

INSPECTION REPORT

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Aldridge, Walsall

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104255

Headteacher: Mrs P Mullins

Reporting inspector: Dr P Crumpton
2784

Dates of inspection: 4 – 8 December 2000

Inspection number: 187431

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Catholic Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Erdington Road
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr L Prothero

Date of previous inspection: 25 March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Philip Crumpton [2784]	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and pupils' achievements.
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Shirley Elomari [11072]	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?
Bob Love [2760]	Team inspector		How well are pupils taught?
Bill Goodall [15127]	Team inspector	Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Keith Brammer [30941]	Team inspector	English	
Bob Sawyer [12058]	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Tony Stoddart [17799]	Team inspector	Science	
Jenny Hazlewood [20619]	Team inspector	Information technology	
Mike Stanton [27351]	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Val Taylor [22339]	Team inspector	Geography	
Dave Perrett [27922]	Team inspector	History	

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Vicky Ward [2018]	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Garry Jones [3556]	Team inspector	Music	
Bob Phillips [14641]	Team inspector	Physical education	
Eric Peagam [14943]	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is an 11-18 mixed Catholic comprehensive in a semi-rural location on the eastern fringe of Walsall and within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Currently with 1067 pupils, it is a bigger than average comprehensive. There is significant over-subscription, with numbers steadily increasing since 1995. The intake is predominantly Roman Catholic and has become more so over recent years.

Its immediate catchment area shows favourable socio-economic circumstances. However, it actually draws most of its pupils from a wide area, stretching from north Birmingham to Tamworth. Most pupils travel in by bus (16 buses daily). The intake draws from 26 primary schools. The immediate catchment area has a below average number of minority ethnic children and 98% of the school's population is white. There are 23 pupils from ethnic minority groups and the number with English as an additional language (3) is low.

The percentage of pupils qualifying for free school meals (7%) is below the national average and has fallen since the last inspection in 1996 (10%).

There are 4% of pupils with statements of special educational need, which is above the national average. The number has risen since 1996. There are 148 pupils on the special educational needs register (14%), which is below the national average. The school houses a designated unit for pupils with specific learning disabilities (dyslexia).

The intake is a fully comprehensive one in terms of range of ability. The last inspection report indicated that the intake was slightly above average but the ability of the intake, based on Key Stage 2 test scores, has risen steadily since 1997, and is currently above average. Entrance to Sixth Form courses is growing rapidly and the current entry to Year 12 has increased by one third since 1999.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and effective school which is oversubscribed. Pupils achieve high standards by the time they leave. Leadership and management have created a clear commitment to improvement which is ensuring high standards of teaching and learning. It is a successful school which continues to provide good value for money overall, and cost-effective provision for the Sixth Form.

What the school does well

- Overall attainment is above national averages in Key Stages 3, 4 and well above in the Sixth Form.
- A very committed staff is providing good teaching in Key Stages 3, 4 and in the Sixth Form.
- Quality of learning in lessons is good in Key Stages 3, 4 and in the Sixth Form.
- Pupils with special educational needs are achieving well and making good progress in subjects across the curriculum.

What the school does well (contd)

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good.
- Relationships are excellent throughout the school.
- A very caring staff is providing good support and guidance to pupils.
- The Headteacher and senior staff are managing the school very well and providing very good leadership.
- The personal development of pupils is very good.
- The moral development of pupils is excellent.

What could be improved

- How assessment and target-setting is used to help pupils make progress and improve standards of work.
- Meeting the needs of the range of ability within classes.
- Reporting pupils' progress to parents.
- The management and provision of information and communication technology.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved significantly since the last inspection in 1996. Examination and test results are now higher than national averages and at least equal to the average for schools with pupils of similar prior attainment. At Key Stage 3, there has been an improvement in standards in English, mathematics and science, and in almost all subjects, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 and above is higher than the national figures. In Key Stage 4, attainment has continued to rise and has now caught up with the national rate of improvement. Sixth Form results are now well above the national average. Overall, across the age range, there has been some improvement in standards in almost all subjects. It is significant in art, history, design and technology and modern foreign languages, but is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology. Senior managers have organised a comprehensive programme of self-evaluation and there have been clear efforts to monitor the school's progress. The quality of teaching is higher than at the time of the last inspection. Careers education and guidance have improved.

However, there has only been a partially successful response to the specific key issues included in the last inspection report. There have been improvements in development planning, the role of middle managers, the monitoring of teaching and the evaluation of cost-effectiveness. However, the quality of assessment and the management and provision of information and communication technology remain key weaknesses.

The school is well able to identify and effectively deal with its weaknesses and it has the capacity to improve still further.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	C	well above average A average B above average C below average D
A levels/AS levels	B	C	A	N/A	well below average E

The school's standards in 1999 were broadly in line with those expected but results in the latest tests and examinations in 2000 indicate that pupils' attainment is now higher than that expected nationally in all key stages. Standards have risen steadily since 1997 and are now higher than when the school was last inspected. Standards seen during the inspection generally confirm results from tests and examinations.

At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, attainment based on statutory assessments was above national averages in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, art, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and music. It was below what is expected in design and technology. Progress in results in Key Stage 3 has been satisfactory.

Attainment in Key Stage 4, based on GCSE results, was broadly in line with national standards in 1999 but, based on students' average points scores, was above them in 2000. The number of students achieving five or more A*-C grades has risen steadily each year since 1997 and in 2000, the school's rate of improvement equalled the national rate. The percentage of students with five or more A*-C grades is higher than the national average in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, art and music, and lower in English literature, drama, science, history, information and communication technology, geography, physical education and design and technology. In Key Stage 4, students, including those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and ethnic minority pupils are achieving well and are making good progress.

After being close to national averages in recent years, standards in the Sixth Form, in 2000, based on A level results, are now well above those found nationally.

The comparison with similar schools in the table above is based upon the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. However, the school's results are well above average for those schools with pupils of similar prior attainment in 1999 and close to the average in 2000.

The school is setting GCSE targets based on pupils' prior attainment and in 2000, it exceeded them for the number of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades and for the school's average points score. It just fell short of its target for 100% of the entry to achieve one A*-G grade.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to the school and to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The school is a very orderly community and behaviour is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is very good. Pupils show maturity and are given opportunities to take responsibility. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. There is some degree of lateness, largely due to bus arrivals.

The very positive attitudes to learning, with pupils highly motivated, showing pride in their work, good levels of attention and concentration and willingness to co-operate – contribute significantly to pupils’ achievement and progress. Firm and fair disciplinary procedures and pupils’ responses result in a significant proportion of lessons where behaviour is very good. It was unsatisfactory in only three of 191 lessons observed. The excellent relationships and the growing confidence and maturity of pupils contribute to the school’s caring ethos.

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.

The quality of teaching is generally good. During the inspection, 95% of teaching seen in 191 lessons was satisfactory or better, 60% good or better, 27% very good or excellent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 5% of lessons observed.

Generally, teachers possess good knowledge of their subjects and use varied and effective methods. They have high expectations and set challenging work. Teachers exercise very good classroom management and forge excellent relationships with their pupils.

Teachers are aware of their pupils’ progress in covering the content of lessons but they are too little aware of pupils’ specific understanding and do not effectively specify what pupils need to do to improve. Connected to this weakness is the fact that teachers pay too little attention to the variations in attainment within their classes to fully meet the needs of all pupils.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy is sound.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and generally well-balanced. It is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is very good provision in the Dyslexia Unit, withdrawal groups and in-class support. Arrangements to ensure full National Curriculum entitlement are good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few pupils with English as an additional language receive very good care and personal and educational support.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This provision is a strength. Personal, social, spiritual and cultural development are very good. Moral development of pupils is excellent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils but teachers' use of assessment to raise standards of pupils' work is unsatisfactory.

Generally, the curriculum is effectively contributing to the good quality of education for pupils. Assemblies are well prepared and delivered. There is a good range of subject choice in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Provision of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. A strong personal, social and moral education programme effectively reflects the ethos of the school. Pupils' welfare, health and safety are well looked after and child protection processes are very effective. Assessment is not contributing sufficiently to teacher's planning or to pupils' progress. The school works satisfactorily with parents but reporting of pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and managed. There is a strong commitment to high standards and personal development, and continued improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are effectively carrying out their responsibilities. They are well-informed and committed to the progress of the school. They are very supportive of the Headteacher and senior management team.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is effectively and accurately analysing its results and has a comprehensive programme of monitoring and self-review.

Aspect	Comment
The strategic use of resources	Available resources are used well. Finance is linked to priorities and spending is carefully monitored.

The Headteacher and senior management team have clear vision and sense of direction. There are excellent relations between governors, senior management team, middle management and other staff. The Dyslexia Unit is well managed. Prioritising lacks sharpness and monitoring of teaching is not fully effective. Principles of best value are applied well. There is a good match of staff to demands of the curriculum. Resources and accommodation are adequate, with limitations in some areas.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress of pupils. • Good teaching. • High expectations. • Good leadership and management. • Personal development of pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about pupils' progress. • Amount of homework. • School working more closely with parents. • Range of activities outside lessons.

Findings from the inspection support parents' views on pupils' progress, quality of teaching, leadership and management and the personal development of pupils.

Inspectors judged that teachers' setting of homework is satisfactory. The inspection evidence indicates that the range of extra-curricular activities is limited by staggered lunchtimes and pupils' dependence on buses but that it enhances the curriculum and has a positive impact on the many pupils who attend. Inspectors judged that the school is working closely with parents, who come from a wide geographical area.

The inspection evidence endorses the view of those parents dissatisfied with the reporting of pupils' progress. Progress is not adequately reported to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Based on their total attainment in public examinations and National Curriculum statutory assessments, pupils are attaining standards that are higher than those expected nationally for their age ranges. In 1997, there was a significant fall in results but standards of attainment have risen steadily over the last three years. By 1999, the school's standards were similar to what they were in 1996, the year the school was last inspected, and further improvement in 2000 has resulted in current standards that are higher than those quoted in the last inspection report. This overall improvement is due to the school's increasingly effective analysis of its results, an improvement in the quality of teaching, good educational support for pupils and pupils' continuing positive attitudes to their learning. In 2000, the school's results were in line with the averages for schools in a similar context, both in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Standards observed during the inspection were generally consistent with test and examination results.

- 2 At the end of Key Stage 3 of the National Curriculum, overall standards across English, mathematics and science are above the national average. Based upon pupils' average points scores, which provide the best overview of their achievement (points are awarded according to the levels achieved), this has been the case across the period 1996 to 1999, with overall standards for both boys and girls being above national averages. In the latest results in 2000, the percentages of pupils achieving Level 5 and above across the three core subjects were above national averages.

- 3 In 2000, despite a fall in results from the previous year, standards in English are still above the national average. The percentages of pupils achieving Level 5 and above are above the national averages for both boys and girls, with a very close correlation between National Curriculum test results and statutory teacher assessments. Although more girls than boys gained Level 5 and above, boys have achieved more highly than girls when results are related to the relative performance of boys and girls nationally. Based upon pupils' average points scores, standards of both boys and girls have exceeded national expectations each year since the school was last inspected. Pupils' results in 2000 are broadly in line with the average for schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, whereas they were well above the average in 1999. Standards seen during the inspection were consistent with test results.

- 4 Standards in mathematics have improved since the last inspection. Having been close to the national averages from 1996 to 1999, they are now well above what is expected nationally. In 2000, the percentages of pupils achieving Level 5 and above are higher than the national averages for both boys and girls, with a very close correlation between National Curriculum test results and statutory teacher assessments. There is no significant difference in the performances of girls and boys. Pupils' results in 2000 were above the average for similar schools whereas they were well below the average

in 1999. Standards seen during the inspection were consistent with the results from tests.

- 5 Standards in science at the end of Key Stage 3 also show improvement since the last inspection. From 1996 to 1999, standards have been close to national averages, with pupils about a term behind in their progress, but there was significant improvement in 2000. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in National Curriculum tests was above the national average, largely due to the performance of boys whose results exceeded the national average for the first time since 1996, whereas girls' results remained slightly below. Despite the improvement in science results, they remain below the average for similar schools. Standards observed during the inspection were consistent with the results from tests.
- 6 In other subjects, results in National Curriculum assessments in 2000 are well above average in history and art; they are above average in geography, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and music and close to the national average in physical education. Results in design and technology are well below average. In all subjects exceeding the national averages, both boys' and girls' standards are above average. Although generally more girls than boys are reaching Level 5 and above, boys are achieving better than girls relative to gender performances nationally. This is the case in history, geography, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, art and music. In design and technology, both boys' and girls' results are well below average.
- 7 Generally, when the attainment of pupils on the special educational needs register is exempted, standards at Key Stage 3 demonstrated during the inspection – in the scrutiny of pupils' work and in lessons – confirmed the results of end-of-key stage assessments. However, because of some lack of clarity about the requirements for higher achievement in history, and some lack of focus in activities in music, pupils were not achieving as highly in those subjects as end-of-key stage results suggest they should.
- 8 Conversely, in design and technology, evidence from the inspection suggests that the current Year 9 pupils are on course to achieve the standards expected nationally in 2001. Standards in information and communication technology during the inspection were broadly in line with what is expected and findings suggest that end-of-key stage assessment (which judged standards to be above average in 2000) is insecure.
- 9 Overall standards in Key Stage 4 are above those expected nationally. Based on students' total attainment (their average points scores) students' results in public examinations are above the national average. They have been above the standards expected nationally for the last four years and have risen steadily each year. Up to 1999, however, the rate of improvement has not been as high as it has been nationally. In 2000, there has been further improvement and the results suggest that the school's improvement has caught up with the national rate.
- 10 The average points scores of both girls and boys have been above national averages since 1996 and although the girls' averages are higher than the boys', boys are

achieving relatively better than girls when results are compared with gender performances nationally.

- 11 In 1999, overall standards in public examinations were similar to those in 1996, but the latest results in 2000 indicate that standards are now higher than they were at the time of the last inspection.
- 12 The percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades in 1999 was close to the national average, as it has been since the school was last inspected. From 1997, the school's results have been slightly below the national averages, but the number of students achieving five or more A*-C grades has risen each year and a further 6% increase in 2000 has brought the results genuinely in line with the national average. They have been above the Local Education Authority averages since 1998 and the gap has widened still further in 2000. The number of students achieving five or more A*-G grades has been close to the national averages over the last three years. A further improvement in 2000, has lifted it above the national average. In English, mathematics, art, modern foreign languages (French) and geography, students achieved well relative to their average performance in all their subjects. In science, design and technology, English literature, history and physical education students performed below their average across all their subjects.
- 13 However, although the number of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at the end of Key Stage 4 has steadily risen, until the most recent year students' individual progress, given their prior attainment, has not been good enough. This is because the improvement across separate subjects has been uneven. The proportion of students achieving an A*-C grade is above the national average in English, mathematics, geography, religious education, modern foreign languages, art and music, but below it in all other subjects.
- 14 The school's results in 2000 indicate that the numbers of A*- C grades in mathematics and modern foreign languages (in German) have risen to above the national averages whereas those in English literature and drama have fallen below. In English, art, music, religious education, mathematics and geography, the number of A*-C grades has risen each year since 1997; it has fallen each year since 1997 in English literature. The proportion of A*-C grades has also risen in information and communication technology, although more improvement is needed in that area. Of those subjects below average in 1999, the latest results indicate some improvement in information and communication technology and design and technology.
- 15 The school's overall performance in GCSE in 1999 was below the average for schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals. However, based upon pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 3 in 1997, results were well above the average for similar schools. The cause of the divergence was that the school draws its pupils from a wide geographical area and its socio-economic context is not as favourable as its immediate location suggests. In 2000, students' progress at GCSE, based on average points scores, was close to the average for similar schools. However, the percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades was well below average for similar schools.

