

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**OUR LADY AND ST BEDE RC SCHOOL**  
Stockton-on-Tees

LEA area: Stockton-on-Tees

Unique Reference Number: 111758

Headteacher: Mr Malcolm Frank

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Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones

Dates of inspection: 6 – 10 December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708064

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bishopton Road West Stockton-on-Tees TS19 0QH
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Kathleen Oyston
Date of previous inspection:	December 1994

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Marjorie Glynne-Jones Registered Inspector		Attainment and progress Quality of teaching Leadership and management Efficiency Attendance
Gillian Barker Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Accommodation
Ann Hawley	Mathematics	
Wendy Easterby Graham Carter Mary Harrison	English Science Art	Assessment Curriculum Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Renee Robinson	Design and technology Information technology	
Terry Morrison Neil Cowell	History Geography	Special educational needs Special educational needs assessment
Michael Lafford Shirley Stanley Bob Castle	Modern languages Music Physical education	Staffing Equal opportunities Learning resources

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- GCSE results for one or more grades A\*-G above the national average in 1998
- Results are improving at a faster rate than the national results for five A\*-C grades, and much faster for five A\*-G grades
- Results very good compared with schools with a similar intake
- Unauthorised absence is very low
- Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships
- School aims and values put into practice very well and very positive learning environment through effective leadership
- Provision for spiritual, moral and social development is very good
- Very good extra-curricular activities
- Very good community links

### • Where the school has weaknesses

- I. 1998 results at A\*-C below average in mathematics, art, design and technology subjects, French, geography and information technology
- II. Unsatisfactory leadership and management resulting from:
  - i lack of monitoring of teaching and the curriculum
  - ii whole-school policies and procedures not put into practice consistently
  - iii development planning lacks rigour and pace
  - iv lack of sharp focus on raising attainment
- III. Assessment data not sufficiently analysed or used in subject planning
- IV. Unsatisfactory arrangements for the professional development of staff

**The school has 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 or guardians of pupils at the school.**

### • How the school has improved since the last inspection

Standards at GCSE have improved from slightly below average to average. Results fell after the 1994 inspection. Between 1996 and 1998, though fluctuating, they rose again, and further improved in 1999. The quality of pupils' attitudes and relationships has been maintained and enhanced. Teaching standards remain much the same. Attendance has improved. Statutory requirements for information technology are now met.

There has been insufficient progress on other key issues. The weaknesses persist in development planning and monitoring and evaluation, in arrangements for staff development and in assessment arrangements. The school has been unable to rationalise the accommodation. A recent joint bid with the local education authority and the diocese to the Department for Education and Employment for development of the premises, has been unsuccessful.

Not enough progress has been made since the last inspection. However, the school has the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16-year-olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			well above average
			above average
Key Stage 3	C	A	average
Key Stage 4	C	A	below average
			well below average

\* *Similar schools refers to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.*

• **1998 GCSE**

The strongest are: science, history, music, religious studies.

The weakest are: mathematics, art, French, geography, information technology.

The 1998 results show that in science, standards have improved since the last inspection; in history and music they have remained above average. In other subjects, with the exception of English and English literature, standards are below the national average. However, in these subjects, the 1999 results show improvement, except in geography, where they fell.

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	satisfactory	English art information technology (specialist) modern languages physical education	mathematics
Years 10-11	good	English science art geography information technology modern languages physical education	
English	good		
Mathematics	satisfactory		

V. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of lessons

VI. It is good, or better, in 51 per cent

VII. In 13 per cent it is very good or excellent

VIII. It is unsatisfactory in 1 per cent of lessons

*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**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Very good: pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships are school strengths.
Attendance	Good: rate is slightly above national average; unauthorised absence is well below average.
Ethos*	Good: considerable strength in very good relationships and pupils' attitudes, equal access to school's opportunities for all pupils, very positive learning environment, but notable weakness in the lack of sharp focus on raising attainment.
Leadership and management	Unsatisfactory overall: strong sense of purpose for quality of pupils' experience, not strong enough for high achievement; aims and values put into practice very well, but this is not consistently achieved for whole-school policies; weaknesses in development planning, and in monitoring the school's work.
Curriculum	Satisfactory: broad, balanced and soundly planned, with required elements of sex and drugs education; helpful setting arrangements supporting equal access; good careers education; particular strength in extra-curricular activities; weakness in using assessment information to help planning.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory: requirements met in full; team works well and is sensitive to pupils' needs; good contribution from learning support staff in lessons; individual education plans in place but not always used effectively in departments.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good for each aspect except cultural development which is satisfactory, but not consistently planned for in subjects; overall, a school strength.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory: sufficient staff, but no technical support for information technology; weakness in arrangements for staff development; generally satisfactory resources, but ready access to computers not consistently achieved across the school; sound subject accommodation overall, though some difficulties for the curriculum of split departments persist since last inspection; dog-fouling of the school games field is a health and safety hazard.
Value for money	Satisfactory.

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

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

These views are expressed by the 34 parents (six per cent) attending the meeting, and 295 parents (48 per cent) who returned the questionnaire.

#### **What most parents like about the school**

- IX. the school encourages parents in the life of the school
- X. the school is approachable when there are problems
- XI. the school informs them about what is taught
- XII. the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress
- XIII. the school enables a good standard of work
- XIV. the school encourages more than daily lessons
- XV. they are satisfied with homework
- XVI. they feel the school has positive values and attitudes
- XVII. the behaviour is good
- XVIII. their children like school.

#### **What some parents are not happy about**

There is no matter about which there is notable concern. The inspection team agrees with most of the parents' positive views. However, inspectors do not find that annual reports on pupils' progress give parents sufficient information about how their child is doing in each subject. They also do not find that higher attaining pupils are sufficiently stretched.

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In their continuing efforts to improve standards and the quality of work in the school, governors and senior managers should act to:

- \* identified by the school
- \*\* procedures already in place

1 raise attainment:

- i sustain the rising trend in overall GCSE results and the improvement in subject results in 1999
- ii improve GCSE results in geography and information technology
- iii improve the results of boys and girls where they compare unfavourably with the national difference

*through*

- XXIX. using the existing twice-termly review procedure to track pupils' progress from entry
- XX. implementing a tracking sheet for this purpose, beginning with the assessment data for Year 7, Key Stage 2 assessments, reading and other assessments (already collected for the current Year 7 and 8)
- XXI. setting individual subject targets for all pupils
- XXII. co-ordinating the mentoring at Key Stage 4 to ensure that support is well targeted, monitored and evaluated
- XXIII. taking action on key issues 2 and 4 below.

( paragraphs 13,15-17, 19, 26-27, 51, 57, 62, 90, 100, 118, 128, 135, 142, 153, 160 )

2 implement a termly monitoring programme to ensure:

- i consistent quality in teaching across and within departments and key stages
- ii that policies and procedures are consistently put into practice across the school

*through*

- XXIV. providing training for senior and middle managers in observation and monitoring techniques
- XXV. planning initial and timely follow-up observations and sampling exercises
- XXVI. providing timely feedback for the whole staff [anonymously] of the strengths and weaknesses identified across the school
- XXVII. setting time targets for improvements
- XXVIII. providing termly reports for governors on the findings of the monitoring, and on the action taken.

( paragraphs 40, 42-43, 47, 50, 52, 56, 62, 72-74, 79, 87, 133, 142, 150, 160, 183 )

3 Sharpen development planning \*

*through*

- XXIX. ensuring that the responsibility for development planning is properly carried out by governors and the headteacher
- XXX. setting clear targets with specific success criteria
- XXXI. identifying a lead person for each target, accountable for progressing the action and time scales
- XXXII. setting time targets for each area of growth, with a timetable for any phases planned
- XXXIII. expecting the same quality of development planning from departments.

( paragraphs 70-71, 74, 79, 87, 110, 149 )

- 4 Use assessment data routinely to \*
- i provide staff and governors with analyses and comparisons of data
  - ii ensure that planning takes appropriate account of the information gained from assessment
- through
- XXXIV. ensuring that the data on pupil tracking is analysed at each review to show trends in performance by all pupils and by boys and girls - for individual pupils, for teaching groups/sets, and year groups
- XXXV. tracking individual performance against the predicted levels at Key Stage 3 and GCSE grades at Key Stage 4
- XXXVI. using this information in subjects to check that the work planned is pitched at an appropriately challenging level for individuals and groups within classes
- using standing items on meetings agendas to keep staff and governors fully informed about specific assessment findings
- XXXVII. ensuring that pupils' annual reports give consistently clear information about their attainment in each subject and the targets for improvement.

( paragraphs 39, 40-42, 50-51, 62, 72, 98, 110, 116, 133, 141, 148, 157, 183 )

- 5 Ensure that the programme of professional development
- i fully reflects school priorities for improvement
  - ii addresses areas of weakness identified through school monitoring
  - iii provides updating for long-serving staff
- through
- XXXVIII. ensuring that all staff have up-to-date job descriptions stating clearly teaching responsibilities and, as appropriate, subject and whole-school management responsibilities
- XXXIX. providing training/development activities for senior and middle managers on the areas delineated in these key issues
- XL. evaluating the effectiveness of staff development by checking to what extent teaching and learning, and school provision, have improved as a result.

( paragraphs 73-74, 78-79, 87 )

- 6 Continue in the endeavour to ensure that the school field is free from the hazard of dog-fouling \*\*.

( paragraphs 81, 184 )

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

- i Not enough attention is given to the quality of display throughout the school.  
( paragraphs 81, 184 )
- ii The food technology room is in a poor state of repair; fittings are worn out so that further repair is ineffective. \*  
( paragraph 80 )
- iii Some weakness in resources for mathematics and music.  
( paragraphs 84, 110 )
- iv There is a shortage of non-fiction material in the library for most subject areas; this persists from the last inspection.  
( paragraph 85 )
- v Insufficient computers are allocated to support learning in English, mathematics, music, science and design and technology.  
( paragraphs 84-85, 87, 106, 117, 159, 175 )

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

- 1 Our Lady and St Bede is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-16. It is the only Roman Catholic secondary school in Stockton and so draws pupils widely from the town and surrounding villages. It is smaller than most secondary schools with 618 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs is about average, and there is an above average number of pupils on the special needs register. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language, and this is unusual. On entry pupils' attainment is broadly average, although about a third have poor reading skills in the current Year 7. When they leave school, about 60 per cent of pupils stay in full-time education, and about 15 per cent go into training. The headteacher has been in post for two years. Pupil numbers have declined since the last inspection, with the consequent reduction in income. Governors have had to deal with the issue of over-staffing.
  
- 2 The mission statement identifies five mission areas, integral to the everyday life of the school. These focus on the experience of prayer, worship and the liturgy; on dynamic interaction between home, parish and school; on the understanding of relationships; on ensuring that the curriculum provides a Catholic setting for pupils' development; and on concern for all members of the school community. There are four main areas for action in the school improvement plan: raising achievement, management issues, staff development and physical resources.

## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	68	57	125

<b>2 National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	36	41	38
	Girls	41	41	32
	Total	77	82	70
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	61.6(58.9)	65.6(59.1)	56(55.4)
	National	65(56)	60(60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	25.6(28.7)	45.6(33.9)	21.6(26.6)
	National	35(23)	36(37)	27(29)

<b>2 Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	39	43	39
	Girls	41	43	33
	Total	80	86	72
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	64(59.6)	68.8(78.4)	57.6(59.7)
	National	62(60)	64(63)	62(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	32(35.3)	43.2(44.6)	23.2(33.1)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(39)

.....

1

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

## Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>1</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	61	60	121

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 pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	28	57	61
	Girls	21	51	59
	Total	49	108	120
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	40.5(52.6)	89.3(86.6)	99.2(93.3)
	National	44.6(43)	89.8(88)	95.2(94)

.....  
2

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

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	7.35
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	0.06
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

2

2

2

## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	13
	Permanent	0

2

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	13
	Good or better	51
	Satisfactory or better	99
	Less than satisfactory	1

## 2 PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

### 2 EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

#### 2 Attainment and progress

*The standards achieved by pupils at the school are compared with (i) the national average for all secondary schools, and (ii) the average for schools with a similar intake as determined by the number of pupils entitled to free school meals*

*Evidence from the inspection includes observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their work.*

#### **Key Stage 3**

##### **English, mathematics and science**

- 2 In English, the 1998 results of the Key Stage 3 national tests are in line with the national average for all schools. They are above the average for similar schools. The trend is rising. Standards are maintained in the 1999 results. Pupils do less well in English than they do in science, and far less well than in mathematics. The difference between boys' and girls' results reflects the national difference.
- 3 Results in the 1998 national tests for mathematics are above the national average. The proportion achieving higher grades is well above average. Standards rose at a faster rate than nationally between 1996 and 1998 and rose further in 1999. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Results are well above the average for similar schools. This is a good picture.
- 4 The 1998 national test results in science are in line with the national average for all schools, and well above the average for similar schools. Over the last three years 1996-98 the trend is a rising one, at a faster rate than the improvement in national results. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The level achieved in 1998 is not sustained in 1999. No factors are seen as significant other than the different group of pupils involved.
- 5 It is not possible to make a direct comparison with the standards reported at the last inspection because they were reported in a different way.
- 6 Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in English, mathematics and science is in line with the expected standard.
- 7 In English pupils understand the meaning and content of what they read, communicate clearly in speaking, and listen carefully. There is some weakness in spelling. In mathematics, pupils use calculators efficiently; they find different types of average and understand their use, and understand simple probability. In science, pupils have a sound knowledge of basic atomic structure, and the chemical reactivity of acids and alkalis. In investigations they can plan a fair test effectively.

