

INSPECTION REPORT

Mount Carmel RC High School

Accrington

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique Reference Number: 119804

Headteacher: Katrina Ryan

Reporting inspector: Linda Humphreys

Dates of inspection: 27 September – 1 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708182

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 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wordsworth Road Accrington Lancashire BB5 0LU
Telephone number:	01254 233458
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Very Rev. Dean P. Desmond
Date of previous inspection:	December 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Linda Humphreys, RgI		Attainment and progress
		Teaching
Patricia Watts, Lay Inspector		Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Efficiency
Sally Wicks	English	Resources for learning
Pat Hanage	Mathematics	Curriculum
		Staffing
John Mitchell	Science	Assessment
Jackie Goodman	Art	
Pamela Walton	Design and technology	
	Information technology	
Muriel Harrison	Geography	
Frank Evans	History	
Pam Haesewindt	Modern foreign languages	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Peter Stevens	Equal opportunities	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
	Special educational needs	Leadership and management
	English as an additional language	
Barry Hodgson	Physical education	Accommodation

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and, with the senior management team, clear direction for the work of the school.
- Relationships are good, and there is an effective atmosphere for learning.
- Pupils behave well, they have mature attitudes to learning and their personal development is good. Behaviour is well supported by effective procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour.
- Provision for spiritual, moral and social development is good.
- Careers education and guidance is very good.

Where the school has weaknesses

- Governors do not play an active enough role in the management of the school.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and curriculum development are not adequately monitored and evaluated.
- Planning to ensure pupils' progress and the continuity of their learning is unsatisfactory in most subjects, and the information gathered through assessment is not used in planning the curriculum.
- Resources for learning, including textbooks, library stock, equipment and information technology resources, are inadequate.
- There are not enough support staff.
- Statutory requirements are not met for:
 - information technology in Key Stage 4
 - appraisal
 - the content of the school prospectus
 - the content of the governors' annual report to parents.

The school has a number of weaknesses in significant areas. However, the new headteacher and senior management team have a clear vision of how to improve these areas, and provide strong leadership. 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

In the five years since the school was last inspected, the school has made unsatisfactory progress. Insufficient progress has been made in some of the key issues identified by the previous inspection. However, in the last year, the degree of improvement has been significantly greater. Results in GCSE examinations improved to a level above the targets set for 2000, and a number of new policies and procedures have been put into place. Partnership with parents has been strengthened, and registers are now completed appropriately. The school's capacity to improve is now satisfactory.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, and GCSE examinations in 1998:

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

When pupils enter the school, their attainment is average. Results in Key Stage 3 tests in 1998 are in line with the national average, and well above the average in similar schools, and 1999 results maintain these levels. In 1998 GCSE results are below the national average, although they are above the average scored in similar schools. In 1999, however, GCSE results improved significantly.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	Art, history, science	Geography
Years 10-11	Satisfactory	Art, history, information technology, science	Modern foreign languages, physical education
English	Satisfactory		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

95 per cent of teaching is at least satisfactory, of which 46 per cent is satisfactory and 43 per cent is good. There is only a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. The quality of teaching is similar in each key stage. The very small number of unsatisfactory lessons occurred in more than one subject, but there are examples of good teaching in all subjects. The proportion of very good teaching is small, and, in order to raise standards, teachers need to consider the means by which satisfactory and even good teaching can be further improved.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good in most classes and around the school, most pupils are mature and courteous. Occasional unsatisfactory behaviour by a small minority of pupils. The number of exclusions is falling.
Attendance	Satisfactory.
Ethos*	Good. Relationships are good, and pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They grow in an atmosphere which supports and values them as individuals. Commitment to high standards is not consistent across the school.
Leadership and management	The headteacher provides strong leadership, and, with the senior management team, clear direction for the work of the school. Governors do not play an active enough role in the management of the school.
Curriculum	Generally satisfactory, but unsatisfactory planning for progression and continuity.
Pupils with special educational needs	Pupils make satisfactory progress. Provision for special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good provision for spiritual, moral and social development, satisfactory for cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Accommodation is adequate, support staffing is unsatisfactory, and learning resources poor.
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

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school enables their children to achieve high standards of work and behaviour.• They are encouraged to play an active part in school life, and find the school approachable.• They are kept well informed of their children's progress.• Their children are encouraged to get involved in more than just lessons.• Their children like school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homework.• They are not given a clear understanding of what is taught.• The school does not handle their complaints well.

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views of the school: the school has made considerable progress since the previous inspection in building a more successful partnership with parents. Homework supports learning, and most complaints are dealt with appropriately.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