- 16 During the inspection, attainment in Key Stage 4 was in line with national expectations in 80% of lessons and above average in 44%. However, only evidence from Year 10 was available because Year 11 students were absent preparing for and sitting 'mock' GCSE examinations.
- 17 The school's A level results were close to the national average in 1999, as they have been over the last three years. Over this period the school's results have fluctuated whereas the national averages have risen. In 2000, the school's results were well above the national and Local Education Authority averages, with both boys and girls improving on the previous year's performances. There is no significant difference between results of boys and girls. The A level pass rate is above the national average. Current standards are above those at the time the school was last inspected, largely due to more focused activity with individual students to support and guide them to better performance.
- 18 Standards seen in the Sixth Form during the inspection, based on lesson observations and scrutiny of work, were consistent with the latest A level results. Attainment was at least in line with what is expected in 98% of lessons observed and above average in 63%.
- 19 Across the curriculum, standards of literacy are sound. Subject-specific key words are being identified and there is some use of writing frames to help pupils organise their writings. Levels of technical accuracy and standards of presentation are satisfactory. However, the school has not yet effectively developed a whole school approach to literacy.
- 20 Standards of numeracy across the school are generally sound. Pupils are competent in mathematics, although numeracy is less well-developed in Key Stage 4. Pupils have good recall of number facts and are able to use the facts to solve number problems. There are examples of the effective use of number in science, geography and information and communication technology. The National Numeracy Strategy is not yet having a significant impact on pupils' progress.
- 21 Generally, pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well. They are often challenged by good teaching and high expectations from their teachers. They make good progress overall as they move through the school. Comparing Key Stage 3 results in 2000 with the prior attainment of the same pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1997, pupils' progress was about two terms ahead of the average progress nationally. Comparing GCSE results in 2000 with the prior attainment of the same pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, pupils were two terms ahead in the progress that was typical nationally. (In 1999, in Key Stage 4, students had made the progress expected.) This is consistent with the findings from the inspection with pupils learning effectively in 95% and learning well in 60% of lessons. However, despite this good progress, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades remains close to the national average.
- 22 Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress to achieve well in subjects across the curriculum, particularly in the development of literacy skills. Pupils who arrive in the school in Year 7 with attainment in English measured at

National Curriculum Level 2, generally make gains which bring them to Level 4 by the end of Key stage 3, and most go on to achieve passes either in GCSE at foundation level, or in the Welsh Board Certificate of Achievement. One student with cerebral palsy attained eight GCSE A*-C grades in 1999 – an example of the school's effective and positive support for pupils with special educational needs.

- 23 Generally, there is no significant variation between the performance of the few pupils from minority ethnic groups and that of their peers. Some are high achievers including the very few pupils who have English as an additional language and are recent arrivals from overseas. Some of these pupils have made very good progress which is attributable to the care the school has shown for them and the support they have been given.
- 24 In 2000, the school's GCSE results exceeded its targets for the number of students achieving five or more A*-C grades and for the average points score. They fell just short of the target for one grade A*-C. The school decides its targets by predictions of pupils' performances based on achievements in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3. The predictions have been accurate since 1997. The prior attainment of students currently in Year 10 indicates that the school's 2001 target for five or more A*-C grades is realistic and challenging, but that the target for average points score errs on the side of caution.
- 25 Parents' conviction that the school's standards are rising and their satisfaction with the progress pupils are making are justified by the findings from the inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 26 The very good attitudes and outstandingly good behaviour of pupils are a major strength of the school. Virtually all pupils have a very positive attitude to school and are diligent in lessons. This contributes well to their achievement and progress. They are proud of the school. Pupils throughout the school show very good levels of interest in their work, even on those occasions when tasks lack challenge. In only three of the 191 lessons observed during the inspection was behaviour unsatisfactory. The proportion of very good and excellent behaviour observed in lessons was extremely high. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, behaviour in almost half the lessons seen was very good or exemplary and in Sixth Form lessons this rose to three quarters. In these lessons, students were very attentive, highly motivated, enthusiastic and keen to succeed. Good numbers of pupils are involved in the range of extra curricular activities and take part in assemblies and school productions.
- 27 Almost all pupils take a pride in their work and try hard to present it neatly. The standard of presentation throughout the school is generally very good. Pupils often enjoy their work, especially when it is suitably challenging and when they are working in small groups. Almost all pupils concentrate well and persevere to complete the set tasks even when, as in one history lesson, they are struggling to understand what they have to do. When pupils are offered the opportunity to work in small groups they co-operate very well together and work effectively, supporting one another sensitively. They listen most attentively to teachers and to one another. When using equipment,

they co-operate sensibly. In design and technology they use tools and equipment safely.

- 28 Pupils with special educational needs share the positive attitudes that pervade the school. The good quality of support they receive enables them to work hard and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs value the support they receive and try hard to make effective use of it. They work hard in lessons and tuition sessions and extend this work willingly through homework. When they work together in groups withdrawn from lessons, they behave well, co-operate with the teacher and support each other well. The feedback they receive enables them to be aware of the extent of their own learning and they take pleasure and pride in the improvement they make.
- 29 Pupils respond well and enthusiastically when given responsibility for their own learning, for example, through investigative work, research or decision making exercises. However, the limited range and number of books in the school library and restricted access to information and communication technology restrict the opportunities for such work and hamper the development of independent learning skills.
- 30 Standards of behaviour throughout the school are extremely good. The school functions as a very orderly community, despite the narrow and often crowded stairways and corridors. However, a significant number of pupils do not consistently obey the rule to walk on the left and this causes some confusion at busy times. In particular, the jostling in the 'tunnel', although good humoured, causes apprehension in some younger, smaller pupils. During the inspection, wet weather prevented pupils going outside at several breaks and lunch times. They behaved extremely well and the school remained orderly and quiet throughout.
- 31 Pupils are very pleasant, polite and courteous. They show very good levels of respect to staff and to their peers. They talk willingly and informatively to adults, showing confidence and maturity in their comments. They treat their own, other pupils' and the school's property with due respect. Pupils in all years participate willingly in helping to keep the site free of litter. Bus drivers speak very well of the quality of behaviour on buses. The programme of extra curricular activities, which is particularly strong in sport and music, has a positive impact on the personal development of the many pupils who choose to take part. Pupils benefit from the programme of personal, social and moral education, which offers them opportunities to discuss a wide range of issues. Work experience and the good residential opportunities have a positive impact on the personal development of pupils.
- 32 There is a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions. However, the merit system is relatively newly established and the emphasis remains more on discipline than on a positive approach based on praise. However, parents greatly appreciate the firm but fair disciplinary procedures. Appropriate sanctions are in place and are understood by pupils. Pupils who misbehave are helped to understand the effect of their behaviour. The rate of exclusions is low and the school works hard to avoid the necessity of permanent exclusion. There were no permanent exclusions in the last academic year. Exclusion records are appropriately kept and are monitored.

- 33 The excellent quality of relationships is a major strength of the school. Pupils forge extremely good relationships with one another, teachers and other adults. They respond well to the very positive role models provided by all staff. Almost all pupils appreciate the high levels of concern and care shown by the staff and respond very positively. They treat others with courtesy and consideration and display outstandingly good levels of respect for the values, feelings and beliefs of others. The excellent relationships promote a very positive working atmosphere in lessons. Sixth Form students are encouraged to help younger pupils through involvement with special educational needs support and extra curricular activities. Pupils report that bullying and other forms of oppressive behaviour are rare. They are aware that the school takes a strong line on bullying and state that incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively when they are reported. The “Helpline” system encourages the reporting of bullying by enabling pupils to convey any concerns privately, in writing.
- 34 Overall, personal development is very good. The school’s performance here is much valued by parents. The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 11 to take responsibility, and all are expected to show care for others. Pupils respond very positively and support one another very well, in or out of classrooms. There is no formal forum, such as a school council, for pupils’ ideas and views to be heard. However, Form Tutors and Heads of Year are responsive to suggestions made by pupils. Sixth Form students have the opportunity to serve as prefects and have a range of duties, mainly supporting staff in patrolling corridors and doors at break and lunchtime. Pupils in all years undertake a considerable amount of fund raising for a wide variety of charitable causes. Some of this arises from individual pupils’ initiatives while other activities, such as the fund raising carried out annually during Lent, is more formally organised.
- 35 Attendance in the school is satisfactory, with the levels of both authorised and unauthorised absence being broadly in line with the national averages. There is a significant amount of lateness on some mornings, almost all of which is caused by buses being late. Almost all lessons begin on time but, at times, when pupils have to travel a significant distance between lessons, or at the end of lunchtime, there is some lateness.
- 36 Overall, pupils’ attitudes, values and personal development remain strengths of the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 37 Teaching and learning, aspects of the school much valued by parents, are good. Teaching makes a positive impact on pupils’ achievements and is meeting the needs of most pupils well. Across the school over 95% of teaching seen was satisfactory or better. Teaching and learning in over 60% of lessons were good, very good or excellent. There is little difference between the key stages and the Sixth Form in the good quality of teaching; marginally, the greatest proportion of high quality teaching was found in the Sixth Form.

- 38 Teaching and learning are very good in art, physical education and modern foreign languages. They are good in English, science, music, information and communication technology, geography, design and technology and personal, social and moral education. Teaching in mathematics and history is predominantly sound. There are no subjects where teaching observed was less than sound overall.
- 39 The pupils and students are committed to learning. Teachers complement this with very good classroom management. Learning is planned well and there is clarity about what teachers expect pupils to do. Relationships are excellent between teachers and pupils and lessons are approached with expectations of work beginning immediately after a formal start. Lessons do not begin without pupils remaining standing until they are quiet and have the teacher's permission to sit. Teachers are clear about what they want to achieve in the time allowed, and they have high expectations of pupils.
- 40 Pupils' response is very good. Pupils co-operate well and fully with staff and seek to complete tasks and activities that are required of them. Their behaviour is very good. There were very few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour in any of the lessons observed; in most classes teachers maintain very effective discipline with minimal and unobtrusive interventions. Many lessons observed provide very good evidence that pupils, given a challenging task, can learn independently and show initiative. A Year 13 lesson proved a very thorough and rewarding experience for art students: self-reliant and well-organised students demonstrated high standards of research and refining skills when preparing their art studies for formal assessment. Role-play, modelled between a teacher and the foreign language assistant in Year 8, fascinated pupils, holding their close attention. Pupils then spoke from memory with clarity and expression.
- 41 In most lessons pupils make good progress with their learning. Consolidation is evident in many lessons and there are advances in knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and makes a significant contribution. For example, during an English A level lesson on *The Taming of the Shrew*, the teacher's enthusiasm and thorough knowledge inspired students to think, respond and develop their critical skills. In many lessons, a teacher's subject knowledge enabled good open questions to build pupils' learning. In a drama lesson with Year 7 pupils, questioning developed their knowledge of forum theatre, sound-tracking, tension, body language and register.
- 42 The methods and strategies employed by teachers are good; they are varied and appropriate. There is evidence of group work, individual and whole class sessions. In many lessons these strategies work effectively to promote learning not only through pupils' dialogue with the teacher but also between pupils and students. Sociology students in Year 12 were able to discuss changes in roles in the family over 50 years and make articulate presentations to the whole class using charts formulated from group discussion. Teaching strategies with the key intention to involve pupils in their own learning successfully developed pupils' understanding in science lessons. A science lesson in Year 8 tackled the topic of digestion in an imaginative and entertaining way; pupils were fully engaged in dressing-up, recognising the place and function of the main organs of the body and observing the simulated absorption from the small intestine.

- 43 Teaching and learning of special educational needs pupils in withdrawal groups and where they receive individual tuition are consistently good. Teachers know the needs of their pupils and use a range of strategies to ensure that lessons are highly motivating with well-chosen activities to reinforce learning. A reading game with a Year 7 reading support group engaged pupils in the speedy recognition of word differences, for example ‘started, starred, stared’. Where special educational needs pupils are taught in mainstream classes, learning is significantly enhanced by the deployment of learning support assistants (LSA) of high quality. A visually impaired student in Year 10, with the support of her LSA, was able to key in the correct data and formulae to produce a pie chart using Excel when other pupils had difficulty in making progress. In a Year 7 personal, social and moral education lesson, the LSA effectively supported two pupils with specific learning difficulties in checking what was understood in reading, spellings and key words. Subject teachers carefully teach the specialist vocabulary to improve special educational needs pupils’ access to learning. However, individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are not sufficiently precise to help teachers plan to meet the needs of specific pupils.
- 44 Planning is sound. Very good or excellent lessons are planned explicitly on the basis of what the pupils are to learn, and learning is organised to challenge pupils to answer and justify their answer. Opportunities are created to require pupils to evaluate their work and to determine the next steps. Expectations of the pupils are high and clearly so in the way the work challenges them. A lesson on composing and performing for a Year 10 music class was clearly related to higher GCSE grade criteria. Pupils produced good compositions and a promising contralto was able to demonstrate upper grade performance. The teacher actively supported pupils’ progress through well-timed, challenging interventions. In a Year 9 lower attaining science set, pupils were challenged to think about the movement of fixed bodies in relation to the observer on Earth. The teacher used references to the visible space station, the location of Jupiter and diagrams of ‘The Plough’ to encourage pupils to find patterns and begin to explain the concept.
- 45 Progress made in many lessons is linked to well-planned activities that build learning in small steps. Good examples were observed in teaching literacy and numeracy to lower attaining pupils. In a Year 8 lesson in mathematics, pupils developed their skills to recognise and record measurements to two decimal places by being taken carefully through prior learning of one decimal place and place value. In a Year 7 English lesson pupils were developing their decoding skills to build confidence and self esteem in reading by focusing on common letter blends. However, some tightly planned lessons became too teacher-directed with learning opportunities missed as the teachers sought to deliver too many teaching points. A business studies lesson in Year 12 on budgeting failed to capitalise on a student’s observation about ‘when is profit not a profit but a loss?’ as the teacher sought to cover the planned lesson activity.
- 46 Generally, lessons are introduced with a framework that helps pupils get down to tasks quickly. In the weaker and unsatisfactory lessons, planning is not sufficiently

focused on what pupils are going to learn: planning is too focused on what teachers or pupils will do. Pupils from Year 7 worked conscientiously in an English lesson drawing pictures, folding and cutting card but too little time was spent developing a draft piece of writing. The inability to focus on learning outcomes for pupils means that they were not frequently communicated to pupils. Thus pupils could say what they were doing but not what they were to learn from the activity and how this helped them improve. A Year 9 lesson on 'stencilling' in design and technology did not move at the pace it should because pupils were unclear as to how the activities were to contribute to their learning.

- 47 Too little attention is paid to the variation in attainment across a class and how this is to be dealt with for the full lesson. Work is too frequently targeted at a single outcome for the whole class. In a mathematics lesson in Year 8, pupils were taught how to calculate the product when two decimal points are present in one of the numbers. The range of attainment meant that some pupils completed the tasks quickly and made little further progress whilst others, with the support of the teacher, continued to seek to understand the process.
- 48 Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is generally unsatisfactory. Teachers are aware of the progress that pupils are making in relation to the content being taught and provide encouragement to pupils as they complete the activities or tasks set. However they are not sufficiently identifying pupils' specific achievements and what they need to improve. There is too little checking of understanding to push standards higher or to provide more demanding work. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson on measures of central tendency, the teacher's assessment of their work established pupils' competence in relation to the mean, median and mode, but the work subsequently set simply required them to repeat work they could already do. Too few teaching strategies focus closely on pupils' outcomes from an analysis and evaluation of standards of attainment in relation to the National Curriculum or the grade criteria used by examining boards and then use this in setting work to produce learning of a higher order. Where they do, standards and progress are excellent. An A level physical education lesson on racism in sport in the USA showed how well chosen resources, very good teacher knowledge and accurate formative assessment could combine to enthuse and engage students to produce work of high quality.
- 49 In the few unsatisfactory lessons seen, pupils did not show initiative in or enthusiasm for their work. Generally, in such lessons, pupils are content to follow the instructions of the class teacher and work through a sequence of tasks. Pupils do not seek to question or contribute beyond the content immediately before them. Pupils do not work at a demanding pace and are frequently working at the lower levels of confirming knowledge and practising skills. Too much of the content is insufficiently challenging in relation to prior learning or does not reflect the range of attainment in the classes. A personal, social and moral education lesson in Year 7 had little support from the class teacher yet pupils continued to work through tasks. Unsatisfactory lessons were in several cases taught by non-specialists committed to helping deliver a course, but lacking some necessary expertise. For example, in teaching of information and communication technology at Key Stage 3, some teachers have sufficient knowledge to work with information and communication technology in their specialist

subject area but not the understanding of how pupils' learning develops in information and communication technology as a whole.