## **Other subjects - art, design and technology, geography, history, information technology, French, music, physical education**

- 8 The evidence from the inspection shows that, by the end of the key stage, attainment is in line with the standard expected in design and technology, geography, information technology, music and physical education. It is above the expected standard in art, history and French.
- 9 In design and technology, pupils apply the design process in the different areas of graphics, food, textiles and resistant materials. They produce simple graphic images; they measure, mark out, cut, shape and select appropriate tools for the task. In geography, pupils understand how people can improve or damage the environment, and they use appropriate vocabulary when explaining this, for example 'greenhouse effect'. In information technology, pupils use computers confidently for word-processing and desktop publishing although their keyboard skills lack fluency; they use CD ROM, and sometimes the Internet, to search and access information, for example on multicultural festivals. In music, pupils play tuned percussion instruments, for example, using harmonic patterns, and they read from a score. Singing skills are good and pupils listen carefully. In physical education, pupils demonstrate skills in a number of games, for example, basket ball, netball and football, and they make individual and group dances. They understand the reason for stretching when starting physical activity, and what happens to the body in warm-up exercises.
- 10 In art pupils use a range of techniques and media well. They use bold colours, for example, when painting on glass. There are good explorations of colour, perspective and tonal work in their sketch books. In history, pupils show a good ability to use sources critically, for example, when studying the English Civil War. They use correct terminology and have a sound understanding of chronology. In French, pupils know a variety of expressions to describe weather; they pronounce the phrases accurately. They listen and understand, although some are reluctant to speak.

## **Key Stage 4**

### **GCSE**

- 1 There is a rising trend in GCSE results for five or more grades A\*-C which between 1996 and 1998 is faster than the national rate of improvement. The improvement brought results close to the national average in 1998. In 1999 there is further improvement. Over the same period results for five or more grades A\*-G also rose at a faster rate than nationally, but not sufficiently to reach the national average. Results at grades A\*-G in 1998 are above average. 1999 results are very much the same as the 1998 results. The rising trend is reflected in the average total points pupils achieve, which over 1996-1998 is close to the national average. However, over this period while boys' points were above average, girls' points were below average.
- 2 The schools' results are very good in comparison with schools with a similar intake, particularly in mathematics.

### **Certificate of achievement**

- 3 The results in 1998 and 1999 are similar. In 1999 all pupils taking science, French and resistant materials achieved a pass. The pass rate in information technology was 87 per cent. Distinctions and merits were achieved in science.

- 4 The 1998 English results are in line with the national average for all schools. The entry rate is lower than the national entry rate. All those who entered achieved grades A\*-G. In 1999 there is improvement: there is a very substantial increase in the entry rate and all the pupils entered gained grades A\*-F. Results are declining slightly. Girls did much better than boys in 1997 and 1998; the difference was greater than it is nationally. Pupils do better in English, particularly English literature, than they do in their other subjects. This compares favourably with the national picture.
- 5 Mathematics results in 1998 show attainment below the national average. The entry rate is in line with the rate nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C is below average, although the proportion gaining grades A\*-G is slightly better than the national average. In 1999 results show improvement. Results have shown a rising trend over the last three years. Pupils do not do as well in mathematics as they do in their other subjects. This compares a little unfavourably with the difference nationally. Boys do better than girls at the higher grades whereas nationally their results are much the same.
- 6 In 1998, GCSE results in science show attainment above the national average when account is taken of the triple as well as dual award results. The results are well above the national average for similar schools. Higher attainers take the triple award. The entry rate for the dual award is much the same as the national rate. While the results are below the national average, overall pupils' results in the dual award reflect their results in other subjects. Girls' attainment in the dual award examination is below that of boys, whereas nationally it is the reverse. In 1999, dual award results show improvement. The overall standards are maintained.
- 7 The inspection evidence shows that, by the end of the key stage, attainment in English and mathematics is in line with the expected standard. In science the evidence shows attainment above the standard expected, an improvement from Key Stage 3. In English, pupils write accurately using appropriate vocabulary, and develop their ideas at length. They understand the relationships between characters in a play, for example, in 'An Inspector Calls'. In mathematics, pupils confidently solve simultaneous equations graphically. Most have sound non-calculator skills, and can explain clearly their strategies for mental calculation using percentages. In science, pupils show good understanding of the major organs of the human body, and good knowledge of processes such as photosynthesis and respiration. They have a good grasp of particle theory.

### **Other subjects and courses**

#### **National Curriculum subjects - art, design and technology, geography, history, information technology, modern languages, music, physical education**

- 8 The GCSE results in 1998 are below the national average for grades A\*-C in art, design and technology subjects, information technology and French, and significantly below in geography. They are above average in history and very good in music. GCSE is not offered in physical education. In 1999 results improved in all these subjects except geography and information technology.
- 9 Evidence from the inspection shows that attainment is at or above the standard expected in all subjects. It is in line with expectations in design and technology subjects, geography, and information technology, above expectations in art, history, French and physical education, and well above expectations in music.



10 In design and technology, pupils' understanding is equally developed in designing and making, although knowledge and skills are not always secure. Work is well presented. In geography, pupils compare land use and explain physical processes, although their use of technical vocabulary is not sufficiently developed. They make appropriate use of a wide range of geographical and graphical skills, for example, when comparing the seaside town of Whitby with the market town of Stockton. In information technology, pupils use a wide range of software, for example to produce a questionnaire, and present the analysis in different graphical forms such as bar charts.

- 11 In art, pupils analyse critically their own work and the work of other artists and art movements. They produce three-dimensional work which shows good spatial awareness and command of technique, for example, in a delicately constructed flower composition in papier mache. In history, pupils have a good understanding of historical concepts and skills. They can judge the reliability and value of sources, and recognise that the same set of changes can affect different people in different ways, for example, when studying eighteenth and nineteenth century England. In French, pupils talk about themselves, their likes, dislikes and leisure activities. They have good skills in listening and writing. In music, pupils have good instrumental and vocal skills. They apply their knowledge to different styles of music well. In general physical education, pupils show good games skills, and many sustain their level of skill in a game situation. Pupils show a good knowledge of officiating and apply offside rules fairly.

## **Progress**

### **Key Stage 3**

- 12 The profile of ability on entry to the school is, overall, broadly average as measured by the end of Key Stage 2 national tests. However, the results of reading tests on entry, for the current Year 7 and Year 8, show over a third of pupils have reading ages two or more years behind their actual age. Over the three years of Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress overall, and do so in the core subjects. Progress is always at least satisfactory across all subjects, good in geography, history, French, information technology and physical education, and very good in art. Pupils settle quickly in Year 7 and make some rapid progress at the beginning of the key stage. This confirms the point made by parents at the pre-inspection meeting. Good progress usually results from good teaching. In geography, pupils' attitudes and responsiveness make a major contribution to their good progress over the key stage.

### **Key Stage 4**

- 13 Over the two years of Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress overall. Progress is always at least satisfactory across all subjects, and good in English, science, French, music and general physical education. Good progress in science is achieved across all aspects of the subject and raises attainment above average. In English the good progress in many lessons is not yet securing sufficient progress over time to raise attainment above average. The very good progress made in art reflects pupils' good work attitudes and the good teaching they receive.

## **Whole school**

- 14 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at each key stage. Progress is enhanced where there is support by learning support assistants. Where pupils are taught by teachers who have additional training in special educational needs, as in English in Year 11, this enhances their progress. Good progress is made in the small classes of lower attainers, which are

particularly effective in English, and in the small groups concentrating on numeracy. Where Year 11 pupils with special educational needs are taught together, for the national skills profile certificate, they make very good progress, particularly in their oral confidence and competence, and in their social and practical skills.

## **Targets**

- 15 For 1999, the school set a target of 41 per cent for the achievement of five or more A\*-C grades; it was exceeded by 4.8 per cent. The target for one or more A\*-C grades was exceeded by 5.5 per cent, and for five or more grades A\*-G was almost exactly matched. The 100 per cent target for passes at A\*-G grades was not achieved as two boys, both on the special needs register, were not entered for GCSE. Targets for 2000 are appropriately considered in relation to the attainment profile of the year group, while being reasonably ambitious for a further improvement in the achievement of five or more grades A\*-C.
- 16 Pupils with special educational needs are involved in agreeing their personal targets. This is good. Subject teachers receive helpful information on the prior attainment and current needs of these pupils through their individual education plans. However, this information is not used effectively to set subject specific targets related to the particular needs detailed in the plans.

## **Literacy**

- 17 The school has no whole-school approach to developing pupils' competences in literacy. Some areas such as art and design and technology have considered the contribution they can make, but this is neither widespread nor consistent across the curriculum. Standards of literacy are in line with those found nationally, with speaking and listening skills a little better than reading and writing skills. Pupils speak clearly and confidently. They have many opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills: for example in analysing their own work and that of other artists in art; in planning and evaluating work in physical education; in role play in history; in taking part in assemblies. They read competently and can find information from their text, identifying relevant points. However, they are not enthusiastic readers and the library is not used sufficiently either for enjoyment or research. Pupils produce neat well-presented work. They spell reasonably accurately and use appropriate terminology. They are encouraged to write for different audiences and purposes, for example newspaper reports in history and letters to the prime minister about pollution in the North Sea, but opportunities for sustained writing are limited. Drafting as a process of developing work is under-developed in the school, although at Key Stage 4 pupils in design and technology draft their evaluations before producing their finished work.

## **Numeracy**

- 18 Pupils transfer their mathematics skills successfully to some areas of the curriculum. Data handling skills are sound in geography and science, with occasional use of bar charts to support discussion in English. Skills are sufficient to manipulate formulae in science. Measurement skills are used competently for fitness sessions in physical education. In information technology pupils use spreadsheets and access data bases. There is good practice in design and technology: a department policy stresses the importance of numeracy development through estimated and accurate measurement, data handling, properties of shapes and costing. Too little use is made of numeracy skills in other subjects. There is no whole-school policy for the development of numeracy across the curriculum, and no arrangements to check subject contributions to numeracy skills.

## 29 Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

- 19 Pupils show a desire to learn and demonstrate very good attitudes to learning. It is a strength of the school that they are prepared to concentrate in lessons and co-operate with their teachers over classroom procedures, so that learning may take place. Pupils are interested in the work and talk about it in a reflective manner. For example, in a Year 10 educational guidance lesson, pupils sustained discussion of personnel problems in a bank, putting themselves in the position of the staff managers. When pupils are given opportunities to work on their own, in a group or in pairs, they maintain their interest and concentration, for example, in a Year 8 orienteering exercise in physical education.
- 20 Pupils with special educational needs show the same positive attitudes to learning as other pupils. For example, in Year 11 a group of boys and girls worked co-operatively creating table decorations as part of their life skills course. Pupils show politeness and keen interest, enjoying humour and pleasant relationships with other pupils and with their teachers. Behaviour overall is good. Relationships are good: pupils with special educational needs, including the small number with physical difficulties, are well accepted and integrated. Some pupils learn to manage their behaviour with effective support.
- 21 When given the opportunity pupils use the resource centre for independent study. Year 7 pupils were observed at break working steadily on the production of posters. In the learning support base pupils use the computers at break times. Pupils take care over the presentation of their work, giving good attention to detail.
- 22 Throughout the inspection the behaviour observed in the buildings and outside was very good, sometimes exemplary. An ex-pupil returning to school to work in the science department spoke of loving the school's atmosphere; so too did a parent for whom, originally, the school was not the first choice. At Key Stage 4 pupils enter into the spirit of assembly, enjoy the ideas being presented and laugh at appropriate points, while at the same time treating prayer in a reverent and proper manner. Pupils on duty at the reception desk are unfailingly helpful and responsible in their dealings with visitors. They enjoy the use of intercom equipment and feel secure in the fact that there are panic buttons for their use. All year groups have the opportunity to fulfil this role. Parents' responses to the questionnaire and at the meeting rated the school highly for behaviour standards. The letters received from external bodies agreed with this. The school has used fixed term exclusions for abusive or violent behaviour. There have been no permanent exclusions. During the inspection there was no evidence of any disrespect for property.
- 23 Pupils' sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others creates an atmosphere which is non-conducive to bullying. Strong peer pressure limits the possibility of bullying. Older pupils are involved in helping younger ones who have concerns, and in an informal way help in the learning process through acting as reading mentors. They display considerable maturity and concern when they act as listening mentors and cope with the rules of confidentiality. In science, pupils show a good level of respect and interest in each other's views when discussing reproduction.
- 24 Very good relationships of trust and respect enable pupils to work effectively in collaboration with one another and with adults. For example, a group of Year 10 and 11 pupils being trained for library work, discussed and planned their responsibilities effectively, using the information given by the schools' library service representative very efficiently. They over-see the use of the resource centre, staff it, design its logo, and take a major role in planning its development. Pupils make very good use of the school's provision for its maturing pupils to have real management opportunities. Another group in Key Stage 4, under the auspices of the learning support department, runs a team enterprise where, last year, shareholders received 150 per cent return on their investment. It is characteristic of the school that pupils are prepared to encourage one another's efforts. They respond generously to charitable fund-raising and take the initiative in suggesting charities that should be supported.

25 The position existing at the time of the previous report has been sustained and enhanced.

### 36 **Attendance**

26 Attendance is good. The rate is slightly above the national average, but the rate of unauthorised absence is well below the national average. There is a gradual downward trend in the rate of authorised absence which is mostly for medical reasons. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Lateness is not an issue. The school's target for authorised absence is a reduction to five per cent.

*The school's action on monitoring attendance and encouraging full attendance and punctuality is reported in paragraph 59.*

### 37 **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

#### 37 **Teaching**

27 Teaching is satisfactory overall: satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. There is at least satisfactory teaching in 99 per cent of lessons. The proportion of teaching which is good, or better 51 per cent is much the same as at the last inspection. In all subjects the overall quality of teaching is at least satisfactory at each stage. In English, science, art, geography, French and physical education the quality is good overall. In these subjects, except in geography, there is also some very good teaching. Some teaching for special educational needs and in careers education is also very good.

28 The unsatisfactory teaching is in two Year 7 mathematics lessons. The main reason is ineffective strategies to teach mixed ability groups, in particular, a lack of appropriate planning for higher attainers and pupils with special educational needs.