- Ensure that governors take a more active role in leading and managing the school, by involving themselves in monitoring and evaluating its work, and in strategic planning. (paras 61, 87, 98, 110, 111)
- Improve provision for pupils with special educational needs by:
 - Clearly identifying the roles and responsibilities of all staff in order to ensure a consistent and coherent approach across the whole school. Provide appropriate training for staff and increase the level of support available (paras 56, 57, 88, 98)
 - Ensuring that individual education plans which include subject specific targets are provided for all pupils at Stage 2 and above of the code of practice. Improve arrangements to review the progress of pupils so that both school and parents are given the information necessary to systematically monitor and support pupils' progress (paras 65, 76, 79, 83)
 - Monitoring more effectively the outcomes of spending to ensure that funding is appropriately directed, and that it is having a positive impact on the quality of education provided and on standards achieved. (88, 91, 111, 114)
- Improve curriculum planning by ensuring that staff in all subjects plan for breadth and balance of activities, and for progression and continuity of learning, and that assessment data is used in planning to meet pupils' needs. Establish curriculum leadership in art (paras 27, 42, 43, 47, 49, 51, 56, 58, 66, 67, 68, 83, 124, 150, 151, 162, 167, 176, 192, 202, 214, 216).
- Establish procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and curriculum development which involve governors, senior and middle managers (paras 68, 88, 89, 98, 99, 111, 152, 167, 192, 202, 216).
- Improve the provision of resources for learning and of support staff (paras 46, 74, 96, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 112, 124, 141, 150, 153, 162, 176, 184, 192, 202)
- Ensure that statutory requirements are met for the following:
 - Information technology in Key Stage 4 (24, 26, 52, 53)
 - Appraisal (99)
 - The information about special educational needs in the school prospectus (82, 95)
 - Information about school security, professional development undertaken by staff, progress on the post-inspection action plan, and the implementation of the policy on pupils with special educational needs, in the annual governors' report to parents (82, 95).

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

- ensure that form tutors have enough time with their tutor groups (53, 75, 78)
- ensure that whole-school risk assessments are carried out (80)
- improve dust extraction in design and technology rooms (80, 101)
- reduce the amount of litter in school grounds (80, 103).

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Mount Carmel Roman Catholic school is a voluntary aided, mixed, comprehensive school in Accrington, Lancashire. It educates some 700 pupils from age 11 to 16. Pupil numbers have risen slightly since the previous inspection, from 630 in 1994. The majority of pupils come from relatively disadvantaged circumstances, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. A higher than average proportion of pupils comes from homes where English is not the first language. There are 85 pupils, 12.4 per cent of the school population, on the register of special educational needs, of whom 12 have statements of special educational need. However, no pupil is disapplied from the National Curriculum. Pupils' attainment when they enter the school is average. Rates of attendance and exclusion are broadly average.
2. In 1998, 55 per cent of sixteen year old pupils remained in full-time education and 34 per cent entered training or employment.
3. The school aims to develop Christian values of generosity, forgiveness, justice, peace, love and truth and aims to enable pupils to be effective witness to Christ's teaching. It aims to nurture the gifts and talents of each individual by providing a challenging and stimulating environment with effective teaching and learning.
4. The school has set targets for pupils at GCSE in July 2000, where it aims that 35 per cent of pupils gain 5 grades A*-C, and 95 per cent of pupils gain A*-G in at least one subject. In 1999, results were significantly higher than these targets.

Key indicators

5. **Attainment at Key Stage 3²**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	80	65	145

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	47	48	55
	Girls	47	30	36
	Total	94	78	91
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	65(75)	54(59)	63(69)
	National	65(56)	60(60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	26(50)	25(30)	28(35)
	National	35(23)	36(36)	27(29)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	23	45	63
	Girls	32	33	47
	Total	55	78	110
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	38(69)	54(66)	77(65)
	National	62(59)	64(63)	62(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	13(36)	28(34)	28(18)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(29)

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

6. Attainment at Key Stage 4³

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	59	70	129

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	23	52	55
	Girls	25	56	63
	Total	48	108	118
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	37(40.5)	84(85.4)	91(93)
	National	44.6(43.3)	89.8(88.5)	95.2(93)

7. Attendance

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

		%
Authorised	School	7.6
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised	School	1.3
	National comparative data	1.1

8. Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	30
Permanent	2

9. **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	6
Satisfactory or better	95
Less than satisfactory	5

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

10. When pupils enter the school, their levels of attainment are in line with national averages. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and in most other subjects, are also in line with national averages. In modern foreign languages standards are below average, and in history standards are above average.
11. Results in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1998 in English are close to the national average, they are below average in mathematics, and above average in science results. Boys' results are better than girls' in all three subjects, and are well above the national average in English. When average National Curriculum levels are considered, results are well above the averages scored in similar schools in English and mathematics, and very high in science. Over the last three years, taking all core subjects together, the performance of pupils is close to the national average. In English and science it is above the national average, and in mathematics it is below average. Results in 1999 show some improvement in English and mathematics, but results in science are less good than 1998 results.
12. The results of teachers' assessments in foundation subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1997 were above the national average for pupils scoring level 5 and above in design and technology, history and geography, close to average in the modern foreign languages equivalent, and below average in information technology. In 1998, results remain similar, and in 1999 results are much the same in information technology, considerably higher in design technology and history, but lower in geography and modern foreign languages. At the higher levels, results have steadily improved in design and technology, and remained stable in the other subjects, except in modern foreign languages, where results have steadily declined. Girls consistently score higher than boys in design and technology and history, but, in 1999, score lower than boys in geography, information technology and modern foreign languages.
13. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is also in line with national averages in most subjects. Attainment is above average in art, where pupils reach high standards in an endorsed GCSE course. Attainment remains below average in modern foreign languages, and is also below average in information technology, because many pupils have no experience of this subject during the key stage.
14. The proportions of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE passes at grade A*-C, and 5 or more at grade A*-G in 1998 are below the national average: 38 per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-C against a national figure of 43 per cent for all schools. Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more passes at grade A*-C is below the national average, whilst the proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more passes at grade A*-G is close to the average. However, results in 1999 are significantly higher: 52 per cent of pupils gained passes at grades A*-C, and 95.5 per cent gained passes at grades A*-G.
15. In comparison with schools with similar circumstances, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A*-C in 1998 is above average, the proportion achieving five or more grades A*-G is average, and the proportion gaining one or more grades A*-G is below average. In comparison with schools which scored similar results at the end of Key Stage 3 to those scored in this school, the proportion scoring five or more grades A*-C is below average, the proportion scoring five or more grades A*-G is well below average, and that scoring one or more grades A*-G is very low. Over the five years up to 1998, the average total GCSE points score per pupil shows a downward trend, whilst the national trend was rising. However, 1999 results show considerable improvement, and reverse this trend.
16. In 1998, and over the past three years, boys' results are close to the national average whereas girls' results are below average over the three year period, and well below average in 1998. However, in 1999, girls' results improved more than boys': 41 per cent of girls and 38 per cent of boys achieved grades A*-C.
17. The improvement in results in 1999 is seen in most subjects, except in history and modern foreign languages.

