

INSPECTION REPORT

The McAuley Catholic High School

Doncaster

LEA area: Doncaster

Unique Reference Number: 106810

Headteacher: Mr Tim Harrington

Reporting inspector: Brian Evans

1049

Dates of inspection: 29th November – 3rd December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707995

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Catholic voluntary aided
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Cantley Lane Doncaster South Yorkshire DN3 3QF
Telephone number:	01302 537396
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev John McNamee
Date of previous inspection:	31 st October – 4 th November 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Brian Evans, RgI		Attainment and progress
		Quality of teaching
		Efficiency
Gillian Marsland, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and students' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
Clive Ashworth	English	
Roy Meakin	Mathematics	Leadership and management
Graham Carter	Science	
Sylvia Innes	Design and technology	
	Information technology	
	GNVQ courses	
Ray Donne	Modern foreign languages	
Gillian Murray	History Sixth form	
Mike Gallagher	Geography	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Martin Flatman	Music	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Shirley Jeffray	Physical education Equal opportunities	
Ross Parker	Special educational needs	Curriculum and assessment
Jeffrey Pickering	Art	

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The Registrar
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Well above average standards in mathematics.
- Well above average standards in music including a high level of participation in instrumental and choral activities.
- Very good behaviour which has a positive effect on standards.
- Good teaching in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form enabling students to make good progress.
- Very good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Very efficient financial control and school administration.
- Excellent participation in extra-curricular activities.
- Very good ethos for learning.
- Very good involvement of the sixth form in the life of the school.

• Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Teachers' expectations for Key Stage 3 students in some subjects are not high enough.
- II. Good practices on using assessment data in a few departments are not consistently practised in all subjects.
- III. Management of design and technology and art departments is unsatisfactory.
- IV. There is no coherent strategy for staff development.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of the school.

• How the school has improved since the last inspection

Since the last inspection art resources and accommodation have been improved. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality has been reviewed and satisfactory progress made. The strong ethos for learning has been maintained and under the new headteacher the school has a strong sense of direction which promote high standards and quality of education. There has been good improvement in provision of information technology for all pupils. Links between planning and financial allocation are in place but until recently there has been little improvement in the systematic monitoring and evaluation of standards of teaching and learning.

Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection in addressing the key issues. The school now has good systems in place to maintain the good school ethos and to improve standards.

•

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			<i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
Key Stage 3 Tests	A	A	
GCSE Examinations	A	A	
A/AS – levels	C		

When students enter the school their attainment is above the national average. Overall standards are higher than the national average in all years. Progress for high, average and lower attainers, and students with special educational needs, is good in all years of the school.

In the end-of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999, results were above the national average in English, and well above in mathematics and science. In comparison with national results for similar schools (determined by the percentage taking free school meals), results were above average for English and well above average for mathematics and science. For the last three years average National Curriculum levels have been consistently high and well above the local authority and national averages. In 1999 average test levels overall fell below those of 1998 but remained well above the national average.

By the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, 60 per cent of students achieved five GCSE grades A* to C, well above the national average, and well above the national average for similar schools. Average GCSE points scores per students have improved significantly since the last inspection and, when the 1999 GCSE results are taken into account, they show a rising trend broadly in line with the national trend. The percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to G and one or more grades A* to G has consistently been well above the national average since the last inspection. These results reflect the intensive, and most effective, monitoring and support this year group received for several years. In 1999 there was little significant difference in the overall GCSE performance of boys and girls. Over 60 per cent of students achieved grades A* to C in business studies, drama, textiles, English language, English literature, German, history, mathematics, music and science (double award).

The average points score achieved by A-level students has been above the national average for several years. In 1999 100 per cent grades A to E were awarded in biology, music, physical education and religious education. A high proportion of A-level candidates in the most popular subjects of mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, English and general studies obtained A and B grades. Students studying the recently introduced General and National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) are achieving average standards.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	Mathematics, drama, information technology.	Art
Years 10-11	Good	Mathematics, music.	
Sixth form	Good	Mathematics, information technology, music, economics	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The quality of teaching is good. During the inspection it was at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of lessons; good or better in 67 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 26 per cent. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form three in every four lessons were good or better and one in three were very good or excellent. There were a few unsatisfactory lessons in Key Stage 3 but well over half the lessons were good or better.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good: exclusions have fallen owing to the setting up of an internal exclusion unit; students are courteous and trustworthy.
Attendance	Satisfactory: attendance is close to the national average; students are sometimes late to lessons when they move between the two sites.
Ethos*	Good: students learn well in a supportive environment.
Leadership and management	Good: headteacher and governors provide clear educational direction for the school. There are some weaknesses in middle management.
Curriculum	Good: curriculum overall is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements.
Special educational needs	Good
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good: spiritual, moral and social development very good; cultural good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory.
Value for money	Good: students develop very good personal qualities and above average academic standards by the time they leave school.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

· **The parents' views of the school**

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
V. The positive effect the school's values and attitudes have on students' learning. VI. The school enables students to achieve high standards of work. VII. Standards of behaviour are high. VIII. The school is easy to approach when parents have questions or problems.	IX. A small number of parents are not satisfied

Inspection evidence supports parents' positive views on the school. There are occasional variations in the setting of homework between teachers but students' planners and folders confirm that, overall, homework is a significant contributory factor in the high standards achieved by students.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To improve standards further the governors and senior management team need to:

- **raise teachers' expectations of students' standards in Key Stage 3 by**

[Paragraph numbers – 32, 101, 116, 129]

setting up a formal monitoring framework by senior managers for observing and supporting good classroom practice;

structuring lessons so that tasks are better matched to challenge students of all attainment levels;

- **improve on the good assessment practices that exist in the school by**

[Paragraph numbers – 48, 77, 118]

introducing a whole-school approach to the use of assessment and performance data that builds on the current good practice in some departments;

monitoring what impact on students' standards the interpretation and use of performance data analysis has on specific groups of pupils, for example of high, average and lower-attainers.

- **improve the management of art and design and technology departments by**

[Paragraph numbers – 72, 141, 152]

implementing and supporting well-defined priorities and targets within a longer-term strategic plan for each subject;

monitoring teaching so that specific needs are identified and guidance given for improvement.

- **establish a coherent strategy for staff development across all aspects of school planning by**

[Paragraph numbers – 79, 88]

appointing a member of the senior management team to oversee all aspects of staff development funding;

planning a staff development programme that supports whole school priorities identified in the school development plan.

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

Developing the use of the library as a more effective learning resource for students in Key Stage 4 to research and retrieve information.

[Paragraph numbers 14, 80, 83]

Improving access to information technology for students with special educational needs and monitoring whether all teachers have sufficient access to students' individual education plans.

[Paragraph numbers 86,125]

· INTRODUCTION

· Characteristics of the school

- 1 The McAuley Catholic High School is a much bigger than average 11–18 comprehensive school with 1640 students. The sixth form has 264 students. There are slightly more girls than boys in Years 8 and 9 but overall there is a fairly even balance. It is a split site school and the upper and lower schools are a walk of about five minutes apart across a busy main road into Doncaster. Students are well-behaved and alert when moving between buildings but there are no pedestrian crossings to halt the traffic and prior to and during the inspection week there were two accidents as well as some near misses.
- 2 Around 174 students (just under 11 per cent) are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. There are 20 students with English as an additional language which is about the same as most schools. The percentage of students from ethnic backgrounds is low compared to the national average. Over 97 per cent of students are white. Just over 226 students (14 per cent) are on the register of special educational needs which is above the national average. The percentage of students with statements of special educational need (1.7 per cent) is broadly in line with the national average.
- 3 The school has an extensive catchment area and many students are brought in by buses from outlying districts and towns to the south of Doncaster. There are students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds which reflect both the favourable residential districts and the pockets of unemployment associated with the decline of the mining industry in the area. Over 80 per cent of students are from Catholic families but there are a variety of faiths represented in the school. The overall attainment profile of students on entry to the school is above the national average.
- 4 The percentage of students who stay into the sixth form at The McAuley High School has increased from 54 per cent in 1996 to 56 per cent in 1997, 60 per cent in 1998 and 68 per cent in 1999. Around ten per cent go into training, or employment. Approximately 77 per cent of Year 13 students move into higher or further education and ten per cent find employment.
- 5 The school prominently displays around the buildings and on its stationery 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10.10) as an integral part of its mission statement. The school aims include clear objectives on the teaching of the Catholic Faith; all students being given every opportunity to develop spiritually, academically, physically and socially to develop their full potential; all students having an awareness of the diversity of present day society.
- 6 Targets set for Summer 2000 are that 55 per cent of students will achieve five or more GCSE grades A* to C, and 99 per cent will achieve one or more grades A*-G, with an average total points score of 45. These realistic figures maintain the high standards obtained by The McAuley School in 1999.

6 **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3
For latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	138	143	281

6 National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	84	105	128
	Girls	120	113	96
	Total	204	218	224
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	73 (82)	78 (81)	78 (77)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	39 (42)	51 (54)	33(35)
	National	N/A (35)	N/A(36)	N/A (27)

6 Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	77	99	101
	Girls	57	115	108
	Total	134	214	209
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	67(70)	76(79)	74(77)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	30(34)	47(53)	33(38)
	National	N/A (31)	N/A (37)	N/A (31)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	101	136	237

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of students achieving standard specified	Boys	58	101	101
	Girls	84	133	134
	Total	142	234	235
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	60(51)	99(93)	99(97)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such students* who achieved all those they studied

	Number	% Success rate
School	0	N/a
National		

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	58	53	111

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	19.0	16.7	18.1	3.3	0	2.2
National	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications
and
Percentage of *such students* who achieved these
qualifications:

	Number	% Success rate
School	11	91
National		

.....

3

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

1

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

4 **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions)
missed
through absence for the latest complete
reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8.0
	National comparative data	7.7
Unauthorised Absence	School	1.1
	National comparative data	1.1

4

4

4 **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of students (of statutory school age)
during
the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	166
Permanent	6

4 **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	26
Satisfactory or better	99
Less than satisfactory	1

4 PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

4 EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

4 Attainment and progress

- 1 When students enter the school their attainment is above the national average. Overall standards are higher than the national average in all years. Progress for higher, average and lower-attainers, and students with special educational needs, is good in all years of the school.
- 2 In the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999, results were above the national average in English, and well above in mathematics and science. In comparison with national results for similar schools (determined by the percentage taking free school meals), results were above average for English and well above average for mathematics and science. For the last three years average National Curriculum levels have been consistently high and well above the local authority and national averages. In 1999 average test levels overall were below those of 1998 but remained well above the national average.
- 3 By the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, 60 per cent of students achieved five GCSE grades A* to C, well above the national average, and well above the national average for similar schools. Average GCSE points scores per students have improved significantly since the last inspection and between 1996 and 1999 show a rising trend broadly in line with the national trend. The percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to G and one or more grades A* to G has consistently been well above the national average since the last inspection. These results reflect the intensive, and most effective, monitoring and support this year group received for several years. In 1999 there was little significant difference in the overall GCSE performance of boys and girls. Over 60 per cent of students achieved grades A* to C in business studies, drama, textiles, English language, English literature, German, history, mathematics, music and double award science.
- 4 The average points score achieved by A-level GCE students was above the national average in 1996 and 1997 and well above in 1998. The score for 1999 is close to the national average. A high proportion of A-level candidates in the most popular subjects of mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, English and general studies obtained A and B grades. Standards in GNVQ Advanced information technology and in Intermediate leisure and tourism and health and social care are close to those expected nationally. The majority of students on GNVQ courses produce portfolios with well-written assignments, presented using a variety of information technology software. Portfolios incorporate evidence of all the key skills. Students use their work experience placements, part-time jobs and visits to write well-focused case studies. In all GNVQ subjects, work is neat and well presented, showing a satisfactory standard of reading and writing skills. Students make good use of photographs and diagrams.
- 5 In the work seen, attainment in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average. It is above that expected nationally in geography, history and music. It is in line with national expectations in design and technology, information technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. Attainment is below that expected nationally in art.