29 Teachers' planning acknowledges the presence of pupils with special educational needs but not always their stage on the register of special needs. There is inconsistency in the way lesson planning makes clear the provision to be made to address their specific needs. Where pupils at different stages on the special needs register are taught with a group of pupils whose abilities are similar, work is not sufficiently tailored to take account of the range of learning needs within the class. Appropriate and effective use is made of support assistants and specialist teachers.

30 The quality of teaching skills is nearly always satisfactory, or better. Teachers show good subject knowledge in the majority of departments, although the way they use this is not always as good. The teacher's knowledge was well used in a Year 9 English lesson where questions on a poem were designed to bring out the themes and symbolism. In a Year 11 science lesson the teacher's knowledge was used to good effect in presenting information and checking that pupils understood it. In the same lesson it was used less well in the final plenary session where the teacher did not intervene sufficiently. In history, some teaching did not capitalise on good subject knowledge so that tasks and methods, though suitable, were rather dull. Expectations for pupils' progress in lessons are sound overall; in about half the departments the work offers good challenge. In geography expectations are not high enough at Key Stage 4. The good level (very good in art) of subject competence is not matched by the level of challenge in art, history and physical education.

31 Planning is sound overall, good in about half the subjects, but with weakness in geography, and,

at Key Stage 3, in music. Progression is well planned in physical education so that pupils progress well, for example, improving their timings in swimming. In music, planning takes insufficient account of pupils' prior attainment so that some are under-challenged by class tasks and do not always have opportunities for group instrumental work. Teachers' methods and organisation are satisfactory; they are good in art, history and information technology, but there is some inconsistency within subjects. In history, the best range reflected the teacher's confidence, and there was humour. A good range of methods is used in art, especially, for example, teacher demonstration and 'lesson stops' for making evaluative comments for all pupils to reflect on. In science methods are better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 where in some classes there is insufficient focus on providing for pupils with special educational needs. In French, methods are not as good at Key Stage 4, where, for example, insufficient opportunities for extended speech are created.

- 32 Teachers manage pupils well overall, very well in mathematics and soundly in design and technology and geography. Overall, there is satisfactory use of resources and lesson time, except for some weakness in geography where time targets are not always set, and if set, are not adhered to. Some lessons in history lack pace; for example, when studying the Gunpowder plot, pupils were moving faster than the teacher and wanting to go further. Some inconsistency shows in science where the use of time is better than this at Key Stage 4, and in French, where it is better at Key Stage 3. In French it is the listening activities which sometimes drag. Day-to-day assessment is unsatisfactory overall because of the extent of the weakness across subjects, although practice is good in English, art and physical education. In English lessons teachers make sure pupils understand before moving on; effective questioning is used in physical education to check pupils' understanding. Day-to-day assessment is unsatisfactory at both key stages in geography and history, and at Key Stage 3 in music. In geography pupils do not receive sufficient evaluative comments about their work. In science there is inconsistent quality in evaluative comments which are better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Homework practice shows the greatest variation in quality. Practice is sound overall, but unsatisfactory in mathematics. It is good in art and information technology. In English it is very good where it is used to prepare for discussion in the lesson; for example, in Year 9, pupils wrote about violence before looking at the poem 'Murder'. In science, practice is better at Key Stage 4; for example the work set is well related to the lesson and set at an appropriate level. In mathematics, opportunities are missed to use homework to consolidate learning and to give pupils the opportunity to develop the capacity for personal study.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

- 33 Overall, provision is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, there has been a number of improvements. These include the addition of Spanish as a second modern foreign language in Year 8, and drama for all pupils in Year 7 and as an option in Year 10. The school now offers specialist information technology lessons for all pupils. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum has been extended to include accreditation by certificate of achievement in science, technology: resistant materials, French, information technology and religious education. It is a strength of the school that every effort is made to promote goals, in the form of accreditation, for those who are not strong academically.
- 34 Generally, the curriculum has satisfactory breadth and balance, although in music, composing is not sufficiently developed. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. At Key Stage 3, French and Spanish are provided from Year 8. In Year 9, five sessions of careers guidance are provided for all pupils to support them in making option choices for Year 10. At Key Stage 4, all pupils study a broad core curriculum of nine subjects: English, mathematics, single science, religious education, design technology, information technology, French, physical education and educational guidance. In addition, they choose three subjects from

a further seven, which include art, child development, drama, geography, history, information technology and music. Pupils can extend their science studies by replacing up to two option choices with science. Sex education is taught primarily through the religious education curriculum, supported by contributions from the science department. Drugs awareness is appropriately incorporated into the careers guidance programme, and in some aspects of the science curriculum.

- 35 There is sound curriculum planning in most subjects. Effective schemes of work provide logical progress and sequencing from one topic to another. However, in mathematics at Key Stage 3, the scheme of work provides insufficient guidance for teachers to ensure that this is achieved.
- 36 The curriculum is accessible to all pupils. Sound provision is made for pupils with special educational needs through the work of the learning support department. The experienced and qualified team of learning support assistants makes a good contribution to ensuring that individual pupils have access to the curriculum. While it is helpful that a link teacher from each department is expected to disseminate information from the special educational needs department to their subject colleagues, in practice this is not sufficiently effective because it does not happen consistently. Two lower attainers are disapplied from the curriculum in modern languages and are provided with a suitable alternative programme. The local education authority's raising achievement programme involves work with small groups of lower attainers, which is effectively motivating the development of reading, writing and research skills. Individual education plans satisfactorily meet the needs of pupils on the special needs register, but the plans are not yet fully used by teachers in all departments to maximise the support provided for these pupils. The setting arrangements at Key Stage 3, put in place since the appointment of the new headteacher, incorporate regular reviews of pupils' progress within teaching groups. The reviews contribute helpfully to the planned access for all pupils.
- 37 There is a good, comprehensive programme of careers guidance. In Year 9, it is mainly aimed at supporting pupils in making their option choices, although it also incorporates a novel event. For 'The Bean Prix', pupils work in groups to design and build a mechanical buggy. In Years 10 and 11, guidance is provided through a weekly timetabled lesson. A week's work experience is organised in Year 11 in liaison with the local Training and Enterprise Council; it incorporates good preparation and follow-up. Since the last inspection, a very worthwhile development of pupils' skills through a transition team programme has been established. This involves Year 10 pupils making a presentation at the Stockton campus of the University of Durham, based on their research into the world of further study, training and work. It makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' confidence and personal and social skills, as well as to their developing understanding of business and industry.
- 38 Extra-curricular activities play a large part in the life of the school and are a major strength, not only in range but also in quality. High standards are achieved in sport and music. The school enjoys much praise within its local community for musical and dramatic presentations. Nearly 200 pupils, boys and girls, sing in the choirs or play in ensembles. There is very good provision of sporting activities. Each week as many as 300 pupils and up to 12 teaching staff and parents are involved in a wide variety of activities, including football, netball, swimming, orienteering, badminton and hockey. Football matches and orienteering competitions are regular features.
- 39 Assessment is an area of weakness. Procedures are unsatisfactory overall, and the information from assessment not used sufficiently in planning. The lack of effective monitoring of the procedures leads to uneven provision. School policy on assessment is very general, allowing departments to develop their own systems. Some individual systems are good, for example, in English, science, art, modern languages and physical education, but, overall, there is a lack of

consistency across the school. Some procedures are unsatisfactory, for example, in history, geography and music. The inconsistency makes it difficult for the school and for the pupils to compare individual attainment across subjects. It leads to reports with a variety of formats which some parents find confusing, despite the conscientious efforts of teachers to be informative.

- 40 Although the school collates appropriate assessment data, this is not analysed sufficiently nor used effectively in curriculum planning. For example, the whole-school analysis of boys' and girls' results is not followed up in departments to check to what extent the results reflect national differences, or impact on results of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and curriculum planning. Although in English, design and technology and information technology teachers use information gained from assessments to ensure that planning is appropriate, this is not generally true across subjects. The school records pupils' Key Stage 2 results and reading ages, which are passed on to departments. These are used for determining teaching sets, but their use for other planning purposes is under-developed. There is no database to track pupils' progress. Since the last inspection there have been improvements within departments but at a whole-school level not enough improvement has been made.

## 51 **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- 41 The school's provision is very good overall: very good for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and satisfactory for cultural development. There is a very positive effect on pupils' learning and progress. Parents are generally very pleased with this area of their children's education. Planning for these aspects of development within subject departments, however, is not always specific enough or consistently achieved.
- 42 In its wider sense, spirituality pervades the school and is fundamental to the Catholic Christian ethos in which the pupils are educated. A lay chaplain has recently been appointed. She is charged with promoting all aspects of pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Some areas of the school have a calm, spiritual quality, including the learning support base and the chapel where pupils can quietly reflect or pray. The range of assemblies, whole-school, year group and class assemblies, and form periods, foster a sense of a reflecting community. For example, a Year 7 assembly explored the use of symbols with a particular focus on the meaning of light. For other assemblies, pupils prepare role plays on moral themes which touch on feelings and beliefs. Different religions are studied, including Judaism, Hinduism and Islam, allowing pupils to reflect on other people's values and beliefs. There is a spiritual quality in some pupils' work, for example, in the romantic landscapes painted by Year 7. In physical education, pupils experience a sense of well-being after physical activity in a cross-country lesson. In geography, pupils show empathy with hill sheep farmers who have lost their income. Pupils say prayers in the French language and in English Year 7 pupils sing with their teacher. In instrumental activities pupils give expression to inner feelings. The impact of contributions by staff and pupils in assemblies is sometimes reduced by the poor acoustic in both halls.
- 43 The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. School rules are based on care, consideration and respect for others. Merit and sanction systems are in place which emphasise a positive approach. There is strong encouragement for pupils to develop their sense of responsibility and their own moral values. In music they are taught songs with a moral emphasis, for example, 'The Streets of London' and the 'Blues'. Fair play is demonstrated in sport and pupils are taught to accept referees' decisions. Teachers set good standards for moral behaviour and are good role models. In science, when Year 11 pupils learn about reproduction, moral implications and commitment are emphasised. In English, there are frequent opportunities for moral issues to be explored, for example, good and evil in Macbeth, and discussion of violence in Vernon Scannell's poetry. Honesty and truth are taught through the Catholic ethos.

44 The quality of relationships enhances pupils' social development. Many subjects provide opportunities for pupils to work together, relate to each other, or take some responsibility for others. This happens in physical education through canoeing, or through playing three-a-side, when pupils share computers in information technology, and in science when groups carry out investigations. In art there are opportunities for pupils to work together on projects such as decorating a chair in Year 9. The learning support base is a focus for social interaction between pupils and their mentors. Field work and residential visits, including one to Paris, contribute to the development of pupils' social skills and enhance their understanding of different customs in every day life. Political and social issues are brought into the study of 'Animal Farm' in English. Pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility for aspects of the school's work and to serve the school community, for example, through daily reception duty and the millennium jubilee committee, or as school librarians for which they are officially and appropriately trained. Personal and social education promotes pupils' social skills, maturity, and awareness of current moral and social issues.

45 Aspects of work in a number of subjects enhance pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultural traditions, although there are no arrangements to ensure that provision is made across the school, or to check whether it is. There is an emphasis on literature in English and pupils have their own poems published, for example, 'Black and White'. In art, pupils visit galleries and study the work of artists such as Turner. They incorporate local sculpture, 'The Angel of the North', into their compositions. Pupils visit local power stations and the science museum. Several subjects, including religious education, introduce pupils to a range of different cultures, religions and beliefs, but overall this provision is under-developed. In art, studies include African and Aboriginal art, as in Year 8. Pupils study music from America, China and Japan. On the residential visit to Paris, they visit famous museums including the Musée d'Orsay. In geography, the cultures of other countries are studied. In design and technology, pupils are introduced to food from countries around the world, including India, France, Italy and New Zealand.

#### 56 **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

46 The school's arrangements are satisfactory overall with strengths in promoting good behaviour and attendance. Pupils' progress is monitored through a half-termly review involving the senior management team and pastoral staff, followed up by tutor discussions with individual pupils as necessary. Pupils can be moved to a more appropriate ability group, with the head of year bearing the responsibility of talking this through with both pupil and parent. Care is being taken to monitor the effects of the recently introduced banding arrangements, a strategy to improve achievement levels. It is too early for its success to be judged. Individual needs are taken into account when the Key Stage 4 timetable is drawn up following the options discussions. Most pupils' choices are met and adjustments made as required. An informal mentoring scheme, introduced originally to target pupils with predicted D grades at GCSE, has been extended. There is an overwhelming demand which cannot be fully met.

47 Form periods are used for both educational and personal matters, for which a sound scheme of work is provided. The work of the lay chaplain provides opportunities for pupils to link their personal and spiritual development. At Key Stage 4, the well-developed programme of educational and careers guidance makes good use of community links to cover aspects related to personal choice and motivation. Good liaison with the careers service is established. The pastoral programme culminates in the preparation of a detailed record of achievement. The school is usefully looking at linking this with the home-study diary, so that pupils have a continuous experience of self-monitoring as they progress through the school.

- 48 Responsibility for the care of individuals and behaviour support is carried out well. The system of rewards and sanctions successfully places emphasis on establishing good relationships. The general standard of behaviour observed demonstrates the success of this aspect of the school's work. There is good monitoring of attendance, and the liaison with the educational welfare service is effective. The deputy head is the named person for child protection. Detailed and helpful guidance is provided for staff.
- 49 Health and safety matters are the responsibility of the deputy head who liaises with the appropriate authorities. There is good teaching about healthy living and first aid with emphasis on, for example, hygiene and good warm-up techniques in physical education. The school nurse is in regular attendance and three members of staff have first aid training. Every effort has been made to ensure the safety and integrity of the buildings through regular whole-school audits carried out by designated members of staff. Departmental health and safety practice is secure and detailed. Inspectors witnessed dog-fouling of the sports field, a matter reported to parents in the governors' annual report. The school's continuing efforts to put a stop to this have not been successful. It is a health and safety hazard to pupils.

