitude which pervades all aspects of sixth form life.

26. All individual subjects have teaching which is at least satisfactory, and in most, teaching is good. At Key Stages 3 and 4, nearly all National Curriculum subjects have predominantly good teaching, and this is also typical of GNVQ and business studies teaching at Key Stage 4. At both key stages, information and communications technology and English teaching is satisfactory overall, but is less consistent in quality than most other subjects. The same is true for design and technology at Key Stage 3 and modern language teaching at Key Stage 4.

27. In the sixth form, the teaching of history and English A and AS courses is particularly good. There is consistently very good-quality organisation and a lively, demanding pace to lessons, with high-level involvement of students. Good teaching predominates in virtually all other subjects, while in design and technology it remains variable, but satisfactory overall.

28. The variation in teaching quality between subjects is partly a reflection of individual teachers' skills and style, but there is a close match between departmental leadership and teaching quality. Leadership is particularly strong in history, science and art, for example, where teaching is at least good at all key stages, and owes much to close departmental attention to lesson planning and a collective view of what constitutes good practice. These features are less well developed in English, design and technology and information and communications technology, which together have most of the 'satisfactory' as opposed to 'good' teaching at different key stages. English also has more of the school's unsatisfactory teaching than other subjects.

29. Individual lessons help to illustrate the numerous strengths in the school's teaching. For instance, in a Year 11 science lesson, the very good teaching built on a highly authoritative exposition and very perceptive questioning by the teacher. Pace was strong throughout, because activities were well timed and included practical sessions which led back into discussion of the key points. A Year 7 French lesson also showed how very good teaching derived from fine planning and the skilful use of a wide range of teaching techniques: objectives for the lesson were set clearly and quickly; there was a strong emphasis on speaking in the foreign language, but written instructions and examples broke



this up effectively and reinforced the aims of the lesson in a fresh way; verbal praise and stickers were used as part of the systematic rewarding of good participation, and pupils responded well.

30. There was excellent teaching in a Year 8 history lesson on the Civil War, captivating for the pupils because of their active involvement in an exercise requiring the use of their historical imagination. Planning was exceptional: it ensured that learning objectives and key words were copied into planners; it offered rapid but subtle changes of activity; it provided challenge for pupils of all abilities and valued their contributions openly. Relationships were excellent and attainment was noticeably above average. In a Year 12 and 13 physical education lesson, there was very good teaching, which typified many of the strengths in sixth form practice. The session was very well organised, involving all students in helping to observe and assess each other in a practical swimming lesson. The teacher struck a fine balance between allowing students to arrive at their own analyses of swimming stroke patterns and correcting faults when such intervention was helpful. As a result, students made good progress, their knowledge was secure and they appreciated that the quality of the lesson depended as much on them as on their teacher.

31. When teaching is less successful, it usually lacks structure, pace and pupil involvement. In a Year 8 geography lesson with unsatisfactory teaching, materials were not ready at the outset and pupils were not used to a clearly defined start to lessons, based around close attention to the teacher and the objectives for the lesson. Subject expertise was good, but expectations were too low and tasks failed to engage pupils. In a Year 9 English lesson on the text 'Walkabout', teaching was satisfactory overall and dealt with many relevant English and whole-school issues, but stopped short of exploiting their potential fully. For example, key words were put on the board, but the opportunity to discuss the spelling of other important words as they arose was missed, and while the lesson focused on analysis of texts, for a high-attaining set, that analysis lacked depth. Unsatisfactory teaching, for example in a Year 10 reading of *Macbeth*, resulted from a lack of clear objectives for the lesson and a failure to manage effectively the lack of interest and restless behaviour which ensued.

32. Teaching in the special needs base is very good. Teachers there show high levels of expertise, patience, and planning. The methods they use are very good and enable pupils to learn well. They have established very high expectations, to which pupils respond well. In mainstream lessons, preparation between teachers and support assistants before lessons is not consistent across all subjects. For example, in English, no evidence of such pre-planning was found. Overall, pupils who have special needs learn satisfactorily, and, in some subjects, such as modern languages, science and mathematics, they learn well. In the learning support unit, teaching is very good. The teachers have a very good understanding of the special needs of the pupils and use a full range of appropriate methods to encourage and interest them. They apply their considerable expertise and enthusiasm well, with good outcomes in terms of pupils' progress and re-integration into general lessons.

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

33. The overall curricular provision in the school is good and meets statutory requirements in all subjects, with the exception of information and communications technology at both key stages, design and technology at Key Stage 3, and religious education in the sixth form. This represents a significant improvement since the last

inspection, particularly in the way provision has broadened to meet the academic and social needs of a wider range of pupils.

34. At Key Stage 3, the pupils are taught all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and health education. Overall provision in the sciences, English, mathematics, modern languages, geography, music and religious education is good. Access to the curriculum is also good because of well-organised special educational needs support, much careful setting and additional features, such as the literacy summer school for incoming Year 7 pupils. Some shortcomings do exist, however. For example, information and communications technology is delivered across the curriculum, but the subject is not being taught adequately or in sufficient depth; co-ordination is lacking and there is no provision for monitoring the subject across the curriculum. National Curriculum guidelines are not being fully implemented in design and technology, for which the time allocation is considerably reduced to accommodate a programme of health education. Lessons last for sixty minutes, which lower-attaining pupils in modern languages find long, and opportunities to pair Year 7 classes for setting purposes are being missed: both of these factors detract from the progress pupils make. Most guidance lessons are effectively used to deliver aspects of literacy and personal and social education. In the best lessons, there is a beneficial impact on standards of literacy and personal, social and health education. In a minority of less effective guidance lessons, best use is not being made of the allocated time. The lack of uniform schemes of work in English means that specific areas of experience are not assured, and there is a lack of progression and continuity, because teachers do not pass on information on what has been covered.

35. At Key Stage 4, the range of subjects broadens, and the pupils have the opportunity to follow vocational as well as academic courses. There is a range of courses for the GCSE examinations and intermediate GNVQ courses in health and social care, manufacturing, office applications and business studies, and sufficient breadth is provided through the range of choices. Some subjects offer a certificate of achievement for lower-attaining pupils. The curriculum is effectively complemented by these measures, but the even greater breadth of provision some schools achieve, by offering drama and media studies at GCSE level, for example, is not matched.

36. The school provides a wide-ranging curriculum for post-16 students which more than meets new national requirements, and which strongly supports the inclusive ethos of the school. There is a wide range of A level provision which offers the traditional subjects and general studies, but which also offers subjects not always found in schools. These include sociology and the new AS 'science for public understanding'. Alongside the A level subjects, the school offers a comprehensive and burgeoning GNVQ provision in business studies, leisure and tourism, hospitality and catering, and health and social care, some of which are offered at both intermediate and advanced levels. The importance of this provision is underlined by student choice, since 47 per cent of students opt for GNVQ courses, and an increasing number are combining A levels and vocational subjects.

37. This academic and vocational curriculum is underpinned by a very effective key skills provision, with particular emphasis on information and communications technology, delivered to all students during their guidance lessons.

38. The provision is further enhanced by an enrichment programme of extra-curricular activities, including sporting and recreational pursuits. There are also opportunities for students to take on responsibilities in and out of school, such as helping to run the sixth

form common room snack machine or assisting with events such as the literacy summer school.

39. At an individual level, each student is supported by career and higher education advice and has regular meetings with tutors. A customised student planner encourages students to develop time and project management skills to ease the transition to the world of higher education and work. The Villiers Park scheme also enables students to meet other sixth formers from different schools who share a common interest in a subject area.

40. There are some small groups, but none less than four and these are offset by many groups which are in excess of 15 and sometimes in excess of 20. Post-16 provision is well managed by a deputy head whose involvement reflects the importance of the sixth form in the overall life and work of the school. The value and success of the sixth form are readily attested to by the unusually wide range of social events that the students organise and attend. Since the last inspection, the school is still failing to provide the religious studies entitlement for all its students.

41. The programme for personal, social and health education is carefully planned, enabling it to be taught effectively across the school. Aspects of sex, health and drugs education are also taught in physical education, religious education, technology, guidance lessons and assemblies. There is a well-planned careers programme, with effective links across Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The careers service is closely involved in giving guidance to help pupils make informed choices about options and prepare them for employment and further and higher education. During the inspection, Year 11 pupils were effectively using the guidance period to write letters of application to prospective employers. Arrangements for work experience at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are good and pupils are well prepared for their time in the workplace, with importance being given to health and safety issues.

42. Very great care is taken in the special needs department to ensure that pupils working in their base receive an appropriate curriculum which enables them to keep pace with the National Curriculum and gives them full access to all that the school offers. In mainstream classes, the majority of subjects provide appropriate work. Overall provision for pupils who have special needs is good throughout the school, and very good in their base and in the learning support unit, where the imaginative and very good planning by the head of social inclusion ensures access to the whole curriculum. The use of a commercial scheme that challenges and gives a wide range of work and experiences is applied very well. Within their study of other cultures and values, pupils research in some depth subjects as diverse as Christianity and the application of rap.

43. The total teaching time is appropriate. The allocation for English and mathematics is adequate, but that for art, music, design and technology and physical education at Key Stage 3 is barely adequate to deliver the appropriate programmes of study. The time allocation for religious education across the key stages is also barely adequate for the local authority agreed syllabus and the GCSE examination board syllabus. This places a strong responsibility on the school to ensure that the time offered to non-National Curriculum subjects, such as the daily guidance lessons, is very effectively used.

44. The school makes good use of information from primary schools to identify pupils with special educational needs and to build up base-line profiles of attainment to measure progress, but curricular links with subjects in the primary phase are not well established. In mainstream classes and in their base, pupils with special educational needs have access to a full curriculum and work is appropriately differentiated. As part of the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative, the school plans to enrich the programmes of study for gifted and talented pupils.

45. Good relationships have been developed with local schools. There is a high level of participation in inter-school sporting fixtures. Pastoral links are very effective and pupils are well prepared for entry into the school in Year 7. Schools in the local cluster work well together, producing, for example, common Records of Achievement and a joint home-school agreement applicable to all schools.

46. Good links have been developed within the community. The school and local community organisations, such as the toddler group and ACE project, work closely together to provide an environment for learning for children and adults, promoting the values of education for all. The Lynx Centre, under the auspices of the youth worker, provides purposeful as well as social activities for young people from 11 to 25, both at lunchtimes and in the evening. The Boilerhouse Gallery provides opportunities for local artists to display their work. The community police constable speaks at assemblies and contributes to personal, social and health education. Useful links have been established with local businesses for GNVQ courses, and all pupils in Year 10 undertake a three-week work experience placement in the community. These effective links with the local community and with business have been maintained and extended since the last inspection.

47. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The aims of the school stress the importance of creating a caring community in which pupils will mature as personalities, together with a concern for their social development, so that they will live as richly and humanely as possible. Departments are expected to audit their own contribution to these areas of pupils' experiences. While some departments show an understanding of their contribution to pupils' wider development, others do not, and further development in this area is necessary.

48. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. There is a regular pattern of assemblies, and although they often include moral, social and cultural aspects, only a few have any spiritual element, allowing for collective worship, including prayer, reflection and the sense of the almighty. The school does not hold a collective act of worship for all pupils every day. Some subjects provide a limited spiritual experience for pupils, for example art, through the study of art history and the renaissance, but in most, opportunities are missed to enhance pupils' spiritual awareness.

49. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. The guidance programme is a strong element here and it encourages pupils to distinguish right from wrong. Policies for behaviour are clearly set out and communicated to pupils, staff and parents through the behaviour charter. Moral issues are explored in a number of subjects, including religious education, where topics such as abortion are discussed in Years 10 and 11, and in English, where pupils are asked to consider the differences between right and wrong through the study of texts such as *Buddy*.

50. Pupils' social development is supported by the way staff respect pupils, treating them as young adults, through co-operative and collaborative work in lessons, and through a number of school initiatives. The target-setting process allows form tutors to negotiate both academic and social targets for pupils. There are visits and fieldwork involving residential experiences that enable some pupils to participate in shared activities and living together: the history department, for example, has visited the battlefields of the First World War. There are very good opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities, such

as the choir, orchestra and music workshops. The GNVQ courses provide considerable opportunities for pupils to develop socially, especially through the provision of work placements and residential courses.

51. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are several cultural avenues, including a range of visits, in the region and internationally, which expose pupils to cultural experiences that widen their knowledge and understanding. A number of subjects promote pupils' understanding of their own cultural heritage and that of others. In music, Year 7 pupils compose in the North American style, using ethnic instruments and in art, source materials are used that include aboriginal art, eastern art and calligraphy and tribal sculpture. The school goes some way towards promoting a full understanding of Afro-Caribbean, Asian and other cultures of non-European origin, especially through the guidance and personal, social and health education programmes.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

52. The school makes good provision for the care of its pupils. Good procedures are well established to identify and handle issues related to child protection. There is an awareness of health and safety matters and when problems, such as leaking roofs, arise the school responds quickly to attempt to rectify hazards. Written assessments of risks are undertaken for trips outside school premises, but are not fully in place for school-based activities in all departments, particularly in the design and technology accommodation. Tutors and other staff work hard to create a secure working environment where all pupils can feel valued. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection.

53. The school's monitoring of academic performance and personal development, and the educational and personal support and guidance available to pupils are good. The care and guidance provided by form tutors and heads of year are strengthened by the maintenance of good records of personal attributes and achievements. Gifted and talented pupils are properly identified and extra provision is made to challenge them. The school has made good provision for the social inclusion of all its pupils.

54. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. The school uses an electronic registration system and follows up all unexplained absences on the first day. Pupils identified with attendance problems are closely monitored. Educational welfare support is limited, but used effectively.

55. Procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are good. The system of rewards and sanctions is well understood and generally appreciated by most pupils. The school deals well with reported incidents of bullying and addresses the issues to eliminate an atmosphere of oppressive behaviour through the guidance programme of personal and social education. The introduction of the learning support centre is a positive initiative to enable the social inclusion of pupils with behavioural problems. Co-operation with the police, the youth service and other external support agencies is good.

56. The school has good procedures for assessment, a significant improvement since the last inspection. A coherent policy document indicates how it uses a wide range of data about pupils' achievements to indicate present needs and future expectations. The main strengths lie in the school's ability to make use of end-of-key-stage tests and other information to predict and improve the next stage results. The adoption of procedures that identify the particular skills of the most able pupils is another example of good whole-school improvements.

57. Information from primary schools, cognitive test results and national key stage tests

are collated at senior management level and given to departments to enable them to track progress and set higher targets for pupils. There is inconsistency, however, in how the departments interpret and make use of this information. Additionally, there is inconsistency in how departments assess their own work and record it to set future targets. There is a strong whole-school commitment to the present structures for assessment, but management and monitoring procedures at subject level do not allow the system to be totally effective. The school has yet to assess successfully the relative performance of all departments and good practice is inconsistently shared as a means of improving subject performance. Assessment practices in science, art, GNVQ, work with pupils with special educational needs and some aspects of geography and modern languages are very good. Assessment criteria closely reflect the National Curriculum programmes of study and examination course outlines. Day-to-day assessments of pupils' performance are recorded and analysed to ascertain the rate of pupils' progress as they move through the school. In some departments, procedures are inconsistently applied and evaluated, and ongoing assessment is not used sufficiently to make curriculum changes. Information and communications technology is not adequately assessed in most of the identified areas of study. In English, there is a lack of consistency in the criteria used to mark work. The department uses too varied a range of diagnostic information to monitor and inform pupils of their progress. In a number of subjects, there is a lack of assessment against National Curriculum levels, which hinders the recording of progress and setting of targets prior to the end of the key stage.

58. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in using assessment information to report results to parents and pupils. Form tutors use guidance periods to review progress and to negotiate individual targets. Pupils are aware of their achievements and efforts in subjects and co-operate with teachers in writing targets for the next levels of achievement. The extent to which pupils achieve or work beyond their targets depends on the success of the individual department's assessment policy.

59. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Tutors and heads of year keep themselves well informed about the pupils in their care. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and set targets for improvement each week. Form tutor times and guidance sessions vary in their usefulness. Most provide a purposeful and thoughtful start to the day, but a significant minority lack rigour.

60. Since the last inspection, procedures for formal monitoring of progress have been established and are securely in place. Guidance sessions reinforce moral and social development, and basic skills, especially literacy. Monitoring of personal progress through the planners has been introduced for all pupils.

61. Pupils with special educational needs are well cared for. Very good records about progress and achievement are kept, and very good reports are collected and presented at the annual reviews of pupils who have statements of special educational need. The assessment procedures for identifying such pupils are very good and there is a very full programme of re-testing to establish the levels of progress made by each pupil. Individual plans are very good, and they include targets which enable good progress to be made. In the learning support unit, pupils receive very good care, including high levels of expectations for behaviour and work. Assessment is good and very full records are kept, starting with the initial identification process and continuing throughout the time a pupil is placed there.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. In general, parents are satisfied with what the school provides and achieves. Results of the questionnaire distributed to parents before the inspection show that, on balance, parents support the work of the school. Most parents think that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best, and find the school approachable if they have questions or problems. They feel that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting endorsed these views. They praised the rewards system and the help for pupils with special educational needs. They said that considerable improvements had taken place recently, including the appearance of the buildings, the cafeteria at lunch times, and the communication between home and school via the planners. They also felt that behaviour had improved. A minority do not feel that the school works closely enough with parents, and expressed concern about the standards of behaviour, the amount of homework set and the turnover of teachers in the past.

63. The inspectors endorse the positive comments made by parents. They found that some concerns about behaviour were justified, although many of the problems which arise are brought into school from the wider community, and involve a minority of pupils. Parents, pupils and staff all reported that there have been improvements. There is less bullying, but violence and aggression flare up at times. Appropriate homework is usually set and parents have access to regular reports on progress. The planner provides a complete record of aspects such as attendance, punctuality and behaviour along with regular assessments of effort and performance in each subject. While parents respond well to requests to visit the school if problems arise, very few are willing to be involved in its work on a broader scale. The school has developed effective links with some parents, with a positive effect on standards of work and personal development.

64. The quality of information provided to parents is satisfactory. The prospectus and the governors' report are well produced and informative, although neither enables parents to judge the school against national averages, except at Key Stage 3. In addition, parents receive regular information of events in school. Annual progress reports are not consistent across all subjects, but the best identify individual achievement in each subject and suggest ways to improve; some only focus on the work covered and pupils' responses. Appropriate consultation evenings are offered and parents who do not attend are contacted as necessary. Parents are routinely contacted both when problems arise and when their child has demonstrated a good standard of work or behaviour. The school makes its expectations for parental support very clear and home-school agreements have been satisfactorily introduced.

65. Parents are not yet sufficiently involved in the life and work of the school. They do not routinely contribute to lessons or extra-curricular activities. They generally respond to school requests to discuss their children, but do not always recognise the school's efforts to inform and involve them, which hinders the creation of an effective partnership. Attendance at parents' evenings is reported to be satisfactory. A small number support the Parents and Teachers Association which organises a Christmas Fair to raise funds for extra-curricular activities.

66. Contact between the school and the parents of pupils who have special educational needs is very good. As well as parents' consultation times, the school frequently makes personal contact. The learning support unit is in almost daily contact with some of the parents and the staff also make visits to pupils' homes. The great majority of parents attend annual reviews, and all parents are able to have their views recorded on the reports.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. The school is well led and managed. This is a significant achievement, since many factors pose problems: accommodation is poor; staffing continuity and resource levels have reflected low budgets for many years; and a considerable degree of social and economic disadvantage affects pupils adversely in a variety of ways.

68. The headteacher and other key staff succeed in setting a good tone: there is a very clear sense of direction to the school, with broad objectives and very specific points of focus agreed and understood by staff as a whole. The school's development plans are open, shared documents. Pupils and parents are made very well aware of the school's aims in terms of academic success, behaviour and social development and pupils' involvement in both lessons and extra-curricular activities. Most managers at every level have been successful in translating these aims and values into the day-to-day work of the school. For example, the establishing of a good special educational needs department and a new learning support unit reflects the school's commitment to giving extra attention to pupils with learning and behavioural problems, while the recently developed programme for gifted and talented pupils shows that its aims for able pupils are being actively pursued. Similarly, the prominence given to guidance lessons and to personal, social and health education are bold and direct responses to the school's objective of redressing the social and academic disadvantage that many pupils bring to the school.

69. Planning since the last inspection has been well directed. It has incorporated the key issues raised in the last report and other matters which are crucial to improvement. Plans include realistic strategies and clear responsibilities amongst the leadership team. For instance, the need to improve assessment arrangements, as identified in the last inspection, gave rise to analysis, a new policy and then a strong implementation and monitoring phase. As a result, good practice is now common in the school. Equally important, the objective of maintaining staffing levels has been pursued with determination and skill, so that whatever the limitations of the basic school budget, an average of three additional teachers has been paid for in each of the last four years, via additional funds or re-allocation of existing funds.

70. Collectively, good overall improvement has been made on the issues raised in 1996, largely because of realistic and sometimes imaginative planning, and because there are both the will and the structures to see things through. Senior management now consists of a team of five, with a good gender and age balance, and this represents a great improvement on the position several years ago, when financial stringency led to the school being run by the headteacher plus a single deputy. Careful use of funds, redesigning of senior posts and some strong appointments now spread management and leadership amongst the five, each having specific areas of responsibility, with their complementary strengths enabling good team work and far better scope for monitoring. This successful delegation extends beyond the senior management team to embrace heads of department, heads of year and school as well as co-ordinators of several distinct areas, such as key skills, the learning support unit and special educational needs provision.

71. The headteacher has been particularly successful in the strategic use of resources. Funding has been well below national averages for many years, in buildings which are poor yet costly to maintain, and in a community which is not able to contribute the additional income other schools can raise with ease. Efficiency has been very high, including the cost-effectiveness of the sixth form and the impressive day-to-day financial control of the school bursar. Each year, a budget of about £3.5 million is successfully balanced to within £1,000. The principles of 'best value' are successfully applied in all aspects of the school's work. Strategic decisions have directed funds to the key priorities of staffing levels and specific



strategies for raising standards and supporting distinctive sections of the pupil population. Additional funds have been pursued with vigour and the school has now succeeded in becoming part of an 'Excellence in Cities' project and several other centrally funded initiatives. It has consistently pressed for changes to LEA funding arrangements, and these are now more favourable to the school. Consequently, the budget for 2000/2001 is considerably greater than for many years previously and allows for some increased spending on resources, staffing and refurbishment. Value for money in the school is good.

72. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are generally satisfactory. There has not been a long tradition of monitoring the work of colleagues, but since the last inspection, classroom observation by peers or line managers has developed. It is now common practice for heads of department to monitor the teaching and other aspects of the work of their colleagues. The rigour of this activity varies, with some departments having clear criteria and extensive scope for identifying best practice and supporting weaker practice. Others have a less formal approach without a clearly agreed departmental view of desirable outcomes. Some heads of department are observed by colleagues, but others are not, nor do senior managers systematically monitor their teaching. As a result, while much helpful monitoring takes place and has contributed to improved teaching standards, there is scope for greater consistency and for acquiring the data on which a sound 'Performance Management' programme must run.

73. Within middle management, the quality of leadership and co-ordination is generally good. There is very good management of the learning support unit and the special educational needs department. Very strong leadership underpins the success of history, business studies and art; it is enabling science to improve significantly; and in religious education it is helping to sustain a department hit by major losses of staff. There is good departmental management in GNVQ courses and physical education, music and modern languages. It is sound in geography, but unsatisfactory in English, design and technology and in information and communications technology. In these last three, lack of co-ordination and consistent standards of practice adversely affects pupils' progress.

74. The special needs department is very well led. The co-ordinator has a particularly clear vision for development, and provides effective leadership and good planning. All the documents relating to special needs are of high quality, and offer effective help and guidance for those who use them. Since the last inspection, the special needs department has made very good improvement. New systems for supporting students are being implemented, teaching has improved and the overall provision in their base has been improved by devising new programmes of study. The learning support unit has been established since the last inspection, and this has improved the overall provision for special needs very well.

75. The head of social inclusion leads and organises the learning support unit most effectively, provides good organisation, and has established a firm but fair routine for pupils. The partnership between teachers and mentoring assistants is good and provides a very high level of care for pupils. They feel secure and work well with these adults, whom they respect.

76. The school's governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. Through its committee structure and several key individuals, the governors form a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They offer good support to the school and play a satisfactory role in shaping policy and the direction in which the school develops. The curriculum and the governors' report to parents have some statutory shortcomings. All other statutory responsibilities are properly fulfilled.

77. In spite of a considerable reduction in staffing over recent years, the school has enough teachers to maintain the curriculum it offers, and to cater for the number of pupils at each key stage. Nevertheless, there have been, and are, difficulties. Recent high levels of long- and short-term illness amongst key staff resulted in unsatisfactory provision in 1999-2000, and these continue to have repercussions in this academic year. Parents have been concerned by the number of different teachers a minority of pupils have had during this time. The most serious effects of absence on the standards achieved have been in geography, science and English. Staffing difficulties are still affecting science and English, and the quality of provision is also to some extent adversely affected in religious studies, design and technology and information and communications technology. The high levels of absence and the difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified supply staff are now reasonably well controlled. Senior managers are taking measures to ensure that early intervention in particularly badly affected areas prevents difficulties, insofar as this is possible.

78. Teaching staff are, in general, deployed satisfactorily. The best possible use is made of existing expertise to ensure a relatively high proportion of good quality teaching. In most cases, careful account is taken of all the responsibilities of teachers, but in a small number of instances, the level of responsibility does not warrant the amount of non-teaching time and financial reward the posts carry.

79. Lessons are often enhanced by support staff who work well with teachers and pupils in several areas: special educational needs, science, art, design and technology, and information and communications technology. The number of technicians in science is low. The school benefits from a qualified full-time librarian, and two foreign language assistants, shared with two other schools. Support staff are well prepared for their various roles and make a significant contribution to the progress pupils make. Administrative staff and the bursar make a valuable contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The cleaning, kitchen and ground staff ensure high standards of cleanliness and wage a mostly effective war against litter.

80. Provision for the induction and professional development of staff is of mixed quality, and there are some areas of weaknesses. All newly qualified teachers feel well supported within their departments and they are assigned mentors to offer them professional guidance in their first year of teaching. The induction programme is unusual in that it seeks to respond to needs, rather than containing a planned structure of discussion and input. The programme is not monitored carefully enough to ensure coverage of all aspects of the induction process.

81. The development and training of other teachers are more closely linked to the priorities of the school and departmental plans than was the case at the time of the last inspection. Records of courses attended are kept carefully, but are not analysed to ensure that every department receives an equitable amount of training. Useful in-service training takes place on school training days. Recent sessions have raised staff awareness of current issues, such as the national literacy strategy. Appraisal has ceased within the school: departments have regular reviews, but the lack of rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching in a few departments means that some staff are not sufficiently clear about how well they are performing, nor about what they need to do to improve their performance.

Performance management training has begun with a series of visits by heads of department to other schools to observe and monitor teaching. An analysis of how useful the heads of department found this experience has not yet taken place. The full programme of training is due to begin at the end of the autumn term.

82. Compared with circumstances at the time of the last inspection, the staffing situation has deteriorated.

83. Accommodation in the school is poor. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection. Since that time, the school has suffered a severe arson attack and there has been a positive change in the government's and LEA's approach to funding the refurbishment of school premises. As a result of these events, the school has been able to build an excellent new resource centre and to begin to improve some of its buildings and to dispense with some of its temporary structures. Many of the buildings remain in a poor state of decoration and several areas have leaking roofs, but the general standard of cleanliness has improved and the litter problem is much less acute. The problem of access for the disabled and of disabled toilets remains. The accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively in all areas, other than in modern languages, design and technology, and science. In modern languages, some of the cramped rooms and rooms without blinds and carpets make teaching very difficult. In design and technology, there are several problems, including leaks near electrical fittings, slippery floors, lack of a clean multimedia area and no separate hand-washing facility. In science, some of the old laboratories have inadequate electrical and gas supplies and some have loose floor tiles. However, the new resource centre is very successful across the curriculum, physical education has a multi-gym, there is a textiles area and the facilities for special educational needs are good. Display in the school is good, with particularly good examples in the art department which support the effective teaching of history of art. The community continues to make very good use of the school accommodation. Accommodation has improved significantly since the last inspection but the school recognises that a great deal has to be done to bring it up to a satisfactory standard.

84. Expenditure on resources for learning continues to be below average, as reported at the time of the last inspection. The school budget for the current year allows for an expenditure of 2.9 per cent on resources for learning, compared with 6 per cent nationally. There is unsatisfactory provision in two core subject areas, science and English, and in two non-core subjects, design and technology and religious education. In some other subject areas, resources are barely adequate, and in art, resources are supplemented by contributions of books and materials by staff. There is, however, good provision of resources in physical education and modern languages and satisfactory provision in mathematics. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The generally poor situation has persisted over recent years, due to the need to divert expenditure to meet staffing needs, but projected provision is much improved because of the input of more funds from the LEA and other sources, amounting to £400,000.

85. The library has been redesigned and largely rebuilt internally, following the recent extensive fire damage. A mezzanine floor has been inserted, allowing access for the disabled, and special lighting has been provided to facilitate working with computers. This, together with improved sound insulation, provides a very good environment for study and for reading for pleasure. The area is very well used and the new first-floor space enables private study to take place independently of the busier area below. There are currently 10,000 books in good condition, mostly new, and a further 4,000 on order or in course of being catalogued.

86. The school has made considerable efforts to improve the quality and quantity of information and communications technology resources. Three main computer rooms are well set out, though access is somewhat restricted by timetable constraints. New investment

now provides a ratio of one computer to every seven pupils, which is close to the national norm. In total, there are 273 computers distributed across the site, of which 86 are more than five years old. Computers and equipment in the learning resource centre are extensively used by the whole school.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

87. The school should:

- (1) Further narrow the gap between national standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 and those subjects which fall short of them by:
  - ensuring that all departments use the school's assessment and target-setting policy with equal vigour;
  - promoting literacy and numeracy skills more fully;
  - monitoring the teaching and management of heads of department so as to spread best practice more thoroughly;
  - monitoring the daily 'guidance' lesson to ensure its consistently efficient use.(See paragraphs 23, 43, 57, 72, 81)
- (2) Raise standards of provision in English by:
  - ensuring that management provides comprehensive departmental schemes of work for Key Stages 3 and 4;
  - setting the highest possible expectations for all pupils, but especially for those of average- and below-average attainment;
  - establishing a confident and consistent use of National Curriculum assessment procedures at Key Stage 3.(See paragraphs 7, 26, 28, 34, 35, 57, 73, 88, 89, 92, 93, 96)
- (3) Take all possible steps to improve the quality of accommodation, the resourcing of departments and the continuity of staffing so that these factors cease to hinder pupils' progress.  
(See paragraphs 77, 83, 84)
- (4) Establish full provision and strong co-ordination of information and communications technology at Key Stages 3 and 4 so that:
  - statutory requirements are met;
  - pupils' prior knowledge and skills are built on;
  - existing resources are used to the full, and further requirements are accurately gauged;
  - pupils' progress is systematically monitored and challenging targets are set for them.(See paragraphs 158, 160, 163, 164)

## **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

### ***Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection***

Number of lessons observed	220
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	60

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	23	45	26.5	3	0.5	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1265	162
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	315	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	210	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.7
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	159	122	281

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	71	67
	Girls	69	60	49
	Total	118	131	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	42	47	41
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13	23	15
	National	28	38	23

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	82	59
	Girls	70	70	37
	Total	130	152	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	46	54	34
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16	24	15
	National	31	37	28

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	111	136	247

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	31	100	108
	Girls	58	129	133
	Total	89	229	241
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	36	93	98
	National	46.6	90.9	95.8

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35
	National	38

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	19	28	47

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	10.4	17.1	14.3	0	1	0.8
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	47
	National	82.5

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	7
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1413
Any other minority ethnic group	2

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	153	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	86.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y11 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	587

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y11 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.2
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y11 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	23.2
Key Stage 4	20.2

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3,310,497
Total expenditure	3,307,964
Expenditure per pupil	2264
Balance brought forward from previous year	-1085
Balance carried forward to next year	1448



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1427
Number of questionnaires returned	393

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	58	8	5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	30	56	6	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	42	18	5	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	57	16	4	2
The teaching is good.	19	59	11	1	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	45	2	4	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	48	7	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	44	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	17	50	22	3	8
The school is well led and managed.	21	51	10	3	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	57	9	3	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	45	7	3	11

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

### ENGLISH

88. In the standard assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, attainment was well below average compared both to schools nationally and to those with a similar intake. Forty-two per cent of pupils gained a level 5 and above, whilst the national average is 64 per cent. Girls did better than boys. Attainment had been around the national average for the previous three years, but the low standards of 1999 have been repeated in the 2000 tests. Pupils did less well in English than in science and mathematics. Teachers assessed their pupils in line with their test performance. Work seen during the inspection confirmed attainment as well below average at the end of Key Stage 3. Some pupils attain high standards, but the majority attain standards well below those expected. High-attaining pupils write accurately, using complex sentences and a wide vocabulary. Their narrative work such as that in response to the sinking of The Titanic uses imaginative imagery. They read with understanding of content and of how an author, for instance James Vance Marshall in *Walkabout*, creates effects, but choose unchallenging texts for their personal reading in the learning resource centre. Lower-attaining pupils have difficulty in expanding answers beyond a simple sentence or in co-operating in a group to develop ideas. Written work is brief, with very poor spelling and careless punctuation. They can recall the story from their reading, for example of *Buddy*, but are less confident in understanding how the characters feel.