- 6 In work seen by the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in mathematics, science and music is well above the national average. It is above the national average in English, geography, history and drama. Work in design and technology, information technology, modern foreign languages and physical education is at the national average. It is below the national average in art.
- 7 In the sixth form, A-level GCE examination work is well above the national average in mathematics and music and above the national average in English, science and modern foreign languages. It is close to the national average in art, economics, sociology, general studies, geography, history and physical education.
- 8 Students generally have above average literacy skills and make good progress in developing these skills across the curriculum. Good displays of subject-specific vocabulary in some departments support students' learning well. In most subjects, regular and well planned opportunities are provided for all students to develop their writing skills, including for example, when writing about investigations in mathematics, in project work in history, and in a good range of assignments in religious education. However, apart for sixth form students, students do not make enough use of the library to improve their literacy skills.
- 9 Standards of numeracy and mental number skills in mathematics are above national expectations. A systematic and coordinated whole-school approach to numeracy is incorporated into the mathematics development plan. Generally, students of all ages respond well to a wide range of well-planned opportunities to develop numerical skills across a range of subjects. These extend from competent data-handling and analysis, as part of students' research in design and technology, to drawing accurate conclusions from a variety of graphical presentations and techniques in A-level economics.
- 10 Standards in information technology match national expectations by the end of all key stages. Students use their information technology knowledge to present information in a range of subjects in Key Stage 3 as, for example in physical education where they apply their data logging skills. By the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form they apply their information technology skills to research information and choose sensibly between options as, for example when to use the Internet. Good progress in the subject is underpinned by teachers' positive attitudes across much of the curriculum.
- 11 Progress in English is good in all key stages for all levels of attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3, handwriting is good; spelling is generally accurate, and nearly all lower-attaining students, including those who have special educational needs, are able to write a short sequence of sentences. Students make good progress in their oral skills at Key Stage 4 because teachers encourage participation by all students in class discussions.
- 12 Progress in mathematics is good in Key Stage 3, very good in Key Stage 4 and good for A-level students. In Key Stage 3 all students make good progress because exercises and explanations match individual attainment levels closely. Progress is very good in Key Stage 4 because students' mathematical skills develop well through carefully constructed schemes of work.
- 13 In science, progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and sixth form courses. In Key Stage 3 students gain a sound understanding of scientific vocabulary and notation and show solid gains in their knowledge of life processes, materials and physical processes. Occasionally, students with special educational needs and low-attainers make less progress because the text used is too difficult for them to understand. In Key Stage 4 practical skills develop well and are applied successfully in investigation work.

- 14 In design and technology students make good progress at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. Good progress is made in geography, history, information technology, modern foreign languages and music in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in drama at Key Stage 4. In physical education students' progress in relation to their prior attainment is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. Progress in art is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 because some lessons are disrupted by a minority of students which has an adverse effect on the learning of others in the classroom. Progress in art at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is satisfactory.
- 15 Students with statements of special educational needs make good progress. The morning and lunchtime reading support promotes gains in reading development of up to eighteen months over a school year. Improvements in behaviour can be seen through positive comments in individual student planners. Students with specific learning difficulties gain an understanding of how to organise their learning. Students with statements make good progress in class when learning support assistants can help them, but this support is not available in all their lessons.

21 **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

- 16 The attitudes to learning of the students throughout the school are good and have a positive effect on attainment and progress. The students show interest in their work and sustain concentration for long periods of time when teaching is challenging. For example a group of Year 12 music A-level students studying a concert symphony were attentive, showed initiative and worked independently. Parents state that the school fosters achievement and hard work and ensure that students are responsible members of society. This view was confirmed by the inspection.
- 17 The behaviour of the students in and around the school is very good. They are courteous, trustworthy and politely open doors for visitors. The school has a discipline policy, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Parents state that the school has clear, firm guidelines on behaviour. This view was confirmed by the inspection when teachers were seen to consistently apply the discipline policy. Students are rewarded with stars and merit certificates but the school is reviewing the scheme because merit awards are not awarded consistently by all teachers. Sanctions are well understood by all students and implemented fairly by the staff.
- 18 Since the previous inspection, incidents of fixed term exclusion have risen above the national average for a school of this size. There have been six permanent exclusions in the last reporting year. To address this issue the newly appointed headteacher has introduced an internal exclusion system whereby students are withdrawn from classes but continue to work on appropriate lesson tasks in school. This initiative has had a positive effect on behaviour and no students have been excluded since the implementation of the scheme in September of this year. Parents give the new measures their full support.
- 19 Relationships throughout the school between the students and the students and staff are good and contribute to the positive ethos of the school. The students work together well in pairs and groups. During classroom discussions the students are sensitive and respectful of the feelings, values and beliefs of others. For example, this was evident in a Year 9 personal, social and health education lesson discussing law and order.

- 20 The personal development of the students is good. Students in the sixth form, Year 9 and Year 11 carry out their roles responsibly as prefects and there is a head boy and girl. Year 10 students volunteer to assist in the information technology department. Many sixth formers provide good support for younger students in Years 7 and 8 mathematics lessons and work with those that need extra reading practice through a paired reading programme. An active school council led by sixth form students meets weekly and organises social and fundraising events for the school. The school has a successful Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Many students participate in residential experience at an outdoor pursuits centre in the Lake District, which has a positive effect on the personal development of the students involved.
- 21 Students with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning. They attend extra sessions during registration and during their lunchtime. They concentrate hard when they are taught in small groups. They show determination to develop skills which will compensate for their difficulties, and they help each other with their learning. When they are supported in class they maintain concentration very well.

27 **Attendance**

- 22 Attendance is satisfactory and most students are punctual for school and for lessons. Attendance for the last reporting year was close to the national average at 90.9 per cent. Unauthorised absence was in line with the national average at 1.1 per cent. There are no instances of particular groups of students with poor attendance. Registers are completed in form tutor groups for the morning and afternoon sessions and at the beginning of each lesson. Registration procedures meet statutory requirements.
- 23 Overall, punctuality is satisfactory. The school works hard to ensure a rational approach to timetabling to minimise movement problems between the two sites. Inevitably there is some lateness to individual lessons and the frequent late arrival of the school buses also has a detrimental effect on some students' attainment and progress.

29 QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

29 Teaching

- 24 The quality of teaching is good. During the inspection it was at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of lessons; good or better in 67 per cent of lessons; and very good or excellent in 26 per cent. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form all lessons were at least satisfactory: three in every four lessons were good or better and one in three were very good or excellent. There were a few unsatisfactory lessons in Key Stage 3, but well over half the lessons were good or better.
- 25 Teachers' knowledge and understanding about their subjects are good. They are a particular strength in mathematics and science where in many lessons teachers use their subject expertise very effectively to set a series of short-term targets for students which built on their previous knowledge and understanding of the topic being studied. In a few lessons teachers were less secure in their subject knowledge and relied too much on textbook exercises to reinforce students' learning.
- 26 Above average standards and good student progress in Key Stage 4 and sixth form lessons were clearly linked to tasks that were demanding but fair. Students responded well to such high expectations. Teachers' expectations are not high enough at Key Stage 3.
- 27 Lesson plans and the use of time and resources are good. Teachers plan their lessons well in line with their programmes of study and, where appropriate, National Curriculum targets. In most lessons teacher make their learning objectives clear to students at the beginning of lessons and review how far they have achieved them at the end of the lesson. The difference between a satisfactory lesson and a good lesson was frequently a reflection of how well a teacher allowed time within the lesson to assess students' learning. In the most effective lessons teachers were able to respond flexibly to unforeseen learning difficulties.
- 28 Teachers' organisation and selection of activities and teaching styles are good. For example, in English skilful questioning by teachers encourages students to apply their knowledge and understanding to give fuller explanations of their answers. A characteristic of many lessons in Key Stage 3 that are satisfactory, but not good or better, is that students are not expected to develop their thinking in this way.
- 29 Unsatisfactory teaching was seen on very few occasions during the inspection. A major characteristic of such lessons was unsatisfactory classroom management. In such lessons a few pupils disrupted the learning of others.
- 30 The overall quality and use of day-to-day assessment are good. Students' work is marked regularly and most teachers support their literacy and numeracy skills sensibly.
- 31 The quality of homework set is good. In some subjects such as mathematics and science effective homework is a strong feature of students' learning because it is constructive and builds on work in the classrooms and laboratories. Homework is recorded in pupil planners and teachers implement the school's homework policy satisfactorily although there are a few occasions on which students are either overloaded or have no homework at all.

32 Teachers use information technology with increasing confidence across a broad range of subjects and integrate appropriate software programs into their planning and teaching. For example, teachers in mathematics use computers for work on omnigraphs and in music, keyboards are linked to computers. In modern foreign languages not enough use is made of information technology.

33 Specialist teaching for students with special educational needs is good. When small groups are withdrawn from classes teaching is closely focused on individual needs. Strategies are meticulously planned. This helps students to face up to their inappropriate behaviour, or to use special techniques to remember facts, or to explore new concepts in science. Learning support assistants give students confidence to take full part in class discussions.

39 **The curriculum and assessment**

34 The school curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides breadth and balance in both key stages and in the sixth form. There is positive and effective support for students with statements of special educational needs. The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of extra curricular activities and events. However, curriculum development is not effectively monitored. Senior staff have not been identified to check the quality of schemes of work, though some departments do arrange for lessons to be observed and evaluated. New arrangements are planned which will draw together senior staff to monitor and manage development of the curriculum and timetable.

35 Arrangements for liaison with partner primary schools provide for a smooth transition for students at the start of Key Stage 3. For example, there is excellent provision in mathematics. Year 6 students are introduced to the scheme of work in mathematics in the second half of the summer term at primary school and then begin their secondary career in September with work that builds on their previous attainment.

36 The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides students with the opportunity of studying a full and balanced range of GCSE courses. Students are given sound balanced guidance when they choose their course. The school's involvement in the local authority partnership provides mentors for students across all levels of attainment in Year 10. This scheme motivates and encourages students to continue their studies into the sixth form. Information technology is taught through the personal and social education programme in Key Stage 4, and this gives an added relevance to both aspects of the course.

37 In the sixth form students have a wide choice of A-level and GNVQ vocational courses at intermediate and advanced level. This enables students at all levels of attainment to continue their studies within the school.

38 Effective careers education is a key part of the programme from Year 9 onwards. The careers service works with the school to provide a comprehensive range of information and teaching strategies. Many local businesses participate in the local authority partnership scheme. They set targets for attendance and personal development for students and provide representatives to encourage and monitor progress towards these goals. There is a carefully organised programme of work experience. Students are well prepared for the placements and the experience is reviewed in detail.

- 39 A well-planned personal, social and health education programme includes sex education and awareness of drug abuse. Form tutors choose from a wide variety of suggested approaches so that students of all levels of ability can participate. In a few instances its effectiveness is undermined when some tutors are not fully committed to the materials which they are using.
- 40 There is a wide range of extra curricular clubs and activities which enrich students' learning. Additional lessons are available for students in the period leading up to external examinations. Music is a particular strength of the school. Students can benefit from music tuition and participation in a variety of performance groups. This promotes high levels of motivation and involvement. Most of the activities are confined to lunchtimes because students travel to school by bus, but the libraries are well used for homework, and many students take advantage of the help that is provided. Extra lessons are available for students with learning difficulties. Specialist information technology courses lead to advanced skills in desktop publishing and web page design. A full range of competitive team games is provided.
- 41 The school's equal opportunities policy is implemented well. Positive lesson planning ensures that both boys and girls have full access to the curriculum. Curriculum planning for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs have full access to National Curriculum subjects. For example, in geography teachers provide work which is carefully matched to individual attainment levels. There is not enough careful matching of work to levels of attainment in science. Where a student is not able to follow all aspects of a subject as, for example in Key Stage 3 modern foreign language lessons, appropriate individual language work is provided as part of the special needs support.
- 42 Procedures for assessing the attainment of students are generally at least satisfactory within subject areas but the assessment system is not well coordinated on a whole-school basis. The collection of data on students' performance from their admission to leaving the school is comprehensive. It includes a good range of key stage results, standardised tests, GCSE scores, local authority statistics on performance and further analyses from commercial consultants. Some of the data are collected and analysed to decide on allocation to teaching groups and to predict performance. Some staff refer to the database for target-setting and monitoring individual student progress. However, most of the emphasis is on presentation of data and there is not enough commentary on the action required to improve attainment as a result of analyses. Opportunities to show the value that the school adds to students' attainment are missed: for example, there is little comparison of GCSE results with levels attained by the same students at the end of Key Stage 2 or 3. Assessment information is not always effectively used to support curriculum planning and change.
- 43 Procedures for reporting attainment and progress are clearly established and effective. Clear guidance is given to staff and students so that they can build the profiles of achievement within the student planners. The resulting records of achievement are good detailed documents. Reports to parents have evolved through careful discussion, and they give a full and clear picture of students' progress.

49 **Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- 44 The provision for students' personal development is very good. It is implicit in the school's mission statement and aims which are based on Gospel values.