60

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

- 50 Partnerships are satisfactory with strengths in the school's links with the community. A clear partnership statement is now in place involving undertakings from the school, the pupil, parents/guardians and the chaplain.
- 51 Plenty of information is provided for parents. A useful introduction since the last inspection has been a well produced newsletter which helps keep parents informed on a range of topics. These include school outings and achievements, for example, success in soccer or an appearance of a pupil on Tyne Tees talents show, and final dates for receipt of GCSE coursework. However, overall the quality of information for parents is unsatisfactory because of the weakness in pupils' reports. The inspection findings support the comments from a small number of parents indicating concerns about the nature of the reports they receive. Reports are quite full, but because they do not follow a common pattern it is difficult to determine exactly what standards a pupil is achieving in each subject, and what targets are being set. Parents' evenings are well attended. In particular, parents commented positively about the Year 9 options meeting and the helpful documentation received. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed. They receive copies of their child's individual education plan, and attend annual reviews of the statement of educational need with their child. Imaginative efforts are being made to associate parents with their children's learning. Homework diaries are provided to encourage parental involvement. The new issue for Years 7 to 9 sets targets and includes record of achievement material of interest to parents. In the individual support groups a special home/school diary is used with very detailed information as to the work expected during the week and helpful suggestions as to the contribution parents can make to learning.
- 52 Parents are informed if their children are involved in poor behaviour; a record is kept of incidents and shared with parents. They are also contacted effectively by the school and the education welfare service if there is a problem over attendance or lateness and this has resulted in an improvement in attendance levels. An open, friendly relationship exists which means that parents consider complaints are dealt with effectively and it is easy to seek help.
- 53 Individual parents help in the school, particularly with reading examination papers for dyslexic pupils, and assisting in sessions with pupils under the guidance of the adult literacy service. This work is being developed into a family literacy project where parents, pupils and reading mentors from Year 10 combine social activity with a literacy trail. An award of £3,000 has been received

for this work. Fund raising by the active home-school association has resulted in the current year in £2754 being distributed, under a bidding system, to departments, making a valuable contribution to resources.

- 54 The strong and effective links with the community have been maintained since the last inspection. These contribute both to the ethos and the learning opportunities offered. All heads of local Catholic schools meet regularly so it is possible to resolve problems and ensure effective communication. As a result, induction for new pupils is good and includes some experience of subject lessons. A science project has just been introduced which enables feeder schools to utilise the skills and, if necessary, equipment of their secondary colleagues for Year 6 pupils. For the first time a sports event was held for Year 6 pupils organised by the prospective Year 7 tutor. A thorough and appropriate educational guidance and careers course has been produced which utilises local contacts to offer extra expertise and make work experience and option choice more effective. The way in which pupils work alongside outside facilitation is impressive. The Year 9 'Bean Prix' day, and the developing opportunities conference in Year 10, enable pupils to experience the flavour of industry and appreciate the pressures and tensions of employment.
- 55 All year groups have the opportunity to participate in school visits linked to subject areas, thus the geographical understanding of Year 7 pupils is informed by a local village study, and knowledge of the application of science is extended by a visit to a power station. These activities involve hard work by the staff and are a very useful extension of pupils' experience. The school also uses resources offered by other educational establishments to meet the needs of pupils, for instance some pupils from Year 8 attend mathematics master classes at Teesside University and some attend Latin classes at a specialist language school. Good use is made of the local music service. The valuable resource of the swimming pool is shared with the local schools, a college and a canoeing club, resulting in reciprocal benefits. Links with local clubs are extensive, enhancing educational and career opportunities for pupils in sport and athletics.
- 56 Throughout the school pupils are encouraged to think of those in need and to support them by prayer, talents and money. Thus Year 8 pupils were observed producing cards for those in prison; pupils pray for those who are ill in the school community; money is raised for a wide range of charities and gifts are taken to old people's homes.
- 57 Contact with the local parishes in which pupils live is strong. News of the parish comes into the school; news of the school goes out to the parish. The local priests attend regularly for Mass and parents also attend; this is a worshipping community which has a notable effect on pupils. Part of the work of the recently appointed lay chaplain is to extend these links but also to work with the other schools within the area in a cross-denominational way. An early example of this is a linking of Anglican and Catholic primary schools to produce a millennium musical at the local arts centre, with the art work being done by the Anglican and Catholic secondary schools.
- 58 The school has sustained and built upon its school relationships with parents and community and has shown itself open to the need to change and develop.

## 69 **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### 69 **Leadership and management**

- 59 Leadership and management are, overall, unsatisfactory. There are strengths and a number of weaknesses. Governors and staff share a profound sense of purpose for the quality of pupils' educational experience at the school. The leadership by the headteacher and senior staff shows well how this purpose is translated into action in its daily work. All members of the school

community, adults and pupils, show commitment to its aims and values through their interaction with others. Parents speak very highly of this aspect of the school, as do the pupils. The school's sense of purpose for pupils' achievement of high standards is, however, not strong enough. Leadership by the headteacher and senior staff is ineffective in setting a clear expectation for the rigour and pace of whole-school improvement, focused on raising standards. This shows in development planning for example.

- 60 The improvement plan 1999-2002, not dated, has raising achievement as the first priority, with a range of suitable, though rather general, actions to effect this. However, the targeting lacks sharpness: it is not enough for most staff managers to be identified as key persons without a lead person to draw the threads of development together to achieve a coherent whole-school view. There are no time targets, which is a weakness, although they are included as a heading. Success criteria lack focus: they are not linked to school GCSE targets for example, nor do they identify how other improvements in attainment will be measured. These weaknesses dissipate the impetus gained from identifying priorities. The minutes of the governing body show that the last recorded discussion of the development plan was in May 1998 when reference was made to the need for greater detail in future planning. Sufficient attention has not been given to this aspect of governors' responsibilities.
- 61 School aims and values are very successfully put into practice with consistency. Pupils' response in lessons shows how effective this is. School values are strongly reflected in the work of the school office, from which staff, pupils, parents and other visitors benefit. However, departments do not always put school policies and procedures into practice with the same degree of consistency and effectiveness. This is not always expected, nor checked out by the senior staff team. It shows, for example, in the general lack of specific information about attainment in pupils' annual reports so that parents are not sufficiently helped to see their child's strengths or where attention is needed.
- 62 Neither the senior management team nor the governing body is in a position of knowing, from evidence, where the strengths and weaknesses are in the school's provision. In five departments the head of subject is in a similar position of not knowing from direct observation what the strengths and weaknesses are in teaching and the curriculum in their subject. There has been a failure to act on the key issue from the last inspection concerned with monitoring and evaluation. As teaching is not routinely monitored, for example, the inconsistencies in practice have not been picked up. The inspection evidence shows the link between the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. This shows in science, where better teaching at Key Stage 4 is matched by better progress. Often where teaching is no more than satisfactory, neither is progress. The school does not know this from first hand evidence, systematically gathered. Neither does it have knowledge of those very good teaching skills which heighten pupils' engagement in learning so that their progress is enhanced. For example, how the teaching of particle theory in science involved pupils fully, stimulated their curiosity, and challenged them effectively so that motivation and enjoyment were high and progress very good.
- 63 The responsibilities of staff managers, members of the senior management team, subject and pastoral heads, have not been sufficiently considered in relation to their quality assurance role. This role is carried out well in art and in design and technology with positive effect on pupils' progress in the subject, but in many departments practice is unsatisfactory. The learning support department is soundly managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator, and there is effective team work.
- 64 The school's ethos is good overall. This judgement reconciles considerable strength with notable weakness. The strength comes from very good relationships, from the equal access achieved for all pupils to the full range of opportunities the school provides, and from the very positive learning environment that staff and pupils create together. The weakness is a lack of the sharp

focus on raising attainment which should be a consistent thread in every aspect of the school's work.

65 Statutory requirements are met.

## 76 **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

### 76 **Staffing**

66 There are sufficient qualified staff to teach all aspects of the school's curriculum. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified, experienced and knowledgeable in the subjects they teach. The level of specialist knowledge is generally good. Where staff are teaching outside their specialism, for example in history and design technology, this does not constrain pupils' attainment and progress. This situation contributes positively to the standards achieved. Staffing for special educational needs is satisfactory; all the teachers and learning support assistants are appropriately qualified and experienced. The school receives effective support from the local education authority's support services for pupils with special educational needs. There is sufficient provision of technical support except in information technology where the result is some loss of curriculum time. The experience of the non-teaching staff, including technicians and administrative staff, is appropriate. These staff contribute to the school's effectiveness.

67 An effective induction programme is in place both for new staff and for newly qualified teachers. Good use is made of the local authority's induction programme for newly qualified teachers. Beginner teachers are very well supported by the school both pastorally and academically, for example, through regular meetings with heads of department. These arrangements enable them to play an effective role as part of the school team. Requirements for appraisal are currently not met. An informal arrangement for staff development discussion is operating while national developments are awaited.

68 Overall, the arrangements for the professional development of staff are unsatisfactory. Although most staff have had some training opportunity, the effect of training varies across departments. The effect is least evident in mathematics and geography, where training has been limited. The school does not have a coherent programme which links the professional development of staff with school and department priorities, with job descriptions, or with staff training needs identified through whole-school monitoring. The issue of staff development raised in the last report has not been adequately addressed.

### **Accommodation**

69 The school operates in two main buildings, formerly separate boys' and girls' schools. There are no covered walkways for travel between the buildings so that on rainy days pupils get wet as they move between lessons. The accommodation is generally adequate for the curriculum to be taught effectively. In most subject areas rooms are now grouped and specialist provision is mostly satisfactory, although there is no specialist space for drama. However, the science department still operates in both buildings, a weakness persisting from the last inspection. The food technology room is separated from the rest of the technology department; it is in a poor state of repair because the fittings are generally beyond repair. In these subjects there are adverse effects in terms of additional demands on the management of the curriculum. A recent development bid with the local education authority and the diocese, with the prime focus of dealing with surplus places, sought also to rectify these weaknesses, but has not been successful. The key issue from the last inspection concerned with rationalising the accommodation, when funding permitted,

persists.

- 70 School security has recently been improved through a new system and the installation of some security fencing. However, the extensive school field is an unfenced area. Despite the school's best efforts through contact with the local authority, police and press, people continue to use the field to walk their dogs. The issue of dog-fouling is a daily concern for the school. During the inspection the jumping pits were fouled. This is a health and safety hazard for pupils.
- 71 Some departments have improved the sense of subject identity by good display work outside the teaching rooms, but not enough attention is given to the quality of display throughout the school. Some parts of the building are not easily accessible to those with physical difficulties, particularly the areas for English, design and technology, and information technology. This does not currently affect any pupils on the register of special educational needs. The learning support base is a welcoming and secure environment for pupils with special educational needs. By contrast, the far ends of the two main buildings look neglected. Some internal spaces are drab and external paint work is in poor condition.

## **Learning resources**

- 72 In most subjects the supply and quality of resources are satisfactory. Resources for special educational needs, including information technology equipment, are readily available and well used. The use of specialist software for special needs is a major contributor to progress in English for those with language needs and those who need to develop self-confidence. However, the limited use of information technology in most subjects restricts learning opportunities for some pupils with special educational needs.
- 73 In physical education resource provision is good, and has benefited from additional funding raised by the department. In design and technology there is a need to replace some small equipment, such as drills. There are weaknesses in resources for mathematics and music: in mathematics there are no computers and the textbooks currently in use are inappropriate for the National Curriculum. Some keyboards and headphones are in an unusable state.
- 74 Although the quantity of computers for the overall number of pupils is above average there are insufficient allocated to support learning in English, mathematics, music, science and design and technology. Computers in general teaching rooms are not always easily available. Since the last inspection library provision has improved and there is now a good supply of fiction books. However, there is still a shortage of non-fiction material for most subject areas. Use of the resource centre, by subjects and individuals, is under-developed.

## **85 The efficiency of the school**

- 75 Financial control and administration are sound. The school is administered efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Routines are well established. They are carried out in the office with a calm gentleness which does not broadcast the thoroughness and efficiency of the procedures. There is good financial control. The office administrator knows exactly the current budget position and the circumstances surrounding any apparent under- or over-spend. The governing body fulfils its financial responsibilities well, benefiting from the expert advice of a finance committee member whose professional experience is in educational finance. This is backed up by the school's use of local authority legal and financial services, the main purpose being to have access to legal advice; financial advice is a bonus. A financial audit, April 1998, found satisfactory financial control and administration, with the school being well managed. A small number of minor matters was raised which were promptly attended to.
- 76 The use of funding for staff training and special educational needs is properly accounted for. However, the weakness in current arrangements for staff development undermines the efficiency with which training funds are targeted. Funding for special educational needs is used well. Within departments the use of human, physical and learning resources is generally satisfactory. There are, however, some inefficiencies resulting from the allocation of computers across the school, and the under-use of the learning resource centre. The headteacher's current teaching commitment is too high, leaving insufficient time for monitoring the school's work, with inconsistencies in practice not picked up. This follows from the poorly defined monitoring role of senior and middle managers which in turn weakens development planning so that the pace of improvement is reduced.
- 77 A major investment of governing body time has been put into preparing a planning strategy which is responsive to the recent fall in pupil numbers, and the projected slight rise and subsequent fall in numbers by 2010. This has been done in collaboration with the local education authority and the diocese, with whom planning application was made to the department for education and employment. Prudent planning enabled budget reserves to be maintained to cover the anticipated

costs to the school of the project which sought to rationalise the split site operation, releasing redundant space to other users which would generate income. When, during the week of the inspection the school heard that project approval was not granted, governors began discussion of alternatives. The governing body is rightly concerned to eliminate the cost inefficiencies, and the curriculum inefficiencies, which result from the present operation in three buildings. In their current planning for new catering arrangements, alternatives to operating two kitchens are being explored. In response to the fall in income because of reducing numbers, governors took timely action in the previous academic year to achieve a reduction in staffing.