- 50 Pupils demonstrate satisfactory levels of competence in a range of skills across the curriculum. In mathematics, appropriate and satisfactory teaching of numeracy takes place. Literacy is taught well to special educational needs pupils and to pupils in English lessons. Key words linked to the specialist vocabulary of a subject area are displayed prominently in many areas, and there is some use of writing frames. In information and communication technology the lack of available hardware prevents more teaching of the subject. However, these national initiatives in teaching and learning are not impacting sufficiently on the pace of learning and pupil progress. For example, pupils do not fully demonstrate learning through extended or different writing requirements in a range of subjects.
- 51 The quality of homework is generally sound. However, there are instances where homework is confined to finishing off work begun in class rather than extending further pupils' learning.
- 52 Teaching has improved since the last inspection. There is greater consistency in quality. The proportion of high quality teaching has increased alongside a reduction in the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is now making a greater impact on pupils' achievements than it was in the previous inspection.

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

- 53 The school provides a broad and generally well balanced curriculum which is effectively contributing to the good quality of education that the school provides. In Key Stage 3 all pupils study the subjects of the National Curriculum as well as a religious education course, a personal, social, and moral education course and performing arts. There is some time-tabled time for information and communication technology in design and technology lessons, but this is brief and it is difficult to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. All pupils study French, and the top sets take German in Years 8 and 9, the other pupils studying drama. Pupils are set into ability bands, the lowest groups being quite small
- 54 Organisation into ability groups is contributing satisfactorily to pupils' progress, although teachers are not taking enough account of the range of ability within classes.
- 55 During Key Stage 4 all pupils students follow courses in English, mathematics, science, physical education and personal, social and moral education, which includes careers education, and religious education. This, along with an option system that provides a degree of choice for students, ensures study of the compulsory subjects of the National Curriculum and allows for options. There is a good range of options including a vocational alternative, a GNVQ Part One in Leisure and Tourism, and GCSE drama which contributes to the breadth of the curriculum. Some students take GCSEs in Year 10; they are able to take mathematics and then study for either GCSE statistics or retake mathematics, and some students take religious education early. This is an effective arrangement that is producing good results. Students also have the

opportunity to study for a basic certificate in information and communication technology, but overall provision for the subject in this key stage is weak as the only systematic provision for most students is through work in science and this is not planned coherently.

- 56 The Sixth Form curriculum includes around twenty A level courses, with a good range and diversity of subjects. The change to the new examinations has meant a re-organisation of the Year 12 curriculum, and it has been well managed following consultation. The recent introduction of A level courses in sociology and media studies has been very popular. GNVQ courses are established in liaison with Tamworth College and some students combine an intermediate level course with re-sits of their GCSEs and work experience. There is a sound core programme of religious education and general studies, which includes careers, information and communication technology and physical education. This programme is being developed to match the new Sixth Form requirements and it is satisfactorily adding width to the curriculum at this stage of education.
- 57 There are some pressures on the curriculum: there is little provision for information and communication technology in Key Stage 3 and for those not taking a GCSE in it in Key Stage 4 and there are few opportunities for departments to deliver it through their subject work; time allocated for physical education is causing staff difficulties in covering the required aspects of the subject; design and technology is being re-introduced across Key Stage 4, and both art and design and music have introduced 'flexi-time' GCSE courses to allow students to study the subjects during lunch times and after school. (The staggered lunch break and need to catch buses at the end of the school day make this arrangement difficult.) The time-tabling of some double lessons over break-time also creates some problems, particularly in physical education and other practical subjects. These pressures are aggravated by the fact that the school has not taken up the recommended length for the teaching week.
- 58 There are good arrangements to ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive their full National Curriculum entitlement with effective procedures to ensure that this is not adversely affected as a result of withdrawal. In many cases, the effective liaison between learning support assistants and subject teachers actually enhances access as when a Year 9 pupil has a partially modified curriculum in history. The specific additional curriculum required to support literacy needs is well planned, and assessment is very effectively used to ensure that teaching takes appropriate account of pupils' progress and prior learning. Learning support assistants contribute well to enabling pupils with visual impairment to have full curriculum access by modifying materials and ensuring that their difficulties are taken account of in lessons. The school makes good provision to ensure that pupils with a range of special educational needs are appropriately supported in externally accredited examinations, including negotiations to secure extra time or reading and scribing support. The school takes good care of pupil's with special needs, regular teachers are well aware of them and there is an effective and well used system of identity cards to inform new or cover teachers of an individual pupils particular difficulties.

- 59 Literacy support is sound across the curriculum with the gradual introduction of the key words and writing frames but numeracy still has to make an impact except in mathematics lessons.
- 60 The formal curriculum is enhanced by extra curricular activities including an enrichment week at the end of the summer term. The Year 7 pupils have a residential week in their first term which is valued highly. It settles the pupils into school routines and establishes positive relations between pupils and with teachers. There is a good range of activities offered during the lunch break and after school. As many classrooms are in use during lunch, and pupils have to catch buses for a long journey home, opportunities are sometimes limited to sport and music, although the quality of support for these is high. The school does what it can to compensate by arranging late buses once a week to allow pupils to take up extra-curricular activities. The lack of information and communication technology facilities at lunchtime limits pupils' access to computers.
- 61 Personal and social education is very good. The pastoral curriculum is taught through a very strong programme of personal, social and moral education for all pupils. This has been developed by staff to reflect the mission statement of the school and the needs of pupils in each year and is an improvement on the programme available at the time of the previous inspection report. Sex education is delivered and monitored by the religious education department in liaison with the science and personal, social and moral education teachers. There is a useful policy, approved by the governors and explained to parents when their children are in Year 7. Drugs education is covered appropriately in the personal, social and moral education curriculum. The school works hard to ensure that all groups of pupils have equal access to the whole curriculum.
- 62 The school provides opportunities for all pupils to be involved in work related education, including careers education and guidance. The Education Business Partnership and work experience work effectively and an Industry Day is valued highly by the pupils. The school has a contract with a careers agency, and works in partnership with them to deliver an appropriate framework. Careers guidance is delivered through the personal, social and moral education programme to all years and has been extended to address the issues highlighted in the previous inspection report. There is now a sound provision for all pupils. The school offers a good range of GNVQs, and also an NVQ in liaison with Tamworth College.
- 63 Links with the local catholic community are extensive and productive. Pastoral links with primary schools are well planned and provide a very good preparation for pupils' transition to the secondary phase. Links with local further education colleges are very good, with joint planning and delivery of vocational courses.
- 64 The spiritual development of all pupils is fundamental to the school's ethos and is very good. Pupils are provided with clear guidance and instruction through the taught curriculum, and through the whole approach to teaching, which is based on values and beliefs that permeate the learning of the pupils. Pupils relate well to each other and to teachers, and feel able to discuss problems and issues freely. The chaplain provides extra support for staff and pupils. Collective worship is very effective in supporting

spiritual development; it is well planned and delivered and has a strong educational content.

- 65 Moral development is excellent for all pupils. There is a framework of values implicit in the school's provision which enables pupils to distinguish right from wrong and defines the expectations of their personal behaviour. The school's mission statement and aims are fully evident in the way pupils respect each other, behave impeccably, and consider their actions in the light of their faith and a clear and consistent framework of values.
- 66 The school cultivates its pupils' social development very effectively. The quality of relationships within the school is excellent and reflects the developing social awareness of the pupils. This is particularly evident in vocational courses where they take responsibility, show initiative, and develop an understanding of the community they live in. There are very good experiences in many subjects that help to develop these attitudes, such as in physical education, drama, art and music where pupils co-operate, demonstrate initiative and take responsibility. Sixth Form students take a full part in this through their pantomime for younger pupils, which was very well-received at the time of the inspection, and the outward bound courses. The residential experience for Year 7 pupils in their first term in the school is valued as an integral part in establishing the relationships that they build up over their time in the school. There is a strong sense of the Catholic community of the school linking with the work of the parish to support pupils and their families.
- 67 The cultural development of pupils is very good with a very strong emphasis across many aspects of the curriculum. Pupils are given many opportunities to appreciate their own cultural traditions. For example, in art and design they visit exhibitions and galleries, in history they visit Warwick Castle and the Black Country Museum, and also consider issues of racism and the holocaust. In music they study the tradition of western music, and in modern foreign languages they have the opportunity to study and visit other European countries.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 68 The school cares very well for all the pupils and students in its care and parents appreciate the quality of care provided. The steps taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including arrangements for child protection and first aid, are very effective. The arrangements for dealing with child protection issues are very clear and the child protection officer ensures that all staff are aware of them. There are very good procedures in place for first aid and the administration of medicines in school, which include the recording of all medicine administered. The school ensures that staff are well informed of procedures to deal with conditions such as diabetes, asthma, epilepsy and severe allergies. There are appropriate policies in place for health and safety and regular health and safety checks are carried out and recorded. The Governing Body is appropriately involved in monitoring health and safety. Staff pay good attention to health and safety in lessons. However, the tunnel, through which pupils' enter the school, is drab and dark and does not reflect the school's commitment to valuing its pupils.

- 69 A very committed team consisting of a Deputy Headteacher, Heads of Year and Form Tutors provides pastoral care. Heads of Year are permanently appointed to a given year group. This enables them to build up strong expertise in dealing with the particular age group and, in particular, aspects of the work, such as primary liaison in Year 7 and option choices in Year 9. Continuity is provided by Form Tutors, who stay with the same group of pupils from Year 7 to Year 9, and Year 10 to Year 11. Sixth Form students have the same tutor throughout. The excellent relationships that build between pupils and their Form Tutors ensure that pupils trust tutors to deal with any concerns they may have.
- 70 The school meets all the requirements of the 1993 Education Act and the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs. There is an effective structure for identifying and assessing needs and appropriate arrangements for ensuring that these needs are met. Procedures for pupils' Annual Reviews are secure and ensure that provision is reviewed and updated appropriately. As was recommended in the last inspection report, the use of individual education plans has been extended to cover pupils who do not have statements. The content of individual education plans is constantly reviewed and updated, but at present, the generic targets in the overall individual education plans are not sufficiently focused to enable subject teachers to plan to address them in their planning.
- 71 Form tutors teach the programme of personal, social and moral education and this enables them to develop very good knowledge of individual pupils and to monitor the ongoing personal development of pupils. The programmes of study for personal, social and moral education are well planned and, in the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching was good or better. Teachers use their knowledge sensitively to guide and help pupils effectively.
- 72 There is a comprehensive range of assessment of pupils' attainments including tests, regular marking of work and pupils' self-assessments. Marking is almost always positive and is often used to encourage greater effort. Much of the marking seeks to follow the school's policy. In geography and modern foreign languages, marking successfully identifies those aspects of the work that are good. For pupils with special educational needs, work is regularly, consistently and accurately marked with corrections identified and monitored. Overall, however, because teachers do not sufficiently identify pupils' specific strengths and weaknesses, their evaluation of pupils' progress is inadequately based on pupils' prior attainment. This is limiting the effectiveness of teachers' feedbacks to pupils and their setting of useful targets. In consequence, assessment is not making the contribution it should to pupils' attainment and progress, and teachers are not reaping the full advantage from the time and energy they are putting in to marking pupils' progress.
- 73 The assessment requirements for the National Curriculum and external examining bodies are mostly met. The exception is the assessment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in information and communication technology. A small number of projects set in mathematics, English and history after the formal statutory tests are too generously assessed by non-specialist teachers. The National Record of Achievement is well established in the personal, social and moral education programme throughout the school.

- 74 Assessments do not always contribute as much as they could to teachers' planning, but a good example of planning learning from assessment was found in Year 9. A number of pupils who were on the borderline of the average level in mathematics were selected to work with the information technology based 'Success Maker' programme. All these pupils gained the average level for the end of their key stage.
- 75 A number of subjects seek to identify targets for improvement for pupils. Too frequently these are too vague, not related to specific learning or are focused only on handwriting, presentation or spelling. Individual education plans have generic targets that are not sufficiently focused to enable subject teachers to plan to meet them. There are no curriculum targets for learning set for pupils in mathematics.
- 76 Self-assessment by pupils features strongly in many subject areas. In 'using and applying' mathematics, pupils seek to evaluate their work against three assessment strands. They then plan what learning they have to demonstrate to further their progress. Self-assessment is not such a successful feature of English where the completed assessments do not naturally lead to an understanding of how to improve. The pastoral work of the school uses self-assessment to encourage some pupils to be reflective and critical about their behaviour and development. Generally, the impact of these processes is lessened significantly, as pupils are not being systematically helped to develop the skills required to make the most of self-assessment.
- 77 Although there has been a review of the effectiveness of assessment and a new policy with clear principles and guidelines has been introduced during the past nine months, progress in improving assessment procedures since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.
- 78 The pastoral system monitors successfully attendance and behaviour and has good practices that promote good attendance and behaviour. The records of absence are scrutinised regularly and any patterns highlighted and followed up. Behaviour of the year group is subject to regular review. Pupils causing concern are identified and a thorough process of target setting, progress monitoring and reporting to parents is enacted. A good example of this was the monitoring of behaviour in last year's Year 9. Pupils were identified through classroom observation and an external support team counselled those with difficulties. Subsequently, only two pupils have needed additional support. The approach contributes significantly to producing a classroom environment where pupils expect to get on with their work.
- 79 The pastoral system, however, does not provide tutors with information about their pupils' academic progress. The current strategies do not enable tutors to have an overview of each pupils' progress in all their subjects and thus monitor their overall performance. Senior management monitors the achievement of some Year 11 students who have been identified at senior management level from performances in mock examinations taken at the end of the Christmas term. This is producing useful data to provide a basis for target-setting and pupil tracking.
- 80 The school has appropriate systems in place to promote good behaviour and to monitor pupils' behaviour. Pupils are aware of the high expectations the school has of their behaviour and, in the main, comply with them. They understand the system of

commendations and know what the consequences of breaches of discipline are. The merit system is effective in motivating pupils. The referral system for unacceptable behaviour is well understood by pupils and implemented with a good level of consistency by teachers. Parents are appropriately involved in cases of serious or persistent poor behaviour.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 81 Overall, there is a good partnership between school and parents, although there are some areas of weakness.
- 82 Those parents and carers who attended the parents' meeting with inspectors were very supportive of the school but attendance was low. Parents attending the meeting were appreciative of the attitudes and values the school promotes through its Catholic ethos. Approximately a third of parents completed the inspectors' questionnaire and the large majority are supportive of the school. Almost every parent states that their child likes school and is happy there, is expected to work hard and is making good progress as a result of good teaching. They believe that the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. Most parents feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have concerns, although a small number are dissatisfied with the school's response to complaints they have raised. However, a significant number of those who completed the questionnaire state that the school does not work closely with parents and a similar number feel they are not well informed about the progress their child is making. Similarly, not all parents are satisfied that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.
- 83 Inspection evidence supports the parents' positive views of the school. However, there is also evidence to bear out parents' concerns that they are not consistently well informed about the progress their child is making. The single, formal parents' consultation evening provided each year, linked to the unsatisfactory reporting of progress, means that not all parents do receive sufficient, clear information. The staggered lunchtime, and the dependence on school buses for the majority of pupils, does limit the range of extra curricular activities and pupils' access to them. However, the school arranges late buses on one evening each week to try to address this issue.
- 84 The school provides a wide variety of useful information for parents. The prospectus is well presented. However, the section on special educational needs is brief and lacks detail, and the complaints procedure is not outlined as required. The annual report of governors is very full and informative and complies with statutory requirements. The regular newsletters are well written and contain a wide range of information, including a diary of events and a celebration of pupils' achievements. Effective systems are in place to ensure that parents are kept informed by telephone or letter of any concerns about attendance, attitude or behaviour. All pupils have a homework diary and this provides a wide range of useful information for them and their parents. It is used well as a channel of communication between parents and staff.
- 85 Parents have one formal opportunity a year to consult with their child's teachers but are welcome to contact staff by telephone or to make an appointment to discuss their

child's progress at any time. One full progress report is provided each year, with interim reports in Years 7, 9, 10 and 12 introduced in responses to parent's wishes. Currently, there is confusing variation from subject to subject in the report format. There is considerable variation in the quality of reports, both between subjects and between teachers, and the overall reporting of progress is unsatisfactory. Comments too frequently relate mainly to attitude and effort and are not sufficiently specific about the progress made in skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Strengths and weaknesses are not consistently identified and, although targets for improvement are set in each subject, they are rarely sufficiently precise to guide future progress effectively. Information about the work covered is limited.