89. In the GCSE English examinations in 1999, the number of pupils achieving grades A\* to C, 40 per cent, is well below the national average of 56 per cent. This is broadly in line with attainment in schools with a similar intake. Most pupils gained a grade A\* to G, in line with pupils nationally. In the GCSE English literature examinations in 1999, for which a large number of pupils are entered, the number of pupils gaining A\* to C is below the national average. In both examinations, girls outperformed boys by more than is usual nationally. Results in GCSE fluctuate, but the trend is downwards. This well below average attainment is confirmed by inspection evidence. Some high attainers reach very high standards, but far too many pupils attain well below the standard expected by the end of Key Stage 4. High attainers write fluently and accurately in a range of genres. They were seen to respond to literature perceptively, for example, in the role of Eliza in *Pygmalion*, and made detailed and mature comparisons between the relationships in *Odour of Chrysanthemums* and *Far From the Madding Crowd*. They make determined attempts to search for appropriate vocabulary using a dictionary and thesaurus. However, lower attainers are reluctant to speak and do not develop their ideas either orally or on paper. Though they can identify such literary devices as a pun, they are unable to explain how it works to engage the reader's attention in a newspaper headline. Their spelling and punctuation are inaccurate and vocabulary is weak. The attainment of boys is particularly low.

90. At post-16, standards are in line with course expectations. In the A level examinations in 1999, literature results were good, with 40 per cent of students gaining grades A or B, and all passing. English language results were satisfactory. The language course no longer runs, but observation during inspection week confirms standards at post-16 as in line with course expectations. Students have confidence in their own response to their texts. They have a wide vocabulary and strive to extend it. They are articulate, especially in written expression. Their response to literature is perceptive, for example in detailed analysis of the way Keats creates contrasting atmosphere in *The Eve of Saint Agnes*. They make good progress.

91. Pupils are used to drafting and refining work, a process that develops well through the school. Much work is word-processed to improve presentation.

92. At Key Stages 3 and 4, progress is unsatisfactory. Though higher-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress, lower attainers do not make the progress they should. There is a lack of unified, co-ordinated schemes of work to ensure that each pupil progresses steadily through the National Curriculum programmes of study. Also, assessment is not used effectively enough, especially at Key Stage 3, to motivate pupils to progress to higher levels. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards their targets. They receive good help in withdrawal sessions and some support in class, though co-operation between teachers and support assistants in producing suitable work together is less well developed.

93. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but within this, the range is great. For example, teaching in the sixth form is consistently very good, but elsewhere there is some which is excellent, but also a substantial amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Objectives are clearly displayed, but only in the best lessons are they used productively to draw pupils into the purpose of the teaching. Sometimes they are activities to be done rather than the reasons for doing them. Only rarely is the lesson rounded off clearly with pupils invited to consider what has been learnt in the lesson. Where this was successful, pupils were interested and worked conscientiously, and very good learning took place. Where the purpose of the lesson was unclear, for example, where pupils were rehearsing a reading of *Macbeth*, pupils quickly lost interest and became disruptive, especially the boys, and resulting performances were dull and lacking in imaginative response. Where methods of teaching are varied and interesting, such as making a real television programme in the media studio, using a pupil's script chosen by other pupils, attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils are highly motivated and very good learning takes place. However, there is a lack of structured, focused groupwork where pupils can develop their ideas and extend their understanding: the teacher spends too much time talking and asking questions while, in the higher groups, pupils listen politely or, in the lower groups, switch off, sometimes becoming poorly behaved. The best lessons have high expectations of work and behaviour, to which pupils respond accordingly, but less successful ones, such as unstructured personal reading in the learning resource centre, do not challenge sufficiently. Where pupils are allowed to call out unchecked, behaviour is unsatisfactory.

94. In the most successful lessons, assessment is used to motivate pupils to improve. Year 13 students made very good progress in understanding how they could improve their own essay writing by looking at the criteria for an A grade and analysing an A grade essay together. The majority of pupils, however, are not aware of their own standards, nor of their specific strengths and weaknesses. Insufficient attention is given to the teaching of basic skills within the lesson. Though pupils have their attention drawn to key words, these are not always taught. Though the importance of words, such as 'because' and 'recommend', was highlighted in a Year 9 lesson, the words were not written on the board and patterns of spelling were not shown, resulting in very weak spelling in the ensuing writing.

95. The department is under-resourced, though what money is available has been spent wisely. There is an interesting collection of novels for study, including several of a multi-cultural nature, and suitable texts for Key Stage 3 are on order. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, despite valiant attempts by staff to brighten the dilapidated surroundings with good display of pupils' work. An exception to this is the learning resource centre, which provides a comfortable and stimulating environment for the department to use. The department is still suffering from the legacy of problems in staffing last year. For instance, several Year 11 classes have little or no coursework in place. There are now sufficient, suitably qualified teachers to deliver the curriculum, though not to extend it with drama or media studies at Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form.

96. Improvement since the previous inspection has been inadequate. Standards of

attainment and teaching have deteriorated at Key Stages 3 and 4 and management has not yet put into place suitable strategies to arrest this deterioration, though some plans have now been made. Though the department runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, there is a lack of sufficiently rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the curriculum to identify problems and improve performance.

#### Literacy across the curriculum

97. The drive to improve literacy has made a good beginning. A dynamic co-ordinator has been appointed and all staff have received some training, with more planned. Developments have been thoughtfully and efficiently planned and are being carefully evaluated, but there is much still to be done. A successful summer school took place this year, and 24 pupils who attended are carrying on with extra help during guidance lessons to continue their improvement. Most classrooms have whiteboards installed, with lesson objectives written up before lessons, though not all staff use these as skilfully as others. Subject areas have identified specific literacy skills to be taught and all refer to key words, prominently displayed. Where this is well done, for instance in design and technology with Year 7, pupils are interested and request necessary words such as 'quality', to be added to their list, thus improving their writing. However, not all teachers illustrate how to use the words effectively, or teach how to spell them correctly. In history, writing frames help pupils to structure and extend their writing, and paired and group work encourages the development of ideas. In science, attention is sometimes given to improving vocabulary, for example, an original pupil choice of 'stuff', being moved on to 'things', to the more appropriate 'resources'.

98. Pupils in Year 7 follow a literacy programme in one lesson of guidance per week, taught by form tutors, and all years have one lesson of ERIC (Everyone Reads in Class) during another guidance lesson. The effectiveness of this is patchy. Some classes read closely for the period, but many pupils are unfocused and chat as much as they read. The review sheet they complete at the end of the reading time lacks depth for some pupils. Resources, provided by the library services, are good, with interesting, bright new texts.

### **MATHEMATICS**

99. At Key Stage 3 in the national tests, pupils attained well below the 1999 national average for the standard level and for the next higher level. These results were, however, better than those for comprehensive schools with a similar proportion of pupils receiving free school meals. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls, and the results mirrored those in the other core subjects. Results were similar to those in the previous year. The provisional results for 2000 follow the same pattern.

100. At GCSE, pupils attained well below the 1999 national average for grades A\* to C. This was similar to the results for the previous year. There was not a significant difference between the results for boys and girls. The results were near the average for all subjects and represented an improvement on the results of the previous year. The provisional results for 2000 follow the same pattern.

101. The small group size makes comparison of A level results with national figures inappropriate, but the aggregated figures for the past three years for A to E grades are in line with the national figure.

102. The school has an entry profile which is below the national average and the results in mathematics at both Key Stage 3 and at GCSE indicate at least satisfactory progress for the pupils concerned. Inspection of lessons and pupils' work confirms that, at the end of both key stages, pupils are attaining below national averages, and, by Year 13, pupils attain around the

national average for A level mathematics students. The higher standards seen during the inspection reflect the good teaching and learning seen in the classroom.

103. Pupils use calculators sensibly and accurately in general. The department is currently developing the effective use of graphical calculators. Information and communications technology was seen to be used effectively in one lesson during the inspection. Middle-attaining Year 10 pupils used an Internet mathematics package to reinforce successfully understanding of percentages. The department is aware that there is a need to develop the general use of information and communications technology across the mathematics curriculum at both key stages. Attainment in the space and shape and data- handling attainment targets is generally satisfactory at both key stages. Investigative mathematics is in its early stages of development. Good examples of the effective use of algebraic modelling were seen in a sample of Year 11 coursework. Pupils with special educational needs attain appropriately in mathematics. There will, however, be a need to co-ordinate the work done on the computer programme 'Successmaker' with that in the mathematics classroom. Pupils' standards of presentation are generally good. Standards in the sixth form follow the national picture. Students in a Year 12 class were seen to use their knowledge of algebraic long division effectively, and Year 13 students likewise engaged in a thorough analysis of the binomial theorem.

104. At both key stages and in the sixth form, pupils make good progress generally, making particularly good progress and learning well when teaching is stimulating. Pupils generally enjoy learning and using mathematics in practical situations. Poor numeracy standards on entry to the school do slow progress for some pupils in the other attainment targets. Sometimes progress involves consolidation of previous understanding and knowledge: a middle-attaining Year 11 group, for example, was seen to develop understanding of the metric and imperial systems of measurement and apply this understanding to judging appropriate measures for practical situations. Sometimes pupils learn new techniques, as seen in a higher-attaining Year 8 group which learned to successfully develop general algebraic formulae to model numerical patterns. Pupils with special educational needs progress well generally.

105. Teaching is generally good, and occasionally very good, at both key stages and in the sixth form. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. The department has addressed weaknesses identified in a subject review by the LEA in 1999, through individual and team staff development. There is active monitoring of all teaching by the head of department. Teaching is generally well paced, well planned and well controlled. A very successful Year 8 lesson required expert calming control to set the scene for a very effective learning experience in analysing number patterns. Teachers know their subject well and can explain difficult points to their pupils. Relationships are good and pupils generally enjoy lessons. Teachers use homework appropriately to back up classroom learning. Classroom assessment is used to plan further learning for whole groups. In the very few lessons assessed as being satisfactory, as opposed to good or very good, teachers tended to allow pace to slip and pupils lost their momentum in terms of learning. Teaching methods are essentially quite formal, with modest levels of pupil participation. The head of department needs to encourage further the use of practical mathematics and to use the outside world as a source of examples in the teaching of mathematics, and there are missed opportunities to bring in cross-curricular use of the subject. A good lesson was seen in a Year 7 lower-attaining group, who were motivated and excited when using the Egyptian hieroglyphic number system to examine and compare it with number structure in the decimal system. In several lessons, pupils were taught percentages very efficiently, but no teacher brought in the practical implications, such as the impact of a 10 per cent rise in the price of petrol.

106. Pupils are generally well motivated in class and enjoy the subject. They like working

with partners and using information and communications technology, particularly appreciating the Internet as a learning resource, and are usually happy to discuss their understanding of the subject. They are generally tolerant and sustain attention over the one-hour lessons. The quality of pupils' learning closely mirrors that of teaching.

107. The department is well managed by a very hard working head of department who is sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of his team, but is firm in a resolve to improve standards. The teaching team varies considerably in terms of other duties, experience and age, but effective management has successfully introduced some new initiatives into the teaching programme. The National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) has been adopted effectively, teaching is monitored, reviewed and strengthened routinely, and initial moves have been made towards more accurate assessment of attainment and progress. As acknowledged in the departmental development plan, there is a need for routine assessment of attainment and formal target setting for all pupils. Likewise, information and communications technology is under-used at present and this also needs further development. The department has, however, made good progress since the previous inspection.