- 78 The school's expenditure per pupil is broadly average. On entry to the school attainment is broadly in line with the expected standard for pupils age 11. An above average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The school provides a sound quality of education, including satisfactory teaching. Pupils make satisfactory progress so that at GCSE results are generally in line with the national average. Overall, value for money is satisfactory.

## 89 PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

### 89 ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

#### 89 English

79 In 1998, the GCSE results in English and English literature are in line with the national average. In English, all those entered gained grades A\*-G. In 1999 results at the higher grades A\*-C dropped, while all pupils entered gained grades A\*-F. In English literature the 1999 results dropped from 1998. Results are declining slightly. Girls did much better than boys in 1997 and 1999, by more than the difference nationally, but only did marginally better in 1998. Pupils do better in English and English literature than they do in most of their other subjects. The results in the 1998 Year 9 tests are in line with the national average, while above the average for similar schools. Pupils do less well in English than they do in mathematics and science. Attainment is rising at Key Stage 3. Teachers' assessment of their pupils was confirmed by the test results, some of which were raised after appeal. Girls out-perform boys by the same amount they do nationally.

80 Inspection evidence shows that, by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with the standard expected nationally. Average attainers' work is neat and reasonably accurately presented, but there are weaknesses in spelling, for example confusing 'where' and 'were'. They read with understanding of the content and underlying meaning. For example, they understand the symbolism at the end of Vernon Scannell's 'A Case of Murder', and can select detail from the poem to support their ideas. They communicate clearly in speech and listen carefully to each other. Higher attainers structure their writing well. They write successful narrative with accurately punctuated direct speech. They have an extensive vocabulary, use words for effect, and spell correctly. They identify symbolism in poetry, and write their own, employing rhythm and rhyme. Lower attainers find it difficult to develop ideas at length, but they write in sentences, some of which have capital letters and full stops. With encouragement from the teacher they develop their ideas orally in more depth. Pupils do read for pleasure and can talk about their preferences, but this is not yet as extensive as it should be.

81 By the end of Key Stage 4, the evidence shows attainment in line with that expected nationally. Average attainers develop their ideas at length. They write accurately, with an appropriate if not extensive vocabulary. They understand the relationships between characters but not the complex themes underlying the play 'An Inspector Calls'. Written work is paragraphed and clearly expressed. Pupils work well together in pairs and groups, and extend and moderate their ideas according to the discussion. Pupils write well both for coursework and under examination conditions. Higher attainers read independently and express their responses confidently. They use quotation aptly to support their ideas, and write accurately, neatly and fluently, using a wide vocabulary. They analyse literature effectively, for example 'The Merchant of Venice', and place the play firmly in its historical context. They respond perceptively to the characters in 'Lord of the Flies', showing understanding of how Jack and Piggy would have expressed their ideas and how each had leadership qualities. Lower attainers struggle to develop ideas, for example about 'Macbeth'. Their writing is mostly accurate, though simply expressed, but they lack control of tenses and lose the sense if their sentences are long. They understand the character of Billy Casper in 'Kestrel for a Knave', and can explore it in role.

82 Boys are more forthcoming orally but girls show their understanding in their writing, and are more accurate in expression. Standards of speaking and listening are slightly above those in reading and writing. Pupils do redraft their work to improve it but not sufficiently, especially at Key Stage 3. There is far too little use of computers to improve presentation and develop work.



- 83 Taking into account the below average standards of reading on entry to the school, pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4 in all attainment targets. The good teaching at Key Stage 3 has a positive effect on pupils' progress which becomes securely established at Key Stage 4. Higher attainers develop a wide vocabulary and maturity of expression both orally and on paper. Average attainers develop their work in greater depth and analyse more difficult texts. Accuracy is much improved. Speaking and listening becomes more confident. Sometimes progress in lessons is very good. The combination of pupils' very good attitudes and very good teaching brings impressive results. For example, Year 7 pupils made very good progress in control and self-confidence, as well as in developing dramatic techniques, in a lesson which was well structured and stimulating; activities moved briskly through relevant warm-up exercises to groups putting sound effects to a story. Where progress is less effective, insufficient thought has been given to the range of ability in the class and some pupils struggle to develop their ideas, because they have not been provided with the necessary vocabulary, ideas and structure.
- 84 There is no difference in the progress of different ability groups nor of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets. Teachers give them a lot of individual attention and help, though resources are not adapted specifically for their individual needs.
- 85 Pupils' response is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. When teaching is stimulating and involves the pupils closely, response is very good. For example, pupils in Year 10, looking at brochures, analysing how they appealed to young children and then producing their own using the same techniques, were very well motivated. Pupils are interested and well behaved. At Key Stage 3, they volunteer answers and are keen to read out their work. At Key Stage 4, pupils are well motivated, and apply themselves to written work quickly. Pupils try hard over their homework. They are courteous and friendly and have good relationships with each other and the teachers. They collaborate well in class, both in friendship and teacher determined groups, supporting each other well. They sustain concentration increasingly as they progress up the school, and develop more independent attitudes to their work.
- 86 Standards of teaching are good. Some teaching is very good, and some satisfactory, but a large proportion is good. Teachers are dedicated and efficient. Classrooms are welcoming places with vibrant display of pupils' work. Subject knowledge is good, with skilful questioning that establishes understanding and draws out responses. Pupils are expected to work hard and behave well. Homework is used very well to prepare for lessons as well as to complete work. In the best lessons the pace is brisk and resources and methods varied, keeping pupils interested and stimulated. For example, pupils in Year 11, looking at whether children should earn or be given pocket money, moved from class discussion to paired work followed by independent writing, and still had time for some personal reading. In less successful lessons the pace is slower, or objectives are not clearly conveyed to the pupils.
- 87 The curriculum is well balanced, apart from the under-use of information technology and the development of personal reading. The recent introduction of drama as an additional subject has valuably extended pupils' experiences. Day-to-day evaluation and marking of work is good, thorough and accurate, but the information gained from assessments is not used enough when considering future developments.
- 88 This is an efficiently run department which has made good progress since the previous inspection, especially in recent years.

- 89 GCSE results in 1998 show attainment below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C is significantly below the national average but the proportion gaining A\*-G is slightly better than the national average. Boys' results are better than girls' results at the higher levels. Pupils do not do as well in mathematics as they do in their other subjects. The 1999 results show good improvement. The Year 9 national test results in 1998 are above average. The proportion gaining the higher levels is well above average. Standards of attainment are well above average in comparison with similar schools. Standards rose at a faster rate than nationally in the three-year period up to 1998 and improved still further in 1999. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls.
- 90 Inspection evidence shows that by the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 attainment is broadly in line with the expected standards. At Key Stage 3 this is a lower standard than that achieved in national tests in 1999. At Key Stage 4 the evidence shows some improvement in attainment compared with the 1999 GCSE results. No factors are judged to be significant other than that different groups of pupils are involved. Pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding in number, algebra, shape and space and data handling. Opportunities to apply these skills to extended pieces of work are being developed. For example, Year 7 pupils developed strategies which allowed them to make progress with their investigation but they found it difficult to explain clearly what they had done or had noticed. Opportunities for extended pieces of work are not integrated into schemes of work to ensure that problem solving strategies are applied to all branches of mathematics.
- 91 Number work is satisfactory. At the beginning of Year 7 there is thorough coverage of properties of number including multiples, factors and prime numbers. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils use calculators efficiently. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils have improved their non-calculator skills. For example, average attainers explain clearly their strategies for mental calculation involving percentages. However, there is no departmental policy to ensure the structured development, assessment and monitoring of mental numeracy skills.
- 92 Pupils cope well with the abstract nature of algebra. Higher attainers in Year 8 remove brackets and solve simple linear equations. They apply these skills successfully to problems involving area and perimeter. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs recognise and collect like terms. Higher attainers formulate and solve quadratic equations. They explain their strategies clearly when asked to do so. Average attainers demonstrate confidence when solving simultaneous equations graphically.
- 93 At both key stages work on shape and space is good. Higher attainers in Year 9 achieve above average standards in their work on transformations because of their teacher's high expectations. The teacher's careful planning and good resources ensure that lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs in Year 9 quickly understand orders of rotational symmetry. Work on shape and space develops satisfactorily at Key Stage 4. The majority of pupils enhance their work with neat drawings.
- 94 Data handling skills are average. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils find different types of average and understand their use. They understand simple probability and determine the likelihood of a single event. By the end of Key Stage 4 higher attainers use tree diagrams to find conditional probability.
- 95 The use of information communication technology to enhance the learning of mathematics across

both key stages needs is not embedded in the schemes of work. At present the department has no computers.

- 96 Progress over each key stage is satisfactory. However, links with primary schools are not sufficient to ensure that the effects of the national numeracy project are taken into account when planning for continuity and progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. In Year 7 teachers do not make enough provision for the needs of all pupils in the mixed ability groups. Higher attainers in Year 7 do not always make satisfactory progress because they are not sufficiently challenged; pupils with special educational needs sometimes struggle to make progress because they are presented with too many tasks at once. At Key Stage 4 pupils of all attainment levels make satisfactory progress because they work well and their teachers have high expectations for them. This an improvement since the last inspection when the rate of progress was judged to be slow in a minority of lessons at Key Stage 4.
- 97 Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are good. Pupils arrive promptly for lessons and settle quickly. They listen well and are willing to volunteer answers. Their relationships with teachers and with each other are polite and friendly. Presentation of work is generally neat. A number of Year 10 pupils help to run the school bank efficiently.
- 98 Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory. There is some good teaching at both key stages, but a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching with mixed ability groups in Year 7. All teachers have good subject knowledge. Their overall control is very good. Good use is made of question and answer techniques by all teachers. Lesson planning is generally satisfactory, except for mixed ability groups where insufficient account is taken of the different levels of pupils' prior attainment in planning lesson tasks. Use of time is satisfactory but few lessons are sufficiently well structured to allow time at the end to draw together what has been achieved. Use of homework is unsatisfactory. Opportunities are missed to use homework to consolidate learning and to give pupils the opportunity to develop the capacity for personal study.
- 99 The management of the department is generally satisfactory. There is commitment to high achievement. Statutory requirements are met. All but one of the mathematics rooms are grouped and a good ethos for learning has been created. Schemes of work lack development. Procedures for assessment are in place but tests have not been updated for some time. Little progress has been made since the last inspection when it was judged that insufficient use was made of assessment. There has been too little improvement in the quality of resources. Some new texts have been bought but too much reliance is still placed on out-of-date text books that are not linked to National Curriculum requirements. There are not enough text books for each pupil to have one for use at home. Since the last inspection not enough progress has been made with development planning and monitoring and evaluation.

## 110 Science

- 100 In the 1998 GCSE examinations, the attainment of pupils is above the national average when taking account of the attainment of triple as well as dual award candidates. Attainment is well above the national average when compared with pupils' attainment in similar schools. Girls' attainment in the dual award examinations is below that of boys, whereas, nationally, girls' attainment is higher than that of boys. The 1999 results are similar. Over the three-year period from 1997 to 1999 the average grade in GCSE examinations was above average. In the 1998 Year 9 national tests, attainment is in line with the national average, although results at the higher level are below average. In 1999, the results show attainment below the national average though well above the national average for similar schools. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

- 101 The evidence from the inspection shows that by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with the national expectation. In the last two years there has been improvement. Pupils plan effectively a fair test, in order to test the strength of various straw ‘beams’ with different cross sections, using different designs for measuring and suspending their devices. They have a sound knowledge of basic atomic structure, and the chemical reactivity of acids and alkalis. They are developing a sound knowledge of life processes, and the key human organs, such as the heart and lungs, and associated circulatory and respiratory functions. The evidence shows that by the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is above the expected standard. Since the last inspection, there have been steady gains in examination grades at GCSE. Pupils show a good understanding of the human body and its major organs, and have a good knowledge of such processes as photosynthesis, transpiration and respiration. They show a good grasp of particle theory and chemical classification, and can solve electricity problems using Ohm’s Law.
- 102 Over the three years of Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress across all attainment targets. This is the result of sound teaching which incorporates clear progression from one topic and level of understanding to another. Pupils develop a sound understanding of such life processes as respiration, different food types, and their importance for healthy living. They are showing satisfactory gains in their knowledge of rocks and erosion, and of the importance of acids and alkalis, and the part played by oxygen in the processes of burning and oxidation. They show similar progress in their understanding of forces and energy conversion. Boys and girls show similar gains, and pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress. Over the two years of Key Stage 4, pupils show good progress across all attainment targets. They show good gains in their knowledge and understanding of specialist organs, blood, and the immune system, and in their grasp of periodic classification and chemical bonding, and in the theory of radioactivity and isotopes. Boys and girls make similar progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress over the key stage.
- 103 Pupils consistently show very positive attitudes in most lessons. They work very well with peers during practical sessions, and show good safety awareness. They behave well at all times. When the teaching is of high quality they also show real enjoyment of the subject. They show respect for each other - as when groups were feeding back orally to the whole class after a lively planning exercise for an investigation into the strength of tea.
- 104 Overall, the teaching is good, although it varies between very good and satisfactory. At Key Stage 4, a higher proportion of lessons is of good or very good quality than at Key Stage 3. This is because teachers use their good knowledge and understanding to better effect in challenging pupils’ understanding and make better use of time at Key Stage 4. Since the last inspection, the good quality of teaching has been maintained. In a very good Year 11 lesson on the human reproductive process, the teacher showed very good subject knowledge, which he used to give clear explanations and ask challenging questions, to which pupils responded well. In a Year 7 lesson pupils were investigating the connection between chemical change and heat production by observing the effects of water on plaster of Paris. The teacher introduced the lesson with questions about the previous lesson and pupils’ homework. She used skilful questioning to get pupils to think about the changes taking place and had high expectations of pupils’ attainment and behaviour.
- 105 The curriculum is well planned to provide opportunities for all pupils to move from one topic to another in a logical and sequential way through the use of the Salters Science programme. The provision of triple, dual, and single award, along with the Certificate of Achievement (‘Science Plus’) course, allows good access for pupils across the ability range at Key Stage 4. The criticism about half-year blocking made in the last report no longer applies. Assessment procedures are

well established and provide the department with substantial data with which to predict future performance and provide more appropriate grouping arrangements for pupils. However, data are not yet used effectively to modify the planned curriculum.