18. Results in GCSE for English, mathematics and science show improvement when viewed over the past three years, with particularly significant improvement in results in both English language and English literature. Attainment in lessons in both key stages meets expectations in all three subjects.
19. The majority of pupils enter the school with satisfactory standards of literacy and maintain good progress in developing these skills. Speaking and listening is very good: pupils of all abilities speak fluently and confidently, using a wide vocabulary and complex sentence structures. They listen carefully. They take advantage of opportunities in many subjects to contribute to whole class discussion and express their views clearly. When working in small groups they listen and respond thoughtfully to other pupils.
20. Most pupils read capably at the literal and functional level, but are less adept at inferring meaning. Pupils have limited opportunities to read independently for research purposes, but, when they do so, they are able to select appropriate text and information, and make helpful notes.
21. All pupils take great care with the presentation of their work and have fluent, legible handwriting. They use a range of forms, such as writing clear instructions and evaluating their designing process in design and technology. Average and higher attaining pupils show competence in a wide range of writing, including extended essays, note taking, argument, reflection, critical analysis, narrative and poetry. Average and lower attaining pupils have some difficulties with punctuation, and some pupils of all abilities have weak spelling.
22. The school has participated in a literacy pilot project, which involved departments in developing writing frames. This supports work in several departments, and has been particularly successful in mathematics, where a writing frame helps pupils to record the stages in their investigative work.
23. Pupils' skills in numeracy are satisfactory, and this helps their progress in other subjects. They have a particular strength in handling data, for example in science they draw and interpret different types of graphs and can extract data from tables. In geography, pupils can use combined climate graphs, and in fieldwork in Key Stage 4 they can measure slope angles and depths of soil. In design and technology, pupils produce working drawings and show analytical skills, for example using food tables. Most pupils can work out numerical questions, such as calculating percentages, but lower attainers find this difficult.
24. Most pupils in Key Stage 3 have satisfactory basic information technology skills in handling and communicating information and in measurement, thanks to a sound range of experiences in word processing, data handling and the use of spreadsheets in the discrete information technology course. Pupils know how to follow step by step instructions to enter the network, they use the tool bar and the icons appropriately and understand technical language. They manage the computer adequately. Pupils reinforce and develop data handling skills in geography, but there are few opportunities in other subjects. Many pupils have acquired skills using home computers, which they use when producing homework.
25. In Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress in most subjects, but in history pupils make good progress, thanks to good teaching, which includes planning a variety of activities, and using subject knowledge to extend pupils' learning.
26. In Key Stage 4, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in most subjects. They make good progress in design and technology because examination courses are well-planned and skilfully taught. Pupils following the endorsed textiles course in art make good progress because of good specialist teaching. Progress is unsatisfactory in information technology because many pupils have no discrete lessons, and few opportunities to use the technology in other subjects.
27. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment make satisfactory progress in the majority of subjects in all key stages. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and music. This is partly due to effective teaching setting high expectations, and partly thanks to pupils' own diligence. These pupils make unsatisfactory progress in English because they are not given hard enough work. Average attaining and lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in all subjects.

28. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory, and sometimes good progress. Good progress is particularly evident within the paired reading programme, where over one third of pupils improved their reading age by more than one year over a nine month period. Pupils following the work-related curriculum in Key Stage 4 make good progress, and in design and technology, the high standard achieved in design and manufacturing is reflected in good GCSE results.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