- 45 Provision for spiritual development is very good. The statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is met and these occasions, which are often led by students and students, also provide good opportunities for reflection on spiritual matters as well as formal prayer. Participation in the liturgy, including the regular celebration of Mass, also supports spiritual development and the chapels are available for private reflection and prayer as well as more formal liturgical celebrations. Two lay Chaplains minister to the needs of students and staff in addition to priests from feeder parishes. Students benefit from the spiritual and social challenge of retreat experiences available in every year of their school life.
- 46 Religious education makes a strong contribution to spiritual development and is supported by the personal and social education programme as well as other subjects of the secular curriculum. For example, geography promotes the concepts of 'stewardship' and our dependence on the fruits of God's earth, and the music department makes a major contribution to the liturgy.
- 47 Provision for moral education is very good. Teachers provide good role models and their expectations of high standards of personal conduct are met with a positive response by students. Moral issues are frequent themes for year assemblies and form time and the programme of personal and social education provides very well for moral development through its treatment of relevant issues such as bullying and substance abuse. Sex education is treated sensitively and students share a mature response to implications of marriage and child-rearing.
- 48 The school's provision for social development is very good. Good opportunities for social interaction are present in the curriculum. In science experiments and in geography group work students learn leadership and collaborative skills. The series of residential weekends, the juggling club, the annual trip to Anglesey, field trips, retreats, sporting engagements, foreign visits and musical performances are part of a wide range of opportunities for the development of social skills which are available outside the curriculum. It is estimated that many students participate in the sporting activities available and very large numbers regularly work and play together in the wide range of orchestral, choral and band groups. Year 12 students partner students in Key Stage 3 to give positive and supportive assistance in the morning reading club. Lunches are eaten in a civilised atmosphere.
- 49 The provision for students' cultural development is good. Students' knowledge and appreciation of their own culture are developed in several subjects. Modern foreign languages, through their curriculum and trips to France, Germany and Spain, provide insights into European culture. Geography in its study of the Massai in Kenya and the history syllabus, which covers the native Americans, give an appreciation of cultures further afield, but the most notable contribution to students' cultural development comes from music. There are senior and junior versions of the orchestra, strings ensemble, choir, concert band and jazz group as well as a brass ensemble, sixth form chamber choir and orchestra, a recorder group and a guitar group. The frequent concerts are very well supported by parents. A recent highlight was the exchange concert with the orchestra of the school of music and dance in Sante-Foy-Les-Lyon in France, who came to England in July 1999. As was the case in the last inspection there are relatively fewer opportunities for students to prepare for life in a multi-cultural society.

55 **Support, guidance and students' welfare**

- 50 The school's provision for the support, welfare and guidance of the students is good, and provision has a positive effect upon standards. Inspection evidence confirms parents' views that teachers provide good support for the students, deal with any problems effectively and give freely of their time.
- 51 Procedures for the monitoring of academic progress and personal development are satisfactory. Students' planners contain good detailed information on achievement, attendance, homework, merit awards, targets and work experience information.
- 52 The pastoral care and personal, social and health education provided by the school are good. Students feel able to consult form tutors, heads of year and teachers should problems arise and have confidence in the pastoral staff. Liaison with outside agencies is good and takes place when necessary. The personal, social and health education programme is good and has improved since the previous inspection. The programme includes careers guidance, citizenship, drugs awareness, environmental education and sex education within the framework of a Catholic ethos. Sixth form students are closely involved in the programme which addresses their specific needs regarding higher education and life away from home. Students appreciate the personal, social and health education provided by the school.
- 53 The careers guidance provided by the school is good and is supported by the careers office, speakers from industry and commerce and further education tutors. The school has a comprehensive work experience programme for Year 10 students which is supported well by the local authority and by local businesses.
- 54 Students have good opportunities to participate in a mentoring scheme involving staff and business mentors. A business partner is assigned to each form tutor group in Years 10 and 11 to support students in their academic work and in their personal development. This scheme assists in raising levels of attainment in Key Stage 4.
- 55 The school has good induction procedures and pastoral support for new students. There is good curriculum liaison with partner primary schools, particularly for mathematics and music.
- 56 The procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are good. The school's behaviour policy is implemented fairly by all staff. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance by form tutors and heads of year. Procedures have been improved since the last inspection and problems are referred to the educational welfare officer who provides good support to the school. Good attendance is promoted in assemblies, newsletters and with certificates.
- 57 There are good procedures in place for promoting the health, safety and well-being of students. The headteacher is the named person responsible for child protection supported by two trained members of staff. All staff are aware of procedures and have received in-service training. Appropriate systems are in place between the school and outside agencies for support and guidance. The school implements the local authority health and safety policy fully and fire precautions and electrical checks are carried out. Good first-aid facilities are available and there are nine trained first-aiders which is enough to meet the needs of the school. Safe practices are in place for dealing with accidents.

63

Partnership with parents and the community

- 58 The schools' partnership with parents and the community is very good and has a positive effect on students' attainment and personal development as, for example, when the local police make a contribution to the personal, social and health education programme covering drugs awareness. Parents appreciate the school's openness and praise the communication systems available to them through the student planners, regular newsletters and reports on academic progress. There is a good home-school agreement arrangement with parents.
- 59 The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are attractive and informative. The frequent newsletters are of good quality and help to keep parents informed about achievements and activities within school. All parents are offered the opportunity to discuss their children's progress at the annual parents' evening. The annual progress reports are very good and include clear targets to help the students improve on their attainment. Sixth form students and their parents receive a useful termly progress card.
- 60 The opportunities the school provides for parents to become involved in the work of the school and their children's learning, including those with special educational needs, are good. There is a thriving Parent-Teachers' Association which has raised substantial amounts of money to support the school. Several parents are involved in the mentoring scheme and business links. Parents actively support social and fundraising events and respond well to parents' evenings. Many parents regularly use the excellent student planners to liaise with staff and monitor their children's academic work and personal development.
- 61 The school maintains very good links with the local community and businesses. The good curriculum links with contributory primary schools include Year 6 students having access to the computer software at the school. The school participates in inter-school sports activities including basketball, football and hockey. The school bands and orchestras entertain the local community. Sixth form students hold an annual party for approximately 250 disabled people and entertain senior citizens at Christmas.
- 62 Support from the careers office, local authority and local business enhance the work experience provision for Year 10 students. The comprehensive work experience programme involves the local bank, health service and the police. Several teachers have taken the opportunity to accept work placements at the local brewery, retail outlets, and a glass company. Donations of approximately £1500 were received last year from local organisations and the business community. The school has attracted a range of good sponsorships. The local bank sponsored the Celebration Evening where Year 11 students receive their partnership certificate and Record of Achievement. The local chemist sponsored the Memento Albums for school leavers. The sixth form students are involved in voluntary work in the local community and special schools.

68 **Leadership and management**

63 The new head teacher took up his appointment three months before the inspection and has initiated helpful changes to the school's management structure and consultative procedures. Senior members of management are now required to adopt a whole school perspective rather than being largely confined to specific areas of responsibility. They are responding positively to the new approach. Communications and consultation are improved by a series of regular meetings that encompass routine matters and developmental issues including, for example, a school improvement leadership group. Following these consultations, the school development plan is to be modified and include an appropriate longer-term perspective. Good procedures and structures are now in place to build on existing strengths and effect further improvements in the attainment and progress of students.

64 The head teacher is providing clear educational direction for the school. His vision is of a school in which a culture of continuous improvement is second nature, in which there is a shared delight in improved performance, and in which the school's mission statement is the cornerstone of all decision making. The head teacher is well supported in this vision by the school governors and members of staff with managerial responsibilities.

65 The governors and head teacher recognise that a pre-requisite for achieving the vision is to ensure that procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance and progress are sharply focused and form an integral part of the routines of management. A key issue in the previous inspection report was to ensure systematic monitoring and evaluation of targets and there has been little improvement so far in meeting these requirements. Present arrangements are unsatisfactory. There are no clear management structures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and the development of the curriculum. The link between the provision for staff development and the school development plan is unsatisfactory and there is no whole school system to ensure that student performance data are effectively used. The governing body, through a range of committees, is actively involved in monitoring most aspects of the school's responsibilities, but not enough attention is given to monitoring curriculum provision and development.

66 Middle managers are fully involved in the new structure of meetings and consultations and the overall strength and quality of middle management are satisfactory. Subject management and leadership are particularly strong in the mathematics and music departments. In mathematics, for example, effective arrangements are in place for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum and student performance data are being increasingly used to track progress and identify targets. There is not enough scope for enhancing standards across the curriculum by the sharing of good practice between departments. Departmental management in design and technology and art is unsatisfactory.

67 With the exception of monitoring and evaluation arrangements, the key issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. Overall provision and procedures fully meet statutory requirements.

68 A significant strength of the school is its positive ethos for learning. The strong commitment to the catholic faith permeates the life of the school and is reflected in the climate for learning. Students feel secure and valued and they display a positive attitude to their studies. Relationships are good and behaviour is very good. The personal development of students is well catered for and there is a purposeful atmosphere within which students and teachers strive to enhance performance.

69 Coordination of the special educational needs provision is sound. The special needs coordinator has been in post for eleven months. Records and procedures are still being adapted to meet the demands of the code of practice for special educational needs. About a quarter of the individual education plans need to be written in the new format which the local authority has introduced. The learning support team is well managed and highly motivated.

75 **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

70 The school is fully staffed. The numbers, qualifications and experience of the staff overall are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. There are areas such as English, music, information technology and religious education where non-specialists teach the subjects but this is not having any adverse affect on the students' education.

71 There are many staff with pastoral responsibilities, such as heads of upper and lower school and heads of year and their assistants, but few staff directly responsible for the raising and monitoring of achievement throughout the school. No teacher is responsible for raising of achievement by critically analysing and acting upon whole-school assessment data or monitoring the quality of assessment in teaching groups.

72 Curriculum support staff work closely with the specialist teachers and make effective contributions to students' attainment and progress. Peripatetic music staff provide the students with high quality instrumental tuition which directly contributes to the raising of standards in music. The staffing for students with learning difficulties is up to date and skilled practitioners and work well together to provide a good service.

73 The school operates an appraisal scheme through line managers for teaching and other staff. However, while the staff development and the in-service training programme currently meet the individual needs of many staff they do not always directly relate to the whole school priorities outlined in the school development plan or to specific departmental priorities. The approach to staff development and training is not coordinated well.

74 Specialist accommodation is generally satisfactory although the sixth form and the music accommodation are in need of refurbishment and expansion. The sixth former social areas are cramped and students have limited storage space for their school belongings. Many sixth formers take over the upper school library in the daytime. It is currently not possible for teachers to book the upper school library for their teaching groups because space is fully used.

75 As in the previous inspection teaching space is still at a premium. Geography, home economics, modern foreign languages and music departments are entirely housed in the lower school site. All other departments have teaching rooms on both sites and staff and some senior students travel between sites. The physical education department has new storage facilities and no longer uses the garage that was criticised in the previous inspection. Art accommodation has been extended since the last inspection.

- 76 The upper school site is in a better condition than the lower school site. The lower school has, however, benefited from various improvements since the previous inspection. The upper school and part of the lower school roofs have been replaced. Tennis courts have been resurfaced on the lower school site and fencing has been replaced. There is satisfactory provision for students with physical disabilities. Refurbishment of the technology department is in progress and all the information technology facilities have been refurbished. The second computer room in the lower school site is linked to electronic musical keyboards so that students studying music can compose and record with computer aided technology. Accommodation for students with special educational needs is good and appropriately sited in the lower school.
- 77 Resources are generally adequate to meet students' learning needs. The library in the lower school has been attractively refurbished and contains a good supply of computers and software as well as a good stock of newly purchased and engaging literature. The library in the upper school has much outdated stock and does not have enough reading material directly related to the needs of Years 10 and 11.
- 78 Information technology has improved markedly since the previous inspection. The school now has good facilities in both the upper and lower schools. The school has one computer for each eight students and has a well-balanced provision of central and subject based computer rooms. The vocational courses for sixth formers are enhanced by good quality equipment and computer resources.
- 79 Resources for careers education are good. The careers room in the upper school has a good supply of relevant literature and it is easily accessible in the daytime. The school has a good supply of higher education literature for sixth formers but less on job opportunities for sixth form leavers. Local resources available outside the school, such as museums, field centres, galleries, concert halls and theatres, are used well by a variety of departments.
- 80 Learning resources for students with special educational needs are generally adequate with a good range of reading support materials. Their information technology resources, however, are inadequate and include two desktop computers and four laptop computers. The lower school library has a good selection of books for students who experience reading difficulties. Accommodation on the lower site is good but here is no suitable area to continue the small group work for students with specific learning difficulties in Key Stage 4 at the upper school.

86 **The efficiency of the school**

- 81 Since his appointment at the beginning of this term the headteacher has given a very high priority to an evaluation of how effective the school's financial and staffing resources are in meeting the school's aims of developing the full potential of all students. His options are limited by above-average salary costs partly caused by a large proportion of experienced staff at the top of their salary scales.