- 106 The department is effectively and enthusiastically led by a recently appointed head of department. He has begun to assess the quality of the curriculum provision through the scrutiny of pupils' books, but the quality of teaching across the department is not yet effectively monitored through classroom observation. Since the last inspection the quality of the department's development plan has improved, and it now sets out clear priorities. Although the quality and quantity of resources are generally satisfactory, the split site situation continues to put a strain on the overall provision - an issue which was raised in the last inspection report. The quantity and quality of software support has also improved significantly since the last inspection. However, there are insufficient modern personal computers to be able to take advantage of more sophisticated software, including access to the Internet, in the future.

## 117 OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### 117 Art

- 107 In GCSE examinations in 1998 the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades is below the national averages. The 1999 provisional results show good improvement. Over the three years 1996-1998 the take-up of the subject by girls has decreased; girls are achieving better than boys.
- 108 The evidence from the inspection shows that, by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above the standard expected. Pupils use a range of techniques and media. They make ceramic bowls and plates, and understand that if they have air trapped in the clay their work may break when fired. When they paint on glass, pupils use bold colours as they design intricate designs in a mediaeval style. Pupils show awareness of health and safety as they use a printing press with care to make a signed print of a room interior. This is an exacting process, but all pupils in the group, including those with special educational needs, achieve at least a satisfactory print. The majority of pupils work effectively when they draw and paint food labels. Higher attainers work with precision but several lower attainers have difficulty drawing letters. Sketchbook work is relevant, for example, there are good explorations of colour, perspective and tonal work. Pupils critically analyse their work, discussing, for instance, the 'vibrancy' of their design. In their seascape project they incorporate clay, collage and poetry.
- 109 Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 11 attainment is above the standard expected. Year 11 pupils are working on their individual preparatory studies for the mock GCSE examination. After studying other artists' styles and work, for example, they incorporate the local sculpture, The Angel of the North, into their composition, or combine a human head with a tree after studying the work of surrealist painters. Other pupils study art from different cultures, including Aboriginal art. They make lino prints to produce designs in the Islamic style, using colours well. Higher attainers prepare much more detailed exploratory studies using a variety of techniques and media. Their tonal drawings and paintings are very sensitive, for example, a delicate drawing of a watch. They depict texture well, as when drawing a partially open zip. Pupils are imaginative and use a variety of tools to achieve particular effects, as when using a palette knife to paint rocks in a landscape, or a dry brush technique to achieve a spray effect when painting water. Lower attainers are less skilled in observational drawing and tonal work. All pupils analyse their work and that of other artists, and art movements critically. They produce three-dimensional work, for example, a flower composition delicately constructed using papier maché, which shows good spatial awareness and command of the technique.

- 110 Art makes a good contribution to literacy. Pupils write poetry to accompany their work, as in Year 7 work on landscapes. They write detailed critical analyses. They listen well and are confident when discussing their work. Contributions to numeracy include measuring and estimating, spatial awareness and the use of shape. Information technology is used in both key stages: for example, in Year 7, when pupils design in the style of Paul Klee, and in Year 11 when they use the scanner to obtain images of motorbikes. However the use of information technology is not developed fully.
- 111 Pupils make very good progress over Key Stage 3. In Year 7, all pupils work on romantic landscapes. Their work in this has a spiritual quality and shows very good use of colour. They make papier maché fish. Higher attainers make well-shaped fish and detailed colourful designs. Lower attainers have difficulty making the basic shape but improve with additional instruction. In Year 8, all pupils make very good progress in observational drawing when using pencil, charcoal and fine liners.
- 112 Pupils make very good progress over Key Stage 4. In Year 10, they work on individual projects, including a three-dimensional totem pole in the style of Native American culture. Higher attainers use the slab technique in clay work very well to make sophisticated three-dimensional masks. Lower attainers improve their brush work when painting. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress over both key stages. This is because of the sensitive individual tuition that they receive from their teachers. Since the last inspection pupils' progress has improved.
- 113 Pupils' response to art is good. Their behaviour is usually good and occasionally very good. In one Year 9 lower attaining group, the noise level was a little too high but they quickly calmed down, responding to the teacher's good management skills. Pupils can concentrate well, especially when working on observational drawing, for example, in Year 8. They work well together, as in Year 9 when four pupils decorated a chair. Response to art is usually very good at Key Stage 4, aided by the good working atmosphere which has been engendered by the teachers. Pupils use their initiative when giving expression to their own creative ideas. Many increase their independence when they research for projects. There is mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Pupils are very proud of their work, for example, when working on a painting of 'High Force' in Teesdale. All show respect for each other's work and school equipment. These factors have a positive effect on learning.
- 114 The quality of teaching is good. It is at least good in all lessons and occasionally very good. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills are very good. Where teaching is very good, appropriate language such as 'visually stimulating' is used, as in a Year 8 class. Pupils are given clear instructions and written reminders. The terms used are explained in detail and teaching points are given on how to achieve specific effects. The importance of sustained concentration is stressed. Timed targets are used to train pupils to be more spontaneous when drawing. At both key stages teachers have high expectations of behaviour and the quality of work. Good resources, such as a printing press, are used. They have very good management skills which ensure that pupils are motivated and remain on task. Homework is given regularly. Teachers inform pupils how to improve their work. Individual tuition is given to all pupils taking account of their specific needs. All of these factors have a positive impact on standards. However, the lack of use of information technology in lessons is under-developed. Teaching has improved at both key stages since the last inspection.
- 115 Leadership in the department is good. The head of department is new in post, enthusiastic, and has already had a positive impact on standards. In the previous year, the art teacher worked very

hard without the support of a head of department, to greatly improve examination results in 1999. Extra-curricular activities take place in most lunch times and after school to provide opportunities for improving standards. Visiting artists work with pupils. Art makes a positive contribution to spiritual and cultural education, for example, through the study of Aboriginal art in Years 8 and 11. Both members of staff are art specialists and they work very well as a team. Accommodation is good but there is a lack of storage space and the windows are high, which means that the view cannot be used as resource for teaching. Pupils' work and teaching in the department are monitored.

116 Since the last inspection pupils' attainment has improved at both key stages. The department now offers a broader experience for pupils, for example, through glass painting. The head of department is striving to improve the quality of work through training in observational drawing. He recognises that, while display enhances the school environment, this area is under-developed and has started to address this. Displays also go into the parish and community in celebration of pupils' work.

## 127 **Design and technology**

117 Results at GCSE in design and technology subjects over the past few years have been at or just below the national average for similar schools. In 1998, the subject results at grades A\*-C are, overall, below the national average. In food and graphics results are above the national average. For textiles, systems and control and child development the 1998 results are slightly below the national average. Results in resistant materials are well below the national average. In 1999, textile results show good improvement and were particularly good in 1997. Results in food, graphics and textiles have remained fairly consistent over the past few years. While there are some stereotypical choices at fourteen, this is changing: boys are entering for food and textiles and girls are beginning to take resistant materials. Graphics is popular with both boys and girls. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils' results in design and technology are similar to their results in the other subjects they take. There is a slightly improving trend in results since the last inspection.

118 Evidence from the inspection shows that, by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in design and technology is in line with the national expectations. Some higher attainers produce work that is above the expected standard. Pupils become skilled in applying the design process to the different materials areas of graphics, food, textiles and resistant materials. Homework is helpfully used to back up class work. Pupils carry out simple research and generate ideas that, with teacher help, they are able to develop in their designs. Some pupils are not generating and documenting enough ideas before selecting one to develop in more detail. Pupils investigate and adapt recipes to match dietary goals for staple foods, and successfully apply knowledge to new situations. In resistant materials and food, pupils discuss ideas satisfactorily with peers to generate improvements and develop ideas. While higher and average attainers produce simple graphic images and more complicated views of a satisfactory standard, lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs show limited skills in freehand sketching. In resistant materials, textiles and food, pupils measure, mark out, cut, shape and select appropriate tools for the tasks and techniques being undertaken. Overall, pupils show a good understanding of health and safety issues. They answer teacher questions competently, and the majority write clearly.

119 By the end of Key Stage 4, the evidence shows attainment at the standard expected. Some pupils are attaining above national expectations. This shows improvement overall compared with the GCSE results in 1999, and reflects the improvements being made in the department. Higher attainers use their developing designing and practical skills to tackle longer and more complex projects. They apply good graphical skills in GCSE projects on designing a new sports car, sports

clothes and different diets. Higher attainers' work combines detailed research with critical analysis of data. Much individuality is shown in graphics, with a good underlying knowledge base and technical language. Research for some projects includes the preparation and use of questionnaires. Some of these are produced using information technology, with bar and pie charts to illustrate conclusions. Average and lower attainers achieve a satisfactory level in both designing and making, although underpinning skills and knowledge are not always sound and pupils do not use technical language easily. Pupils with special educational needs achieve a satisfactory level in lessons with adult support. In child development, higher attainers show satisfactory knowledge in the child-study work, although underpinning skills and knowledge of lower attainers are not strong. A number of these pupils had no work to show. Across design and technology subjects, pupils of all abilities are articulate, and produce tidy, well presented work which they enthuse about. The use of information technology is not widespread or well integrated into pupils' work.

- 120 Progress is satisfactory. It is supported by a wide range of activities which are combined with careful planning by teachers. Some pupils in each year group are making good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. On entry to the school, attainment in design and technology is below expectations. Interesting tasks, clear teacher guidance with well thought out support materials, enable pupils of all abilities to establish clear routines for working and to improve designing and making skills. Making skills progress well. A successful development has been the introduction of regular 'display days' at Key Stage 3 that enable pupils to look at each other's work and understand how they are progressing. Nearly all pupils make good progress in developing effective team-work. Boys and girls work well together. In Year 10 graphics, some pupils are making slower progress than they are capable of.
- 121 At the time of the last inspection, pupils' attitudes were described as sound and in many lessons good. They are now very good across all year groups and abilities. Pupils respond well in lessons. They show interest in their work, actively participate in question and answer sessions and sometimes volunteer questions themselves. Behaviour is good. Relationships are very good and mutually supportive. Collaborative work is most successful when groups of pupils work on different activities as in the making and investigating food lesson in Year 9. The Year 8 pupils working on designing and making a pencil holder in resistant materials showed a high capacity for personal study and concentration. The take-up rate for GCSE examination courses is good.
- 122 Teaching is satisfactory; much is good. The subject knowledge of specialist teachers is sound. Non-specialist teaching is well-supported and guided so that standards are not affected. Lessons are suitably planned and structured. There is sound use of available time to allow for teachers' explanation as well as for pupils' independent work. Sometimes, however, teaching strategies are inappropriate, pace is slow and insufficient work is accomplished by pupils. Workbooks are clear and encourage pupils' response and ideas. Arrangements for homework are satisfactory, and homework helps with progress in class. Quite challenging topics and ambitious tasks are presented to pupils. In all the lessons, a friendly working atmosphere is created, and teachers usually ensure that pupils understand and apply new knowledge. Pupils' work is well displayed and stored, and used as a resource for learning. There is satisfactory day-to-day assessment overall of pupils' work, although limited comments are to be seen on some pupils' work. In the GCSE classes many pupils do not know how they are progressing. While the examination marking system is displayed in the classrooms, pupils do not know by what criteria their work will be judged. This is a weakness.
- 123 The good leadership and management of this department, supported by good teamwork, overcome the difficulties of separate locations for some teaching rooms, shabby accommodation and short lesson times. Since the previous inspection the department has continued the good work reported then. Examination results are improving and the curriculum is constantly reviewed to ensure it is

up to date. The development plan includes the training requirements of teaching and support staff. Assessment and recording are now closely matched to National Curriculum levels. However, information technology is not well integrated into the work of the department; there is still much work to do on ensuring that pupils have underpinning skills and knowledge. This hard working staff is endeavouring to provide a good quality design and technology education for the young people in their care.

## 134 **Geography**

- 124 The 1998 GCSE results at grades A\*-C are significantly below the national average. They are also lower than results in the previous year. Pupils' achievement of grades A\* to G is similar to the national average. The results for boys and girls in 1998 are similar; boys and girls do significantly less well in geography than in their other subjects. The 1999 results show a further reduction in the higher grades A\*-C, but an improvement in A\* to G grades to 100 per cent. The school's results show the reverse of the trend of steady improvement in higher grades which is found nationally. This is a much worse picture than at the last inspection when results were well above average.
- 125 The evidence from the inspection shows that, by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with the standard expected. The attainment of girls and boys is similar. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, show substantial improvement in geographical knowledge, skills and understanding from Year 7 to Year 9. By Year 9, they can explain with reference to the River Tyne and the North Sea how people can both improve or damage the environment. They use appropriate vocabulary such as 'greenhouse effect', and 'fossil fuels' when discussing global warming and how it affects us. Higher attainers work independently using a range of sources to answer geographical questions; this is good practice. In Year 7 pupils understand the difference between physical and human features of localities. In a study of settlement they offer explanations for the location of towns and can suggest factors, such as river flooding, which make some sites unsuitable. They know that towns have different functions such as industrial or market towns. Year 8 pupils can explain processes like the formation of ox-bow lakes and name features such as meanders and river cliffs and describe their appearance.
- 126 By the end of Key Stage 4, inspection evidence shows attainment in line with the expected standard. In structured course-work, pupils select and make use of a wide range of geographical and graphical skills to compare land use of a seaside resort, Whitby, with that found in a market town, Stockton. Pupils draw on their previous learning and, with prompting, apply it in new situations, for example, realising that both radioactive pollution from Chernobyl and policies of the European Union are factors which have contributed to problems of hill farmers in Britain. Pupils do not have the expectation of extending their learning themselves by asking their own questions. They explain physical processes such as relief rainfall and use terms including 'prevailing winds' and 'dew point' in doing so, and can give the Lake District as an example of where this happens. Middle and lower attainers are not sufficiently confident in their understanding and use of a wide enough range of geographical vocabulary. Their work in consequence is not sufficiently accurate or detailed. Pupils do not routinely include named examples in their writing and this reduces their ability to gain credit when responding to examination questions.
- 127 Pupils' progress, including the progress of those with special educational needs, is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In most lessons at Key Stage 3 progress of the higher attainers is restricted by the lack of different work to suit different abilities. Where, in Year 7, pupils use a computer program to generate satellite weather images this usefully extends their learning. Progress in Year 8 is satisfactory; the time allocations in each year of the key stage

result in less work being covered in Year 8 than in other two years. In Year 9 pupils increase their understanding of factors that affect climate such as latitude and distance from the sea.