29. The school is an orderly and caring community. Pupils grow in an atmosphere which supports and values them as individuals. The high standards identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and, in some areas, have been improved upon.
30. Pupils' attitudes are good. Their response to learning is hardly ever less than satisfactory, and, in three quarters of lessons, it is at least good. This is a significant factor in contributing to progress and improved attainment. Pupils settle quickly and enthusiastically to their work and show an eagerness to learn. They are appreciative of the opportunities provided by staff and involve themselves fully in lessons. Behaviour is good, and pupils develop a mature and sensible approach to tasks, whether involved in practical work in art, design technology and science, or in discussing the significance of first impressions in personal and social education. Pupils co-operate and work well collaboratively, whether in drama, making decisions about techniques and skills related to preparing a tableau, or in physical education when playing to the rules of the game without a referee. Pupils are eager to contribute ideas and talk confidently about what they have done. A very small number of older pupils find it hard to settle to work and to concentrate. Their response to lessons is unsatisfactory when they are not managed well, and when the content of lessons does not take enough account of their needs.
31. Relationships between pupils and with adults are good. Pupils show openness, warmth and mutual respect, which promotes a purposeful climate in which learning can take place. Staff care, and work hard to respond to pupils' needs and requests. Parents and pupils appreciate the commitment of staff. Visitors to the school are made to feel welcome and part of the school community. This feature of the school plays a positive part in enhancing the personal development of pupils.
32. Behaviour is consistently good both inside the classroom and in all aspects of school life. During break and at lunchtime, most pupils display a sensible and often mature approach, whether in the dining room, study areas, clubs or elsewhere on the school site. Whilst there are incidents where some pupils are boisterous, pupils generally respond appropriately to the mood of the occasion. Challenging behaviour, when it occurs, is managed sensitively and well, for the most part. Given the restrictions of the building, movement around the school is sensible. Pupils are generally polite and courteous towards each other and towards adults. Incidents of poor behaviour are rarely seen and no instances of bullying or physically threatening attitudes were seen during the inspection. Whilst bullying does occasionally occur, pupils and parents indicate that on such occasions it is dealt with effectively by staff. Respect for property is evident in the lack of graffiti, the good condition of displays and the care for equipment and materials.
33. There were 30 fixed term exclusions during the previous year and two permanent exclusions. The number of exclusions in recent years has fallen, and it is continuing to fall. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions is about average when compared with schools nationally.
34. Lessons in personal, social and health education make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities which develop particular interests and aptitudes, such as modern languages, music and sport, together with a range of homework and study clubs. Participation in activities is good. Pupils are willing to take on responsibility, and carry out their duties well. This is particularly true of the prefects, who, besides normal duties, provide support in areas such as the reading partnership, where their help enables younger pupils to make significant progress with reading. The School Council provides a forum through which pupils are able to contribute to school policy in areas such as the home-school agreement and the drugs policy. They also identify concerns and confidently express their views on a wide range of issues. Work experience and the work-related curriculum help pupils develop a mature attitude to life through participation in different types of activity and involvement in the local community. Through the Amnesty International group, pupils become more aware of human rights, and write to governments to protest about the unfair treatment of political prisoners. Pupils respond positively to the expectations and targets of Compact agreements, and value opportunities to develop self-confidence through training and residential visits. Their concern for the wider community is evidenced in fund raising activities. Much of what the school seeks to achieve is reflected in the confidence, sensitivity and maturity shown by the head boy and girl in the way they

conduct themselves as ambassadors for the school.

Attendance

35. Overall attendance for the academic year 1997/8 was sound at 91.1 per cent, with 7.6 per cent authorised and 1.3 per cent unauthorised absence. These figures are in line with the national average. Overall attendance for the second week of the current term showed an improvement to 92.7 per cent.
36. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced more systematic and effective procedures for monitoring attendance and has ensured that the completion of registers conforms with current legal requirements. Registration periods are brief, but well-managed by tutors, and registers are completed promptly and correctly. However, a small minority of pupils fails to arrive punctually for registrations and lessons.
37. The Educational Welfare Officer attends school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and procedures are in place for weekly meetings with each head of year. However, liaison is not always effective and on some occasions last year these consultations did not take place, partly due to the lack of service cover during sickness and holidays.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

38. Most teaching is at least satisfactory, and there is only a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. 95 per cent of teaching is at least satisfactory, of which 46 per cent is satisfactory and 43 per cent is good, with examples of very good teaching in art, history, mathematics, science and physical education. The quality of teaching is similar in each key stage. Teaching is unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons observed in geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages, personal and social education and physical education.
39. There are several common characteristics of very good teaching. Amongst these are well planned and organised lessons, where teachers' knowledge of their subject and understanding of how to teach it ensure that pupils enjoy learning and make good progress. Very skilful use of question and answer is another prominent feature. Pupils are also very well managed, often in an unobtrusive way, and a good working atmosphere is established where pupils want to do well. In particular, in these lessons, teachers are plainly enthusiastic about their subject and teach it with energy and verve.
40. The small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory shows that there are few major weaknesses. Yet many lessons, although satisfactory in promoting learning, are somewhat dull and uninspiring. The challenge for this school is to raise the standard of the teaching by emphasising high expectations, enthusiasm and energy.
41. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects. They often use technical language well, to extend pupils' knowledge and reinforce their understanding. In physical education lessons on the respiratory system, and on joint movement and the effect of exercise on the muscular system, technical language used was explained well. Secure knowledge of information technology enabled the teacher to give successful explanations to a Year 7 class, using correct technical language to extend pupils' knowledge of basic skills, such as formatting. Good knowledge of examination requirements is sometimes evident, for example in an English lesson preparing for a speaking task. In a mathematics lesson on compound shapes, good knowledge of examination requirements was shown in illustrating explanation. In another mathematics lesson on vectors in Year 11, the teacher placed careful emphasis on precise definitions, continually introducing technical terms in order to link the work studied to that required for A-level study. In a music lesson in Year 8, after giving clear directions on the task of playing a melody in 12 bar blues style, the teacher provided good suggestions for developing the performing and composing activity. In geography, the subject knowledge of some teachers is not secure enough for the teaching they are required to provide.