- 82 The governors' finance committee is well-informed and well-briefed with regular financial information by the school but do not have formal system of evaluating expenditure. Departmental development plans and those of other budget-holders, such as the co-ordinator for special educational needs, are linked to the school plan and monitored efficiently. Plans are increasingly effectively costed against available budgets, and spending priorities for resources and professional development are established in relation to the school development plan. Spending on educational resources is allocated by formula. The budget for staff development training is fragmented and is not coherently managed. The projected carry-over balance is small.
- 83 Income and expenditure per student are below the national average, and spending on learning resources last year was below average, although it is projected to rise slightly in the current financial year. Because there are two sites, spending is higher than average on buildings and grounds maintenance and administration staff. The cost of educational support staff is higher than the national average.
- 84 Financial control in the school is very good. The finance manager is very efficient in administering the budget and keeping track of spending by budget-holders, who are provided with regular statements of account. Routine management and administration are efficient, and very good records are kept of all the ancillary accounts, such as those for the school fund, transport and educational visits. There is a three-year budget forecast to guide future planning.
- 85 The school makes satisfactory use of teaching and support staff across all departments and good use is made of the available resources of books, equipment and other materials. In spite of inadequate provision in some subject areas, the available accommodation is used as effectively as possible for the delivery of the curriculum.
- 86 The provision for special educational needs within the school is managed efficiently. Undue time is spent coping with over-complicated information from the local education authority about funding for special educational needs. These funds are administered efficiently.
- 87 Overall efficiency is good. The school has made significant advances since the last inspection, with improved financial planning, better links between departments and the planning cycle, and the implementation of initiatives to evaluate the effects of spending on educational standards achieved. Considering the high standards of attainment and the low income it receives, the school offers good value for money. The school has improved standards since the last inspection.

93 **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

93 **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

93 **English**

- 88 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results in 1998 and 1999 were well above national averages and above the average when compared with similar schools. GCSE results in English language and English literature were above the national average in 1998 and 1999. The proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in English language increased in 1999 but fell slightly in English literature. Advanced level GCE examination grades in English language and English literature at A-level were above the national average in 1999. The proportion of students gaining A or B grades in English literature increased significantly in 1999.
- 89 In the work, seen attainment is above the national average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 3 students have above average listening and speaking skills. At Key Stage 3 higher attainers construct thoughtful responses to work set while lower attainers respond with clarity but more briefly. All students at Key Stage 3 listen attentively and improve their speaking skills. Oral skills are, however, developed more effectively at Key Stage 4, where skilful questioning and discussion encourage the use of extended verbal response. Drama is used very effectively in all years to help the development of oral competence.
- 90 Attainment in reading is above average in both key stages. Students keep a useful reading log which lists what they have read through the year. Higher and average-attainers read a wide variety of texts perceptively and with understanding as, for example, when a Year 8 class explored ideas of stereotyping and historical context while reading 'The Machine Gunners'. Lower-attainers in a Year 10 class thoughtfully considered family relationships as they read 'A Kestrel for a Knave'.
- 91 Attainment in writing is above average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 3 students write in a variety of forms, as for example, letters, diaries, poems, reports, stories and reviews. Lower attainers write clear accounts while higher attainers write thoughtful and well-argued reviews and reports. Most students adapt their writing well to a variety of purposes such as instructing, persuading and informing. These skills are further developed well at Key Stage 4. Students construct appropriate critical responses to the literature they study. A Year 11 group explored 'To His Coy Mistress' in good depth in preparation for the writing of an analytical response. Students achieve a good level of accuracy in spelling, grammar, punctuation and syntax.
- 92 High levels of discussion, research and varied writing are a strength of students following A-level courses. For example, English literature students discussed with growing insight aspects of character and theme in 'Wuthering Heights'. They apply their understanding well when setting out their formal written responses. In English language, students understand and apply complex concepts such as 'cohesion' in working with texts.

- 93 Progress is good through each key stage. Students of all attainment levels, including those with special educational needs, make good progress relative to their prior attainment. In the best lessons progress is very good owing to a high degree of student involvement; for example, a Year 9 class made rapid progress when they discussed complex ideas of imagery, noun phrases and word relations. In a Year 13 lesson a debate centred around the gods in 'Hyperion' demonstrated students' growing insight, awareness and intellectual rigour in their discussion of the topic.
- 94 Most students have very positive attitudes to their work in English. Their behaviour is very good. Learning activities are usually tackled with enthusiasm and students become thoroughly absorbed in their work. They take an active part in their own learning and respond well to skilled questioning, thus developing understanding. Students' motivation falls below these high levels only in a small number of lessons when teaching does not engage their interest or hold their concentration. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes to learning. They work well on their own initiative and act responsibly. For example, a Year 12 group working effectively editing 'The Rape of the Lock'.
- 95 The quality of teaching is good. It is, however, better in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than in Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 3 fifty per cent of teaching was judged good or very good and the remainder was satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 ninety per cent of teaching was judged good or very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. All lessons are well planned and teachers have secure subject knowledge. Appropriate homework is set regularly and is carefully marked. Where lessons are good or very good the teaching shows skilful questioning. For example, a teacher's skilful questioning in a Year 11 English literature lesson resulted in significant gains in knowledge and awareness. There are high, but appropriate, expectations, a lively pace and a varied structure. These factors combine to ensure that learning is both rapid and interesting. Where teaching is satisfactory but no better, particularly in Key Stage 3, lesson pace is slower and there is less variety to the lesson structure. Questions sometimes require only brief responses from students.
- 96 The department makes effective use of information technology to enhance learning. At Key Stage 3 the library is used to support learning; for example, lower-attainers in a Year 9 group used both computers and encyclopaedias to research subjects of their own choice. The library is adequately resourced for this purpose. At Key Stage 4 problems of access restrict the use of the library to support learning.
- 97 The department is well led and the head of department has a clear vision of how the subject needs to develop. Departmental policies are well-constructed and implemented. Schemes of work are detailed and well planned for continuity and progression. Assessment methods are clear and consistent. However, there is no formal developmental monitoring of teachers in the department and staff development is not clearly linked to curriculum priorities.
- 98 Most requirements from the previous inspection report have been appropriately implemented. The exception is the issue of Key Stage 4 student access to the upper site library during lesson times. This remains to be addressed.
- 99 Overall, the department is well placed to maintain and further develop its many strengths.

105 **Literacy**

- 100 The previous inspection report judged standards of literacy throughout the school to be good. This continues to be the case. These standards have a positive impact on students' attainment and progress.
- 101 Students make good progress in reading and writing skills across the curriculum. Most teachers carefully correct errors of spelling and grammar. Some subjects require a range of reading skills that go beyond that immediately needed for information and call for skills of skimming, scanning and depth reading. Similarly, most subjects require students to produce extended writing. Drafting is a requirement in most subjects and helps students make good progress in the development and accuracy of their writing. Some subjects use the school library to improve students' literacy skills but overall students' use of the libraries is underused. A strength in some departments is the reference made by students to the good displays of key subject-specific words.
- 102 The school is developing a literacy strategy which has yet to be approved by governors. However, many departments are implementing sound literacy policies in their subjects.

108

Mathematics

- 103 The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average. Test results at the end of the key stage in 1999 were well above the national average. Since the last report there has been an underlying trend of continuous improvement and over the past four years results have been consistently well above the national average. Results are very high in comparison with students from similar backgrounds and there is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. Teacher assessments are well matched to test scores. By the end of Key Stage 3 students show that they have a good level of understanding of the various aspects of their work in mathematics. They are competent in the manipulation of algebraic symbols, interpret and illustrate statistical data with confidence and are familiar with the names and properties of the commoner geometric shapes. Most carry out calculations accurately but for some students, including some higher attainers, weaknesses and carelessness with arithmetic sometimes inhibit success, even though they understand the new work being done.
- 104 The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national average. In 1999 seven out of ten students gained grades A* to C which is well above the national average. Almost every student obtains GCSE certification within the A* to G grade range and the number of students obtaining a grades A*, A or B is almost twice the national average. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls and they perform at least as well in mathematics as they do in their other subjects. By the end of the key stage most students have an extensive repertoire of mathematical vocabulary, solve equations of varying complexity, construct algebraic and statistical graphs, carry out investigation work and consolidate their computational skills. All groups of students, whether higher, average or lower-attainers, experience appropriate levels of work in each of the mathematics attainment targets. As in Key Stage 3, some students' weaknesses in mental arithmetic, rather than a failure to understand the mathematics, sometimes leads to the production of inaccurate or incorrect answers.

- 105 The attainment of sixth form students studying for A-level GCE is well above the national average. In 1999 students achieved their predicted grades and their results were above the national average. However, they were lower than in previous years when results were consistently well above the national average. The number of students gaining a grade A is typically more than twice the national average, and the proportion gaining either a grade A or B is usually twenty per cent higher than the national average. Students build on their significant GCSE strengths and although a wide range of students opt to study the subject at advanced level, most demonstrate reasoning powers of a high order when discussing ideas and problems. Although most students have a preference for a particular aspect of the subject they all produce a standard of work in each of the areas that is of at least the required standard. In lessons students make good progress. The routines of most lessons ensure full participation of students in the sharing of ideas and difficulties and in many lessons students confidently and competently take the lead role. Their confidence and progress are enhanced as they demonstrate the capacity to articulate ideas with very good levels of fluency and understanding.
- 106 Students make good progress in Key Stage 3. The content of lessons invariably has a structure that builds on previous learning and consolidation and practice are usually accompanied by the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Higher, average and lower-attainers make good progress because when students are working on the same topics exercises and explanations are formulated to match the range of individual students' needs. For example, when working with probability, higher-attaining students carry out calculations involving probability trees and combined events, average-attaining students compare the experimental and theoretical probabilities of single events, and lower-attaining students tabulate and discuss with understanding the broad outcomes of experiments. Standards of presentation of work vary and progress is sometimes impeded because written work lacks structure and therefore fails to foster understanding and retention.
- 107 In Key Stage 4 students make very good progress. Their knowledge increases steadily and their skills develop through the provision of carefully constructed schemes of work. Continued arrangements for grouping students according to their needs in mathematics are effective and support progress. Teachers provide each particular group of students with challenging work that ensures that all students experience the same range of mathematical topics at an appropriate level. Higher-attaining students using information technology make rapid progress in a single session as they show that they have a comprehensive and thorough understanding of functions when they construct and describe a wide range of algebraic and trigonometrical graphs. Average-attaining students discuss ways of comparing sets of data and show that they have a good grasp of the essential elements in constructing graphs in general and scatter diagrams in particular. Lower-attaining students produce sensible estimates of average speed, distances and time and show that they have an understanding of comparative speeds. Standards of written work are mostly satisfactory, and very often excellent, but the quality of solutions, particularly in algebra, is sometimes lacking in rigorous, systematic and structured presentation.
- 108 A combination of appropriate schemes of work, sensitive, informed teacher interventions and limited additional support ensures that students with special educational needs make good progress. Work is tailored to match their needs and their self-esteem is enhanced as they are given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Students with special educational needs are integrated well into mainstream classes.

109 Students are very well motivated and they consistently adopt a mature, positive and studious attitude to their work. Their conduct is rarely other than exemplary and they display a healthy regard and respect for the subject. Levels of sustained concentration are generally very high and the relationship between teachers and students is positive and characterised by cooperation and harmony.

110 The overall quality of teaching in mathematics lessons is good and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. There is more very good and good teaching in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form than in Key Stage 3. Teachers have a very good command of the subject, thoroughly prepare lessons, and are committed to raising the achievement of their students. In the best lessons teachers fully involve students in the exposition, engender a brisk pace, set challenging and realistic tasks and continually assess the understanding of the students. For example, a group of higher-attaining students in Key Stage 3 demonstrated that they had a comprehensive understanding of the three measures of average and of frequency distribution tables and used them accurately with both discrete and grouped data. The teacher punctuated the lesson with short-term targets and appropriate time limits that matched each level of increased difficulty, checked the progress of students on an individual basis, and shared the objectives of the lesson with a collective focus that involved all of the students.

111 In a few less successful lessons, teachers do not fully involve all students, rely on responses from a limited range of students and do not vary the activities in order to sustain momentum. For example, a group of average attaining Key Stage 3 students, working on linear equations, were receptive but passive as the teacher used the text book to drive the lesson rather than as a learning resource; students' attention was divided between the teacher, text book and note taking.

112 The team of mathematics teachers is strong and is well led. The department is efficiently and effectively managed and this is reflected in the high quality of documentation and planning. The department has good assessment procedures and a great deal of energy has been invested into generating a data bank of student performance. The department uses the data more effectively than other departments in the school to guide their curriculum planning and to monitor student performance.

118 **Numeracy**

113 Numerical proficiency across the curriculum is good. Students demonstrate that they can apply their numeracy skills in a variety of contexts and their experience in other subjects is often enhanced because of the levels of numerical competence. In A-level physics for example, sixth form students use their competence with calculus and calculators to further their understanding of energy. In design and technology, number and measuring skills are accurately used in preparing materials and ingredients. The geography department has, as part of its scheme, a carefully constructed analysis of the ways in which attainment is raised through the application of numeracy skills. A systematic and coordinated approach to numeracy across the whole school curriculum is incorporated into the mathematics department development plan.

119 **Science**

114 In the 1999 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, the attainment of students was well above the national average, and well above the national average when compared with the attainment of students from similar schools. There was no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.