- 86 In a successful attempt to involve parents from all parts of the large catchment area, the school has established a system of local parent association groups, with teacher support for each. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings is usually good. Heads of Year work hard to establish and maintain good working relationships with parents. Most parents support the school very well over disciplinary matters and attendance.
- 87 There is an effective partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs, particularly of statemented pupils, who always attend the Annual Reviews. This is less well developed for pupils on Stages 1-3 of the code of practice where there is limited parental (or pupil) involvement in the setting of targets in individual education plans. There are very good links with the Local Education Authority and its support services which ensure that specialist advice is regularly received by the school and communicated to all staff involved with the pupils concerned.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 88 Although the Headteacher has only been in post for two years and the senior management team in place since 1999, the school is very well led and managed. Both leadership and management are having a significant impact on the progress of the school. This is well demonstrated by the growth of a culture of improvement within the school and the fact that the continuing improvement in the school's results has recently caught up with the rate of improvement nationally.
- 89 The highly effective leadership identified in the last inspection report has been sustained. The Headteacher has a clear vision of the school's future and she is passionately committed to the school's mission to promote academic excellence and to develop the whole person in the context of the Catholic faith. She communicates this vision and commitment effectively and, as a result, the Headteacher, senior managers and governors are providing the school with a clear sense of direction.
- 90 Although the school's mission statement has not been sharply focused by being translated into a set of specific aims, it is well known to staff, parents and pupils and it is clearly guiding the policies and practices of the school. The school's rising standards, the caring attitudes and excellent relationships throughout, along with the quality of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, all attest to the school's success in carrying out its mission to strive for excellence within a community based on Christian values. The Headteacher's claim in the most recent

School Prospectus that the school's ethos places as much value on pupils' personal development as it does on academic success, is vindicated by the evidence from the inspection.

- 91 The implementation of the mission statement is part of the very positive Catholic ethos within the school. This ethos is also characterised by a strong team spirit with excellent relationships between staff, non-teaching staff and pupils. Individuals generally feel valued and supported, and non-teaching staff feel very much a part of the school community. The ethos of the school contributed significantly to the achievement of Investors in People status in July 2000. The Headteacher, in her commitment, her management style, and her caring attitudes to pupils and staff, is leading by example in fulfilling the school's mission and ethos.
- 92 In this very positive context, the Headteacher has put together an effective senior management structure, with a small senior management team (the Headteacher and two Deputy Headteachers) and a larger senior management group which includes a senior teacher and a number of Heads of Year and Heads of Department. This structure is working well and, coupled with arrangements to have the whole school involved in planning and decision making, is making an important contribution to the management of change. An example of this is the climate of self-review developing within the school, in particular the generally positive attitudes of staff towards having their teaching observed and evaluated by their line managers. Overall, middle managers value their links with senior managers and are appreciative of the guidance and support they receive.
- 93 The school is effectively analysing its performance data and is building a clear picture of attainment on entry, trends over time, gender performance and what needs to be improved. For example, science has been worked on to improve performance from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Currently, the need to increase performance in science, history and design and technology in Key Stage 4 has been recognised.
- 94 The management of the school is very good and it is making an important contribution to the progress of the school. There is a clear line management structure with Heads of Department reporting to a Deputy Headteacher (curriculum) and Heads of Year to a Deputy Headteacher (pastoral). Regular meetings, with formal agendas and action points, are held and all staff are given the opportunity each term to feedback on whole-school issues. There is effective communication and the system is holding together well. The evidence indicates that the Headteacher is justified in claiming a whole-team approach to the better management of the school.
- 95 Overall, the quality of middle management is good and has improved since the last inspection. Pastoral management is good and the music, art, science and modern foreign language departments are very well managed. The management of information and communication technology, however, is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are under-developed and inexperienced teachers are not sufficiently supported. In addition, subject-based teaching is not effectively monitored.
- 96 The Dyslexia Unit and special educational needs department are very well managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator who combines this role with overall

responsibility for the management of the unit on behalf of the Local Education Authority. A marked strength of this role is the energy and enthusiasm brought to bear which contributes significantly to the strong culture of recognition of special educational needs across the school. This is further supported by the nomination of a link person within each subject or department to ensure effective liaison.

- 97 A three year Strategic Plan, containing a longer term view of development, now informs the school's one year Improvement Plan and the former deficiencies in costing the plan and the clarity of monitoring its progress have been rectified. The Improvement Plan is now costed discretely and it is evaluated in mid-year and at end-of-year by the senior management group, individual members taking responsibility for particular targets. In addition, there are now effective links between the School Improvement Plan and individual departments' improvement plans with whole school priorities appearing in the latter.
- 98 Notwithstanding the improvements in development planning, the school's identification of priorities lacks precision. The priority is sometimes expressed as a very broad heading, eg 'environment', 'personal, social and moral education', and often has a large degree of generalisation, eg 'to continue to develop the pastoral curriculum', 'to continue the development of information and communication technology'. Such lack of specific and sharply focused targets is an indication of a lack of rigour in the process and renders it very difficult to achieve an effective evaluation of progress and cost-effectiveness.
- 99 The school is effectively placed to implement national requirements for Performance Management of teachers in the spring term, 2001. Its policy – receiving a final revision currently – has a rationale which is consistent with the school's ethos and mission statement. The policy is an effective one, with a description of the cycle, identification of roles, available support opportunities, and evaluation. Team leaders have been chosen and the setting of objectives is due for completion by February 2001.
- 100 The senior management team has introduced a comprehensive programme of monitoring the school's performance. Attendance is monitored regularly, including Sixth Form, and pupils' behaviour and attitudes are monitored through referral and commendation systems. This contributes usefully to the maintaining of excellent contributions by pupils to their learning and to the quality of the school community. The senior management team monitors Heads of Year and Head of Department handbooks, and schedules dates for checking pupils' homework diaries. Middle managers have scheduled checks of pupils' books to monitor the school's marking policy, although these are not, at present, ensuring that assessment is fully satisfactory.
- 101 The school has made good progress in the monitoring aspect of the key issue on observing classroom practice identified in the last inspection report. Since 1997 there has been a system of classroom observation with twice yearly observations of Heads of Department by senior managers, and of subject teachers by their Heads of Department. The system is in place in all departments except special educational needs, although Heads of Year do not observe form teacher periods. The discussions following the observations have benefited individual teachers and the process is

making some contribution to improving the quality of teaching within the school. Most staff have responded positively to the system although some need support in operating it effectively.

- 102 However, the school is not deriving the maximum benefit from the process because there are shortcomings in the evaluation of information gathered from this monitoring and making effective use of it. There is no senior manager with the responsibility to gather together the findings and gain an overview of the generic strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Consequently, the acquired information is not being used with sufficient precision to link it effectively to staff development and to systematically improve the general quality of teaching. This is exemplified by the observation sheets used for classroom observation; they do not highlight the quality of teachers' assessment or the extent to which they meet the needs of the full range of ability within classes – both identified as weaknesses in teaching during the inspection.
- 103 The Governing Body is effectively carrying out its responsibilities. It has a good overview of the school, as it had at the time of the last inspection, being well-informed about the strengths of the school and its development needs - the further development of information and communication technology, for example. The governors are kept well-informed by the Headteacher when decisions about change are to be made, as she did with the decision to introduce mixed ability grouping in some subjects.
- 104 The governors play a useful part in setting the direction of the school through their participation in drawing up the school's Strategic Plan and in agreeing priorities for the School Improvement Plan. Through their committee structure, they question carefully and do not simply rubber-stamp the school's policies and practices. The Governing Body receives reports on various aspects of the school, for example, on the Sixth Form, the school library, etc. Its curriculum sub-committee receives reports from Heads of Department. The Governing Body is strongly supportive of the Headteacher and senior management, and is very committed to the progress of the school.
- 105 The routine management and administration of the school are very good. Financial control continues to be efficient, with spending effectively monitored by the school's finance manager. With the School Improvement Plan separately costed, finance is efficiently directed at the school's priorities. The finance manager checks that the departments' allocations for contributing to the School Improvement Plan are used for that purpose. He is well-informed about developments such as Performance Management, threshold payments, etc. He meets regularly with the Headteacher and reports to the governors' finance committee. The school has continued to present a balanced budget. All the recommendations of the latest auditors' report have been carried out.
- 106 The school applies well the principles of best value. It is analysing its performance and comparing its results with those of similar schools. The school is working in partnership with Tamworth College because it has determined that some elements of GNVQ can be effectively provided there to the benefit of its students. Its Sixth Form

provision is essentially cost-effective, with good quality provision enhanced by good teaching and with good results. The school is currently spending more than it receives for Sixth Form but there is a funding lag with the increase in the numbers of Sixth Form students. The Sixth Form provision is providing satisfactory value for money. In their attempts to improve their judgements of cost-effectiveness, the governors ask for at least three quotations for each area of spending but seek best value rather than simply going for the cheapest. However, the governors are not yet provided with information from sharply focused monitoring to help them judge cost-effectiveness. The school widely consults about major changes and spending decisions.

- 107 The staffing of the school has changed significantly since the last inspection. The school has maintained a good match of qualified staff to the demands of the curriculum during a period of significant growth in pupil numbers. Over two thirds of the staff have been at the school for five years or less. This year there are ten new members of staff. The school has coped well with this changing situation. The well thought-out induction processes have enabled newly qualified teachers and other new members of staff to make at least a satisfactory contribution to the aims of the school in a short time. This has been achieved through focusing on school processes, requirements and ethos in the first instance. The programme then develops to meet the identified needs of individual teachers. The programme meets the statutory requirements for the induction of newly qualified teachers. Learning support assistants are well matched to make a positive contribution to the achievements of pupils with special educational needs.
- 108 The school has a significant number of part-time and temporary staff. Generally, this works well. However, progress in learning is affected by a lack of continuity in modern foreign languages, where there is a high proportion of temporary staff and they have changed too frequently over the year. In art, there is one permanent full time member of staff. Very good planning enables the high standards to be maintained but the literal interpretation of some of the planning by the high proportion of part-time or temporary appointments does mean that standards are not as high as they could be for some pupils.
- 109 There is a staff development plan that dovetails well with the School Improvement Plan. The plan is costed and the effectiveness of training is reported on. The new assessment policy is good and has been developed with input from the Local Education Authority. However, in many development areas the school has relied upon its own resources. The introduction of a comprehensive monitoring and review programme is not making the impact that it should for this reason. The staff generally does not have the skills in place to do such work with the rigour necessary to ensure a good return from the effort required. The national initiatives in literacy and numeracy do not have the profile in classroom practices that would secure faster progress in learning in these areas.
- 110 Staffing for special educational needs is largely funded by the Local Education Authority in response to the need for support specified in pupils' statements. At present there is Local Education Authority funding for eight learning support assistants who support pupils in the classrooms, in addition to specialist provision in the Dyslexia Unit. The school also benefits from DfEE-funded learning support

assistant support for literacy which is also targeted at pupils with special education needs. Good support is provided for professional development and currently all LSAs are on a training course in dyslexia awareness run by the Local Education Authority for learning support assistants.

- 111 Accommodation is adequate although some rooms do present problems. The ventilation of one information and communication technology room is inadequate and creates uncomfortable situations. The quality of the accommodation for teaching English is unsatisfactory. The noise generated from normal movement and discussion penetrates the teaching space in some English rooms and interferes with learning. Music accommodation is cramped and limits teaching strategies. Achievement is also affected by instrumental sounds interfering with learning in other teaching spaces. Some rooms predominantly used by Sixth Form students, for example the lecture rooms, also pose challenges to the methods and strategies that teachers can employ. Generally, the rooms are deployed effectively and available space monitored.
- 112 Resources are generally adequate to support learning. Access to information and communication technology resources is limited by the number of computer systems in school. The school has more than twice as many pupils per computer as the national average; the information and communication technology rooms are not open at lunchtime and this prevents an already limited resource from being increasingly available to meet pupils' learning needs. Year 7 and 8 pupils do not have access to the internet which makes it difficult to demonstrate the required learning at higher levels in the National Curriculum. The library is efficiently and effectively run. The available resources are made good use of and the librarian supports individuals and classes well in their pursuit of information. The resources are, however, limited in many subject areas and this restricts the potential for the current procedures to further impact positively on pupils' learning. Resources are well chosen and good use is made of information and communication technology in supporting pupils' literacy and numeracy skills as well as encouraging the development of information and communication technology skills.
- 113 The school is an effective one. It has steadily improved its standards since 1997; its pupils have excellent values and attitudes, teaching is good and leadership and management is very good. When its effectiveness is set against its low unit costs, the school is seen to be providing good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 114 The school governors, in conjunction with the Headteacher and staff should take the following actions to raise standards by:
- i) Improving the contribution of assessment to pupils' attainment and progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers' marking identifies pupils' specific achievements and what they need to do to improve, so that pupils receive effective feedback and so that judgements about pupils' progress are based firmly on their achievements and needs within each subject;

- ensuring that assessment of pupils' work is linked to sharply-focused learning objectives to enable the quality of learning to be evaluated;
 - ensuring that specific information from assessment is used to inform teachers' subsequent planning and reporting of progress to parents;
 - providing clear instruction and guidance for pupils so that they can effectively carry out self-assessment;
 - ensuring that Form Tutors have access to assessment information so that they have a valid basis for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress. [46, 48, 72, 76, 77, 83, 85, 131, 148, 153, 159, 169, 175, 202, 215, 224, 236]
- ii) Improving the extent to which the learning needs of pupils across range of ability within classes are met by:
- ensuring that tasks set commonly for the whole class have the scope to challenge the full range of ability;
 - ensuring that teachers' intervention and support is effectively targeted at those pupils who are in need of it;
 - ensuring that extension tasks have the quality to extend pupils' learning rather than simply providing extra work to be done. [47, 54, 128, 143, 182, 202, 210, 243]
- iii) Improving the quality of target-setting by:
- ensuring that pupils' targets for learning are based clearly on their prior attainment and state specifically what is to be achieved;
 - ensuring that individual education plans specifically identify pupils' learning needs;
 - ensuring that targets in development planning are specific and sharply focused so that effective action plans can be drawn up and subsequently monitored and evaluated. [43, 70, 75, 98, 129, 153, 159, 167, 213, 224, 233, 242]
- iv) Improving the management and provision of information and communication technology by:
- developing a whole school strategy for the ongoing review, acquisition, replacement and efficient deployment of computers;