- 128 At Key Stage 4, through a practical investigation into distribution of litter, pupils learn enquiry techniques and collect, record and analyse data and offer reasons which explain their findings. This is one example of improved opportunities for fieldwork since the last inspection. Year 10 increase their understanding of physical processes like delta formation in the Ganges. They recall and consolidate their earlier learning about the load carrying and erosive characteristics of rivers, learning new terms like 'distributaries' and 'levees'. Year 11 make a case study of an arable farm in East Anglia as an example of farming practice. They revisit earlier work and skills but have not yet had experience of a full GCSE paper. Their progress is enhanced where they have the chance to work on extracts from examination questions.
- 129 In all lessons, at both key stages, pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils do their best to concentrate on their work. The care they take over presentation, and the neatness of handwriting and maps and diagrams, are good features. Pupils work well together but do not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning by working independently of the teacher. Relationships are good between teachers and pupils, and are characterised by respect and pleasantness.
- 130 Teaching is good overall, satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Teachers are suitably qualified or experienced, and have the subject knowledge needed to teach schemes of work effectively. However, there is lack of rigour and higher level expectations. Teachers do make good use of learning materials prepared to suit to pupils at different attainment levels which supports lower attainers who can find work too difficult. Higher attainers are offered additional tasks but these do not challenge them enough to raise the standard of their work. Teachers use a limited range of strategies so that lessons lack variety. Pupils are managed well; there is good organisation and control and this ensures that pupils spend their time concentrating on their work. However, there is not enough written comment on homework or class work which tells pupils how they can make their work better. Teachers do not make sufficient use of national curriculum levels in assessing attainment. Time targets are not routinely used to quicken pupils' work and improve progress. Teachers and pupils use some subject vocabulary in oral exchanges and in written work. The inclusion of some key vocabulary in the very effective displays in all teaching rooms and adjacent corridors is a good feature. This raises standards as well as creating a stimulating geographical environment.
- 131 Access to the curriculum for those with special educational needs is hindered by the lack of detailed staff awareness of their learning needs. It is also hindered by the absence of subject specific targets, developed from individual education plans, and shared with pupils. Where there is effective individual support for pupils in lessons from the teacher or a learning support assistant, this improves progress. Schemes of work are sound and ensure that pupils in all classes are moved forward through their work in a planned way. Fieldwork and enquiry opportunities are now included for all year groups; this is a good feature. Arrangements are not adequate for the routine monitoring of teaching and pupils' work and checking these in relation to achievement targets. The development plan does not make provision for staff development. The department makes some use of information technology in its teaching, but this is not sufficiently developed. Management of the department is not sufficiently focused on the raising of achievement, particularly at GCSE.
- 142 **History**
- 132 The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in 1998 is above the national average. Over the previous three years this quality has been consistent, and is maintained in 1999. There is no

significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

- 133 Evidence from the inspection shows that, by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above the expected standard. It is not so significantly for higher attainers. While the attainment of girls is above that of boys, this is similar to the national trend. Pupils use correct terminology, and have acquired a sound understanding of chronology. They are beginning to demonstrate an ability to use sources critically, for example in learning about the causes of the English Civil War. In work on the First World War, they recognise different reasons for, and the results of change, and assess their importance. Pupils are beginning to explain and analyse interpretations of the past by studying such issues as the culpability of Earl Haig, and the social attitudes towards conscientious objectors. Higher attainers are able to evaluate these interpretations. They also show facility in the selection, organisation and deployment of relevant information, to produce well-structured and varied writing. Lower attainers select and organise information to produce structured work. They can recognise and explain where aspects of the past have been represented in different ways.
- 134 By the end of Key Stage 4, the evidence shows that attainment is above the standard expected. Pupils use sources to add to their knowledge, and can use them critically in structured written work. They are able to judge their reliability and value. In their study of eighteenth and nineteenth century England, pupils recognise that the same set of changes can affect different people in different ways. Their writing is confident and extensive, with good features of reasoned argument. Higher attainers' extended written work is effective, often demonstrating empathy, with detailed use of source material. Pupils have a good understanding of historical concepts and skills. Listening is good. They communicate orally both clearly and effectively, and written work is generally of a good standard. However, there is little evidence of use being made of information technology.
- 135 Pupils progress satisfactorily across both key stages. The majority of pupils develop a sound knowledge of past events. They understand that there are different types of causes, and they develop the ability to interpret them. At Key Stage 3, pupils use the knowledge they are acquiring, and the evidence from sources, to reach informed conclusions. At Key Stage 4, they work independently, and are able to research evidence, and analyse and evaluate it, before reaching an informed judgement. Pupils at both key stages use different ways of communicating their knowledge and understanding, for example, designing posters, writing newspaper articles and participating in role-play. Writing becomes more confident, with greater analysis and criticism of source material. It reflects more understanding, a wider historical view, and a maturing style. Lower attainers, and those with special educational needs, make good progress in writing notes and handling sources of evidence, particularly where the work is well planned to meet their needs, and help is provided by learning support staff.
- 136 Pupils' attitudes are good. They show an interest in the subject, and in some lessons show enjoyment. Across both key stages they sustain their concentration for the duration of the lesson, and will respond to challenge when it occurs. Pupils work both independently and co-operatively. They listen well, respond positively and clearly to questions, and are considerate of the views of other pupils. On many occasions, pupils were observed supporting the work of other pupils in the study of sources, and the selection of those appropriate for the successful completion of set tasks. Across both key stages behaviour is good. Pupils move purposefully and orderly when required, and are courteous. Relationships are good.
- 137 Teaching is satisfactory, on occasion good. It is characterised by good, secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. The management of pupils is good in terms of organisation and control. Lessons are suitably planned; there is a range of methods and strategies that match

curriculum objectives to increase understanding. There is a good balance of teaching and learning styles, with pupils taking an active part in the learning process. In some lessons an atmosphere of enjoyment is created. In some others the pace is not sufficiently brisk, and on occasions does not offer sufficient challenge to pupils. Support staff and learning resources are effectively deployed. Although pupils' work is consistently assessed, the information gained from assessments is not used to ensure that the task set, and the resources used, meet well the needs of the pupils, particularly higher attainers.

- 138 The requirements of the National Curriculum are met, and work is suitably planned to provide both continuity and progression. There is equality of opportunity and access for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are not sufficiently developed in order that assessments are used as a basis for curriculum planning, and account taken of the needs of individual pupils. Marking is consistent across both key stages.
- 139 The department is well led, hardworking and successful in many respects. There is clear educational direction. The aims, values and policies of the school are reflected in the work of the department, though not fully put into practice. There is a positive contribution to the collective ethos, which reflects a commitment to high achievement. However, planning within the department is not sufficiently established and there are no formal procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and the curriculum. These are weaknesses. Accommodation is suitable for the delivery of the subject, and is enhanced by the display of pupils' work. There are sufficient, easily accessible resources to meet the requirements of the curriculum. However, there are insufficient text-books for pupils to have individual copies, and this impedes their progress. The use of information technology remains limited. Opportunities exist for pupils to visit a range of off-site specialist facilities.
- 140 Since the last inspection there has been some improvement in the consistency of planning and assessment, and in the variety of learning activities provided. The weakness in information technology persists, and there is scope for further work on differentiation.

#### 151 **Information Technology**

- 141 GCSE results in 1998 at A\*-C are well below the national average, and below the average for similar schools. GCSE short course results for 1998 show about a quarter of boys achieving A\*-C grades. In the 1999 Certificate of Achievement, 87 per cent of pupils obtained a pass grade.
- 142 The evidence from the inspection shows that, by the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are at the level expected nationally. Some pupils achieve higher levels. Pupils are competent at accessing software, including the use of word processing and graphics. They produce spreadsheets on different topics such as examination marks and tuck shop prices, and use formulas efficiently. Between the ages of 11 and 14, pupils word process and desktop publish with confidence. They use CD-ROM and sometimes internet facilities to access information on specific topics, such as multi-cultural festivals. However, a significant number of pupils is not fluent on the keyboard and has difficulty in finding a number of the keys. Pupils do not use two hands when working on the keyboard and are slow in movement.
- 143 By the end of Key Stage 4, evidence shows that attainment is at the nationally expected standard. Pupils are competent in using a wide range of computer software. In GCSE design and technology course-work, some pupils use software to produce questionnaires and then display the analysis of this data in differing types of charts. Software is well used by pupils undertaking systems and control to design and test electronic circuits they have created. Pupils on the CLAIT course word process, desktop publish and create spreadsheets to a satisfactory standard.

Those taking the GCSE information technology course are competent at the computer and produce a satisfactory standard of work to cover the course requirements. They have difficulty when tackling the design assignment of the course which requires them to set up information systems using their own choice of software packages. Higher attainers achieve well above average standards in the separate information technology lessons. In these sessions average and lower attainers, and pupils with special educational needs, achieve satisfactory standards.

- 144 Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is very varied. Progress is satisfactory: good over Key Stage 3 and satisfactory over Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers in both key stages. Progression is soundly planned. In the discrete information technology lessons in Year 7, pupils can log on and use the tools and facilities of commercial software competently. In Year 7, pupils with special education needs create hand-drawn posters on litter for homework and transfer their ideas to the computer. After word-processing them they enjoy changing the type and size of fonts. In Year 8, pupils with special educational needs successfully plan and produce anti-smoking posters relating to the health education topic being undertaken in science. Development of knowledge and skills over the different years is due to teacher encouragement, careful targeting of knowledge to be learnt via the well-thought out scheme of work, helpful demonstration and guidance, and sensible use of the software system. This progress is encouraged by clear presentation by teachers and generally good classroom interaction. Progress is not hindered by the fact that in some classes pupils have to work two to a computer, but is hindered by the lack of a keyboard course in Year 7.

145 Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils enjoy the topics and are keen to work on the computers. Behaviour in lessons is usually good. There is good take-up of the subject at Key Stage 4, with all pupils taking an accredited course of some kind, either GCSE or CLAIT. Pupils are generally supportive of each other and have good working relationships with the teachers.

146 The quality of teaching in discrete information technology lessons is good. This is similar to the situation found at the previous inspection when the quality of teaching within the department was judged to be good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well structured with a suitable balance of time for instruction and for pupils to work independently. Ambitious work is planned and encouraged. The support given to individual pupils helps them to develop confidence and skills. Homework is well-used to support class work, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. Although pupils receive helpful feedback on their progress in lessons there is no assessment scheme in place to ensure that records of pupils' progress are kept. Effective procedures for cross-curricular assessment in lessons are not in place.

147 In addition to being taught how to use computers, pupils are required to develop the use of this capability within the subjects of the curriculum. While information technology is mentioned in the documentation of some departments, there is no cross-curricular scheme of work. Although at both key stages there is evidence that some pupils can use computers independently to support their work in different subjects, for example, limited amounts of information technology are found in English, mathematics, science, art, geography, and special educational needs, this is not well developed. Monitoring of information technology knowledge and skills is not carried out. The situation with regard to cross-curricular information technology is similar to that found at the last inspection; development across the curriculum is insufficient. However, all pupils do now have greater access to computers through the new resource centre, although the use is not extensive.

148 The new leadership of information technology is generally good. There is a very detailed department development plan and detailed schemes of work. Much needed staff development has begun with staff successfully working alongside each other in lessons to gain the necessary information technology skills. Plans to use the new opportunities funding for training are underway. However, the lack of monitoring of the teaching in the department, and particularly across the school, is a weakness. The last inspection found that that technical support for the department was inadequate and that the appropriate deployment of computers should be considered. These weaknesses persist. The governing body has put resources into information technology since the last inspection, and accommodation and resources for the subject have been improved. The school has rationalised provision at Key Stage 4 and now offers additional information technology. Examination results, although below national age expectations, are slowly improving.

### **Modern foreign languages**

149 In the 1998 GCSE examinations in French, the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\* - C is below the national average. The percentage of pupils in the year group entered for the examination is below that found nationally. In 1999 the number entered was about the same but the proportion gaining grades A\* - C\* improved significantly. There has been an upward trend in attainment in GCSE since 1997. Girls obtain more higher grades than boys but this is in accordance with their performance nationally.

150 Evidence from the inspection shows that, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is above the standard expected. Those with the highest attainment levels are able to talk and write about

things they have done, using the perfect tense accurately. They write at length in the past tense about a visit or the school day. They write accurate descriptions of people and places and demonstrate that they have acquired a wide vocabulary. These pupils have acute listening skills and they show this through their understanding of difficult, recorded texts. They are not always keen to express their knowledge in speech because many lack confidence, but can do so when required. They have good pronunciation. The lowest attaining pupils, some of whom have special needs, are able to manipulate question words and phrases, and give appropriate answers. They speak confidently within the limited range of their vocabulary.