#### Numeracy across the curriculum

108. Pupils' standards of numeracy have generally been poor on entry to the school and this is seen in the existing standards of knowledge of multiplication tables and bonds in many pupils in Years 8 to 11. The standards for the current Year 7 are much higher, reflecting the impact of the NNS in primary schools. The department is rightly making a major effort to improve numeracy standards by using the NNS structure for lessons in Year 7 and encouraging similar structures in all years. Pupils enjoy these activities, and numeracy skills are also well exercised in several subject areas. In geography, successful use is made of data handling and display in investigations; in science, graphs are plotted confidently; in art and in design and technology, accurate measurement is carried out; and in business studies, data-handling and display techniques are used effectively. The school is aware of the need to develop cross-curricular numeracy and attempted to recruit a co-ordinator in the recent past. There is an urgent need to map numeracy requirements across the curriculum and to develop a whole-school, cross-curricular numeracy policy.

### SCIENCE

109. Attainment at age 14 is broadly in line with national averages. In the 1999 national tests, the proportion of pupils gaining level 5 and above was approximately 10 per cent below the national figures. However, the average score, which reflects the attainment of all pupils, was close to the national average, and better than the standards in mathematics and English. Pupils' attainment is above that of pupils from similar schools. The test results for 2000 show a significant improvement in the number of pupils reaching the expected standard for pupils of this age. The difference in attainment by boys and girls is similar to that seen nationally. From 1997 to 1999 there has been little variation in standards, but observation of lessons during the inspection confirmed the improvement evident in test results for 2000. Pupils are now consistently working at levels that are approaching the national standards. For example, a top set in Year 8 was given a most challenging task of using microscopes to measure the diameter of a hair, which the pupils tackled with enthusiasm and a great deal of success. A class of low-attaining pupils in Year 9, many with special educational needs, successfully completed an experimental investigation of the factors affecting the strength of electromagnets. High-attaining pupils in Year 9 were able to grasp the very difficult concepts of positive and negative correlation in the context of scientific proof. When compared to the standards of pupils when they enter the school, this represents good achievement.

110. Results in the GCSE examinations at the higher grades (A\* to C) are below the

national average. In 1999, only 34 per cent of pupils achieved these grades, compared to 48 per cent nationally. However, the average grade achieved by all the pupils in the year was slightly above the national figure for all pupils of this age. The standards attained matched in all respects those of pupils in similar schools, and were better than the standards in mathematics and English. After several years of similar attainment, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades in 2000 was slightly lower. This apparent decline in standards was due to extreme staffing difficulties experienced over the preceding two years. A combination of illness and unavoidable delays in making new appointments led to many classes being taught by a succession of temporary teachers. Despite determined efforts by the head of department and other colleagues, this disruption badly affected the education of many pupils. The damaging effect was most marked in GCSE classes, where coursework was seriously compromised. Observation of lessons and the results of frequent tests show that standards are now rising. In Year 11, teachers and pupils are working very hard to compensate for the legacy of previous disruption, and Year 10 pupils are making a good start to their GCSE course. Pupils in a Year 11 top set revised earlier work on food webs at great pace and with good concentration, so that they were able to move quickly on to higher level concepts. Others tackled an open-ended investigation of the properties of metals with confidence and a good deal of independence. A middle set in Year 10, learning about the transference of energy, could apply their knowledge intelligently to the insulation of buildings.

111. Students following A level and AS courses in science are achieving standards that always reflect their prior attainment and often exceed it. There is a healthy uptake of science in the sixth form, and the results contribute heavily to the school's overall performance in post-16 courses. Students' files form careful and complete records of work that is all set at the standard needed for the highest grades. In class, students work with mature competence and independence. In their second year of A level chemistry, students were able to model complex organic molecules and explain the significance of mass spectroscopy in determining the position of atoms within such molecules.

112. Teaching is good across the full range of age and attainment. Of the lessons observed, none were unsatisfactory, three quarters were good or better and a third very good. Imaginative and detailed planning underpins the best teaching. Lessons have clear learning objectives, understood by the pupils, and include a variety of different activities and practical work. This approach helps to interest and motivate pupils, who often lack self-confidence. All the pupils in a Year 11 class worked with great enthusiasm on a set of physics calculations, because the work was presented in an interesting way and they appreciated the potential value in acquiring a difficult skill. Lessons are made interesting by the use of exciting experimental procedures, such as the use of the Van de Graaf generator to produce dramatic effects with static electricity and the construction by pupils of electromagnets.

113. Most teachers have very good insight into the way their pupils learn, including those with special educational needs, and the potential factors that will inhibit learning. Many pupils arrive with little self-confidence and poorly developed classroom skills. Teachers take great care to ensure that pupils are given tasks of suitable difficulty, so that they are challenged but not defeated. Particular skill is shown in dealing with the problems that pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties can cause, both for themselves and others. Such pupils are treated with unfailing care and great patience, but are managed in a way that limits their disruptive effect on lessons. Success by pupils is always celebrated by both personal comment and full use of the school's extensive merit system. This approach is gradually helping pupils to become more effective and ambitious learners.

114. Wherever possible, science is presented in a way that pupils can relate to their own experience. A lesson on the formation of rocks succeeded because information and

concepts were drawn from the pupils' own knowledge of local buildings and of accidentally freezing cans of pop, and was illustrated by good experimental work.

115. Occasionally, careless planning leads to lessons that fail to extend pupils fully, resulting in satisfactory rather than good learning. The effectiveness of learning is sometimes limited by the teacher's relatively weak skills in exposition and questioning, leading to lack of attention by pupils and a reduction in the pace of the lesson.

116. The teaching of basic skills within the science curriculum is satisfactory. Literacy is addressed through the use of key words for each lesson, and pupils' ability to use correct technical terminology is improving. Numeracy skills needed for science, such as measurement, are taught well within the subject, but the experience of pupils would be improved by a co-ordinated approach by all subjects using similar skills. The use of information and communications technology to enrich the science curriculum has been severely limited by lack of access to equipment. However, at the time of inspection, a new suite of computers was about to be brought into use, and the department is now fully equipped for this work. Staff training needs have been audited and there are detailed plans to incorporate information and communications technology and its assessment into all schemes of work.

117. The ability to put right the damage done by the staffing difficulties of the last two years and to raise standards is adversely affected by several factors. The laboratories, although sufficient in number, were not designed to meet the needs of present day science education, with its emphasis on practical work. Furthermore, they are in a very poor state of repair, furnishing and decoration. These dingy and difficult conditions make teaching unnecessarily stressful and have a demotivating effect on pupils. The problems associated with poor accommodation are made worse by unsatisfactory levels of resources. Years of low investment have resulted in almost all the everyday equipment, such as Bunsen burners and power packs, being shabby and often damaged. The non-teaching staff who support the department are all well qualified, very committed and well led by the senior technician. However, there are not enough of them to provide a proper service for 12 full-time teachers working in 13 different laboratories in three buildings and sometimes on three floors. Standards are only being maintained because of an over-reliance on their goodwill.



118. The head of department, who has been in post since April 1999, ably supported by senior colleagues, is leading and managing the department very well. Science teachers form a mutually supportive team, are fully committed to raising standards, and all share the enthusiasm for improving the department. Within the last 12 months, despite staffing problems, the curriculum has been revised and new schemes of work are being written. A new course at Key Stage 4, the certificate of achievement, has been introduced and has radically improved the learning opportunities for the lowest-attaining pupils. The use of CASE (Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education) has been extended and is resulting in more intellectual rigour in lessons. The sixth form curriculum has been enriched by the successful addition of 'science for public understanding' as an AS level. Assessment of pupils' work and achievement has been developed and is now very good. The results of frequent tests and other relevant measures are used well to monitor the progress of individuals and groups of pupils and to set sensible targets. The assessment of pupils' attainment, in conjunction with more formal procedures, is also used to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and to form the basis for professional development.

119. Since the last inspection, accommodation and resources have deteriorated. Teaching and management by the staff are better than those observed at the last inspection. This is an improving department and, given a period of stability, has in place all the factors that are needed to effect a radical improvement in standards.

## **ART**

120. At Key Stage 3, attainment is average in terms of national comparisons. Compared with similar schools, attainment is higher than average. Pupils draw well from direct observation; their drawings show an appreciation of structure, which is recorded carefully. Pupils are also able to develop design ideas successfully from the study of, for example, aboriginal art and pattern structures produced in other cultures. This work in pattern involves measuring and promotes the development of an awareness of mathematical structure. In drawing and painting, pupils show imagination in producing compositions in colour from their experience of their environment, a particularly rich example being the Year 8 project on 'People and Places' based upon the local scene. Work involving the use of computers in art and design is now developing, as formerly minimal resources are supplemented, and National Curriculum requirements are met. Basic literacy skills are enhanced by the practice of compiling lists of terms arising in the discussion of art, and their analysis as lessons proceed.

121. Pupils make good progress through the key stage in developing skills in drawing and design; they also gain an awareness of the work of major artists whose works are studied as a source of ideas. This practice has a positive impact on learning by combining effectively the two main areas of the National Curriculum. Progress in lessons is also good, aided by the enthusiasm and good behaviour of pupils.

122. At Key Stage 4, attainment is around the national average. In GCSE examinations, results in the most recent year were below average, with 52.2 per cent grades A\* to C against a national average of 61.2 per cent. The average points score, at 4.6, is very near the national average of 4.8. This represents a rising trend over recent years. The comparatively low numbers taking the examination do not afford a valid basis for comparison of the performance of boys and girls. Work observed in class and project work on display, though variable, broadly match national averages. The present level of attainment represents an improvement since the last inspection, when pupils were judged to be attaining below the national average. Pupils show good drawing skills in many cases and produce imaginative and well-finished designs in graphics. In some instances, ideas outstrip technical skill: for

example, a chosen theme on 'relationships' made demands in terms of figure drawing which were beyond the reach of the pupil. Attainment in three-dimensional work is good, with imaginative experimental use of materials and sound technique in working clay.

123. Progress through the key stage is good. The chosen art GCSE syllabus successfully builds on the curriculum at Key Stage 3 and promotes continuous development through the two key stages. As at Key Stage 3, there is enthusiasm and commitment, which have a significant effect upon learning and generate a pleasant working atmosphere in studios. Progress by pupils with special educational needs is good and is aided by the nature of open-ended projects and the positive working atmosphere. The analysis of language continues the pattern practised at Key Stage 3, with word lists displayed and discussed. Numeracy also is promoted by work in pattern and perspective.

124. Attainment in the sixth form has fluctuated around the national average over the last three years, with very small numbers of students. In the most recent year, students gained an average points score of 6, against the national average of 4.5. Attainment observed in class confirms this. Students show good skills in researching individual projects and are able to work independently, showing creative maturity. Drawing skills are sound, and colour is used effectively. Three-dimensional work shows skill in construction and imagination in conception.