- providing increased teaching time for information and communication technology with experienced teachers;
- ensure that staff have sufficient expertise to raise standards in information and communication technology;
[29, 49, 50, 53, 55, 57, 73, 95, 103, 112, 123, 163, 170, 207, 212, 213, 215, 216, 236]

115 Governors and senior managers may wish to address the following areas which are areas of relative weakness:

- Extend classroom observation to include special educational needs and information and communication technology departments, and tutorial periods.
[101, 216]
- More effectively co-ordinate information from classroom observations to raise further the quality of teaching.
[102, 109, 130, 148, 159, 177, 184, 205, 216]
- Use more sharply focused monitoring to help judge cost-effectiveness of decisions.
[98, 106]
- Formulate a list of school aims to bring sharper focus to mission statement.
[90]

The numbers in brackets relate to the main paragraphs of this report where these issues are mentioned.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

191

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	22	32	35	5	1	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	927	140

Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	70	-
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Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	41	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	145	4

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.4

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	100	79	179

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	69	78	70
	Girls	63	59	45
	Total	132	137	115
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	73 (79)	76 (71)	64 (51)
	National	63 (64)	66 (62)	60 (54)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	40 (51)	52 (38)	34 (15)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	74	79	78
	Girls	65	59	57
	Total	139	138	135
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	77 (74)	76 (71)	75 (49)
	National	65 (64)	66 (64)	60 (59)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	33 (43)	41 (40)	37 (5)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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
	2000	93	96	189

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	41	88	93
	Girls	51	92	95
	Total	92	180	188
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	49 (43)	95 (93)	99 (99)
	National	49 (48)	89 (89)	96 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.9 (38.3)
	National	38.7 (38.1)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or Units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/A
	National	N/A

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
	2000	25	26	51

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	19.4	19.8	19.6 (16.5)	N/A	N/A	N/A (N/A)
National	17.9	18.6	18.3 (18.1)	N/A	N/A	N/A (N/A)

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	11	100
	National		N/A

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	N/A	N/A
	National		N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	11
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	6
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1044
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	19	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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)	59
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	404

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.5
Key Stage 4	23.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2,271,109
Total expenditure	2,332,045
Expenditure per pupil	2,232
Balance brought forward from previous year	80,050
Balance carried forward to next year	19,114

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1067
Number of questionnaires returned	365

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	56	9	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	37	56	4	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	55	8	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	56	16	5	3
The teaching is good.	25	65	5	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	48	20	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	38	8	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	30	3	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	23	55	14	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	39	51	3	2	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	52	5	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	52	11	4	9

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

ENGLISH

- 116 Overall, pupils are achieving standards above the average expected nationally for pupils of their age groups. Standards in English have improved since the last inspection, although attainment in English literature at the end of Key Stage 4 has fallen.
- 117 At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, despite a fall in results from the previous year, standards in English are still above the national average. The percentages of pupils achieving Level 5 and above are above the national averages for both boys and girls, with a very close correlation between National Curriculum test results and statutory teacher assessments. Although more girls than boys gained Level 5 and above, boys' performance exceeded the national average for their gender by a greater margin than that for girls. Based upon pupils' average points scores, standards of both boys and girls have exceeded national expectations each year since the school was last inspected. Pupils' results in 2000 are broadly in line with the average for schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, whereas they were well above the average in 1999.
- 118 By the end of Key Stage 4, standards overall are above the national average. In 1999, the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in English and English literature was above the national average. In both subjects all students entered achieved A*-G grades. The latest results in 2000, however, show a significant fall in the number of A*-C grades in English literature; and it is significantly below the national average. In English, the proportion of higher grades has risen since 1997, but it has fallen each year in English literature. In the newly-introduced drama course, results in 1999 were outstanding with 91% of students gaining A*-C grades but in 2000, the proportion of students achieving the higher grades has also fallen below the national average for the subject. In 2000, although girls achieved more higher grades than boys, both sexes' results were higher than the national averages for their genders in English, but well below in English literature. Students achieved well in English relative to their average performance across their other subjects but, in English literature they performed below their average across other subjects.
- 119 Contrary to the national picture, boys are doing better than girls in GCSE, some of whom are not performing as well as their Key Stage 4 results would indicate. At Sixth Form, standards are higher than average. The latest A level results for 2000 indicate considerably better overall results than in 1999.
- 120 Standards of attainment in lessons and pupils' work observed during the inspection were consistent with the results from national tests and examinations, if those achieved by pupils with special educational needs are considered separately.
- 121 Overall, standards of writing observed and sampled during the inspection were high. However, many Year 7 pupils do not achieve the standards they are capable of, given their high levels of attainment on entry. Some of the tasks set are not sufficiently

challenging and there are few opportunities to practise and develop extended writing skills in the first term. However, achievement is much better in Year 8 and onwards. Pupils are developing their ability to organise their writing and they are able to write in a range of forms, adapting their style to the purpose and audience of the writing. They understand the difference between standard and non-standard English. A Year 8 class which is studying myths has considered an interesting range of stimuli, including the painting *The Fall of Icarus* and Auden's poem *Musee des Beaux Arts*, and were able to draw out morals from well known proverbs and adapt and integrate them into their own stories written about mythological creatures and events. In a Year 9 class, pupils studying an extract from *As You Like It* were able to write their own extended metaphors based on *All the World's a Stage*.

- 122 At Key Stage 4, Year 11 coursework folders showed a wide variety of writing, discursive and argumentative, creative and original, as well as mature responses to media, Shakespeare and other literature texts. Coursework in the Sixth Form is done conscientiously and thoroughly and in lessons students take notes without being prompted and are able to make apposite annotations to their texts. They express themselves clearly, take care with accuracy and presentation and have a good range of vocabulary. However, the higher critical skills in literature are not well enough developed in some Key Stage 4 and Sixth Form students who have difficulty in the analysis of literary techniques. Teachers are introducing strategies to further develop these higher order skills.
- 123 Reading comprehension is good throughout. The reading out loud of special educational needs pupils is often impressive, and is sensitively encouraged and supported by their teachers; they are making very good progress. Pupils are given many opportunities to read in class and most readily volunteer. Departmental policy advocates that pupils of all abilities read the same texts and a Year 9 special educational needs group was seen reading *Friedrich*, supported when necessary by their teacher and enjoying the challenge. Regular reading sessions in lessons and the library are benefiting all pupils although the recording of simple factual information in reading logs is not helping them to look more closely into their own reading. Many pupils enjoy reading and library book loans have increased significantly from last year. Research skills are developing well and pupils are able to access the library, CD-ROMs and the internet to investigate a wide variety of topics. However, information and communication technology provision is poor and it is rarely possible for whole English classes to spend lessons in the information and communication technology rooms. There are few planned information and communication technology activities because of limited resources and a lack of real expertise within the department. Despite this, a Year 10 class had achieved well doing research on apartheid using both book and information and communication technology resources in the library.
- 124 Standards of speaking and listening are high. Pupils speak confidently and fluently. They are willing to learn from each other and very good use is made of group activities in most lessons, with pupils able to brainstorm, problem solve and make collective decisions. Group discussion is used effectively to develop and consolidate learning at all stages. One Year 8 class studying a play script of *Jane Eyre*, knew the ground rules for successful group work: they listened carefully to each other and

collaborated and refined their opinions in order to present an effective group interpretation of Rochester's character. A Year 9 special educational needs class, helped by careful prompting by their teacher, were able to suggest interview questions which a journalist might ask Jewish people about the Nazi party. They were also able to make significant moral and social judgements based on the book they were studying. Sixth Form students contribute to class and group discussions with a high level of sophistication. Year 13 students, studying *The Taming of the Shrew* were able to make useful cross references to other books that they had studied as well as interrogate the text and make informed judgements about its structure and the dramatic effects on the audience and the didactic intentions of the playwright. In a media studies lesson, students were able in pairs to identify differences in bias in newspaper headlines and comment effectively on the linguistic devices used to influence readers, as well as support their own views and challenge those of others. They were well informed, they were by quoting that day's papers and maturely discussing the ethics of newspaper writing.

- 125 In drama, pupils in the Year 7 class observed were able to understand how body language is used to create tension, how tone of voice is adjusted to indicate inner feelings, how to predict endings given earlier clues and how well chosen sound effects contribute to dramatic effect and the audience's expectations. An excellent Year 10 lesson examined the social, moral and economic effects of drink driving. Students were able to present the subject in a very creative and atmospheric way through their use of ensemble, lighting, costuming and props as well as through tone of voice and facial expression. They were also able take their English course book, *Friedrich*, and to experiment with blocking, props and language to show the social disparity and mutual hatred between the Germans and the Jews in the Second World War. Students were reminded of the technical vocabulary of the subject through the prominent display of the key words in the drama studio and the teacher's insistence that they should be used. Throughout, the students worked co-operatively to problem solve and refine their ideas and interpretations and they were kept firmly on task by the teacher's clear expression of her expectations. The use of freeze framing also enabled students to develop their critical awareness as did the very useful provision and discussion of the assessment criteria before the task was begun.
- 126 Standards of literacy are sound across all subjects. The distribution of dictionaries to all rooms, the practice of encouraging quiet reading at the beginning of lessons and in personal, social and moral education and the display of key, subject specific words in teaching rooms are useful strategies although there has overall been too little progress in the school's literacy initiative. Special educational needs pupils are making very good progress in developing their specific literacy skills because of good teaching.
- 127 Pupils have positive attitudes and are effective learners. They are co-operative and willing to participate fully in lessons. Although there is sometimes an over reliance on teachers as providers of knowledge at all levels, pupils are able to think for themselves, do research and work collaboratively and independently when required. Low attaining pupils in Year 8 were able to identify and note down their own significant personality characteristics and then to test them against those associated with the animals associated with the year of their birth in the Chinese calendar and draw conclusions about the accuracy of the tradition. In a Year 12 group, students

were able to debate the pros and cons of living in a free society with little intervention by the teacher needed to keep the discussion going at a good pace. Pupils' enjoyment of English contributes to the success of their progress in learning in the subject at all levels. Their learning also benefits from activities such as Book Week, the Year 7 Book Club, theatre trips, visiting theatre companies, the annual Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB) Poetry Conference for GCSE pupils, the opportunity to take part in assemblies and school drama productions and a well devised induction course for new Sixth Form students.

- 128 The quality of teaching, including that of drama, is good, and there has been some improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have a good command of their subject and are committed to helping pupils make maximum progress. Generally, teachers' expectations are high, lessons are well planned, appropriate resources are provided and homework is used to reinforce and develop learning. In the most successful lessons seen, teachers often made use of the pupils themselves as valuable learning resources, drawing upon their own experiences and knowledge and building upon them. This was observed in a Year 9 low set studying *The Goal Keeper's Revenge* where pupils were asked to link their knowledge of the characters and events to their own lives. It was also seen in a Year 7 drama lesson in which pupils studying *An Elective Mute* discussed incidents which they had witnessed, or knew about, that might make a person decide to shut out the world around them. Teachers also use a wide variety of strategies to stimulate, encourage and move pupils forward. Particular strengths lie in the good use of open questioning to challenge and guide pupils' understanding, the skills used to keep them on task and to enable effective group work, and in teachers' knowledge of and planning for the needs of individual pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. However, the needs of the gifted and talented are not always met.
- 129 It is departmental practice to remind pupils of their learning from previous lessons and to draw together what pupils have achieved at the end of the lesson. However, because objectives are not always written in terms of what pupils will know and understand this is often a summary of what pupils, or the teacher, have done, rather than what pupils have learned. In the two unsatisfactory lessons observed, the pace was slow; the task in one was insufficiently challenging and in the other, pupils were not well motivated, some were unco-operative, and, as a result, the whole class made little progress, even though the lesson was thoughtfully planned and appropriate resources were available.
- 130 Although standards and teaching have improved since the last inspection, there has been insufficient progress on the development points identified in the last report. A programme for monitoring teaching has been put in place but there is little evidence of how it is extending good practice. Areas of strengths and weaknesses are not clearly identified for sharing nor are action plans always devised to improve practice.
- 131 There is a clear policy statement about the importance of consistency of assessment within the department, as well as folders of assessed exemplar materials at all key stages, but still some inconsistencies in both marking and grading exist. The marking of work is positive, encouraging and supportive and pupils' attainment is monitored

well by the department but, especially at Key Stage 3, it does not always indicate exactly what pupils have to do to improve. Although there is a practice of setting pupils' targets for improvement, the targets are rarely precise and do not indicate how the improvements in the skills identified are to be achieved or measured. A system of pupil self-evaluation is in place but it is often little more than a record of what has been done because pupils lack the necessary skills to analyse their own performance objectively. A most significant shortcoming in the department's assessment procedures is that the assessment of pupils' strengths and weaknesses is not used to inform planning for future lessons. Assessment is still not contributing sufficiently to pupils' standards and progress.

- 132 Timetabling and resourcing problems have been resolved but the accommodation is still inadequate for such a large department.

MATHEMATICS

- 133 Standards in mathematics are above national averages and have improved since the last inspection.
- 134 At the end of Key Stage 3 having been close to the national averages from 1996 to 1999, they are now well above what is expected nationally. In 2000, the percentages of pupils achieving Level 5 and above are higher than the national averages for both boys and girls, with a very close correlation between National Curriculum test results and statutory teacher assessments. There is no significant difference in the performances of girls and boys. Pupils' results in 2000 were above the average for similar schools whereas they were well below the average in 1999.
- 135 In lessons at Key Stage 3, standards overall are above average and for some pupils well above average. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate very high levels of achievement. For example, Year 8 pupils are very confident in the use of the Excel spreadsheet and are able to input formulae to generate a variety of sequences, including triangle and Fibonacci numbers. Pupils are competent in number and algebra; most can solve simultaneous equations by elimination and are developing their understanding of probability.
- 136 At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 standards were below national average for students achieving grades A*-C in GCSE examinations. Again there has been continued improvement and in 2000, the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C was above the national average. Students performed well at the highest grades of A and A* and 100% of students achieved a GCSE grade A*-G. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls, with both achieving higher than the national averages for each gender.
- 137 No Year 11 classes were seen due to 'mock' GCSE examinations. However, standards in Year 10 lessons were above national expectations, with all students achieving well. Students can typically solve simultaneous equations by a range of methods; they can factorise quadratic equations and they can construct perpendicular

bisectors and other loci to solve problems. Students achieved well in 2000 relative to their average performance across their other subjects.

- 138 Standards in the Sixth Form are above national expectations. In 2000, only a small number of students were entered for A level; a larger number were entered for A/S level and overall results were in line with national norms. In lessons, achievement is high with some students showing exceptionally high standards. In Year 12, students are confident in statistics; for example, they understand measures of dispersion for discrete random variables and can calculate the mean and variance of probability distributions.
- 139 Overall pupils are growing in competence in the use of number and algebra. Some still need to develop their numeracy skills to be in line with the demands of the mathematics they are studying.
- 140 Standards of using and applying mathematics are sound. At Key Stage 3, pupils are typically able to sort and classify their work to obtain the largest product from a set of numbers. They can analyse problems and choose appropriate methods and resources. For example, in a lesson on Logo, pupils were able to explore a range of methods to draw regular polygons and pointed stars. At Key Stage 4, using and applying mathematics is presented through set coursework tasks. Attainment in these tasks is generally good; students are able to apply mathematical reasoning to solve problems. The work is presented systematically and is supported by good communication, which makes clear the level of understanding.
- 141 Levels of numeracy are improving and are best developed at Key Stage 3. In Year 7, pupils have a very good recall of number facts and they can use these facts to solve other number problems. For example, in a lesson where pupils were challenged to make '24' using 4 numbers and any number operations, the response was very high with many pupils able to square numbers and use brackets. They are able to partition number in calculations and make sensible estimates. At Key Stage 4, levels of numeracy are less well developed and for some lower attaining groups this impinges on their progress.
- 142 Numeracy across the school is generally sound. In science, pupils are able to describe the size and motion of planets using appropriate terms and units. In geography, pupils use graphs and in information and communication technology, pupils use number relationships competently.
- 143 Progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 is good compared with the national rate of improvement. Higher attaining pupils make good and often very good progress and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils in some average attaining groups, however, do not achieve as well as they could because the teaching approaches often do not best match the learning needs of these pupils. Progress is good in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. Pupils are achieving well, particularly because of their prior attainment and their approach to learning.
- 144 Attitudes towards mathematics are very positive and this is a significant strength of the department. In the great majority of lessons, across all key stages and ranges of

ability, the level of pupil response is consistently good and often very good or better. Pupils are careful with their work and often demonstrate very high levels of motivation. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. In the majority of cases, and even when the teaching lacks challenge, pupils respond well and are attentive to their teachers.