- 115 In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the attainment of students was well above the national average when compared with all secondary schools, and above average in comparison with the attainment of students from similar schools. The attainment of boys in the double award science examination was higher than that of girls, in contrast to the national comparisons, where the attainment of girls is slightly higher than that of boys. In the 1999 GCSE electronics examination, the attainment of students was comparable with the attainment of students in the double award science examination and has been consistently high during the past three years. Over the past three years, there has been an overall rising trend in the attainment of students in GCSE examinations.
- 116 In the 1998 A-level GCE examinations in biology, chemistry and physics, the percentage of students attaining A to C and A and B grades was above the national averages. In 1999, although no national comparisons were available at the time of the inspection, the attainment in A to C and A and B grades was similarly high. In A/S level electronics, the attainment of students in 1999 was in line with high attainment in the other A-level sciences. During the last three years, the average attainment of students in A-level biology, chemistry and physics, has been above the national averages for grades A to E and A to B. There were no significant differences in attainment between the performance of boys and girls at A-level in comparison with national differences. Attainment in A/S level electronics in 1999 has been at least comparable with other A-level subjects, although no national comparisons are available.
- 117 The inspection judgement on attainment closely matches these results, except in Key Stage 3, where the slight difference can be attributable to less successful teaching in some classes, and possible differences in overall attainment between year groups on entry to the school. Since the last inspection, the overall standards of attainment, in relation to national averages, has shown a steady rise.
- 118 At the end of Key Stage 3, students are attaining at above the expected level. By the age of 14 students investigate the pH range of various chemicals successfully and talk convincingly about the outcome of testing various food types. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is well above the expected level. By the age of 16, students have a good understanding of the oil cracking process to produce different alkene products, and show a good knowledge of the effect of weathering of rocks and different rock formation from their studies on the Internet. By the end of their A-level studies students are attaining above nationally expected levels in all subjects. In chemistry, they have a good understanding of periodic classification and reaction mechanisms. In a practical investigation they showed good laboratory skills in the nitration of a derivative of benzoic acid. In physics they have a good understanding of particle structure and motion, and a good grasp of electrical and electromagnetic theory. In biology they can explain, and describe well, processes involved in animal and plant physiology, and the way specialist cells and organs control life processes.
- 119 Students make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. Most students make sound progress in their use of scientific vocabulary and notation, and in number and data handling in scientific investigations. In their study of life processes and living things they show solid gains in their knowledge of simple plant cell structure, plant growth, photosynthesis, and other concepts such as classification, variation, and inheritance. In their study of materials and their properties, they show a satisfactory grasp of chemical notation, structure, periodic classification, atomic structure, and simple formulae and equations. In their study of physical processes they have a good knowledge of the nature of forces; energy and its transfer; electrical circuits; transmission of light, and associated nomenclature and symbolism. There are instances in Key Stage 3 where lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, make less progress because of an inadequate match of learning resources to students' needs or reading demands which are too great.

- 120 In Key Stage 4 students make good progress. Their practical work reflects good planning and evaluation in their investigations. In biological aspects students make good gains in their knowledge of specialist cells and organs, and they show a good grasp of the nature of respiration, digestion, and the factors affecting nutrition and health. In their study of materials and properties, they are make good gains in their understanding of chemical nomenclature, structure and bonding, reactivity and its relationship to periodic classification, and reaction rates. In their studies of physical processes, they are making good sense of force/energy and force/pressure relationships and have a secure knowledge of electrical and electromagnetic ideas. Generally there is no discernible difference in the rates of progress between boys and girls beyond that shown nationally.
- 121 In their A and AS level studies students make good progress and are consolidating their prior learning well. They are developing a good basis for independent study, which is particularly notable in practical work and in the quality of assessed assignments.
- 122 Students of all ages and attainment levels have a very positive attitude to their work. They show a consistently mature attitude during lessons, persevering with written and practical tasks, and diligently applying themselves to homework. They respond well to questioning. In a Year 9 class, students showed sensitivity and thoughtfulness when discussing sexual reproduction and the birth of a child. The behaviour of students is very good. When carrying out investigations they invariably show care with apparatus and equipment and have respect for the health and safety rules of the laboratory. In Key Stage 4, students develop a reasonable degree of independence in their study and investigational skills, and this is developed further in sixth form classes.
- 123 The quality of teaching in the department is good. Since the last inspection, the elements of good teaching reported have been maintained. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed, but the quality of many of the lessons seen in Key Stage 4 and sixth form classes was higher than those seen in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 3 one third of lessons seen were good and the remainder satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 approximately two thirds of lessons were of good quality and the remaining third very good. In the sixth form, two thirds of the lessons were good and the remainder satisfactory.
- 124 The best lessons are characterised by good subject knowledge, high expectations of students' attainment and behaviour, good use of time, skilful questioning and supportive homework. By contrast in the least successful lessons, the work is sometimes too easy, teachers' questioning does not require students to respond in sufficient depth, assessment is unsatisfactory and, in a few lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is not secure. In a good Year 10 lesson higher-attaining students were extending their knowledge of atomic structure from the previous lesson. The teacher provided a useful revision of the previous lesson, making good historical links with the pioneering work of such scientists as JJ Thompson and Lord Rutherford. He displayed good subject knowledge, and used it effectively in his clear explanations and questioning about isotopes. In a Year 11 electronics lesson, the teacher showed very good subject knowledge, and used this well to assess students' progress and understanding with incisive questioning. Through high expectations of his students, he had set them challenging and appropriate problem solving tasks, to which they responded with interest and enthusiasm.
- 125 In some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, teachers had only a scant knowledge of which students were on the special educational needs register. Few had any knowledge of students' individual education plan targets, or how these might affect their lesson planning.

- 126 The curriculum is generally planned well to provide adequate breadth and balance, and a curriculum review is currently under way in Key Stage 3 to improve the match of work to students' needs. Planning to ensure consistency of content from one set to another is sound and planning to enable students to move logically from one level of work to another is generally satisfactory. However, not enough use is currently made of Key Stage 2 curricular information to ensure students in Year 7 build on their prior attainment in science. Procedures for assessment are well established and data collected are used to inform students, to group them more effectively, and to provide indicators of future success. It is not used effectively to revise future curriculum planning.
- 127 The accommodation of Key Stage 4 and sixth form teaching is good and that for Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. There is generally a good supply of text books to support students' learning, but the quality of worksheets provided for students is not consistently good in Key Stage 3. The department has not enough computers for the use of students in laboratories, at a time when it is aiming to improve the quality of software and information technology support generally. Nevertheless, since the last inspection, the supply of software for students' use has improved.
- 128 The department is managed well by a knowledgeable and supportive head of department. However, monitoring of teaching and the curriculum is not fully effective, although a system of classroom observation has recently been introduced. Development planning is in place, but is not based on a clear strategy of monitoring and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in the department.

134

134 **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

134 **Art**

- 129 Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. The proportion of students achieving grades A* to C was below the national average in 1999. Girls' results are in line with the national average. Standards are lower than at the time of the last inspection when GCSE attainment was in line with the national averages. As at the last inspection, higher attaining students are underachieving. However, the standard of work seen during inspection week is close to the national average. Some interesting, challenging work inspired by the paintings of Rousseau is being done by a number of Year 11 students as they prepare for their GCSE examinations. Students' grades in A-level GCE examinations are close to the national average. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is below that expected nationally. In all key stages girls' standards are higher than boys', although few students produce work of the highest quality.
- 130 Progress at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Most students work well with paint and pencil but very few use other media. In a Year 10 lesson students made good progress when developing work based on reflections although for higher attainers there is not enough challenge in the work they are asked to do and so they do not reach their potential because the work is not demanding enough. Progress at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory mainly because of the disruptive behaviour of a small group of students, mainly boys, who slow the progress of the whole class. Progress in the sixth form is good. Here, the students take advantage of the quiet, environment and the good relationships with their teachers to improve their standards of water-colour painting, design skills and critical studies. Students with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 for the same reasons as above and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. The use of a computer to help these older students is a particularly successful strategy in raising attainment.

- 131 Most students, with the exception of a few in Key Stage 3, show interest in their work and enjoy art and design. The students recognise their teachers' enjoyment of their subject and respond accordingly, showing initiative and accepting responsibility for their work and their behaviour. Almost all students respect their teachers, their classmates, the department and its resources. Students have a general desire to improve.
- 132 Teaching in the department is satisfactory overall. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. The pace of some lessons is slow and uneven. Talking, often unrelated to the subject, is allowed to descend into disruptive noise. Some of the work fails to allow students to develop their creativity and, as at the last inspection, they lose interest. A number of lessons start late, a problem usually caused by students transferring from one site to another. Teaching is good in Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form.
- 133 Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of painting and drawing. They are less confident when dealing with computer-generated imagery in the creation of art work. Teachers' expectations of higher attainers are not high enough. Planning is satisfactory except at Key Stage 3 where work does not always meet the needs of students of all attainment levels. Teachers' methods and organisation and use of time and resources are unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. Homework set does not fully develop the abilities of all students. Stronger aspects of teaching include good introductions to lessons which include clear learning objectives and revision of previous work. Many older students benefit from good individual guidance from teachers on examination work.
- 134 The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements but is not broad nor balanced enough. The department provides an essentially two-dimensional, European art education, in spite of having facilities for sculpture, ceramics, textiles, and a variety of printing processes. Students are not given enough opportunity to work with a variety of processes in a range of sizes, either individually or in groups. They are insufficiently familiar with work from a variety of cultures, western and non-Western. The department meets the National Curriculum requirements. The time allocated for art in the timetable is below the average nationally and has an adverse effect on their attainment in GCSE.
- 135 The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. Cultural development is good because there are planned opportunities for students to visit galleries or museums. Management of the subject is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. There is a minimal programme for professional development. The department does not have the capacity to reflect critically on what it is providing or how it can be improved. There is little formal monitoring of teaching or learning. Although the accommodation has been improved since the last inspection, the learning environment is still far from stimulating.

Design and technology

- 136 Attainment matches national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. Students use hand and machine tools competently and confidently in resistant materials lessons and have satisfactory construction skills. Finishing skills are sometimes below average but finished products usually meet the intended purpose. In control technology lessons, students write simple procedures to control external devices such as animated advertising signs, using computers but higher attaining students are not extended enough. Students make a wide range of food products, with higher attaining students demonstrating skills which are often above average. They have an average understanding of nutrition and plan healthy, well-balanced meals. In textiles lessons, students reach standards expected nationally with designing and making products from textiles which meet the requirement of consumers. For example, they make bags which reflect current fashion trends. Construction skills reach national expectations and students use sewing machines with reasonable accuracy, including the computerised machine to add surface decoration.
- 137 Attainment matches national expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, attainment matched the national average. The attainment of boys was lower than that of girls by a wider margin than in the previous year but overall results were similar. Students design and make products from a range of resistant materials, selecting appropriate hand and machine tools which they use confidently and safely. Students have average construction skills but below average knowledge of the materials they use. They design products to a specification but rely more on teacher guidance to make them rather than their own designs. In graphic products, students have an average understanding of normal drawing techniques and communicate their ideas appropriately but have below average understanding of designing. In food and textiles, students have above average practical skills and design products which show advanced skills in course work projects. In textiles, higher attaining students often demonstrate flair and creativity and have a good understanding of designing for particular consumer wants and needs. In food technology lessons, students have particularly good skills in time management and plan to make an ambitious range of products within a short time. Course work folders are well organised, often making effective use of information technology for research and presentation of ideas.
- 138 Students reach average standards of attainment in the sixth form. The small number of students prevents meaningful comparison with national standards but all are appropriately following A-level courses. In resistant materials, students reach satisfactory standards of practical work but course work is not well organised. In home economics, students have a good understanding of home and family, including social issues and consumer education. They carry out research in appropriate depth, and folders are well organised and presented.
- 139 Students make good progress in Key Stage 3. They enter the school with below average attainment and quickly learn to use a good range of tools and processes. They learn to use techniques for working with wood and acrylic when they make simple pencil holders and trophies. Higher attaining students demonstrate more imagination in their designs. Students make good progress in textile lessons when they learn hand and machine stitching techniques and they design and make items for the fashion and sports market. They make particularly good progress in Year 9 where they reach satisfactory standards in textiles, despite a lack of previous experience. In food technology lessons, students make good and often very good progress with practical skills because they are provided with choice and challenge to which they respond well. They learn to interpret design briefs to enable them to demonstrate their best work and learn to prepare appetizing and nutritious meals. They make good progress in learning about healthy eating and nutrition.