42. In nearly all lessons, teachers expect pupils to behave well, and there are examples in a number of subjects of teachers setting high expectations of achievement. For example, in a science lesson in Year 9, pupils preparing oxygen were challenged to carry out the chemical reactions and develop their practical skills. A worksheet in a history lesson on rich and poor in the sixteenth century called for judgements based on appraisal of evidence. In a design and technology lesson where pupils in Year 9 made board games, the teacher set high expectations of pupils applying skills they had learned before to the designing, modelling and making activities within this integrated project. In the small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, expectations of what pupils can achieve are nearly always too low. Sometimes, even in otherwise satisfactory lessons, opportunities are missed to stretch those pupils who learn faster.
43. Lesson planning is generally satisfactory, and in some subjects it is good. In design and technology, work is well structured through a series of booklets for use in class and at home. In geography, history and music, lessons often contain a sequence of carefully-planned activities, many of which allow pupils to take an active part in learning. Planning is often unsatisfactory in English. There is too much question and answer work led by teachers with whole classes, rather than a good variety of group and individual work. Materials are sometimes not suitable for the ability of pupils, and, often, although pupils know what the activity consists of, they do not always understand what they can expect to learn from it. In art, although the individual planning of teachers is sound, there is no coherence overall, because there is no co-ordination.
44. Nearly all teachers have a good rapport with their pupils and manage them well. In instances where a minority of pupils finds it difficult to settle to work, often teachers use good skills of classroom management to establish an orderly working atmosphere. In some lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers fail to establish quiet at the start of lessons and struggle to contain noise thereafter.
45. The range of teaching strategies in use is adequate, but a particular feature of the good teaching is the effective use of question and answer. This is often used to explore what pupils already know, as in English lessons in Year 9 on fairy tales, and in Year 7 on how authors establish character in fiction. In many mathematics lessons, questioning is used well to check that all pupils understand. Sometimes probing questions challenge pupils to think, as in a science lesson on photosynthesis in Year 9, and an English lesson in Year 10 where pupils prepared for an individual writing assignment. In another science lesson on solutions in Year 7, after good use of questions to test pupils' knowledge of vocabulary, challenging questions at the end of the lesson moved pupils on to consider the particle structure of matter. Open-ended questions in another English lesson required pupils in Year 8 to justify their opinions when comparing texts.
46. Some teachers set a brisk pace, creating a purposeful working atmosphere which encourages pupils to work hard. For example, a challenging pace in a Year 9 information technology lesson on databases helped pupils maintain concentration in a very warm room at the end of the school day. Poor use of time is a significant factor in lessons which, although satisfactory overall, have some shortcomings. Sometimes too long is taken to settle a class at the beginning of a lesson, and sometimes the pace slackens when the teacher is supporting pupils who need extra help, because faster workers do not forge ahead independently. Many departments have inadequate resources, but there are a few examples of good resources used well, such as good videos in a mathematics lesson on averages and in a geography lesson on rivers. In a personal and social education lesson in Year 11, writing frames provided a helpful structure for pupils writing the first draft of their personal statement for their Record of Achievement. Occasionally the resources available are not used well, as in a French lesson where a particularly boring section of the textbook was overused. There are also examples of teachers making very useful resources themselves, such as a compilation of news reports of recent events in a lesson on earthquakes.
47. There are examples in some subjects of effective assessment during lessons, where pupils' progress is carefully monitored and helpful feedback is given. In a design and technology lesson in Year 10, preparing for GCSE in graphic products, constructive feedback was given on acceptable levels for artwork and drawing. In a music lesson in Year 7, where pupils composed rhythmical patterns, each group's composition was appraised during the lesson. However, some marking of pupils' work is too superficial and does not provide clear and detailed guidance on how pupils can improve the standard of their work.

48. Homework is generally adequate, and makes a particularly good contribution to design technology, music and GCSE physical education.
49. In lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, the major factors are poor management of pupils and inadequate strategies for teaching. Although there is a minority of older pupils whose behaviour is disruptive, some teachers have no strategies to deal with this. In one instance, a teacher failed to establish quiet in a class of young, amenable pupils. In some lessons, planning is inadequate, so that not enough is expected of pupils. In two geography lessons, the work reinforced what pupils had learned before - in one case, in Key Stage 2 - rather than moving them on to new work. In a physical education lesson, substituted for the planned lesson because of bad weather, the activities presented did little to develop pupils' skills. In a French lesson, the balance of activities was poor, with an over-long repetition phase and no variety of practice activities. One personal and social education lesson took up too much time dealing with administration, so that only 15 minutes was given to the theme and virtually no progress was made.
50. In this school, nearly all the teaching is at least satisfactory, and nearly half of it is good. However, the proportion of very good teaching is small, and, in order to raise standards, teachers need to consider the means by which satisfactory and even good teaching can be further improved.