- 145 Teaching is sound overall, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Clear learning objectives are evident in teachers' planning although these are not always shared with the pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and is sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum. The learning environment created by teachers is good and supports the development of positive attitudes towards the subject. The teaching style is very consistent across the department and is often characterised by clear exposition and the use of questions to promote learning.
- 146 Teaching at Key Stage 3 is variable but sound overall. In lessons where teaching is good, expectations are high and the use of teaching aids such as overhead projectors effectively support teacher exposition. In the small minority of lessons seen where teaching was unsatisfactory, pupils were given insufficient opportunities to engage in the learning, lessons lacked challenge and pupils spent too much time consolidating work they can easily do. Concepts and methods were presented as a set of rules with little or no explanation and no questions were asked to develop understanding.
- 147 Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. Expectations are high and teachers can pinpoint the level at which students are. The quality of exposition is good and focused questions are used to probe and extend pupil understanding. Teaching in the Sixth Form is sound overall and lessons seen were never less than satisfactory. Where teaching is good, subject knowledge is secure and teachers understand the demands of the curriculum well. Expectations are high and the relationships and attitudes are very positive.
- 148 The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards have continued to rise and teaching has improved at Key Stage 4. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are now well in place although the process has still to be refined to impact fully on teaching and development planning. The quality of assessment is unsatisfactory. It has not improved since the last inspection and overall does not sufficiently inform teachers' planning. All work is marked and in line with school and departmental policy. At Key Stage 3, comments, when included, provide positive encouragement. They do not, however, inform pupils of their strengths and areas for improvement. At Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, assessment is generally better as students receive more detailed feedback, particularly on coursework tasks. Learning resources, whilst just satisfactory, are insufficient to support the development of a wider range of teaching styles to support the needs of all pupils.

SCIENCE

- 149 Overall, standards are in line with those expected nationally, and are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.

- 150 At the end of Key Stage 3, standards show improvement. From 1996 to 1999, standards have been close to national averages, but there was significant improvement in 2000. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in National Curriculum tests was above the national average, largely due to the performance of boys whose results exceed the national average for the first time since 1996, whereas girls' results remain slightly below. Despite the improvement in science results, they remain below the average for similar schools.
- 151 At the end of Key Stage 4, in the GCSE examinations in 1999, the number of students gaining grades A*-C in science was about 10% below the national average. In 2000, the standard had improved so that the difference with the national average had narrowed to 5%. Standards of work seen in lessons confirmed this improvement. In contrast to Key Stage 3, girls are achieving better than boys, with results in line with the national average for grades A*-C. Students, however, achieved lower than their average performance across their other subjects.
- 152 In 2000, there has been a significant increase in the number of students studying scientific subjects and the results in A Level physics are particularly good. Standards in lessons observed during the inspection were above what is typically expected.
- 153 Overall, the quality of teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Year 11 students were unavailable for observation because of 'mock' examinations so the only Key Stage 4 lessons seen were in Year 10 where all lessons seen were satisfactory. In Key Stage 3, teaching was good or very good in 50% of lessons and was at least sound in all lessons. In the Sixth Form, all teaching was good or better. The more successful teaching was characterised by good subject knowledge, high expectations and very good classroom management. However, generally, teachers are not sufficiently using their on-going assessments to help them judge pupils' progress and to plan subsequent work. All work seen had been marked up to date, but in some cases, the targets teachers set or the advice for improvement they gave was vague and unspecific. In some instances, it was clear that targets set had not been achieved and that lack of achievement had not been noticed. Pupils' own target setting was often imprecise and many pupils, when questioned, were not sure at what level they were working nor what level they should be aiming for. Many of the satisfactory lessons could have been improved by teachers stating clearly at the beginning of lessons what pupils were expected to learn, by setting a brisker pace and ensuring that by the end of the lesson pupils had achieved the learning goals.
- 154 Learning by pupils in science is broadly in line with the standard of teaching, and pupils are making good progress. In Key Stage 3, a Year 9 group showed that they understood the apparent movement of objects through the night sky, had observed the changes of the moon's phase for themselves and learnt how the seasons occur because of the tilt of the Earth's axis of rotation. On a similar astronomical theme, a Year 8 group was very confidently making a presentation to the rest of the class about the different planets. Other Year 8 pupils showed that they had a good knowledge of the position of human internal organs.

- 155 From the scrutiny of Year 11 work it is clear that the most able students are working to a high standard. Their presentation of work is tidy and legible, diagrams are carefully drawn, results from practical work neatly tabulated and graphs, both straight line and curved, are well drawn. Some very good optical ray diagrams were seen and there were some excellent free-hand sketches of simple ammeters or leaf sections. There is evidence of equations being used, students showing that they can substitute numerical values successfully and calculate a correct solution to a problem. Less able students sometimes leave work unfinished, spell scientific words inaccurately and often do not draw diagrams with sufficient care. In a Year 10 group, students were effectively learning the important skills of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and heart massage.
- 156 Sixth Form students showed good research skills when they presented their findings on scientists involved in the discovery of radioactivity to their peer group. In practical lessons they showed that they could work safely and carefully and understood that practical results may need statistical investigation to show whether they are due to factors other than chance.
- 157 In all the lessons seen the relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers were excellent. Pupils were well mannered and helpful and co-operated with each other and with their teachers extremely well. The quality of relationships is a contributory factor which helps pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress.
- 158 Leadership and organisation within the science department are very good. There is good delegation within the department with several staff carrying a specialist subject or key stage responsibility and the Head of Department sets a high standard in ensuring that pupils' experience of science is enjoyable as well as academically challenging. These factors are making an important contribution to the department's improvement.
- 159 There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards within the science department are clearly rising. Test and examination results are improving and the number of Sixth Form students is increasing. Teaching has improved. A programme of classroom observation is now in place, although the findings from monitoring are not yet being used systematically to further improve teaching. There has not been sufficient progress on assessment.
- 160 Pupil self-assessment has been introduced but pupils are not being sufficiently helped to operate it effectively. Teachers' target setting lacks precision and follow-up procedures lack rigour.

ART

- 161 Overall, attainment is well above the standards expected nationally, and is significantly better than it was at the time of the last inspection.

- 162 By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils are achieving standards well above the national average. Nearly all are achieving the national expectations of 14 year olds for art and design, with girls and boys doing equally well. Paintings using pattern based on the work of Gustav Klimt, and direct observations from nature done during the Year 7 residential week are particularly effective. Work in three dimensions is limited while the kiln is being moved, but there are some good models using card, tissue and wire. An artist in residence project during the enrichment week produced large scale figures in mixed media which are of a good standard, and of which the pupils are particularly proud. A very good knowledge and understanding of art, craft and design is evident in the pupils' work, as when thoughtful work is produced in sketchbooks to supplement still life studies, and homework is used well to extend and explain projects. Standards of work in information and communication technology in art and design are inconsistent, as they were previously; little work is evident in class or in folders apart from work done at home.
- 163 At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results have been steadily improving in recent years, and in 2000 the proportion of students gaining A*- C grades was well above the national average. An above average proportion of students also achieved A and A* grades. The results exceeded the predictions based on the students' previous scores, and their results in other GCSEs. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and this is reflected in current standards of work. Very good work is being done in observational studies and research into the work of artists. Students' achievements are high in their individual projects. High quality materials and the detailed background studies in their sketchbooks, ensure that the final pieces are of a high standard. Some work is limited in scale. Few students have opportunities to demonstrate these high standards of art and design work using information and communication technology. Although it is evident in teachers' planning, practical problems have prevented the regular use of computers or other media. Overall, students achieved well compared with their average performance across other subjects.
- 164 Students' achievement in the Sixth Form is consistently good, as it was at the time of previous inspection. A level results have improved and have been in line with the national averages for the past two years in the art course. Results in the Critical and Contextual examination have been lower, but this is an extra A level for art students taken in two periods a week. Detailed analysis of students' previous achievement indicates that the students achieve comparatively well in their art and design examinations, and several attain direct entry onto degree courses. Students in Year 13 seen during the inspection were preparing for their examinations and were thoroughly researching their potential responses. The work in critical and contextual studies enhances their achievement through informing their researches with a sound understanding of art history and art techniques. Visits to museums and galleries inform this process and give all students valuable experiences. Final pieces in both two and three dimensions are solidly based on competent technical skills and intelligent development into personal statements, and are of a high standard. Students talk enthusiastically in an informed manner about their work. Current Year 12 students are starting the new AS level and their work is also of a high standard, developing links between their special studies and practical work thoughtfully.

- 165 Teaching is very good in art and design, as it was previously. However, the unstable staffing situation means that it is inconsistent and sometimes just satisfactory. There is only one full time member of staff in the department at the moment. The other teaching is done by two job-share permanent teachers, two job share temporary supply teachers, and two members of staff from other departments taking a few classes. Despite these problems all pupils are making good progress in the various strands of the National Curriculum for art and design.
- 166 Teaching is carefully planned and delivered with clear learning objectives, including practical demonstrations and links with artists' and designers' work. The work of some non-specialist and supply teachers can interpret these plans at a very literal level, with little personal involvement or authority, but overall, teaching is having a positive impact on learning. Verbal support, comment and information on progress is used effectively in class to keep pupils focused and encourage them to do their best. This is particularly evident when practical activities are taught in single, forty minute lessons. Teachers have to keep the pace of lessons high, with constant challenge and timed targets to complete work of a high standard. Most teachers use these strategies well to engage pupils, but occasionally teaching is less effective when introductions are extended and lose focus through distractions and irrelevancies so that the time for pupils to work is limited.
- 167 Relationships with all pupils are very good and promote a positive working atmosphere in lessons. All pupils are involved in the full range of activities, although a few are withdrawn from lessons for support work. The needs of pupils of different ages, gender and ethnicity are fully met. Lower sets are much smaller than others, and pupils are given differentiated work, individual education plans are drawn up for pupils with special educational needs with art specific criteria, although these are generic and of only marginal use. Extension work is provided for gifted and talented pupils to enable them to meet their full potential.
- 168 Pupils learn well in the supportive and challenging environment of the art and design rooms. They acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding through well planned and sequenced learning opportunities that build on their previous work. The emphasis on the development and application of practical skills based on a secure and comprehensive knowledge of art and design practice helps the pupils towards an understanding of the role of the subject and how they can improve their own standards in it. They work productively, showing interest and enthusiasm in sustained projects. These are planned and controlled to achieve consistent outcomes in Key Stage 3, but students have the confidence and skills to develop their own responses in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. The solid foundations provide them with a good start that produces the very good and improving standards in external examinations. The work in critical and contextual studies supports the skills of literacy and numeracy well.
- 169 The management of the department is very good. The performance of staff in art and design is supported and monitored to ensure success, and the various staff respond to this leadership by taking on responsibilities for developing their own plans, using their own approaches and strengths. Teachers communicate pupils' achievement in lessons and homeworks effectively, but the use of assessment to inform and develop planning is still not fully developed.

- 170 Since the last inspection, standards have improved and the staff have worked hard to address the issues raised in the previous report. The monitoring procedures are good and work effectively with the art and design staff, but practical issues outside the department's control have prevented movement on the development of information and communication technology and three-dimensional work. Time-tabling problems and the lack of information and communication technology facilities dedicated to art and design mean that work identified in planning often has to be shelved. The kiln has been out of action for a year, meaning that three-dimensional work has to be made of card, paper and found materials. There have been considerable improvements in the development of pupils' observational skills and expressive work, which has resulted in improved performance in each key stage.
- 171 Accommodation, apart from that in pottery, is very good and enables the curriculum to be taught with both depth and breadth, but there are not enough books in the library to support learning and research for all pupils.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 172 Overall, attainment is well below the standards expected nationally, as it was at the time of the last inspection. However, standards seen during the inspection and a recent increase in the number of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C, suggest that attainment is improving.
- 173 At the end of Key Stage 3, in 2000, standards were well below national expectations, for both boys and girls. However, current inspection evidence indicates that Year 9 pupils' results will closely match national expectations in 2001. At Key Stage 4 in 2000, GCSE A*-C results were significantly below the national average, although they were a 10% improvement on the 1999 results. Girls' achievement is considerably better than boys, with results just 5% lower than the national average for grades A*-C. GCSE results in graphic products and textile technology were well above the national average. Some exceptional GCSE work was seen during the inspection including a pop-up book, *Eight Classic Fables*. The weak material focus areas are food technology and systems/control. However, students achieved below their average performance across their other subjects in 2000. In Year 12, students studying AS/A2 product design for the first time are already showing potential to meet national expectations in 2001 and 2002; for example, they are developing a good critical awareness of products through consideration of form and function. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.
- 174 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is sound at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Good lessons have clear learning objectives, are well managed and organised, are stimulating and have pace. For example, successful teaching is enabling students at Key Stage 4 to develop good skills in research and analysis in graphics and food activities. Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge and this enables pupils to make good progress and has a positive impact on their standards of attainment. On-going marking and assessment of GCSE projects is also having a positive impact on standards because students receive constructive comments from their teachers that help them to improve their work. Homework is set when appropriate and is used to

consolidate class work, for pupils to prepare for lessons and to develop their technical vocabulary. Much has been done to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by way of high quality classroom displays containing technical vocabulary and the provision of well structured worksheets to support pupils' planning and evaluating. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, particularly in the practical aspects of making.

- 175 Where lessons are unsatisfactory, activities are inappropriate and a lack of clear objectives leaves pupils unsure of what is expected of them, for example, Year 9 pupils trying to design instruction leaflets without any resources to help them with ideas.
- 176 With improved standards of teaching, pupils' attitudes are generally very good and they enjoy design and technology. They are willing to participate fully in lessons and readily offer answers to questions from their teachers. There is a high degree of co-operation between pupils, especially when they are asked to work in smaller groups. They share tools and equipment fairly and handle them safely. They are eager to do well and take responsibility to clear and tidy up working areas at the end of every lesson. Folders and written work are kept neat, tidy and properly organised. Pupils are now learning effectively in design and technology, and making good progress.
- 177 The leadership of the subject is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. The Head of Department is particularly enthusiastic and sets a very good example for her colleagues. There are systems in place to enable teaching and learning to be monitored, although the department has still to use them effectively to further improve teaching and pupils' progress. Regular departmental meetings focus on improving standards by evaluating the design and technology curriculum and assessment issues. Although pupils' reports are varied, the best refer to subject specific detail in terms of progress and targets for improvement. Detailed analysis of Key Stage 3 and GCSE data has helped focus the department in helping all pupils achieve their potential. The departmental development plan sets out a clear direction for the way forward.
- 178 A wide range of computer applications is having a positive impact on standards. At Key Stage 3, pupils develop their skills in elements of computer control. Students at Key Stage 4, use computers in GCSE coursework to analyse data from small-scale consumer surveys and to improve presentation. However, students' experience of using computer aided design and manufacture is limited.
- 179 Since the last inspection, although attainment in external examinations has not risen enough, there has been improvement in pupils' achievement, in teaching and in management of the subject. A system of classroom observation is now in place, although the findings are not being sufficiently used to have significant impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.