- 140 Students make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. They build on the skills and knowledge acquired in Key Stage 3 and because of the recent introduction of more appropriate courses, make better progress in Year 10 and Year 11. They make more progress with the design process and course work folders in food and textiles than in other aspects of the subject. They make satisfactory progress with consolidating and extending skill for working with resistant materials and for formal drawing techniques but higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged in this aspect. They make satisfactory progress with presenting ideas but not enough with understanding the concepts. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because teachers know them well and support them.
- 141 In the sixth form, students make good progress with more advanced skills and with research. They make good progress with practical skills in resistant materials, particularly with using a wider range of techniques and equipment such as the computerised milling machine for computer aided manufacturing techniques. They are not making enough progress with imaginative and innovative designs in textiles but higher attaining students in particular have very good construction skills. In home economics, students make good progress with consumer education and with practical skills for preparing food. They make good progress with learning to make informed choices about goods and services and the skills and knowledge required to manage homes and families. They make good progress with project management and presenting information clearly and logically.
- 142 Students have good attitudes to learning and respond well to challenge and choice. They enjoy the creative aspects of design exercises and making unique products from resistant materials and food and fabric. They enjoy the fun and challenge of control technology and work collaboratively in pairs. They evaluate their work sensibly and respect each others' views. Occasionally, some students in Key Stage 3 demonstrate immature behaviour and waste time which reduces their progress. Mostly, students are well behaved and polite. They know the codes of behaviour in workshops and behave safely and sensibly. They respond well to opportunities to work independently and persevere to solve problems. Older students are developing mature attitudes to time and project management in food and textiles and A-level courses.
- 143 The quality of teaching is good. In almost half the lessons observed it was good, in ten per cent it was very good and in the remainder it was satisfactory. The main strengths are in the pace and challenge of work in food and textiles and the growing use of information technology in all areas of the subject. Teachers have good subject knowledge which most communicate clearly and enthusiastically. Expectations are high in most lessons but occasionally too few opportunities are provided to challenge the most able students. Teachers plan their lessons well to link with schemes of work and national curriculum targets but learning objectives for the lessons are not always sufficiently clear.
- 144 Teaching methods vary. Mostly they are satisfactory but in some lessons, as noted in the previous inspection, teachers use too narrow a range of teaching strategies with too few opportunities for students to discuss their ideas for design or to reflect upon what they have learned at the end of the lessons. Evaluation of finished products in resistant materials is a good feature of teaching and helps students to recognise good and bad design points. Teachers manage students well and have good relationships with them. They make particularly good use of time and resources in food technology lessons. Teachers give generously of their time to provide extra workshops outside school hours.

145 The curriculum meets statutory requirements and recently there has been an improvement to Key Stage 4 courses. All students now study full courses in the subject. Procedures for assessing students' work are satisfactory and the results of assessment are used to plan future work, but are not used enough to set targets for individuals. Lack of technician time for food and textiles obliges teachers to undertake too many additional tasks to prevent the reduction of opportunities for students.

146 The work of the whole department lacks clear direction. Of the areas identified for improvement in the previous report, some have been successfully addressed. The range of teaching strategies has been extended but not consistently across the whole department. There is still not enough differentiation and challenge for higher-attaining students in some lessons or enough attention to drawing ideas together and reviewing progress at the end of lessons. Progress, however, has been made by some teachers. Monitoring of teaching is informal and does not provide sufficient guidance on the means of raising standards of attainment. The visual surroundings in some workshops remain unsatisfactory and do not reflect modern aspirations for the subject. Satisfactory progress has been made with curriculum development for Key Stage 4 and documentation now includes clear schemes of work to encourage progress in learning. There is a positive ethos for learning with good relationships and opportunities for all students to experience all aspects of the subject.

152 **Drama**

147 Drama is taught as a GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. Attainment is well above the national average with over 90 percent of students achieving grades A* to C in 1998 and 1999. Attainment in lessons is good. Students demonstrate sound knowledge and application of dramatic techniques such as improvisation, freeze frame, spotlighting and mime. Progress is good as students clearly enjoy the subject and therefore make significant gains in knowledge both in lessons and over time; for example, students dramatising poems from the literature anthology made good progress both in mastering role play techniques and understanding the poems on which they were based.

148 Students of all abilities enjoy drama. They work hard and with enthusiasm to improve their own performances; for example, a Year 10 class improvise 'tunnel' interior dialogue. Students are very supportive of each other and critical comment of the work of others is sensitive and positive.

149 Teaching of drama is good and sometimes very good. Major strengths of the teaching are careful planning, appropriate methods and organisation and excellent relationships with students. Lessons proceed at a lively pace and contain a wide variety of activities and discussion appropriate to their aims and objectives.

- 150 Attainment in Key Stage 3 is above the national average. In Year 7, able students know that isotherms mark lines of equal temperature but a few students are unclear about the purpose of choropleth maps. Year 9 students have a good knowledge of the structure of the earth's crust and most understand why volcanoes are found at plate boundaries. Attainment is also above average in Key Stage 4. All students have a good knowledge of the hydrological cycle and most can describe the process using accurate technical terminology with confidence and the most able can hypothesise comparative flow rates between percolation and run-off. Attainment in the sixth form is at the national average. Students construct complex annotated diagrams and test soils for their acidity level.
- 151 The 1999 GCSE results were above the national average both at grades A* to C. All candidates achieved a GCSE grade. These results were an improvement on the previous year, particularly in the higher grades. The small number of candidates entered for A-level achieved results in line with the national average at grades A and B. Overall results for 1999 were lower than the previous year when all candidates achieved a grade.
- 152 Progress in lessons is good in both key stages. Through the development of their mapping skills, Year 7 students gain a good understanding of temperature profiles across Britain in winter and summer. Year 9 develop good research skills in completing a project on volcanoes. Year 10 students enhance their geographical knowledge and understanding of a less economically developed country whilst simultaneously improving their skills in information technology by constructing newspaper reports on the impact of a hurricane on Bangladesh. Students in Year 10 are making much greater progress than those in Year 11 because they receive an extra period per week. Students in the sixth form gain skills in the construction and interpretation of triangular graphs. Students with special educational needs make good progress through the provision of differentiated and extension materials and the individual support of their teachers.
- 153 In both key stages students' attitudes to learning are good and very good in the sixth form. Some students are passive learners but most are very involved and interested in their work. They listen and concentrate well and maintain their efforts through the lesson. They ask searching questions and relate well to each other and to their teachers. They enjoy their geography and are relaxed and confident learners.
- 154 The quality of teaching is good overall and is very good in one quarter of lessons. The best lessons had clear aims, made explicit to the class and were well planned, with activities sequenced to give variety. Individuals were supported well, though some opportunities were missed for on-going assessment. Teachers have a strong and secure subject knowledge and high expectations of their students. The very good relationships in the classroom between teachers and students provide the basis for very good classroom management. Homework is set regularly and is linked to the work in hand. Some classroom activities were mundane and too easy, such as copying from the blackboard or filling in missing words in a text, and, in some lessons, oral discussion and explanation went on too long and led to a loss of interest by students.

- 155 The curriculum meets requirements and there is good progression through and across the key stages. Sixth form courses include A-level and a GNVQ Intermediate course in leisure and tourism. Schemes of work are annotated for the use of information technology and the department has part of the responsibility for teaching the communication strand of information technology. Students' work is assessed using information technology levels of attainment. Three years ago the department moved to a new GCSE syllabus which is proving more relevant to students interests and needs. Examination results are improving.
- 156 Assessment procedures are good, particularly day-to-day marking of students' work with spellings corrected and comments which point the way for students to improve. Students are also set targets for improvement over time but these are often imprecise, not specific to geography and difficult to assess objectively.
- 157 Leadership of the department is good. There is an ethos which is supportive of the school and its values, a commitment to raising standards and an openness to change and development as exemplified in the developments in Key Stage 4 and post-16 curricula. The head of department monitors the teaching and learning in a systematic way. Development planning is good and there is a strong ethos of teamwork, mutual support and co-operation.
- 158 The last report advised that attention should be paid to the provision of appropriate teaching materials, the use of information technology in lessons and to a strategic department development plan. All these matters have been successfully addressed.
- 164

History

- 159 By the end of Key Stage 3 students are attaining standards above national expectations. Teacher's assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that attainment is in line with national expectations but inspection evidence indicates that students closest to the end of Key Stage 3 are attaining higher. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the topics covered. They acquire historical skills such as the ability to detect bias and how to use primary evidence. For example, Year 9 students study eighteenth century factory conditions in widely differing contemporary descriptions.
- 160 By the end of Key Stage 4 most students are attaining standards above national expectations. In 1998 the proportion of students reaching grades A* to C was well above the national average. No national comparisons are available for 1999. However, the proportion of students attaining A* to C grades was lower because candidates began the course in Year 10 with a much wider spread of attainment levels than those entered for GCSE in 1998. The attainment of girls is significantly above that of boys. The department has introduced revision classes to target individual students as one of its strategies of improving boys' attainment. Students understand historical issues and present reasonable arguments in their work. For example, a Year 11 group watching an excellent revision video on the history of medicine consolidated their own learning and were able to explain how and why Greek medical theories were distorted by medieval practitioners and then rediscovered by Renaissance scholars.

- 161 In 1998 the proportion of students achieving A-level grades A to E was at the national average. A similar proportion achieved A to E grades in 1999. Students acquire, often by their own research, a considerable amount of information. In class they offer opinions and theories supported by good evidence. For example, a Year 13 group discussing international relations in the 1930s distinguished between national agendas and explained how these were affected by the Wall Street crash. Numbers of students studying A-level have declined in recent years although they remain viable.
- 162 In Key Stage 3 most students make good progress. For example, Year 8 projects are imaginative and well-produced and the topic completed on a day in the life of Gainsborough Old Hall illustrated the good progress made by students. Most students make good progress in Key Stage 4. Students learn to think independently and to assess historical problems as when a Year 10 class were asked to match a list of precautions taken against the supposed cause of the plague. Students appreciate that there are not necessarily any right or wrong answers when studying historical evidence. In the sixth form students make satisfactory progress. Their powers of analysis develop well. Students' contributions are such that the best taught lessons become a joint enterprise between teacher and students. Most students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
- 163 Most students have a positive attitude to their work. In Key Stage 3 most students are interested and attentive, sustain concentration and are eager to contribute. They work cooperatively. Higher-attaining students are prepared to think for themselves. The more relaxed atmosphere and smaller group in Key Stage 4 makes discussion easier and most students participate well. Sixth formers are happy to initiate debate and there is a mutual respect between teachers and students.
- 164 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are well-qualified and enthusiastic. Classroom management of classes is skilful. Although extension work is provided for higher attainers teachers have a tendency to give more attention to average and lower attainers. Potentially restless classes are handled firmly but with good humour. The use of time is good. Lessons are divided into short stages with a specific time limit for each exercise. Every lesson has an element of written work. A great strength of the best teaching is the patient and skilful questioning which keeps students involved and encourages them to think. Most teachers meticulously assess students' understanding during and at the end of lessons. Occasionally teacher dominate too much and students are not given enough opportunity to participate in the lesson. More often teachers hold the interest of the class with a strong story line or by making interesting connections to underline the relevance of the topic. There are also some very imaginative approaches as when a teacher set some of the sorrow songs written by students to music in imitation of those sung by black slaves.
- 165 The curriculum meets statutory requirements and includes appropriate reference to information technology. Teachers encourage students to refer to the Internet and relevant software programs. Topics are often assessed against National Curriculum standards in both their historical and information technology perspectives. All students have equal access to the curriculum. Assessment of selected written exercises is meticulous. Students are given precise information about the levels attained, the criteria for the next level and practical advice about how to attain them. Assessment is used to inform curriculum planning as for example, when the assessment of students' work on the American Civil War led to a modification of the subject matter and a change in teaching methods.

- 166 Overall, the department is managed well. However, there is little monitoring and evaluation of teaching and students' learning in the classroom by the head of department. Lessons are not monitored but examples of good practice are discussed and shared at the regularly held departmental meetings. Resources are used efficiently. Classroom displays are attractive and relevant. Textbooks and audio-visual materials are up to date and interesting and supplemented by good teacher-produced material. The department has made steady progress since the last inspection. Teachers are forward looking and prepared to adopt new methods of attracting students to the subject.

Information technology

- 167 At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment matches national expectations. Students have a satisfactory understanding of all aspects of the subject which they use relevantly to present information or improve knowledge and understanding in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, in geography lessons they produce reports which they present in the style of a newspaper page. They use spreadsheets to model information and present as charts and graphs and they research information using the Internet or resources such as computer discs. In physical education students use data logging equipment as part of their health and fitness programme and in personal and social education they demonstrate good standards of desktop publishing. In design technology, students reach satisfactory standards when they write procedures to control external devices linked to computers and when they design and make animated advertising signs. They have above average knowledge and understanding of using computers to present information in different forms in most subjects because it is effectively taught as an integral part of their lessons.
- 168 At the end of Key Stage 4, students reach standards which match national expectations for their age but are not examined at GCSE. They continue to use information technology as an effective tool to research and present information in most subjects of the curriculum, particularly for examination coursework projects. They use the Internet and other computer based resources to research information and have a good understanding of the range of options open to them to present their work effectively. Students are provided with good opportunities to develop information technology skills by learning to use them relevantly in the subjects of the curriculum. Students who take business studies reach appropriate standards for the course and have a good understanding of the use and impact of computers in the business community. They continue to use information technology relevantly, often to a good standard, such as when they use data loggers in science to monitor temperature changes during investigations and to convert the information into graphical form. They have good word processing skills and a good understanding of communicating with an audience. For example, in lessons which form part of the drugs education programme, students use the school Internet and database confidently to research information and to produce information leaflets which they desk top publish.
- 169 In the sixth form, students reach appropriate standards to use information technology to support their studies subjects, particularly for researching and presenting work appropriately and clearly.