125. The quality of teaching overall throughout the department is good, with some lessons very good and none observed being less than satisfactory. Two major strengths are very good teacher-pupil relationships and very good subject expertise. Both of these attributes have a powerful effect upon pupils' learning. Lessons are thoroughly prepared, with good attention to detail in the provision of materials. Objectives are clear and good learning is further promoted by sensitive individual tuition and the good pace of lessons. Pupils are encouraged to work from direct experience and to think about the underlying structure of the things they observe, as well as surface appearances. The level of challenge is consequently high whilst still allowing for progress by pupils of a wide range of attainment. A notable feature in the teaching is the use of display as a learning resource. These strengths contribute in different ways at different stages. Sensitive and effective use of encouragement plays an important role at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, much of the teaching takes the form of individual and versatile help and tuition, delivered by teachers with strong subject expertise. Teachers' subject expertise also plays a vital role in sixth form teaching. A weakness in the teaching is the lack of focus on basic art skills in the planning of projects at Key Stage 3, and to a lesser extent at Key Stage 4. This results in some cases in pupils' ambition outstripping technical skill, as noted in the instance cited above.

126. Assessment is thorough at all key stages. Projects are graded on a range of criteria which allow for the use of assessment to inform planning. Pupil self-assessment is incorporated in subject reports and parents are reported to in accordance with requirements. New specific level descriptions have been drawn up for the assessment of Key Stage 3, in accordance with the new National Curriculum recommendations.

127. The department is well managed, with good relationships between staff and shared aims. There is a high level of collective commitment, evident, for example, in the effort put into the development of the school gallery, which forms a link between school, parents and practising artists. The curriculum is broad and varied and provides for continuous progress through the key stages. Provision for information and communications technology is patchy, though developing as resources become available. There is good extra-curricular provision for extended study and studios are open to pupils at breaks, lunchtimes and after school when required.

128. The department has the use of three studios, two of which are adjacent and roomy, with good storage and display areas. These rooms are well furnished and lit and provide a good background for successful learning. The third, pottery, studio is sited at a distance from the main studio area and is in poor condition and in need of maintenance work. Resources for learning are minimal and are supplemented by equipment and materials provided by staff. This reflects the degree of commitment within a department which plays a full part in the life of the school.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

129. By the end of Key Stage 3, the standard of attainment is below national averages, particularly in pupils' design work. This is shown by the low number of pupils gaining a level 5 or above in the teacher assessment at the end of Year 9. This performance is similar to attainment in other subjects in the school. Boys under-perform in relation to girls by a degree that is greater than national differences. In lessons, pupils' attainment in design and technology is below average. When studying products, pupils find it hard to interpret specifications such as food labels. Their knowledge of applying the design process is unclear, as in a lesson to design and make a wooden animal with mechanisms to allow movement. Evaluations of products are often simplistic, and the original specification is not used to compare the product in use.

130. By the end of Key Stage 4, the overall standard of attainment in 1999 is in line with national averages, in terms of numbers of pupils gaining A\* to C. For A\* to G it is also in line with national averages. For girls, 51 per cent gained A\* to C in 1999, compared to a national average of 57 per cent. For boys, 36 per cent gained A\* to C compared with a national average of 41 per cent. Examination standards have improved since the last inspection, and, in lessons seen during the inspection, attainment is also average. In electronic products, pupils are aware of the purposes of components and can build circuits and correctly investigate numerical relationships. In textiles, some pupils who have suffered from staffing shortages show knowledge and understanding of the sewing machine that is below average. In graphics, some pupils produce designs that show flair such as a transformer robot and a model for a car. In resistant materials, one pupil uses a variety of forming processes to produce an attractive DVD storage system. In food products, pupils can carry out testing of products, but some find it difficult to take part in extended discussions, such as describing the properties of products.

131. By the end of post-16, the standard of attainment is below national averages, both for examination results and in lessons seen. Students' work does not have a broad enough research base, and projects lack depth of detail in the design folder.

132. Achievement is satisfactory across Key Stage 4 and post-16, where most pupils, including those with special educational needs, gain new skills in their specialist subject over time. They apply these to project work that shows increasingly sophisticated application of the design process. However, across Key Stage 3, achievement is unsatisfactory, with insufficient consolidation of graphics and design skills, as they progress through projects taught by the two separate departments. Project work needs to be planned so as to provide

clear objectives in terms of project outcomes that match the requirements of pupils with special educational needs and of low, middle and high attainers. This relates to the quality of making as well as the clarity and innovation in pupils' design folders.

133. Pupils' attitudes in lessons at both key stages and post-16 are good. Pupils usually co-operate and share information, as in a Year 8 pastry-making lesson, and help each other with difficult processes as in a Year 11 resistant materials workshop session. In a minority of lessons, some pupils showed unsatisfactory attitudes, with little motivation to complete written work or listen to the teacher.

134. The standard of teaching is best in Key Stage 4 lessons, where it is good. Key Stage 3 lessons have satisfactory teaching. In the best teaching, there is careful guidance of project work. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their specialist subject and can provide clear exposition of techniques, as in a Year 10 textiles lesson consolidating use of the sewing machine. In the minority of unsatisfactory lessons, teachers are unable to command the class to give a full focus to explanations or written work. Some unsatisfactory teaching does not provide sufficient challenge to pupils. There are some deficiencies in teachers' planning of lessons covering the new Key Stage 3 curriculum. Currently, design and technology teaching is provided by two separate departments. One covers resistant materials, graphics and systems, whilst a second provides textiles and food teaching. There is a need for more rigorous curriculum planning to agree on common standards and to cover the new statutory orders. There is no portfolio of projects that allows Key Stage 3 staff to discuss and agree on common standards. Provision for work that sufficiently challenges high attainers is unsatisfactory: a Key Stage 3 automata project could have further extension work, for example, incorporating more cams and design of a timed sequence. The provision of the school's health curriculum, as part of design and technology, also causes fragmented teaching.

135. Design and technology is under-resourced in terms of new machines and tools. There is no equipment for computer aided design and computer aided manufacture and other information and communications technology activities at Key Stage 3. Pneumatics and structures are also given no curriculum time. The workshop accommodation is poor. Most fittings and surfaces are hard worn, with frequent leaks to windows and the roof, giving rise on occasion to unsafe conditions with wet electrical fittings and floors. Surfaces in the food rooms are worn with no separate hand-washing provision, and maintenance of cookers is poor.

136. Staffing is unsatisfactory, with a shortage of specialists, and this is depressing achievement at Key Stage 3. There is no overall management responsibility directed to monitor, evaluate and improve performance at Key Stage 3 and there is little co-ordination between technology at Key Stages 2 and 3. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils receive two separate reports, with no criteria-based targets relayed to levels. Recent staffing shortages have resulted in incomplete departmental records for some pupils. There is no portfolio of exemplar material to allow accurate grading and to allow both staff and pupils to interpret quality in artefacts and folder work for Key Stage 3 projects.

137. Since the last inspection, the standard of attainment at Key Stage 4 has improved and is now broadly in line with national averages. However, several features have not been addressed: the standard of accommodation remains poor and there is a lack of up-to-date equipment; and Key Stage 3 management and curriculum need improvement in order to raise pupils' achievement.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

138. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in lessons are below average, although some higher-attaining pupils achieve in line with expectations. This is reflected in the teacher-assessed tests. In 1999, GCSE results at grades A\* to C were well below the average for all and similar schools. Girls outperform boys at higher grades. Pupils perform less well in geography than in most other subjects. Over the last four years, the results have fluctuated, but remain well below average. They improved this year, despite problems caused by the long-term absence of key staff. This is partly attributable to planned revision and greater emphasis on the fieldwork coursework. Geography is a popular subject, shown by the large number choosing to take it as an examination subject.

139. Over the same period, the proportion of A level students gaining higher grades has fluctuated below the national average. However, in 2000, four out of eleven students achieved higher grades. Two went to university to read geography. Departmental strategies to improve results include changing to syllabuses which more closely reflect pupils' needs and placing more emphasis on using information to monitor progress. Evidence indicates that Year 12 students are particularly benefiting from these measures.

140. At both key stages and in the sixth form, most pupils make satisfactory progress. They make good progress in most lessons, responding particularly well in lessons in which they participate. Over time, however, some classes made slower progress than others, the result of being taught by temporary teachers, a situation which is now resolved. For some Year 11 pupils, absence, resulting in incomplete work, affects their progress. At Key Stage 3, not enough use is made of assessment to improve achievement.

141. Pupils' standards when they enter the school are below average. Many have poor general knowledge. They soon consolidate and develop map skills and through studying the local area increase their understanding of places and basic ideas. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have sound mapwork skills and are good at locating features on maps. Most show some understanding of physical processes and environmental conflicts. They can obtain information from different sources, including the Internet. A well-prepared guide, for example, helped lower-attaining pupils to obtain up-to-date information about the Peak National Park. Most use geographical vocabulary correctly, the result of the emphasis placed on it by teachers. There are too few opportunities to write critically or at length or use fieldwork and enquiries to develop these skills. When given the opportunity, higher-attaining pupils writing about the rain forest, for example, show good improvement. Lower attainers have difficulty remembering what they have learnt previously.

142. Many pupils who choose to take geography as an examination subject enter Year 10 with below-average standards. In the lessons seen, teachers build well on earlier work. Higher-attaining pupils in one lesson made good gains by being given a degree of independence and working in pairs to extend their understanding, and were able to construct their first cross-sections. By the end of Year 11, most pupils use geographical terms well and show some understanding of patterns and processes. The work of lower-attaining pupils remains largely descriptive. Few demonstrate other than a limited capacity for geographical analysis, as shown in their fieldwork on Castleton.

143. By the end of Year 13, students show sound understanding of urban patterns and developed their techniques well during fieldwork in North Wales. They still need some assistance in identifying the best geographical hypotheses to test.

144. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, pupils use their numerical skills competently to support their work, but information and communications technology is insufficiently used for this purpose.

145. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Most achieve a grade at GCSE. Staff are aware of their difficulties but do not use individual targets for improvement. Such pupils benefit from the help given in lessons by learning support assistants. A few, withdrawn from occasional lessons, tend to make slower progress because they do not cover the work.

146. Most pupils enjoy geography and behave well. They arrive at lessons prepared to work hard, with the exception of some Year 8 pupils, whose disruptive behaviour adversely affected the progress of a lesson. When given opportunities, such as fieldwork, they are prepared to use their initiative and take some responsibility for their learning. Most do their homework conscientiously and take pride in their work, as shown in their careful presentation.

147. Teaching is good overall, but varies between very good and poor. Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to give clear explanations that develop pupils' understanding. They plan work well, so that pupils are clear about what they have to do. Most use resources effectively to make lessons interesting. Homework is set regularly and supports classwork well, although some is too easy at Key Stage 3. Marking, although regular, does not give enough information to pupils about how to improve. With the exception of one poor lesson, in which the teacher possessed limited strategies for dealing with poor behaviour, teachers are well organised and enjoy firm but pleasant relationships with the pupils. As a result, most pupils work hard and make progress. Time is sometimes wasted when they are not kept fully occupied. Methods vary: in some lessons, the teacher does not involve pupils sufficiently, thereby restricting opportunities to develop ideas fully in discussion; in others, there is a good balance between instruction and activities. Very good lessons are characterised by their interesting and interactive approach, as illustrated in a Year 12 lesson about weather patterns. A well-planned sequence introduced the students to increasingly complex ideas. The teacher built well on basic concepts, correcting gaps in understanding and extending interest through a lively exchange of views. As a result, they made very good progress. They were able to interpret synoptic charts, compare and contrast conditions and prepare a weather forecast for the news.