GEOGRAPHY

- 180 Standards of attainment in geography are close to national standards. At the end of Key Stage 3, current standards of attainment are slightly above national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 4 levels of attainment are now above national averages. In 1999, 47% of students gained GCSE passes at grades A*-C. However, there has been a steady improvement in standards of attainment since 1997 and results in 2000 show a continued trend of improvement. Overall, students achieved well compared with their average performance across their other subjects. This is also true of the standards seen at Key Stage 4 during the inspection. At A Level, the number of students gaining passes at higher grades is below national levels but all students who were entered gained passes at A – E. Current evidence suggests that students in the Sixth Form are now at levels in line with national expectations. Since the last inspection, hard working, committed staff, have continued to respond to changes and have had a positive impact on raising standards.
- 181 By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are able to present neat, accurate, annotated diagrams. Written work is well presented. The majority of pupils can use information and draw plausible conclusions. They can assess causes and effects of issues such as oil spillage in the North Sea, and demographic changes in inner cities. At the end of Key Stage 4, students have increased confidence in the use of geographic terminology and have a good grasp of the impact of social, economic, and environmental considerations on decision making. Examples of this were seen in Year 10 classes where students held in depth discussions on the consequences of methods of flood prevention. In the Sixth Form, students have an appropriate level of maturity for the analysis and interpretation of information. They are able to identify features of glacial landscapes on maps and diagrams and confidently offer explanations of rates and types of erosion on different rock types.
- 182 The quality of teaching is good and often very good, as it was when the school was last inspected. This has a positive impact on learning. Where teaching is very good, particularly in Year 10 and in the Sixth Form, lessons are well planned and well paced. Students are effectively engaged in learning with a variety of tasks that are well suited to a wide range of learning styles and levels of capability. Good examples were seen in several lessons including a lesson at A Level about demographic changes in urban environments where slides, diagrams, discussion and careful questioning on fieldwork were used to reinforce and further develop students' knowledge, skills, and understanding. In a Year 9 lesson on energy sources video excerpts were well used, followed by well-structured tasks to guide learning. Students with special education needs are well supported and lesson content is appropriate and relevant to their needs. On the occasions when teaching is less effective parts of the lesson lack pace, and there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining students.
- 183 The quality of learning is good. Students have a very positive attitude towards their studies of geography. Good classroom management and teachers' enthusiasm for the subject help to create a stimulating learning environment. Students made sound progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Boys and girls make progress at equally good rates. The subject provides many contexts for the development of numeracy and literacy skills. There are many examples of students presenting quality written work, fieldwork findings, and data analysis. Students are polite, well behaved and keen to discuss their work. They are generally supportive of each other and work well together. Evidence of this was seen

in lessons where fieldwork results were shared and students helped each other to complete evidence bases. Students show respect for exercise books, textbooks, and wall displays, all of which are in a good condition. Students' attitudes to learning have had a positive impact on standards.

- 184 The high quality of leadership and management has been maintained since the last inspection. Teachers are beginning to gather data on the attainment patterns of their students and make predictions on future targets. There are comprehensive schemes of work, which indicate cross-curricular themes and opportunities. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. However, although monitoring and associated procedures are usefully in place, they are not yet sufficiently embedded in practice to have had an impact on raising standards.
- 185 The subject contributes well to students' moral, social and cultural development. Typical examples were seen in work on population, inner cities, economic and social change.

HISTORY

- 186 Overall, standards in history are in line with national expectations, and they are similar to those in the last inspection report.
- 187 At the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 and above in the past two years has been well above national expectations. There is little variation between the performance of boys and girls. Comparisons with the performance of the pupils in other subjects indicate that results attained are in line with the rest of the school.
- 188 From the evidence of lesson observations and pupils' work, standards were generally in line with national expectation. Higher attaining pupils could produce extended pieces of writing, accurately drawing upon historical knowledge and understanding to describe how different points of view relating to events and people in the past can occur. An example of this was seen in Year 9 pupils writing an obituary for Sir Richard Arkwright. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 could compare and contrast the religious changes in the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI and were beginning to make informed analysis of the importance of these changes to people at the time.
- 189 On occasions these standards are not always maintained because tasks set or teacher explanation do not make clear to the pupils the expectations required to attain at a higher level. For example, Year 9 pupils are able to write at length and with accuracy about developments in agriculture in the 18th century but fail to assess or explain the significance of these changes. Similarly, Year 9 pupils exploring the differences two sources provide about the life of 19th century workers are able to identify and explain differences but do not analyse the provenance of the source to determine its impact upon the reliability of the information it gives.
- 190 Lower attaining pupils can sequence events such as the stages in the growth of Leeds as a town in the 19th century. With support, they can identify and record changes in

society throughout the 19th century and make simple judgements, using historical knowledge, about the achievements of Sir Richard Arkwright.

- 191 At the end of Key Stage 4, results are well below national averages. The percentage of students attaining grades A*-C in the period 1996 – 1999 vary from just below to well below national figures. In the past two years the percentage gaining these higher grades has continued to decline. In the same period, the percentage of boys attaining the higher grades has exceeded that of girls. The 1999 GCSE results were well below those attained by other subjects in the school and there was no improvement in the proportion of students attaining A*-C grades in 2000. Students' achievement was significantly lower than their average performance across their other subjects.
- 192 However, observation during the inspection week and of students' work indicate that students' standards are in line with national expectations.
- 193 Higher attaining students in Year 10 can give accurate explanations for the reasons why events occurred but do not yet display an ability to explain how each cause can be related to the others nor how collectively they combined to cause a major event in the past. For example, they can explain the role of Lenin in the success of the Bolshevik revolution and can explain other causal factors but do not link these together. Similarly, they can explain the effectiveness of the Provisional Government in Russia using terms like Constituent Assembly and aristocracy accurately and confidently but fail to evaluate the collective impact of the actions it took.
- 194 In lessons observed they could define and explain propaganda, examine sources to determine the impact of propaganda on different groups of people and displayed a good knowledge and understanding of events, as for example, Year 10 students did when studying the impact and use of propaganda in Stalin's Russia. Over time students build up a detailed knowledge and understanding of events in Russia in the first part of the 20th century. Lower attaining students could describe effects of events such as Stalin's purges drawing upon a limited range of knowledge and understanding. Some had difficulty in selecting relevant information to include when producing answers to a specific question.
- 195 The difference between the department's recent results in GCSE examinations and the standards demonstrated during the inspection is due to the fact that the department has made effective use of examination data to analyse the discrepancies between standards in lessons and end of key stage results. Students clearly have difficulties in learning and accurately recalling information required by the examination. The department has introduced a number of strategies aimed at assisting students in this area but as yet it is too early to accurately assess the impact these strategies are making.
- 196 In the Sixth Form, results are overall in line with national standards. The percentage of students attaining A-E grades have been above national figures for the past four years. However, whilst results have improved over the past three years they have remained consistently below that of other subjects in the school.
- 197 Standards seen in the Sixth Form in the inspection are in line with those typically found in Sixth Forms. Higher attaining students through their personal studies

demonstrate an ability to identify appropriate historical questions. Working independently, they can select and organise information from historical sources. They can identify causes, analyse the links between these causes and evaluate their impact upon historical events, for example, when investigating opposition to Hitler.

- 198 Lower attaining Sixth Form students through their personal studies lack confidence in selectively using information from a range of sources to answer specific questions. Similarly, they lack understanding of factors that affect change and continuity. Their essay writing in response to A level questions reflects similar uncertainties, as for example, in their essays comparing the scale of the revolutions in the iron and textile industries of the 18th century. Answers given tend to be strong on description of the changes but weaker on analysis to compare the scale of change in each industry.
- 199 Throughout the school, students' attitudes to learning and standards of behaviour are consistently good and on occasions, excellent. Positive relationships between students and students and staff (including the learning support assistants) help to promote learning. The majority of students sustain concentration even when teachers' explanations are overly long or confusing.
- 200 Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is satisfactory at all key stages but teaching seen varied from very good to satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and from good to satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Students' learning and progress in lessons are good when the teacher begins by clearly explaining both the key theme and the specific historical knowledge, understanding and skills that are to be learned. Progress and learning are sustained throughout the lesson by the teachers' effective use of their subject knowledge and question and answer techniques, as they did, for example, in a Year 7 group studying the Roman way of life. The pupils clearly understood that they had to research information about Roman entertainment and use their findings to evaluate their understanding of how civilised Roman society was. The teacher was able to use the information to encourage pupils to question what was fact and what was myth. Discussions with each group of pupils indicated that they were re-appraising their thinking about what the term civilisation meant in Roman times and how it differed from definitions of present day society.
- 201 Lower attaining pupils, including students on the register of special educational needs, make good progress when teachers make effective use of learning support assistants. For example, in a small group of Year 7 pupils studying Roman family life, the teacher challenged the pupils to devise and record their own questions and then to interrogate a CD-ROM to search for answers to these questions. Throughout each activity, pupils received good support from the learning support assistants. Through discussion every pupil produced valid questions. With further help and discussion, they were all able to access the CD-ROM. As a result they all gained confidence in using basic information and communication technology skills and were acquiring new knowledge about Roman family life.
- 202 Teaching is less effective when teachers' planning lacks a clear understanding of the specific historical knowledge, understanding and skills to be taught in each lesson. As a result, some teachers' explanations can be overly long, unclear or confusing. On

some occasions, the tasks set for pupils do not extend the thinking and learning for all members of a class. Some of these features were evident in a Year 9 class engaged in a sequence of lessons studying the development of railways in the 19th century. Pupil presentations, arguing in favour or against railway development, did not extend the thinking and analytical skills of higher attaining students. Progress of many pupils in the first half term of Year 7 is limited when teaching is based on curriculum planning that does not take enough account of their prior learning.

- 203 The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The recently appointed subject leader has revised much of the scheme of work for Key Stage 3 which now provides clear guidance on what pupils should be achieving. In particular, it identifies opportunities for the use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning in history, an important area for development identified at the last inspection. Where the department has been able to gain access to the school computer suites, this planning is having a positive impact upon the pupils' learning. In Year 9 all pupils use information and communication technology to interrogate a CD-ROM database as part of their investigation into the Treaty of Versailles. In Year 10, students use the internet to acquire sources of information to complement and add depth to their understanding of why the Bolsheviks won the civil war. They use information and communication technology to produce a newspaper that demonstrates their knowledge and understanding.
- 204 Since the last inspection the subject has made good progress in improving the provision of its resources. For example, all Year 10 students now have their own textbook which is closely matched to the requirements of the GCSE course they are studying.
- 205 The recently appointed subject leader has made effective use of the school's programme for monitoring the work of the subject, including observation of lessons. The results are discussed with each individual member of staff and targets are set to help with their professional development. However, whilst the subject leader has a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning observed, this information is currently not systematically used to inform priorities to develop teaching and learning within the departmental development plan.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 206 Overall, standards of work are in line with those expected nationally from pupils of this age range, as they were at the time of the last inspection.
- 207 Based on teachers' assessments, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has been judged to be above that expected nationally. However, this assessment is based on a narrow range of skills from short projects in English and history and in classwork in mathematics. In mathematics, attainment of knowledge, skill and understanding of computer models is judged soundly, but overall, the evidence suggests that the assessment of attainment has been set too high. Pupils in Key Stage 3 use research from the internet and Encarta and combine this with word processing or desk-top

publishing but have not yet fully developed presentation which shows a sense of awareness of their audience. At the end of the key stage, attainment lacks information on data logging because pupils have insufficient access.

- 208 Attainment in Key Stage 3 lessons observed is broadly in line with national expectations. In design and technology, Year 9 pupils use software to develop and refine instructions to control events and the most able reach National Curriculum Levels 5/6. In mathematics, pupils use the Logo programme to devise instructions for drawing a regular polygon, and some Year 8 pupils use Excel to generate number patterns and sequences, with several pupils constructing formulae to produce triangle numbers, representing achievement well above national expectations.
- 209 At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE in 1999 was below national averages. In 2000, there was an improvement in the percentage of students achieving grades A*-C, although it remains below the national average. The work of current Year 11 students shows standards in line with national expectations; students apply their knowledge of data handling, computer modelling and word processing when solving business problems. Analysis of client need is good and students make reasoned choices of software; their evaluations show an ability to make suggestions for improvement based on practical experience. In Year 10 lessons students make both simple and complex queries in their database activity and perform broadly in line with national expectations. Less able students experience difficulty in constructing and replicating formulae in the Excel spreadsheet programme to support mathematics work and in preparation for representing data as graphs.
- 210 All students in Key Stage 4 take a unit of information and communication technology leading to the National Inter-Action Certificate Award Scheme in Computing. In 2000, 39% of the least able students attained one or more certificates. This skills acquisition course provides an opportunity to extend skills from Key Stage 3. It is most suited to the needs of the least able students who carry out simple word processed tasks, correct obvious errors, and use a variety of word processing techniques. However, there is insufficient challenge for those students who also take GCSE information technology, and low expectations are adversely affecting the achievement of those students which, at beginner and intermediate standard, is lower than is expected for the majority of pupils of this age.
- 211 In the Sixth Form, the first cohort of students taking advanced subsidiary AS level information technology achieved grades in line with school predictions and national expectations. In Year 13, much students' work is above national averages, for example, students develop systems to solve problems, and Year 12 students increase their knowledge of information technology theory and extend their previous knowledge of a database to include relationships. The key skill of information technology has made a good start in Year 12. Students achieve well and make good progress; they develop a wide range of skills with generic software. GNVQ students develop this key skill within the context of their vocational work. Attainment is in line with national expectations at both Level 2 and 3. The majority of students are making good progress as independent learners.

- 212 In Key Stage 3, pupils generally make good progress in the six week programme of information and communication technology lessons, except where work is inappropriate for their ability. However, their progress in learning to use information and communication technology subsequently is not consistently reinforced in other subjects. In Key Stage 4, GCSE students make good progress in lessons, and are achieving more highly than recent examination results suggest. This is due to the quality of teaching and to the positive attitudes and behaviour of students. Teachers have taken positive steps for students to improve documentation and develop examination techniques throughout the course. In Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils with special educational needs make better progress than expected for their ability. Attitudes and behaviour are good in all key stages, pupils are willing to help each other when problems are encountered.
- 213 Across all key stages, teaching is good, and it has improved since the last inspection. It was good or better in 64% of lessons seen, satisfactory in 29%, and unsatisfactory in 7%. The majority of teachers plan their lessons well, outcomes for lessons are shared and pupils know what they have to do, although learning objectives are occasionally unclear. There is a narrow range of teaching styles, but in all key stages, teaching strength lies in the quality of support given to individual pupils by their teachers; teachers offer individual guidance for the development of skills, and to help pupils improve their work. Teaching is unsatisfactory where expectations of pupils are inappropriate, where there is inadequate preparation at the start of lessons and where pupils lack the necessary skills to complete a task effectively. Classroom management is ineffective where there are insufficient computers for individual work and some pupils, mainly girls, make little progress. Learning support assistants provide a high level of guidance, and the provision of appropriate resources such as large monitors and ability specific software has a positive impact on the standards of pupils with special educational needs. The Key Stage 3 course provides a satisfactory introduction for the least able and younger pupils who are enthusiastic and enjoy the work, but there is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils. Where teachers use their personal skills to enhance this course, they motivate and develop a sense of purpose. Some teachers choose to use other software for teaching computer control and this impacts positively on progress.
- 214 There is good support for numeracy where pupils develop numerical skills through the use of spreadsheets and databases.
- 215 There has been some improvement in application and resourcing since the last inspection. There is a strong commitment to using information and communication technology across the curriculum. In Key Stage 3, subject departments are starting to provide opportunities for information and communication technology. History makes good use of the internet for research, and Year 7 pupils make effective use of the BBC website to access information for use in project work. In mathematics at Key Stage 3, some pupils are targeted for extra development work on Successmaker. In the Sixth Form, a number of subjects encourage internet research, in particular business studies and physical education. Departments now include the use of information and communication technology in their schemes of work. The two computer rooms and the library computers are all linked to a common network with internet access. The quality and range of learning opportunities across the curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 have improved and discrete provision is appropriate for

GCSE in Key Stage 4 and all courses in the Sixth Form. Nevertheless, there has not been sufficient progress on the points for development identified in the last report. There is insufficient access to computer resources for departments to carry out their plans. There is, also, a lack of a coherent policy for the continued development of teachers' expertise in the standards of information and communication technology and its use to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. This, combined with an inconsistent understanding by departments of their role in the assessment of pupils' skills, is having an adverse effect on progress as pupils move up the school.