- 170 Students make good progress in Key Stage 3. They build on skills and knowledge acquired in their primary schools and adapt to using new equipment quickly. The liaison with staff from the primary schools and the workshop visits which parents and students attend are supportive of this. Through learning new knowledge and skills in the context of subjects of other subjects in the curriculum, students learn to recognise and use computers as an effective tool for learning. They make very good progress with learning to present work well using desktop publishing techniques from an early stage. There are opportunities for students to practise and extend their skills in most subjects and they take advantage of additional information technology sessions which take place during the lunch period and after school.
- 171 Students continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4. The well-constructed schemes of work which are delivered through personal and social education and through most subject of the curriculum enable students to build successfully on learning from Key Stage 3. They make good progress with learning to use the Internet for research and improve their keyboarding skills. They learn to select appropriate programs and styles to present their course work and use their knowledge and understanding of information technology to present information clearly and attractively. In business studies lessons, students make good progress with learning about the use of information technology in a business environment using spreadsheets and databases to model business situations and selecting and retrieving information.
- 172 In the sixth form, students make good progress with using information technology to support their studies generally and those who study business education and GNVQ information technology courses make good progress with skills and knowledge relevant to their courses.
- 173 Students with special educational needs make good progress. They make good progress with learning to present their work more clearly and accurately and make satisfactory progress with literacy and numeracy skills which they have opportunities to practise when they use computers.
- 174 Students have very good attitudes to learning. They are well-motivated and sustain concentration. They share equipment fairly and remain interested and involved when their partner is performing the practical aspects of the tasks. Students are very well behaved and take good care of equipment. They take opportunities to work independently and are developing good problem solving skills. Students in the upper school who act as information technology assistants in extra-curricular clubs demonstrate commitment and responsible attitudes and are welcomed by students and the staff they support.

175 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have positive attitude to teaching information technology relevantly in other subjects of the curriculum and their clear communication of skills and knowledge as well as their enthusiasm is a significant contributor to the good progress students make. They encourage appropriate use of the Internet for researching information and as an effect means of students presenting their work appropriately. Confidence and expertise are growing in the use teachers make of information technology in their subjects, partly because of the in-service training they receive and the support available to them from the technical and teaching staff from the information technology department. The technicians in both upper and lower school make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the department and the development of the cross-curricular nature of the subject. Teachers plan their lessons well within relevant contexts of subjects. For example, in mathematics they use computers for work on omnigraphs and there are keyboards connected to computers which are used in music lessons. Most teachers have information technology skills and knowledge planned into their lessons and a significant number have received training in assessment of information technology within subject areas such as personal and social education. The team teaching approach between form teachers supported by information technology staff is very successful and enables students to make good and often very good progress in these lessons.

176 The curriculum provides an appropriate range of experience for all students and meets statutory requirements. The provision to teach information technology through subjects of the curriculum and through personal and social education is successful because it is effectively planned and monitored. The monitoring of individual students' progress has not yet been established but is being planned and there are systems in place to record this electronically. Assessment is now accurately linked to National Curriculum levels following a review of previous procedures. Students have opportunities to reflect on social and moral issues in information technology lessons, for example in their work linked to Catholic Aid for Overseas Development. They are developing a tolerance of the views of others and a deeper understanding of Christian principles. They are making good progress with learning about the effects of information technology in society.

177 The leadership and management of the department is successfully carried out by the overall coordinator and separate coordinators for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. There is a clear, shared vision for the development of the subject and a very good team spirit has been established to implement this. Resources are effectively managed by a fourth member of the team. The ethos for learning is very good and there is a strong commitment to high standards. There has been good improvement in all the areas identified for development in the previous inspection and in view of the good systems in place and the evaluative approach to the development of the subject, the department has the capacity to make further good improvements.

183

183 **Modern foreign languages**

184 Results in GCSE French at grades A* to C were above the national average in 1998 and 1999. In the same period Spanish results declined from just above to just below the national average whilst German remained well above albeit with a smaller entry. However, although modern languages obtains a higher number of A* grades than almost every other subject in the school, too many average attainers underachieve at around D grade. Current attainment is in line with the positive levels of the previous inspection given the fact that entry is now universal.

184

- 185 The number of entries at A-level GCE in the three languages is often low but the department usually achieves a good proportion of higher grades. Very few boys study languages in the sixth form. Their examination performance at GCSE is usually in line with the national average.
- 178 Attainment for most students at the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Listening and comprehension skills are good, reflecting the constant use of the foreign language in the classroom. Written work is mostly careful and accurate. Many students read with a degree of confidence which often benefits their pronunciation. Too many students are inhibited in speaking where they lack practice in giving full answers. They do not become familiar enough with the patterns of the spoken language and are unable to manipulate the foreign language for their own use. Speaking ability varies from using only single word responses to higher attainers being able to use the present perfect tense in German with commendable accuracy.
- 179 Attainment for students at the end of Year 11 is at the national average. Students' main language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing develop appropriately following on from the earlier key stage, with speaking in French, German or Spanish still the weakest aspect. However, one class of higher attainers in French could not only answer fluently in complete sentences but could also frame their own questions without difficulty. Written work is generally of a good standard and students at this stage are beginning to adapt their style and vocabulary to be able to write formal and informal letters, descriptions of familiar events and routines and other narratives. Average attainers in both key stages need to be stretched more and to be set higher targets.
- 180 Attainment in the sixth form is good. Written work is often ambitious and usually based on authentic sources. Work files are a good foundation for revision before examinations. Students overcome their lack of confidence in speaking the language and enjoy learning more about the appropriate countries through their language work.
- 181 Progress is good throughout in all key stages. Well-planned teaching, using the language skills logically and systematically, leads to good consolidation of recent work which provides a firm basis for new learning. Homework also makes a valuable contribution to this by reinforcing this continuity and thus helping to bridge the time gap between lessons. Good ability to remember is particularly strong in the sixth form but is also a significant characteristic of all higher-attainers. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They benefit from smaller class sizes, from effective classroom assistance and attain well in listening work.
- 182 Students' behaviour is very good. They are unfailingly polite. Students of all attainment levels stay focused on their work and complete tasks and assignments successfully. They work well together in pairs and groups and seldom need reminders to get on with their work. On rare occasions, a small number stop concentrating and chat away in English.

- 183 Teaching is never less than satisfactory, is mostly good and very good in about one quarter of the lessons seen. The foreign language is successfully embedded as the language of instruction and communication. Lessons are always prepared well and carefully structured to provide systematic practice in the main language skills. Teachers work very hard to maintain a challenging pace so that class time is fully utilised. They monitor pair and group work effectively and have good working relationships with students. They vary tasks and activities to sustain interest and in the best classes there is always time for smiles to complement the hard work. For example, competitive word games to consolidate learning are popular with younger students and older students enjoy the odd humorous exchange with their teachers. On occasion, a teacher may speak too much and sometimes teachers do not insist on complete answers so that students have insufficient opportunity to assimilate sentence patterns. Technical aids such as information technology, video and satellite TV could be used more frequently to help students appreciate the relevance of the subject and to provide closer links with the countries being studied.
- 184 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The curriculum offer of three languages with opportunities to take two is good. However, the current time allotment where two languages are studied within the present school timetable of five single hours is not ideal for modern languages. Assessment of students' work is thorough and carefully recorded both formally and informally but the increasing amount of available data requires careful monitoring and evaluation to be of direct use in seeking improvements for the future. Similarly, the introduction of a planned programme of peer classroom observation with related staff development activities is necessary to ensure the dissemination of best practice. Resources are adequate. Unfortunately, at certain times, there is a shortage of accommodation when languages have to be taught in unsuitable rooms or when foreign language assistants have to practise speaking with small groups of students in the corridors.
- 185 Since the previous inspection the department has improved its teaching and promoted independent and paired learning. It has made satisfactory progress with its reading programme and with the introduction of information technology. It makes better provision for lower-attainers but needs to focus more attention on average attainers.

Music

- 186 Standards of attainment in music are well above that expected nationally. The attainment of A-level students is very high. Attainment has risen in all key stages since the previous inspection. In the last eight years all students who have been entered for A-level music have gained A to E grades. This 100 per cent record compares very favourably with the national average in which approximately 80 per cent of entrants gain A to E grades. The quality of students' performances is high and the standards of students' two and four part compositions are very high. Students have a good knowledge of the history of music and are able to recognise the characteristic features of various musical periods ranging from medieval to modern.
- 187 Since the previous inspection GCSE students have consistently gained grades well above the national averages. All students who have taken GCSE since the previous inspection have gained A* to G grades. GCSE students all have a good grounding in instrumental tuition and benefit from ensemble opportunities. Students compose fine examples of works with a ground bass, in rondo form, and vocal works. GCSE students have a very good understanding of the elements of music and most are capable musicians playing at Grade 4 and above. Many of the GCSE candidates play two instruments and also have Grade 5 theory.

- 188 By the end of Key Stage 3 students' attainment in music is above national expectations. Students are performing, listening and appraising with confidence. Class assessments demonstrate that students have a good knowledge of the rudiments and theory of music and many take the opportunities to learn a band or orchestral instrument. Aural skills are well developed and many students have a good knowledge of musical forms such as rondo and ostinato and are able to compose simple melodies and in particular raps and blues. Students all develop good listening and appreciation skills and listen critically to works such as Vivaldi's Four Seasons and Gustav Holst's Planets Suite. Students compose competent graphic scores and some students compose using traditional notation. Many students participate in high quality instrumental and choral curricular activities which significantly contribute to the raising of standards. Students with special educational needs are achieving appropriate results because the music teachers work hard to provide all of them with suitable learning activities.
- 189 The progress of students is good. Rapid and significant progress is made by all students in the A-level groups. Students are highly motivated and hardworking. Students benefit from high quality teaching and a plethora of further curricular musical opportunities both within school, the local music centre and the wider community. GCSE students progress well because they build on Key Stage 3 work, increase their instrumental standards, take up the additional theory coaching provided by staff and get immersed with further curricular music making. Progress of Key Stage 3 students is good because they enjoy their music lessons and sustain good levels of concentration.
- 190 Students of all ages have positive attitudes to music. In all lessons observed students paid good attention to their teachers, settled quickly and sensibly to their work and collaborated with each other for group performances. Students sustain concentration and enjoy their lessons. Students perceive music lessons to be enjoyable occasions in which they can learn to develop valuable choral and instrumental skills.
- 191 The quality of music teaching across all key stages is very good. Sixth form teaching is excellent, GCSE teaching is very good and Key Stage 3 teaching is good. The music teachers provide well-planned and interesting lessons which captivate their students' attention. A-level teaching is marked by careful preparation and a thorough knowledge of the examination syllabus and the requirements of the examining body. Sixth formers are challenged to compose complex and demanding works which display a thorough knowledge of harmony, counterpoint and musical form. Students are effectively assisted by peripatetic teachers to reach high standards of instrumental prowess and often students are at Grade 7 and above when taking their final GCE examinations. GCSE students are very well taught and all are personally tutored by their teachers so that they become first and foremost confident practical musicians and then learners about music. All GCSE students are competently taught to appreciate the great musical composers and they are thoroughly and systematically taught about the famous musical movements that have influenced style, composition and musical thought. Key Stage 3 teaching is good but lacks some of the urgency and dynamism of the GCSE and A-level work. Teaching is well organised and well planned but there is less differentiation of work in that higher-attainers are not always fully extended or challenged and information technology has not, as yet, been fully incorporated into Key Stage 3 schemes of work. World music does not figure prominently and the music of India, Africa and China is less prominent than expected.
- 192 The music curriculum provides very good opportunities for all students. The schemes of work and further curricular opportunities provide good progression, continuity and variety. Teachers have developed effective assessment strategies and now need to use the Key Stage 3 assessment data to inform further curriculum planning. The department has worked very hard to raise musical attainment throughout the school. Marking of assignments and record keeping is sound and manuscript books are appropriately marked.

- 193 Accommodation and learning resources are barely adequate. Classroom teachers are all competent and peripatetic instrumental teachers make a very good contribution to the raising of standards. Although learning resources for music are generally satisfactory there is a marked absence of any multicultural percussion instruments. The accommodation is inadequate because there is insufficient classroom teaching space, only two practice rooms and no recording studio.
- 194 Standards of leadership and management are exemplary. The head of department has inspired, fashioned and moulded a very successful team of class teachers and peripatetic musicians who provide a very high quality musical education for all students. They are provided with the very best musical opportunities. The department's contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural life is impressive. The extra-curricular music is outstanding and offers instrumentalists and singers of all standards a vast range of high quality performance opportunities in ensembles, choirs, orchestras and concert bands. The department is exceptional because the music making is of a high quality and the participation rate is very high.