148. The management of the department is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, schemes of work have been completely revised and broadly satisfactory overall improvement has been made. More investigative work needs to take place, and monitoring and dissemination of good practice are required, so that all pupils are challenged, and training is needed in information and communications technology. Assessment procedures at Key Stage 3 need strengthening in order to correct weaknesses in planning and help pupils to make progress.

## **HISTORY**

149. By the end of Key Stage 3, in lessons and in work seen in the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils of all attainment levels have a satisfactory knowledge of the period of history being studied and use source materials competently to make deductions and communicate findings. Lower attainers use sources for information, but have difficulty in assessing the reliability of information. Higher-attaining pupils, such as those in Year 9 studying conditions of life in the domestic system during the industrial revolution, correctly assessed the reliability of various types of contemporary documents.

150. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment overall is in line with the national average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A\* to C was in line with the national average. There were no apparent differences between the attainment of boys

and girls. Pupils performed better in history than they did on average in their other subjects. Results vary from year to year, but have improved since 1997; however, they declined in 2000. In 1999, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A\* to G was in line with the national average. In lessons and in work seen in the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment are in line with those expected nationally. These standards reflect the attainment in examination results in 1999. Pupils of all attainment levels show a satisfactory knowledge of the course content and write sound analytical answers to questions. A wide range of historical source material is used competently; lower-attaining Year 11 pupils successfully researched contemporary documents to discuss the hyper-inflation of the Weimar Republic and the conditions under which Hitler came to power.

151. At the end of post-16 education, attainment overall is above the national average. In the A level examinations in 1999, all nine candidates obtained a pass grade. Over the period 1997 to 1999, virtually all candidates passed; all ten candidates obtained a pass grade in 2000. In lessons and in work seen in the inspection, students' standards of attainment are above those expected nationally. These standards reflect the attainment in recent examination results. Most students show a very good ability to explain the historical background of the events they study and can formulate complex views which are clear orally and supported by appropriate evidence. In a lesson on the trial of Charles I, students analysed historical source materials very competently and made perceptive presentations following this analysis.

152. Pupils' achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and very good in the sixth form. Pupils of all attainment levels make good, or very good, progress, making advances in knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school. At Key Stage 3, higher-attaining pupils make good progress towards developing extended writing skills, but such skills are relatively under-developed amongst lower attainers. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils of all attainment levels develop the ability to use source material to support arguments, and higher-attaining pupils question the reliability of historical evidence. Sixth form students develop very good independent research and analytical skills: in a lesson on Peter the Great, for example, Year 12 students demonstrated their increasing ability to analyse documents in order to discuss the nature of absolutism. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with other pupils in lessons.

153. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour at both key stages and in the sixth form are good. Pupils quickly settle to work, listen attentively to teachers' explanations and sustain concentration throughout the lesson. Relationships are positive and supportive. A particular strength is pupils' readiness to co-operate well with each other, especially in group and paired work, and to respect each other's feelings and views. In a lesson on the battle of Marston Moor, Year 8 pupils of all attainment levels worked together very effectively to make a media presentation.

154. Teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and very good in the sixth form. Teachers plan lessons well, establish very clear learning outcomes and employ effective questioning techniques to check pupils' knowledge and understanding of topics. This results in satisfactory learning at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good learning in the sixth form. Good pupil management skills, together with the use of a wide variety of teaching methods, challenge pupils of all attainment levels and enhance their understanding of the subject. In a very good lesson on life in the Civil War, Year 8 higher-attaining pupils used role-playing to recreate a contemporary painting, matching appropriate words to the characters. This was then used as a very successful stimulus for extended writing on the period. Marking is regularly done, but would benefit from the addition of more detailed comments related to the learning of historical knowledge and skills, so that pupils know exactly what to do in order to improve their work.

155. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The department works as a very committed team of teachers, focused on raising attainment, and is very well led by the head of history. There is appropriate and detailed documentation, including very good schemes of work, contained in a useful departmental handbook. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department are very good, especially the analysis of assessment information and its use in curriculum planning at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

156. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved. A wider range of teaching styles is now used effectively, including the provision of fieldwork opportunities, such as visits to the battlefields of the First World War. Over the period 1997 to 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations improved. Information and communications technology has been successfully introduced into the history curriculum.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

157. Attainment is below average at Key Stage 3, because the overall experience for pupils is of variable quality, lacks consistency and is often at a superficial level. Few subjects provide the full range of experience to the necessary depth. At the end of this key stage, pupils show confidence and competence in applying information and communications technology to support their use of language and their learning in a range of curricular areas. The use of information and communications technology has been incorporated into several schemes of work and there are examples of good use of the Internet as a research tool in history and geography, composing software in music and control applications in design and technology. Word-processors are also used for the drafting of pupils' work in a number of subjects. In physical education, digital cameras are well used in gymnastics to capture finished positions and help identify areas of tension in the body. However, this range of opportunities is patchy and the degree of challenge too low for standards to reach national level.

158. At the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of pupils in information and communications technology courses is below average. The certificate of achievement course offers insufficient challenge for many pupils, despite additional accreditation through courses which have been provided within business studies. Across the curriculum, pupils have few opportunities in subjects to use the range of applications effectively and independently at this key stage. While pupils have a good understanding of the principles of word-processing and desk top publishing, they are less assured in their awareness of modelling or the use of the technology to record, control and automate events. The requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met at Key Stages 3 and 4. It is notable that some information and communications technology experience is included in GCSE information systems and RSA skills courses, provided as part of the business studies curriculum, and in 1999 pupils achieved very good results.

159. At post-16, attainment is above average in the key skills courses. Pupils effectively consolidate their skills in office applications.

160. At Key Stage 3, both boys and girls show confidence and competence in the use of hardware and software. The work they produce is enhanced through information and communications technology and other resources. However, there is little accreditation of prior learning or evidence of building on Key Stage 2 experience. At Key Stage 4, previous work is consolidated, with some opportunities provided for extension activities. Although pupils show increased responsibility in choosing and using information and communications technology tools and information sources, there is reluctance to take responsibility for



problem solving and independent working. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, improve their skills and knowledge in their use of information and communications technology. Post-16 pupils show confidence in both independent and collaborative working.

161. Pupils behave well in lessons and are motivated, the majority sustaining their concentration throughout and working productively. They show involvement and enjoyment in most of the tasks set by teachers, and take pride in their completed work.

162. The quality of teaching in information and communications technology lessons is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16. Most lesson plans identify learning objectives clearly, although occasionally these lack precision. Key terminology is defined, but common misconceptions in the use of information and communications technology are not always identified for pupils. Lessons are well managed, despite being inhibited by insufficient or unreliable resources. Teachers show sound subject knowledge and positive relationships with pupils, evident in the disciplined working environment. In some lessons, there is a need for more variation in the strategies and interventions used to assess pupils' progress and contributions.

163. At Key Stage 3, the quality of learning is satisfactory overall, but it is good when information and communications technology is effectively integrated into the subject being studied, as, for example, in history. At Key Stage 4, the quality of learning is average. The emphasis is on the re-enforcement of skills, consolidating rather than extending what has been learnt. At post-16, the quality of learning is good, when information and communications technology tools are used effectively in the presentation of information, such as pupils' curriculum vitae. It is less effective in the use of spreadsheets and databases to organise and analyse information in different ways, or in the wider application of multimedia.

164. There is currently no subject co-ordinator and this has seriously undermined developments and had a negative impact on standards of pupils' work. There is no whole-school curriculum mapping, identifying how pupils' skills are developed progressively across subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4. Significantly, there is no effective dissemination of quality practice across subjects. The school has made considerable efforts to improve and enhance the quality, quantity and accessibility of its information and communications technology resources. The developing whole-site network provides an excellent resource to support learning across the school. However, computer resource areas need careful monitoring to ensure that maximum use is being made of the equipment, and that courses heavily dependent on information and communications technology have sufficient hardware available.

165. There have been clear improvements since the last inspection. Departmental use of information and communications technology has increased alongside resources, and there is evidence of some innovative work in some subjects. Several subjects are now about to expand its use. For example, in science, new resources and related schemes of work should ensure real progress. There is a programme to improve teachers' capability, but too narrow a range of opportunities is currently provided across the school at Key Stages 3 and 4 to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met.

## **MODERN LANGUAGES**

166. In 1999, GCSE results at A\* to C in French were below average, and for Spanish they were well below. Pupils performed in French in line with other subjects, but their performance in Spanish was below that of most of their other subjects, though there was little difference in ability between the pupils taking French and those taking Spanish. In both languages, there

was a wider gap between the performance of boys and of girls than is the case nationally. GCSE results remained broadly similar over the three years from 1997 to 1999, but they declined in 2000. In 1999, A level results at A or B grades in French and Spanish were above average - nine students entered and six gained A or B grades. Over the previous three years, small numbers of students achieved equally good results. In 2000, although the A level results were not as high, they were similar to results in students' other subjects.

167. At Key Stage 3, the standards in lessons and other work are below national expectations. However, overall, pupils achieve to their potential, given their below-average attainment on entry to the school. These standards are broadly similar to the 1999 teacher assessments. Pupils make a good beginning in languages and develop their listening and speaking skills well. For example, pupils in a Year 7 lesson learnt how to say in Spanish which school subjects they liked or disliked. They then watched a video and understood well what Spanish children said on the same theme. Despite this good start, by Year 9 many pupils have become hesitant in using the foreign language and are not always prepared to listen carefully. A few higher attainers make better progress in these two skills of speaking and listening. Most pupils show satisfactory recall of words they have previously met, either in small groups or singly, but they are often put off by longer reading passages. In writing, most pupils cope with short sentences well, but they need much support when attempting to write at any length. Many, especially lower attainers, need more guidance in presentation and writing accurately. Doing follow-up corrections of their marked work would help in this context.

168. At Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in lessons and other work is also below national expectations. Pupils develop their writing skills better in response to examination requirements and most of the higher attainers learn to write accounts and descriptions using a variety of tenses. The writing of middle and lower attainers is often brief and lacking in accuracy. Most pupils make some progress in listening and speaking, but lack sufficient confidence to enable them to participate freely in class. A few higher attainers join in willingly in short dialogues about themselves.

169. In the sixth form, most Year 13 students of French express their ideas and opinions well. Their written work shows a good standard of grammatical accuracy. Less talented students of French and Spanish are not as forthcoming in oral work and write with less fluency and care.

170. At both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. A minority of pupils have little interest in the subject and make little progress, particularly in speaking. Most pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils in the class, since teachers are aware of their difficulties, but there is little extra support from classroom assistants.

171. Behaviour is good in nearly all lessons. The small minority of uninterested pupils at both key stages either become very passive and take little part, or do not settle to the work in hand. Take-up for the visits abroad is good, and exchange visits have been successful. The interest in languages at sixth form level has generally been high, despite occasional lean years such as the current Year 12.