- 151 By the end of Key Stage 4, the evidence shows that pupils attain levels above those expected nationally. Those taking the full GCSE course in Year 11 develop good writing skills and the most competent can write at length on a variety of topics. They produce extensive and detailed course work in the form of a guide to the local area as well as on the topic of fitness and health. They are able to write an account of holidays and other events and in doing so they show that they can manipulate the tenses. Most pupils can talk about themselves, their likes and dislikes and leisure activities. They understand town vocabulary and give directions. Listening skills are good because of the routine use of the language for instructions and simple explanations. Although pupils have sufficient knowledge to speak at length they lack the systematic practice to give them the confidence to do so. They demonstrate sound understanding of grammar and syntax.
- 152 Pupils make good progress over both key stages. Those of all attainment levels progress equally well. This is because teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils in reading, writing and listening skills. Progress is less consistent in oral skills because teachers do not always get pupils to practise using vocabulary in relevant contexts as much as possible. Pupils with special needs make good progress because of effective strategies and the tenacity of teachers. The brisk pace of most lessons also contributes to the good progress pupils make. Although no Spanish lessons were observed during the inspection, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that they make good progress in their learning.
- 153 Pupils' response in lessons is very good. They are highly motivated and have very good concentration. Behaviour in lessons is of a very high standard. Pupils relate very well to each other and to teachers. They are able to work productively in pairs and groups when required to do so. Lessons are characterised by a positive attitude to learning which is reflected in the standard of work pupils produce. Pupils are usually keen to answer questions in lessons although many do not have the confidence to speak at length, even though they have the knowledge of vocabulary and structures.
- 154 The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers generally plan a sequence of effective learning activities which cover all four of the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. They are clear about what pupils are to learn in a lesson, and share these objectives with pupils at the beginning. They make good use of the language being taught so that pupils are used to hearing it for classroom instruction. Teachers are skilful in ensuring that lessons move at a brisk pace so that good use is made of the time, although there is some lack of rigour in oral practice. Teachers manage their classes well and require high standards of behaviour. Good use is made of homework to support learning.
- 155 There is a clear departmental policy and a comprehensive scheme of work is in place. These ensure that the subject has a broad and balanced curriculum and that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. There are effective procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment which ensure that the setting arrangements are kept under review, and that pupils are made aware of their progress. The use of information technology to support learning is currently very limited but there are plans to address this in the near future. The department has good

leadership and clear direction. There are sufficient appropriately qualified staff for the languages to be taught to National Curriculum requirements. The accommodation is satisfactory and there are sufficient learning resources, including audio-visual aids.

156 Since the last inspection there have been improvements in the following areas:

- The school has made provision for a second foreign language. Spanish is now taught to some pupils in Year 8 and 9.
- At Key Stage 4 all pupils now learn a foreign language. From September 1999, all pupils entering Key Stage 4 follow the full GCSE French course.
- Teachers in the department now have clear understanding of the attainment represented by the National Curriculum levels.

### **Music**

- 1 The 1998 results are very good, all the eight pupils entered gaining A\*-C grades. This is also true in 1999, but with good improvement in the average points gained by the ten pupils entered. Pupils' results in music are generally similar to their results in other subjects.
- 2 Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with the national expectation. A small number of pupils achieves higher standards. These pupils are usually supported in their music learning by additional instrumental lessons and extra-curricular performing opportunities. On entry to Year 7, many pupils do not have the range of knowledge and skills expected of their age group, and are not familiar with the elements of music. By the end of the key stage pupils play harmonic patterns of notes on tuned percussion instruments, and read notation in the treble clef. They show good singing and listening skills, and know some technical vocabulary. Lower attainers count and play irregular rhythmic patterns reading from a score using note-names. Higher attainers have good analytic listening skills, for example, they identify instrumentation, form and style, and read staff notation fluently.
- 3 By the end of Key Stage 4, evidence shows that attainment is well above course expectations. Pupils apply their knowledge of different styles in their work. The level of attainment is raised by the wide range of opportunities pupils have for instrumental and vocal tuition and performance, provided both in school and by the local authority's music service. Standards in instrumental and vocal activities, involving both boys and girls, are high.
- 4 Over the three years of Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress overall, although in listening and performing progress is generally good. The progress of higher attainers is limited by a lack of challenge and missed opportunities to use a variety of orchestral and other instruments in lesson activities. Progress over Key Stage 4 is good; it is well promoted in extra-curricular activities. In instrumental lessons progress is good; pupils' instrumental learning enhances their progress in GCSE coursework.
- 5 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good at both key stages. Pupils apply themselves to the work in hand and sustain concentration even when the range of activities is limited. Pupils are given encouragement to succeed, especially those who perform to a variety of audiences. Such opportunities help to raise the self-esteem of those involved. These pupils persevere to improve their instrumental skills, many returning voluntarily at lunch times and after school to practice. When given the opportunity pupils work well in pairs and groups. For example in a drum lesson, two Year 9 pupils and one Year 10 pupil played a piece in three parts on five drums composed by the teacher: they were making good progress learning to play as an ensemble and taking their lead from one member of the group.
- 6 Teaching is satisfactory overall; much is good. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills are sound and used effectively in singing, listening and appraising activities. There is less success in

incorporating composing ideas and experiences into practical activities. This imbalance is reflected in lesson planning, which lacks sufficient detail to ensure appropriate breadth and depth. There are not enough opportunities for group music-making in lessons. Class lessons mostly proceed at a moderate pace. The use of lesson time is not always judged well, for example, by not allowing time for pupils to evaluate their own work and that of others. The arrangement at Key Stage 3, that homework is set only when appropriate, is handled too casually. At Key Stage 4, there are suitable deadlines for coursework to be finalised and homework is set regularly. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are good at all times.

- 7 Spiritual awareness is developed through performance activities where audience reaction is always very good. Opportunities for reflection are not created in many lessons, for example, in listening activities. Pupils have many opportunities to work together in ensembles, choirs and orchestra, and in the community. GCSE pupils take part in a residential weekend which allows them time for refining their composition work. Cultural experiences are created for pupils in studying the music of the British Isles and world music. Assessment procedures are in place and pupils are assessed at regular intervals. The grading, however, is too general to be helpful, and learning targets are not set for pupils at Key Stage 3.
- 8 Accommodation is adequate and the atmosphere is inviting. Resources are inadequate overall. Although there is a satisfactory range and quantity of instruments for the curriculum, many of the keyboards and headphones are in need of repair. Some keyboards have small keys which limit progress in keyboard skills. Pupils do not have access to computers in the department, although some make use of other computer provision in the school or use computers at home. Progress in music technology skills is consequently restricted. The department has made little progress since the previous inspection in the use of information technology. There is some weakness in development planning and arrangements for monitoring teaching and the curriculum are inadequate.

## 175 **Physical education**

- 9 Pupils do not follow a GCSE course in physical education. The school uses a system of units of accreditation, the Certificate of Achievement, validated by the northern examination board, which is available in modules for Year 11 pupils. All pupils passed in 1999.
- 10 Inspection evidence shows that, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 4, it is above the national expectation. At both key stages, there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Teaching strategies and individual attention given by teachers ensure that pupils with special needs attain in line with other pupils.
- 11 By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils understand what happens to the body when they warm up, for example, the rate of breathing increases and they start to perspire. They understand that the reason for stretching when starting physical activity is to avoid injury, for example, pulling hamstrings, and that it also improves performance. In cross-country pupils know the muscle groups to stretch during their warm up. They know to drive their arms in order to get the legs to move more effectively and efficiently. Many pupils experience a sense of well being from cardiovascular exertion. Pupils acquire the skills necessary for playing a number of games, for example, basketball, netball and football. In dance, pupils create jagged and angular movements using different body joints. They make individual and group dances working both in canon and in unison. They use different levels in space. A minority of higher attainers shows quality in gesture and poise, and some evidence of emotion. Lower attainers are not aware of this dimension in dance. In country dancing, pupils make effective footwork patterns moving in time with the

music. They make sideways slip steps and back-to-back movements, working in unison with a partner. Pupils apply these steps to a full dance.

- 12 By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils play games with confidence. Their performance is usually good and many sustain their levels of skill when under pressure in a game. In basketball, Year 10 pupils know dribbling violations, for example, double dribbling and travelling illegally with the ball. In football, pupils use the width of the pitch and play well in a controlled game, although depth is less well developed. Passing and dribbling skills are good. Higher attainers time their run for a cross ball; when passing they look up to check the direction and speed required for the pass to be successful. Pupils show a good knowledge of officiating, and apply the offside rules fairly.
- 13 All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress over both key stages. Most pupils in Year 7 show appropriate levels of attainment in swimming, ball handling and football. They make good progress in consolidating and developing the skills of receiving and giving passes in football, netball and basketball. They learn effective dribbling skills in basketball and soccer. Games skills are allowed to develop successfully as time is given for quality practice with appropriate targets and opposition. In Years 8 and 9, pupils continue to make good progress as individual skills are consolidated and linked with the introduction of strategic and tactical awareness in small-sided games. For example, pupils use shadowing skills, and start to be aware of other players and space about them using peripheral vision. In a minority of lessons, where tasks are not sufficiently matched to their prior attainment, pupils make less progress. In Years 10 and 11, good relationships between teachers and pupils, and the use of appropriate coaching techniques within the varying groups, combine to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress. They begin to understand the concept of width in team games and the different roles of performer, coach and official.
- 14 Pupils' attitudes are good. Almost all are enthusiastic about physical education and are keen to participate. They dress appropriately for activities and participation rates are high. Pupils listen attentively and concentrate well. They work effectively with a partner, in both small and large groups, for example, creating jagged shapes in a Year 8 dance lesson. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and are effectively assisted by their peers. Relationships are good, often very good. Many pupils are strongly competitive, they show a strong sense of fair play and good safety awareness; for example, they accept a decision by one of their peers who is officiating. Many pupils take responsibility and use initiative, for instance in orienteering; they efficiently collect and return equipment, and officiate. Good behaviour and positive pupil attitudes are factors contributing to the good progress.
- 15 The quality of teaching is good, with a small proportion of very good teaching. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge and use their knowledge effectively, for example, when linking theory and practice in Year 10 resuscitation, and in football in Year 9. Teachers observe, diagnose and give constructive feedback because of their depth of knowledge and understanding, for example, coaching within a conditioned game of football with Year 11 pupils. They successfully integrate pupils with special educational needs into lessons and adapt their teaching accordingly. A clear understanding of the routines prior to the start of a lesson has been developed. Overall, good discipline linked to good organisation and at times, appropriate challenge, allows pupils to make good progress. There are occasions, however, when insufficient challenge and expectations restricts progress, for example, in Year 8 dance where gesture and emotion are insufficiently developed. Overall, teachers planning is good; this includes aspects of safety, for example, changing-room routines and the handling of large gymnastic equipment. Organisation is always good and efficient, however, at times, insufficient knowledge and lack of strategies constrain progress, for example, in Year 10 basketball. Effective and timely intervention by teachers and good feedback contribute to good progress. Good use is made of praise, encouragement and constructive comments. Good strong personal relationships ensure

that teachers very effectively manage pupils.

- 16 The leadership and management of the department are effective. Staff create a positive ethos for learning within physical education. The head of department has a clear sense of direction and members of the department work well together as a team. The physical education curriculum is good; it is balanced and organised to give equal access for all pupils, although individual educational plans are not adapted sufficiently for pupils with special educational needs. Lesson plans are linked effectively to units of work, programmes of study, assessment and recording procedures. Assessment procedures are good and support curriculum development, although there are no arrangements for checking and comparing the accuracy of assessment. The systematic monitoring of teaching is under-developed and consequently inhibits the sharing of good practice.
- 17 There is a good programme of activities. A range of school teams, team practices and recreational activities effectively helps to extend pupils' skills and involvement. The accommodation is satisfactory with good and some less good features. The fouling of the school field by dogs prevents unhindered access to curriculum games and athletics activities. Scheduling of the hall sometimes constrains the physical education programme, for example, affecting badminton. The school swimming pool and the employment of a full-time swimming instructor enhance attainment in swimming. Links with the local community are very good and good use is made of physical education facilities.
- 18 Since the last inspection standards have been maintained. Both the curriculum and assessment procedures have improved significantly and give more structure to the teaching. The whole department is strongly committed to the raising of pupils' attainment and progress.

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## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **185 SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

19 The team consisted of the registered inspector, lay inspector and 10 other team members who were specialists in their subject. Between them inspectors spent a total of 47 days in the school. During the inspection week they spent 111 hours in class, observing 132 lessons. Nearly all full-time teachers were seen teaching at least once, and some were seen several times. Inspectors also observed assemblies, registrations and some extra-curricular activities. They looked at the work of many pupils in class, and studied the books and folders of a representative sample of pupils in each year group. Inspectors met these pupils to talk about their work and their experience of the school.

20 Planned discussions were held with the chair of the governing body, and a parent governor with a particular role in relation to special educational needs. Discussions were also held with the senior staff, teachers with subject and pastoral management responsibilities, other teachers and support staff. Many informal discussions took place during the week. The lay inspector had discussions with the headteacher of one of the partner primary schools and the education welfare officer.

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188 The registered inspector made three visits to the school before the inspection. She met the staff and governors, and led the parents' meeting arranged by the governing body at which 34 parents were present. The 295 returns to the parents' questionnaire were analysed. Extensive documentation prepared by the school was examined before and during the inspection.

## DATA AND INDICATORS

### 188 PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	618	15	102	143

### 188 TEACHERS AND CLASSES

#### 188 Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	37
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.8

#### 188 Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff:	11
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	228.5

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	79.67
Average teaching group size	KS3 22
	KS4 20

### 188 FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:	98/99
	£
Total Income	1399065
Total Expenditure	1411300
Expenditure per pupil	2273
Balance brought forward from previous year	70965
Balance carried forward to next year	58730

Number of questionnaires sent out: 617

Number of questionnaires returned: 295

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	61	11	3	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	38	51	5	4	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	20	53	18	7	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	22	62	10	6	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	33	57	6	3	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	34	57	7	1	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	41	50	5	3	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	30	57	6	5	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	37	52	8	3	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	32	54	9	4	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	35	48	9	4	3