The curriculum and assessment

51. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. In subjects such as science and mathematics, the provision includes a secure grounding in using and applying the skills taught. Information technology is taught as a discrete subject. In response to concerns about pupils' levels of literacy, a language skills programme has been introduced in Year 7 for one lesson a week. This programme is in the early stages of development and, as yet, is not sufficiently well planned for it to be of value for all pupils. A staff working party developing a whole-school numeracy policy is looking at ways in which pupils' numeracy skills can be improved for them to cope confidently with the demands made by all subjects. However, in art there are no co-ordinated schemes of work, with the result that the curriculum followed by pupils is not coherent; the range of activities is limited as there is no three-dimensional work, no use of information technology, and only limited development of drawing from first-hand observation for creative work. In design and technology the curriculum does not include the necessary breadth of activities.
52. In Key Stage 4, all pupils take double science and a full GCSE course in design and technology. In addition to the core curriculum, pupils are able to choose from a range of options, which includes history, geography, art, sports studies, business studies and child development. This range enables pupils to tailor their curriculum, to some extent, to their interests and future plans. Some pupils may choose to follow a work-related programme linked to provision at the local college, instead of a modern foreign language. This work-related programme is well planned and delivered; it is so popular that it is oversubscribed. As a result of this arrangement, the proportion of pupils who do not study a modern foreign language is greater than in most other schools. A further group of low attaining pupils, who do not follow the work related programme, have started a new language in Year 10, following a Certificate of Achievement course in Spanish. Provision for information technology is improving but, not all pupils receive their entitlement to it, either as a discrete subject, or through work in other subjects. Statutory requirements for information technology, are, therefore, not met.
53. At the moment, there is no option for some pupils to include a second language in their programme at either key stage, and the school plans to offer this option from September 2000. In Key Stage 3, pupils have equal access to the curriculum, but, in Key Stage 4, not all pupils receive their entitlement in information technology. In both key stages, a programme of personal and social education is well planned to enhance the curriculum, broaden pupils' experiences and prepare them to take decisions necessary for the next stages in their life. This programme is taught by form tutors. One hour each week is devoted to an assembly, tutor group administration and personal and social education. Because the time provided each day for registration is very brief, sometimes more time is spent on administration than on effective personal and social education in the designated lesson.
54. There is a very effective and well-organised careers guidance programme which prepares pupils to make decisions at key points in their time in school. Pupils and parents speak highly of it. This, together with

the opportunity for two weeks' work experience in Year 10, equips pupils with the skills and knowledge to make effective choices for their next steps after leaving school. The quality of careers education in the school has been recognised by the award of the Quality Standard for careers education and guidance.

55. A homework timetable is arranged at the beginning of the year for all pupils. Parents are given information about homework which includes homework timetables, useful guidance on the type of tasks set, and guidelines as to the time required.
56. The way in which pupils are grouped for lessons has recently been changed. Pupils are placed in two half-year populations, broadly divided according to prior attainment, and are then set in groups of similar prior attainment within these bands. In most cases these changes have been beneficial, allowing teachers to target work more closely to pupils' needs. However, in some cases, for example in design and technology in Key Stage 3, the arrangement results in an imbalance in the topics covered by different groups. In addition, some less motivated and lower attaining pupils, particularly in Year 10, are frequently grouped together to the detriment of their learning.
57. Curricular provision for all pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. These pupils are fully integrated into the life of the school, and receive their curricular entitlement. Staff are given detailed and helpful guidance about the needs of pupils at Stage 3 and above of the code of practice. However, provision for special educational needs is not yet an integral part of all the school's work..
58. Planning for continuity and progression throughout the school is unsatisfactory. The school has provided clear guidelines about the content and structure of departmental policies and schemes of work. A member of the senior management team is linked with each curriculum leader to work together to review and improve curriculum planning. However, there is no consistency of good practice across departments. In some departments, such as science and mathematics, there is a clear framework in place to guide curriculum delivery and development. In music, the scheme of work newly in place is broad and balanced. There is good practice in history, where an additional scheme of work has been developed for pupils with special educational needs. However, in some areas curriculum documentation is unsatisfactory. For example, although there is a scheme of work for GCSE Sports Studies, there is no scheme of work for physical education in Key Stage 4. The scheme of work in English in Key Stage 3 is not linked to the National Curriculum, and there is no scheme of work for art. Planning for progression and continuity in learning from Key Stage 2 into Key Stage 3 is slowly developing.
59. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. Sport makes a particularly strong contribution, with many clubs and teams, especially in football. The school's teams take part in many external competitions. About one third of boys and girls take part in these extra-curricular sporting activities in Years 10 and 11; in Key Stage 3 the proportion is higher, about two fifths. Musical activities have been started this term, with a band and a choir. Many departments run revision clubs. There are successful residential visits, such as one to Anglesey, and one to the battlefields of France for Year 10 history pupils. There is a geography residential field course in Year 10.
60. Statutory requirements for the curriculum are met, with the exception of information technology for all pupils in Key Stages 4.
61. The governors maintain oversight of the curriculum through a curriculum committee. This meets regularly and meetings are timetabled to inform the cycle of full governors meetings. They are kept informed by senior staff of the progress of curriculum, but do not monitor and evaluate provision.
62. There were few curriculum issues identified in the last inspection report and satisfactory progress has been made on them. Sufficient time is now allowed to deliver the National Curriculum in music, and a system has been introduced to monitor homework.
63. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing its pupils. A new assessment and recording policy has been in place since the start of this term and is being followed by almost all subject departments. This document sets out the school's rationale for assessment, and gives guidelines from which departments can devise their own subject specific policies. Some of these departmental policies are very detailed and contain much good practice. The science department has made good progress since the last inspection in developing standardised assessment, and uses the data obtained very effectively to keep