172. The quality of teaching is good overall. A third of the lessons seen were good, one third very good and the remainder satisfactory. Teaching is better at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 4. Most teachers plan their lessons well and use a variety of teaching methods to cover all the attainment targets. They set objectives clearly at the beginning of lessons and review them at the end, a process that helps pupils to see the relevance of what they are learning. Most teachers' expectations of what pupils can learn are high, but the pace of lessons is sometimes slow, discouraging pupils from making enough effort. Pupils respond and learn better when the teaching is clearly focused and vigorous. Most teachers have managed to enhance the poor accommodation with colourful display to create a good language-learning environment, but clear 'help-cards' in all classrooms would encourage the development of pupils' speaking skills. Consistent use of the foreign language for classroom instructions, a wider range of teaching methods, to include chorus work for practice sessions in pronunciation to build pupils' confidence, repetition of key vocabulary and more stimulating work with the overhead projector could all be further developed.

173. The head of department ensures a clear direction for the work and development of the department. Schemes of work and the handbook are good, but not all teachers follow departmental policies, for example, in marking pupils' work and in using the foreign language. Teachers have given some consideration to what is the best practice in teaching, but rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not yet in place.

174. Improvement since the last inspection is broadly satisfactory overall. Good standards in A level results have been maintained, but GCSE results have fallen slightly.

## **MUSIC**

175. Overall, standards are in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of the pupils reaches the nationally expected level and progress is satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are generally above the national average and the great majority of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The pupils in Year 7 are familiar with the elements of musical notation, including the stave, bar lines and simple time signatures. Year 8 pupils play effectively in small groups on a range of instruments, with a growing sense of performance. The pupils in Year 9 are familiar with chord sequences and are able to play the *Titanic* theme in a small ensemble. The substantial majority of the pupils have a satisfactory understanding of such musical terms as consonance, dissonance, sharps, flats, naturals, drone bass and melody. Higher-attaining pupils confidently follow staff notation and are able performers on a range of instruments, including descant recorder, tin whistle, guitar, keyboard, flute and violin. Lower-attaining pupils are unsure of the elements of music and basic theory. There is insufficient singing, and information and communications technology skills are under-developed.

176. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, there were three candidates, whose overall grades were well below the national average. There was a significant improvement in the number of candidates entered and the grades they achieved in the most recent examination, although results still remain below the national average. The pupils in Year 10 successfully develop composing and performing skills as individuals and in small groups. During the inspection, they created a medieval piece of music based on an early rhythmic accompaniment, and Year 11 pupils gave solo performances on violin and flute of such pieces as 'The Dance of the Blessed Spirits', by Gluck. Such presentations are effectively appraised against given criteria by other class members. The higher attainers have well-developed sight reading and performance skills, with good technical accuracy, while lower attainers have satisfactory performance skills and limited theoretical knowledge. Pupils make good progress over time and are familiar with renaissance, classical and romantic musical periods. They perform on wind and stringed instruments more difficult pieces such as extracts from 'The Marriage of Figaro'. Information and communications technology skills are insufficiently developed. The pupils' research and extended writing into such topics as Renaissance instruments and the Baroque period make an important contribution to the development of literacy.

177. Pupils have a good attitude to music and enjoy lessons. The substantial majority is well behaved, and senior pupils are committed to achieving good examination results. Occasionally, a small but significant group of Year 8 pupils disrupts lessons and holds back progress. The large majority collaborates effectively, and relationships between them and with their teachers are mature and productive. They handle the instruments and expensive resources they use with care. They show respect for their own and each other's performances and contributions.

178. The quality of teaching, including instrumental tuition is good. The two teaching staff and six visiting teachers are accomplished musicians with a secure knowledge of the subject. They successfully impart much of their enthusiasm to the pupils, who show interest and concentration. Schemes of work and lessons are well planned, with clear teaching objectives and expected learning outcomes being clearly identified. This enables the pupils to approach their work with confidence, and they make good progress in most lessons. Care is not always taken to match the level of work to the needs and abilities of individuals or groups of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3. Work is effectively assessed as the lesson proceeds. The quality of teaching makes a significant contribution to the pupils' social and cultural development. For example, pupils in Year 7 were introduced to Aboriginal music and created an authentic North American sound to 'Song Without Words', using ethnic instruments. Key Stage 4 pupils study Chinese and other ethnic music and instruments. Opportunities for spiritual development are being missed in lessons and assemblies. There is good pace and interest in many lessons, especially when specific tasks are set within a precise time frame. Lessons are less effective when there is limited content. Work is well marked, with appropriate, encouraging comments, but with limited target-setting.

179. A satisfactory amount of time is allocated for the new National Curriculum. Option arrangements at the end of Key Stage 3 limit the number of pupils selecting music at Key Stage 4. Seventy-two pupils benefit from free instrumental tuition, and up to forty pupils, almost all girls, are involved in the school orchestra and choir. Three lunchtime workshop sessions are well attended. Resources are satisfactory but some glockenspiel are in need of replacement. There are enough books in the learning resources centre, and the school has ordered a number of music CD-ROMs. Classrooms are cramped, particularly for practical work. Information and communications technology is not adequately used to support the pupils' learning. The department is well managed and enthusiastically led, and standards are carefully monitored. Since the last inspection, overall standards have begun to improve. Music technology remains under-developed and there are still too few practice rooms.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

180. Standards in physical education are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In comparison to similar schools nationally, standards are high at all key stages. The 1999 GCSE results are well below the national average. By comparison, the 2000 GCSE results represent very good improvement. Identified changes in teaching delivery and lesson content produced a 23 per cent increase in grades A\* to C. The most recent A level results are below national averages. However, many pupils achieve the highest grades, which represents considerable achievement. Others struggle with the course content, and their results bring the average down. Examination results are good in comparison to other subjects in the school and to similar schools nationally. Pupils studying basketball at the end of Key Stage 3 have sound spatial awareness and decision-making skills. They have a satisfactory understanding of sequential movement in gymnastics and use tension in movement and balance to improve the qualitative aspects of their work. Although pupils understand the tactics and principles of volleyball, their digging and volleying skills are unsatisfactory and result in frequent game stoppages. At the end of Key Stage 4, girls have a sound understanding of the variety in passing skills in netball, and their knowledge of the principles of circuit training and strength improvement in muscle groups is good. Although boys at this stage have a satisfactory understanding of many of the techniques in rugby, they do not consistently perform to the relevant expectations in whole-game contexts.

181. Pupil achievement is good across all key stages. They arrive at school with unsatisfactory knowledge and understanding, but a feature of the work in the department is the immediate improvement most pupils make at Key Stage 3. Pupils' attitudes remain positive through all the key stages, but below-average time allocation at Key Stage 4 means the pace of progress slows down. Written work in examination classes is satisfactory, and pupils make good progress in their ability to apply theory to practice. Year 12 pupils make good progress in their understanding of the evaluation of performance in swimming. The majority of pupils can transfer skills and understanding from one game to another, using good spatial awareness. Their learning is enhanced when using their planners to incorporate key words in the next stage of learning. Lower attainers consistently make good progress as a result of clearly stated learning objectives which are then compared with actual lesson outcomes.

182. The standard of teaching is good overall and it is often very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to improve pupils' application of a wide range of skills and techniques. They do not always structure their lessons to achieve an appropriate balance of skill practices and game playing. In rugby, boys are not always expected to use previously gained expertise to develop their tactical thinking and performance. Teachers' enthusiasm and encouragement result in good responses and the willingness of most to improve. The department has made good progress in contributing towards personal development through physical education. Teaching is of a higher standard when a variety of methods is used to extend pupils' thinking. Tasks are given in basketball, netball, swimming and gymnastics that require pupils to plan their work and to analyse their own and others' performance. In a gymnastics lesson, girls used a theme of synchronised swimming as a stimulus for collaborative group sequences. In basketball and netball pupils increase their understanding by planning their own group practices, based on the clear learning objectives of the lesson. Further opportunities are given when the girls are involved as netball coaches for small groups of players. Planning is a much-improved feature of the teachers' work, with learning expectations clearly identified for the lesson, but it does not always relate to those pupils who have above-average abilities and these pupils often simply consolidate previous learning without new and challenging activities.

183. There is good leadership in the department and a developing vision of the role of physical education. The department recognises and consistently promotes the personal and social qualities gained from participation in physical activity. Staff enthusiasm for extra-curricular activities has resulted in excellent participation rates which offer additional valuable experiences. This enhances the department's reputation in the school and wider community. Further participation and links with the community feature very strongly in future departmental development plans.

184. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Schemes of work now have more appropriate learning objectives, with a clear focus for raising standards. Improvements in examination provision, staffing and resourcing have also had a positive impact on standards. Issues relating to assessment, monitoring of teacher effectiveness and the teaching and use of literacy are clearly defined within present department documentation. A lack of structure to evaluate the outcomes of these initiatives is restricting future progress. For example, the results of assessment are not assisting the next stages of learning by using National Curriculum levels for target-setting in the core programmes. This restricts both pupils' understanding of their performance and elements of above-average achievement.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

185. The department is recovering from a staffing crisis in which the head and second in the department both left. A new head of department was appointed less than two months ago.

186. Pupils end their Key Stage 3 studies in Year 8 in order to begin a GCSE course a year early. By the end of Year 8, standards of attainment from a low base are satisfactory, when compared to similar schools. Pupils know about the beliefs and practices of some of the world's major religions and use technical language effectively to describe aspects of them. For example, Year 8, when describing the Buddhist Jewel symbol, used the terms 'Buddha', 'Dharma' and 'Sangha' to describe the three elements of the jewel.

187. At the end of Year 11, levels in examinations are well below national norms. These results reflect the crisis in the department and the fact that many pupils were studying a compulsory subject beyond their level of interest. However, evidence in classes observed indicates rising standards, and some pupils are now attaining in line with national expectations. Pupils are good at discussing how religious values might apply to contemporary issues, but they are less skilful at constructing a concise written answer on the topic. Motivation is a major factor of success at this key stage, and in class, pupils are well motivated by good teaching.

188. At the end of post-16 education, attainment in public examinations in religious studies is well below national comparative figures. However, in classes observed during the inspection, it was apparent that there is increased confidence in the students, and this is leading to rising standards of attainment. For example, students in a Year 13 A level lesson were able to sustain a high-level discussion on Aquinian theories about proof of the existence of God.

189. Pupils' response is generally good. Pupils apply themselves well to their work. They settle quickly and sustain concentration. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress, which is linked to the establishment of a work ethic in the subject.

190. Teaching is good overall. No teaching seen was unsatisfactory, and some was very good. The best teaching was seen in lessons where pupils were challenged and teachers

had high expectations of both their work and their behaviour. Much of the satisfactory teaching was secure in terms of pupil management and lesson structure, and only fell short of being good because of some lack of confidence by non-specialists teaching religious education.

191. Provision in religious education has some distinctive features. Pupils begin their GCSE course in Year 9. This is partly to counter problems amongst lower-attaining pupils pursuing compulsory courses at GCSE level in Years 10 and 11, and is having a beneficial effect for many pupils. However, some would benefit from a different form of examination. Schemes of work are not yet established, and assessment is not yet embedded into the department's work. The time allocation in the sixth form is insufficient to allow compliance with the post-16 requirements. Teachers who are not specialists are doing a very good job in the classroom, but they are totally reliant on the lessons planned by the new head of department. The school is aware of this and is currently seeking to make permanent appointments.

192. The arrival of permanent staff will be a boost for the new head of department, who has made a great impact in a short time. There is now a vision of, and a commitment to, raising standards, already underpinned by a range of practical processes and ideas to help strengthen the subject. The commitment and hard work, as witnessed by the extra classes run outside normal hours for examination groups, are already bearing fruit and this bodes well for the future of the subject throughout the school.