- 216 The overall management of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work in information and communication technology are not fully developed and there is insufficient support for inexperienced teachers. Pupils' performance in Key Stage 3 is not fully monitored or evaluated. These factors have a negative impact on pupils' progress. The recommendation in the last report that subject-based teaching should be formally monitored has not been effectively carried out.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 217 Overall, attainment is above that expected nationally, and shows improvement from when the school was last inspected.
- 218 At the end of Key Stage 3, standards were below average in 1999 but rose significantly in 2000 with a high percentage of pupils attaining above average levels. Similarly, many pupils seen during the inspection were working at above average levels. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE examination performance has fluctuated in recent years and in 1999, the number of students gaining grades A*-C dropped significantly and was below the national average; students performed better in their other subjects. However, in 2000, due to a significant improvement in German, overall results in modern foreign languages were above the national average. In French, students' achievement was higher than their average performance across the other subjects. Students do well at gaining high GCSE grades and almost all students who sit the alternative lower level Certificate of Achievement gain a distinction. More girls than boys attain higher grades, particularly in French, at Key Stages 3 and 4. Sixth Form students have attained grades across the full range over recent years. In 1999 results were low compared to students' results in their other subjects. However, in 2000, students were particularly successful.
- 219 In the lessons seen pupils and students attained above average standards overall. Pupils with special educational needs attain well. Speaking and listening skills are strengths at every stage but standards in writing are less consistently secure in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- 220 The teaching seen during the inspection was very good and it has improved since the last inspection. Clearly planned learning goals were achieved because of focused, whole class and pairwork reinforcement activities, followed by imaginative and challenging individual and group creative activities. Pupils were well motivated and were able themselves to identify the good progress they were making in their learning.

- 221 Teachers conduct lessons in the foreign language, using prompt cards, visual aids, props and well planned activities. These approaches are effective in extending pupils' learning; pupils are increasingly confident to respond and speak spontaneously in the foreign language. In a Year 9 French lesson, the teacher used flashcards to prompt pupils to recall and extend their vocabulary, then acted out short dialogues with individuals to rehearse key phrases; finally, groups of pupils independently improvised a role play. By Year 10, teachers encourage individuals to speak at greater length and to use a wider range of vocabulary, style and tense. For example, in a Year 10 French lesson the teacher gave a talk about a hobby and three students followed the model, speaking expressively about their hobbies. Pupils in a Year 10 German lesson used props to act out a role play they had devised about household chores; they spoke from memory fluently and expressively. In Sixth Form, lessons teachers engage students in arguing and presenting contrasting points of view about topical issues. For example, in a Year 13 lesson the teacher checked a student's recall of vocabulary, sought and showed genuine interest in his opinions, role played and provided cards with headline words from the current topic of study. The student was able to sustain conversation, argument and presentation on the topic of politics and young people for a complete lesson, speaking on different aspects of the topic and finally, having randomly selected a headline, recapitulated the key points of the lesson at speed, effectively learning and integrating into his talk the new vocabulary introduced during the lesson.
- 222 Teachers foster pupils' listening skills effectively through harnessing their attention. In addition to providing opportunities for pupils to listen to taped conversations, they use classroom activities as listening exercises. For example, in a Year 8 French lesson pupils noted on a grid information given in role plays acted by the teacher and the Foreign Language Assistant and by the teacher and pupils. In a Year 9 French lesson pupils noted all the details in a rapidly spoken conversation between the teacher and the Foreign Language Assistant.
- 223 Teachers encourage awareness of the importance of grammar for understanding, speaking and writing at higher levels. For example, in a Year 10 German lesson the teacher talked about the need to focus on prepositions and cases in order to accurately read and understand a text; students listened attentively and reused the structure successfully in the exercise which followed. In a Year 12 German lesson the teacher posed questions which enabled students to analyse the grammatical pattern in sentences; by defining the pattern and identifying a concept which is different in English, the students showed that they had effectively learnt the structure.
- 224 Since the last inspection the department has made significant improvement. Standards have improved, although examination results have fluctuated. Teaching by the permanent staff is frequently very good now. The school has had a problem staffing modern foreign languages and frequent changes of teacher is a factor in unsettling pupils' learning. The school is currently timetabling four periods of subject leaders' time to support affected classes. Leadership and management of French and German continue to be good. Feedbacks from monitored lessons and from relevant in-service training are effective in establishing a consistent team approach to the teaching and learning strategies used. A common understanding of attainment levels now exists and is supported by teachers collaboratively assessing samples of pupils'

work and collating the samples in a portfolio. Marking, however, varies in quality. Where marking is effective, teachers' comments identify the strengths and weaknesses of the language and specify precise targets to help pupils improve.

MUSIC

- 225 Attainment of pupils is above that expected nationally for the age groups. This is an improvement on the standards identified at the time of the last inspection.
- 226 At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are higher than national average. This is a significant improvement from 1996. In Key Stage 4, numbers taking the optional music courses at GCSE are well above the national average. Attainment in GCSE music examinations has improved steadily over recent years. Results were below the national average in 1998 and at the national average in 1999. In 2000, the proportion of students achieving grades A*-C was significantly above the national average. Students' results were higher than their average across their other subjects. Results do not show any significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. A small number of students take A level music each year. Two students entered in 1998 and 1 in each succeeding year. Students gained one A and one C grade in 1998, a D grade in 1999, and a C grade in 2000.
- 227 At Key Stage 3 many pupils show familiarity and confidence in reading simple music; they play well in group music making and have a growing knowledge of musical vocabulary. They listen to each other when performing and show a musical approach to the composition of melody and the organisation of musical structures. In one Year 9 lesson, pupils were asked to compose a round. They preferred to experiment aurally with different tunes, trying melodies out on instruments and making musical choices before writing tunes down. In particular, all pupils showed a confident and inventive approach to tasks set. Middle sets experience more difficulty with skills based learning which includes notation. There is no noticeable difference in the standards achieved between boys and girls. Pupils progress well in lessons and over a period of time. In all Key Stage 3 lessons seen pupils made satisfactory to good progress, although musical learning was limited to some extent by a lack of stated musical focus in the activities set.
- 228 In Key Stage 4 lessons, a wide range of standards was observed, but all students were achieving soundly and many better than their ability would suggest, especially in performing and composing activities. A significant number of students sing or play instruments to a high standard, and all are enthusiastic and confident in performing activities. Many students possess a good musical vocabulary and all are able to talk confidently and knowledgeably about their own achievements. However, in one Year 10 group, students were experiencing difficulty with aural dictation of rhythms. Many were unsure of the note values, and most students were unable to remember the rhythm accurately. From an analysis of results, the department has identified listening activities as an area for improvement.
- 229 In the Sixth Form, two students are achieving good to very high standards of attainment, with significant strengths in performing and two-part composition. One student showed a very clear understanding of the harmonic and melodic requirements

of two part inventions, and another played a difficult piece of music with musicianship and a good sense of style. Both students discussed their musical progress confidently and with a good musical vocabulary. Talented students achieve well especially at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, particularly in instrumental and vocal performance

- 230 At Key Stage 3, pupils are keen to succeed and maintain a constructive and musical approach to their learning. They want to make music and work hard at practical tasks. Pupils' response was less positive in a few lessons, where inadequate musical stimulus or variety was given. In one lesson, pupils spent a considerable time working out the notes of a tune on keyboards and the monotony of the task led to some loss of concentration. At Key Stage 4, students are well motivated and often show enjoyment, enthusiasm and commitment in making music. Sixth Form students are committed to high standards and gave evidence of sustained work over a period of time. In all key stages and in particular in the Sixth Form, students talk confidently about their musical achievement and abilities. The attitudes and values of students remain positive and open as they were at the last inspection.
- 231 The quality of teaching is good overall, in comparison to the last inspection, when it was reported as sound or better.
- 232 Expectations of behaviour and effort are high, and there is consistently clear planning and good class management. Lessons have good teacher-pupil relationships. Teachers make good use of questioning, and maintain a caring and positive attitude towards pupils' progress. Lessons are well prepared and have clear aims. Homework is appropriate and regularly set. Teachers' awareness of individual needs at Key Stage 4 enhances the appropriateness of planned activities. Sixth Form teaching is very good with high expectations, good pace, and an obvious commitment to students' progress. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and constructive understanding, allowing good progress to be made. Special educational needs pupils are provided with effective teacher support based on a knowledge of their individual needs. Opportunities for the support of literacy are also evident, especially through the use of key words at Key Stage 3.
- 233 Some lessons are less effective in raising standards because teachers, and consequently pupils, are not clear what specific musical learning is intended. In one lesson, pupils were learning to play a four-part piece but it was unclear whether pupils were to focus on improving their notation skills, keeping a balance between their part and others, or playing in time. This lack of sharply focused learning objectives can lead to a lack of purposeful support for individual pupils. A limited range of learning strategies is used in some Key Stage 3 lessons and single common tasks at times do not always cater for a wide range of abilities. Except in the Sixth Form, there is insufficient planning for or use of information and communication technology. There is only one computer available but this is underused.
- 234 The department's assessment policy is clear and contains good assessment criteria. However, in Key Stage 3, lesson aims are often based on the completion of activities rather than specific learning objectives. Teachers often do not identify to pupils what

musical learning they are intended to gain or have gained. Assessment at the other key stages is thorough and based on individual students' development and needs.

- 235 The department is excellently managed. Planning is thorough and often exemplary. Monitoring of results and target setting for students is good at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form but needs development at Key Stage 3. The departmental development plan is effectively linked to the School Improvement Plan. Regular monitoring of the teaching staff in the department takes place. These elements are usefully contributing to the department's improvement.
- 236 There has been sound improvement since the last inspection. Attainment at Key Stage 3 has improved, and curriculum opportunities have widened. Assessment procedures are in place but require sharper musical focus. Information and communication technology opportunities and accommodation, with only one classroom suitable for teaching music, remain unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 237 Overall, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. It is similar to that identified in the previous inspection report.
- 238 At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. From the evidence of all lessons seen, pupils have a good knowledge of the importance of a warm up and are able to lead these effectively and safely. In Year 7 dance, pupils have a good understanding of levels, have appropriate movement vocabulary and are able to effectively interpret the beat of the music. In Year 8 netball, basic skills are good and pupils have a good knowledge of strategies for attack. However, in Year 9, in gymnastics and badminton, pupils are working at levels of attainment below those expected for this age group.
- 239 At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students gaining A*- C grades in the 2000 GCSE examination was below the national average and the achievement of girls was lower than that of boys. In 2000, students achieved below their average across their other subjects. There are good strategies in place for raising the achievements of girls in the practical aspects and improving the delivery of the theoretical components.
- 240 Results at A level are well above the national average with a 100% pass rate at A-C grades. Year 12 students achieve a high standard in the Community Sports Leaders Award and have a good understanding of the management of groups of children and the safety requirements in delivering practical activities.
- 241 Standards in extra curricular activities are good with individuals achieving representative honours both regionally and nationally and teams competing successfully.
- 242 The quality of teaching is very good; in almost two-thirds of lessons seen it was good or better. This is an improvement from the last inspection. Teaching at A/AS level is exceptionally good and promotes very high educational standards. There is good specialist knowledge in the department and this is reflected in teachers making

information meaningful for pupils. Lessons are effectively planned and progressively developed with learning objectives identified and content related to previous lessons. When learning objectives were more specific it enabled better judgement of pupils' progress at the end of lessons.

- 243 Teachers' management and organisation of pupils and equipment are excellent and contribute significantly to pupils' high rates of participation and learning. High expectations are established for pupils' behaviour and effort and this is evident in all lessons with pupils on task and responding positively to all that is expected of them. Pupils receive constant support and feedback on their progress and they value the care provided by their teachers. Activities are mainly differentiated through outcome and individual feedback; in some lessons this results in the more talented pupils not being challenged. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in the physical education programme, and achieve at the same rate as their peers. There is excellent support through a support teacher for a child with special education needs in gymnastics.
- 244 The marking of pupils' theoretical components in the accredited courses is encouraging and up-to-date with valuable comments on how to improve their work. However, the monitoring and recording of pupils' progress requires further development.
- 245 Overall, there has been sound improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved. The department handbook provides a detailed framework for the effective operation of the department, and there is now a consistency in approach by all department members. In some lessons, teaching is too teacher-directed with not enough opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning through exploration, problem solving, observation and evaluation of their own and others' performance. Skills are sometimes delivered outside the context of the game and there are few opportunities to apply and transfer principles of play across different activities. The development of gymnastics is limited through a lack of gymnastic equipment. Cricket is also limited because of the lack of outdoor and indoor facilities. There are good safety procedures in place for dealing with accidents, but the department should undertake a risk assessment of all facilities, changing procedures, practices and activities.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

THE DYSLEXIA UNIT

- 246 The school houses a designated Local Education Authority special unit to provide for the special educational needs of statemented pupils who have specific learning difficulties primarily located in difficulties in acquiring literacy skills, although often there are other attendant learning difficulties. The unit has provision for 20 full-time statemented pupils, for whom the normal admissions criteria are waived. For these pupils, sensitive and appropriate arrangements are made to enable them to understand and feel comfortable within the Catholic ethos. The unit is staffed by a learning support assistant who also acts as a clerical assistant to the head of the unit

- 247 The unit is organised to provide a high level of individual support for pupils to enable them to participate fully in the curriculum and life of the school. The very good progress they make in acquiring and improving their literacy skills is a significant factor in the success that they achieve in other subjects. Pupils who have previously made little or no development of reading and writing, acquire techniques and skills which enable them to overcome their difficulties and, in many cases, become competent readers able to express complex ideas in writing. Teaching, by skilled and confident teachers, is consistently good. The individual sessions are well planned within a coherent and consistent framework. Teachers use a good variety of tasks and materials to enable pupils, who often have poor attention spans, to sustain motivation and concentration. Recording is based on sound and secure assessment procedures and these are very well used to monitor development and plan future work. Teachers know the pupils very well and take good account of their individual personality and learning characteristics in determining the strategies to be used.
- 248 Management of the unit, which is undertaken by the special educational needs co-ordinator as part of a wider special educational needs role within the school, is very effective. This arrangement, which is very flexible and responsive to the needs of both the unit and the school, is instrumental in enabling the good practice in the unit for addressing literacy to be spread more widely throughout the school. This gives good effect to the aims of the special educational needs policy in ensuring that special educational needs work is firmly integrated into the work of the school. The unit is well resourced with appropriate and carefully chosen materials. Good use is made of information and communication technology to provide opportunities to develop aural skills and practise their spelling and decoding techniques.
- 249 There are very good links between the Unit and the Local Education Authority, especially through the special educational needs support services which reflect the commitment by the Local Education Authority to being a 'Dyslexia friendly' authority. These links provide an effective structure for Local Education Authority oversight of the provision.
- 250 For these reasons and, taking into account the good teaching and learning that it supports, the unit represents good value for money to both the school and the Local Education Authority which funds it.