track of the progress of pupils through the school. Assessment procedures are also developing well in mathematics and geography. Several departments are using standardised tests to obtain data which will allow attainment to be assessed against benchmark performance, for example Key Stage 3 pupils are assessed in science with reference to National Curriculum levels, and end of unit tests are being used or developed in design and technology, geography, information technology, mathematics, music and physical education. Most departments keep effective records of the assessments they make.

64. There is no whole-school marking policy, but one is currently under development. Each department is being required to draw up a marking policy which explains criteria to pupils, offers ways for improvement and gives pupils positive feedback on their performance. The extent to which marking is currently carried out in line with these and other criteria varies considerably from one subject area to another. All departments set and mark work regularly, but there is no uniformity of approach. Different systems of annotation are used across different departments and, in some cases, within departments. In design and technology, history, information technology, in practical activities in music and in Key Stage 4 physical education, pupils are given some guidance on how to improve their work.
65. Statutory requirements are met for the assessment of pupils with statements of special educational need. However, there are no arrangements for identifying pupils at Stage 1 of the code of practice for special educational needs, and individual education plans are not provided for pupils at Stage 2. The arrangements for reviewing the progress of most pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory, and do not pay due regard to the code of practice.
66. Assessment data is used to group pupils, but there is no evidence that any use is being made of this data to set targets for individual pupils. There is a programme to monitor pupils in Year 11 who are considered to be achieving below their potential.
67. The use of assessment data to inform curriculum planning is unsatisfactory, and the senior management team is aware of the need to develop the necessary procedures as soon as possible. One or two departments have modified some practices in the light of assessment data. In geography, the timing of fieldwork was changed in the light of assessment data gathered, and in music activities are modified in accordance with the response of pupils.
68. There is some monitoring of marking by senior staff who collect random samples of books on a regular basis, but there are, no procedures for monitoring the extent to which departments are collecting or using data effectively. No use is being made of available assessment tracking procedures such as SIMS Assessment Manager or the YELLIS information systems, but the school participates in the Lancashire schools value added project, which allows subject comparisons to be made with other schools and with other departments in the school. Whilst there has been some good progress made in individual subject areas, there has been little overall progress in assessment on a whole-school basis since the last inspection.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

69. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. The school aims include offering a distinctive curriculum in religious education in school life and worship, with religious education permeating all school life rather than being restricted to a curriculum subject. The guidelines for worship clearly set out the nature, aims and forms of worship, and principles to be adhered to in the school.
70. The structure of the curriculum (which is under review for 2000-2001), is such that pupils only attend one assembly a week. However, there is daily reflection and prayer during form time and at the end of the day. This is brief, but is effectively carried out and provides pupils with thoughts for the day. The themes of assemblies support reflection, self-knowledge and spiritual awareness. Those observed were well delivered, and pupils participated well both in the activities and in prayer. There are also liturgical services, and a lunchtime mass which visiting clergy attend. The development of spirituality is currently under review, with the aims of clarifying a common understanding of spirituality and reviewing where it can be further provided across the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. A number of activities already enrich provision. The school 'Discovery' days, which are held for each year group each year, provide good opportunities for reinforcing values and beliefs, discussing issues central to life and

stimulating a search for meaning and purpose. There is also provision in the new personal and social education programme for developing pupils' self-knowledge from Year 7 onwards. All pupils study religious education in both key stages, and these lessons provide them with a particularly rich environment for exploring the spiritual in the wider sense. For example, in Year 7 it is explored through literature, and in Year 9 through music. There are moments for reflection in lessons and pupils also write their own responses to the beauty of Creation in poetry or prose. Examples of sculptures and paintings were used to explore feelings of transcendence in a lesson in Year 9.