Physical education

- 195 The proportion of students gaining grades A* - C in the 1999 GCSE examinations is in line with the national average. All students who entered the examination gained at least a grade G. This was an improvement over the 1998 results, which were well below the national average. Girls outperform boys in this examination, but there is little difference between the performance of students from different ethnic groups. The 1999 A-level results were in line with the national average and all students gained at least an E grade.
- 196 In work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form are in line with the level expected for students of the same age nationally. These standards of attainment are similar to those reported in the previous inspection. By the age of 14, students have a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, and the need to warm up before undertaking strenuous exercise. Standards in games are satisfactory. Many students perform skilfully and show a sound understanding of the principles of play in the major games. Planning skills develop well in most games lessons, as students plan for performance and refine their skills in the context of strategic play. Boys and girls achieve sound standards in gymnastics. Most students make a good beginning in orienteering. They can read a map of the school grounds accurately, and demonstrate their map reading skills, effectively, in a timed competition.
- 197 Planning and performance skills are developing satisfactorily but students' skills of evaluating their own and others' work are generally unsatisfactory. In many lessons there is a lack of opportunity for students to observe, analyse and comment on performance, particularly against specific criteria. By the age of 16, students in the core physical education programme maintain sound standards in team games. Good work was seen in rugby.

- 198 Standards in GCSE practical work vary. In volleyball, many students have yet to master the basic skills of the game, which inhibits their effectiveness in play; students near the end of their rugby course, however, show a good understanding of the game and there were some good individual performances. GCSE written course work indicates a wide range of attainment, but overall, students show a sound knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. This was well illustrated in a lesson on Drugs in Sport, in which students' responses reflected a satisfactory knowledge of the topic. The differences in attainment between girls and boys in the 1999 examinations may be attributed to the girls making carefully considered option choices, while a number of boys choose GCSE physical education mainly because of their commitment to football. By the age of 19, A-level students attain good standards in their chosen sports, and their written coursework reflects a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. Standards in extra-curricular sport are good, and many students gain representative honours at district, county and sometimes national level.
- 199 Students' progress in relation to their prior attainment is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and 4, and good in the sixth form. Most students respond well to sound teaching, work at a steady pace, and usually make good use of opportunities to practice. Boys and girls are taught separately in Key Stage 3, but make equally sound progress. Discernible progress is evident in many lessons, as students of all levels of attainment consolidate their skills through repetition and practice. This was well illustrated in a netball lesson, where higher attaining students made good progress in jumping to receive a pass and turning in the air to pass in a different direction, and low attainers perfected their footwork skills by pivoting to change the direction of the pass. However, the limited indoor accommodation for the subject is an inhibiting factor in planning for continuity and progression in games, particularly in the event of bad weather.
- 200 Although sound progress in planning and performance skills takes place in Key Stage 3, there is less evidence of students' progress in the skills of observation and analysis of performance. As students move through each key stage, they make steady progress in games, as they apply previous knowledge, acquire new skills and develop understanding well. Students identified as having special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme and make progress at the same rate as their peers, such as in a gymnastics lesson, where a student demonstrated her movement sequence to the class, competently and confidently.
- 201 Students' attitudes to learning are generally good, and most students are well motivated and take an interest in their work. These positive attitudes are reflected in good behaviour in lessons and a willingness to participate and become involved. Students respond well to opportunities to take responsibility, but these are limited in lessons.
- 202 The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and there are examples of good teaching in both key stages and the sixth form. The standard of teaching is similar to that reported in the previous inspection. Teachers have very good relationships with the students, which contribute significantly to students' good behaviour, standards of dress and high levels of participation in lessons. Student management and organisation are strengths of the department. The teachers know their subject well and prepare thoroughly, identifying appropriate learning objectives. However, the tasks which are set are not always sufficiently well organised to ensure maximum student progress. The strongest teaching has a clear focus, based on raising the standards of attainment, high expectations of students and a demanding pace, within which learning targets are set. This was well illustrated in a boys' gymnastics lesson, where skilful questioning enabled students to evaluate the extent to which they had achieved their targets.

203 In the best lessons, teachers combine good subject knowledge with a range of teaching strategies, which enable students to take some responsibility for their own learning. For example in a Key Stage 3 football lesson, students evaluated their own and others' work. Teachers' observation, assessment and feedback are generally good, and used effectively to give individual coaching. Although satisfactory, in some lessons tasks are not always matched to students' levels of attainment and on occasions higher-attainers are insufficiently challenged. There are inconsistencies in the teaching across the department and teaching and learning strategies require development and monitoring to sharpen up the focus on raising standards of attainment.

204 During the prolonged absence of the head of department, the second in department has become the acting head. Day-to-day leadership and management are sound, and the staff work well together as a team. However, long term development planning and monitoring aimed at raising standards and improving progress, require a more permanent resolution to departmental management. Progress since the last inspection has been generally satisfactory. Recent curriculum initiatives have broadened students' opportunities in the subject. For example, physical education makes a very effective contribution to the information technology curriculum through the data logging activities in the health and fitness coursework. The excellent displays in the girls' area also make a good contribution to the schools' literacy policy, involving the technical language of the subject. As reported in the last inspection the regular use of one gymnasium for examinations has a detrimental effect on the progression and continuity of the Key Stage 4 and sixth form curriculum. Health and safety risk assessments have not yet been carried out or documented.

212 **Sixth form: an overview, other A-level subjects and GNVQs**

205 The sixth form has 265 students. Students study from a very wide range of subjects for A and AS-level, GCSE and Advanced and Intermediate GNVQs in one or two year programmes. Students can choose any appropriate combination of subjects. There is a strong tradition of student participation in whole-school activities especially in musical events and sports.

206 Students enjoy the sixth form and most are committed to their studies. Few students drop out during the first year. Good pastoral care and guidance are provided in the sixth form in tutor groups. Students receive valuable academic and personal guidance through tutor interviews. Advice on careers, job information and the opportunity of a careers interview are available. Students' progress is monitored well and includes an A-level Assessment Card which gives students a valuable overview of their progress and current position in relation to their predicted grades.

207 The sixth form students are prominent in the life of the school and are good role models for younger students. Their involvement with younger pupils is a strength of the school. In spite of the split-site sixth form students are involved in lower school activities and offer help and guidance to younger students. They also visit the school's partner primary schools.

208 The sixth form common rooms are used well but are cramped with no separate area for quiet study. Students make very good use of the upper school library which is well-stocked with information for sixth form courses.

1 The sixth form is energetically and effectively led but the management structure lacks the broad foundation of a permanent group of tutors to support the Director of Sixth Form and to provide continuity.

- 2 General studies is a part of the core curriculum in the sixth form. Students who attain A*, A and B grades in GCSE at the end of Year 12 continue to A-level.
- 3 Advanced level GCE examination results are in line with national expectations. In 1999 eighty per cent of students attained at least a grade E or better. Students are able to think for themselves, to interpret evidence, to put forward hypotheses and to argue logically. They make good progress in formulating and putting forward their own opinions based on their experience and research evidence. Students have open and pleasant relationships with each other and with the teacher. In a class where students were of very diverse religious backgrounds they were very tolerant of, and interested in, each others' views.
- 4 The curriculum is clearly set out and well planned. Teaching is good. It is direct and energetic. Information is drawn from the students by skilful and patient questioning. They are fully involved in the lesson and engage in discussion based on their own opinions but supported with the evidence they have already evaluated.

220

220 **Economics**

- 5 Over 30 students were entered for the A-level examination in 1999 and above the national average achieved grades A to E. Over the last four years results have been consistently above the national average with well over 20 entries in each year and above average numbers achieving A and B grades.
- 6 Progress of students in lessons and over time is good. Coursework folders for Years 12 and 13 contain well-presented notes and well-drawn supply and demand curves. Students use material from local industry well and understand key micro and macro-economic concepts. Written answers are clear and well-argued. For example, students' work on the relationship between tax rates and employment patterns showed a good understanding and application of economic principles and statistical techniques. Their analysis of topical economic data and evaluation of material researched from a variety of sources enhances their understanding. A Year 13 lesson on the costs and benefits of cutting tax gave students an opportunity to apply their previous learning so that they made good gains on understanding the implications of Laffer's curve.
- 7 Students discuss economic concepts in a mature way and have a very positive approach to the subject. Motivation is very high and many students go to read economics at university.
- 8 Teaching is very good. Teachers encourage students to think critically about economic concepts through group and class discussion, role play, research from textbooks and current affairs magazines and newspapers. Teachers are secure in their command of the subject and convey their enthusiasm to the students. Planning includes very good use of local commercial links and external visits are arranged outside Doncaster. Students are given very good guidance on A-level examination techniques.

224 **Government and Politics**

- 9 Government is taught under the auspices of the history department. The number of candidates, entered has never exceeded ten students. In 1999 the A-level A to E grade pass rate was 80 per cent. This year there are two A-level candidates in Year 13 and the subject has not been offered in Year 12. Teaching is thorough and efficient but the response is limited because of the very small number of students involved.

225 **Sociology**

- 10 A full sociology course was introduced into the sixth form curriculum in 1997. In 1998 five candidates were entered for A-level and in 1999 18 candidates. By the year 2001 entry these numbers will have almost trebled. In 1999 80 per cent of candidates gained grades A to E.
- 11 Attainment is in line with national expectations. Students, particularly the boys, are able to offer opinions and to put forward theories usually supported by evidence. As a result of careful teaching students make good progress in developing their social attitudes and in becoming more aware of their own and other peoples' prejudices. They are fully involved in the class and comments are balanced, thoughtful and sometimes very perceptive.
- 12 Teaching is good. The style is relaxed and non-directive lessons are well structured and well timed. The teacher is good at making connections which make the topic relevant to the students. Questioning is skilful and requires the students to provide most of the information. The teacher creates a good hardworking learning environment.

GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications)

- 13 GNVQ courses are currently run in the sixth form at Advanced level in business education and information technology, and at Intermediate level in health and social care and in leisure and tourism over one year. GNVQ courses complement the extensive A-level programme in the school and provide a well-recognised pathway to university and employment.

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- 230 The GNVQ Advanced level – Business education and information technology course was introduced last year and students are reaching average standards. They have a good knowledge of computer applications and competent keyboarding skills. The style and content of reports they write are of a satisfactory standard.

230

- 231 In the GNVQ Intermediate Level – Health and social care students attain standards that are above the national average and make good progress.

- 14 In the GNVQ - Intermediate Level - Leisure and tourism course students attain above average standards. Students understand the difference between information provision and information need and can structure information, gathered from the Internet, to prepare a presentation on a tourist attraction such as the Doncaster Dome. They make good progress in their lesson and gain skills which allow them to analyse positive and negative influences on the economy of an area frequented by tourists. The students are interested and actively involved in the course and respond well to the good teaching, detailed planning and high quality resources which have contributed to the success of the course.

232 **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

232 **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 15 Before the inspection the registered inspector held a meeting attended by 56 parents and the team considered 294 responses of parents to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.
- 16 Thirteen inspectors gathered first-hand evidence during the week of the inspection. To hundred and six lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Further observations were made of form periods, registration times, assemblies, and of a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Discussions were held with students in all classes during the course of lessons, and separate discussions were arranged with some students in order that they could talk about aspects of their work or involvement in school activities. Subject inspectors held planned discussions with all members of middle management. Interviews also took place with the governors, the headteacher, deputy heads and teachers with particular responsibilities. Inspectors analysed the work of high, average and low-attainers and students with special educational needs, from each year group.
- 17 The previous OFSTED report, action plan, policy documents, schemes of work, development and financial plans and further documentation provided by the school were scrutinised both before, during and after the inspection. Attendance registers, records kept on students, particularly in relation to their attainment on

235 **DATA AND INDICATORS**

235 **Student data**

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1650	29	226	174

235 **Teachers and classes**

235 **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):

97.60
16.91

Number of students per qualified teacher:

235 **Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)**

Total number of education support staff:

21
507

Total aggregate hours worked each week:

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:

78.8

Average teaching group size:

KS3

24
20

KS4

Financial year:

1998/99

	£
Total Income	3,824,680
Total Expenditure	3,831,505
Expenditure per student	2,393
Balance brought forward from previous year	147,115
Balance carried forward to next year	140,290

Number of questionnaires sent out:	1650
Number of questionnaires returned:	294

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	24	65	6	5	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	37	53	6	3	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	21	49	24	5	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	28	59	8	4	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	29	57	9	5	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	43	52	4	1	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	31	54	11	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	29	58	5	6	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	40	50	5	5	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	41	49	8	2	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	38	50	7	4	1

NB: Percentages of responses are rounded to nearest integer, sum may not = 100%
Percentages given are in relation to total number of returns, EXCLUDING nil replies.