71. Provision for moral and social development is also good. There is a behaviour policy, which clearly sets out its aims, purpose and expectations of pupils, along with a variety of rewards for high standards of conduct, effort and academic achievement, and sanctions for misdemeanours. There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour, to which almost all pupils respond well, and teaching and support staff are good role models. Parents feel that the school generally promotes good behaviour. There is a good anti bullying policy which includes reference to anti-racist behaviour. The curriculum provides numerous opportunities for pupils to reflect on moral issues and to develop their knowledge of right and wrong. For example, the personal and social education programme addresses such issues as bullying, equal opportunities, animal rights, law, and child abuse. The Discovery day for Year 9 takes as its theme 'examining prejudice'. In the Amnesty group there is a clear exploration of moral issues, which last year included all pupils and staff celebrating the universal declaration of human rights during one full day, when every subject area contributed a teaching theme. The 'justice and peace' mass continues this theme on a regular basis. Almost all subjects contribute to pupils' moral development through their curriculum programmes. For example, in English there are frequent opportunities through literature to explore issues such as vandalism, homelessness, loneliness and racism.
72. The behaviour policy seeks to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their actions, exercise self-discipline and consider the needs of others. Class reflection and prayer time reinforce this. Relationships in school are generally good. Teachers in all subjects treat pupils with respect, so that pupils are able to learn in a supportive atmosphere. Pupils' relationships with each other are good and many are generous with help for each other. The new mission statement refers to serving the people of Hyndburn, and the personal and social education programme delivers units which support serving the community, for example, charity work and community work in Year 7, friendship in Year 8, contribution to society in Year 9, and voluntary work in Year 11. Parcels are delivered to the elderly at Christmas, and members of the community are invited into school. The aims of the Discovery days are to help develop self-awareness and build an appreciation of oneself and others in the wider world. The Year 8 day, in particular, focuses on roles and responsibilities, team work and building up the spirit by working and sharing together.
73. Most subjects support very well the social development of pupils. This is both through the types of activities they are required to participate in, such as pair, group and team work in drama, information technology, modern foreign languages, music, and physical education, and through the curriculum provided, such as in English where pupils are encouraged to empathise with others through the exploration of literary texts. Extra-curricular activities, particularly sporting events, and residential visits organised in geography, history and modern foreign languages, provide good opportunities for social development. There are now opportunities for pupils to take direct responsibility in school with a head boy and girl, and prefect system in Year 11. There is also a School Council, which enables pupils to participate in decision making within the school community.
74. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. There are opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own culture through reading in English. There is a variety of visits throughout the year, including visits to theatres to see productions and participate in workshops, field trips and visits to nature centres such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds at Leighton Moss and the Menai Sea Zoo, and to Beaumaris and Conwy Castle. There are, however, no visits to art galleries, museums, religious or cultural centres planned for all pupils. An appreciation of other cultures is fostered through the work of the Amnesty group, and some subject areas contribute to some appreciation and comparison through their curriculum. There is not, however, co-ordinated provision for multicultural education with a clear focus on enabling pupils to appreciate the richness and diversity of other cultures. This was a weakness in the previous inspection report which has not been explicitly addressed.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

75. The school provides a warm, supportive environment which effectively promotes constructive relationships and responsible behaviour. Pupils feel secure and confident, and are encouraged to make a positive contribution to their community through the prefect system and the School Council. Since the last inspection the school has continued to develop its pastoral structure by appointing a pastoral manager who is a member of the senior management team. However, registration periods are too brief and form tutors currently have insufficient contact time with their pupils.
76. Behaviour is carefully monitored, and developments such as the new Conditions and Consequences policy set out clear expectations and are effective in promoting good standards of conduct. A revised anti-bullying policy is in place, and parents and pupils confirm that any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. The school has introduced improved procedures to monitor attendance, such as self-monitoring sheets and a scheme for contacting parents on the first day of absence. However, weekly liaison between the educational welfare service and heads of year is not always effective. The monitoring of academic progress and personal development in the school is sound, and use of data and target-setting is developing. However, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is not satisfactorily monitored, and there are no formal reviews for pupils at stages 1 to 4 of the code of practice.
77. Induction arrangements for pupils entering the school have been carefully considered and are enhanced by very effective pastoral liaison with primary schools. Their effectiveness is illustrated by the confidence and self-assurance of Year 7 pupils in the third week of the autumn term. Helpful and comprehensive booklets are provided for pupils on GCSE options and post-16 choices. The school gained a Quality Standard award for careers education and guidance in 1998. The careers programme is very well organised, and parents feel that the guidance in this area is effective. Strong links are maintained with the careers service and with local colleges, and all Year 10 pupils complete two weeks' work experience.
78. The programme for personal and social education is well planned and documented. Since the last inspection, further strategies have been developed for teaching this. However, effective delivery of this subject is currently hampered by timetabling restrictions, whereby only forty minutes is allocated each week for tutors both to complete routine form administration and teach the personal and social education course. The sex education programme is taught through religious education and science, and has been sensitively considered within the ethos of the school. A drugs education programme includes successful initiatives such as the Year 10 drugs awareness weekend, and is currently under further review. Appropriate procedures are in place for child protection and the pastoral manager has designated responsibility for this area. Whole staff training was undertaken in 1997 and the school ensures that guidelines and procedures are well-known.
79. Specialist support for pupils with special educational needs is valued and provides helpful guidance to staff. The quality of individual education plans is unsatisfactory.
80. School policies and practice demonstrate a proper concern for pupils' health and well-being, and careful personal and medical records are kept. There is a good-sized medical room and appropriate first aid arrangements are in place. The school nurse attends every Thursday and runs a drop-in clinic for pupils. Health and Safety policies are sound and a whole-school audit has been scheduled for later in the term. Electrical and fire equipment is regularly checked. The school is addressing the issue of the leaking roof raised in the last inspection report. However, the governors' Health and Safety sub-committee has not met this year and whole-school risk assessments have not taken place. Dust extraction in design and technology rooms is inadequate, and litter on outdoor playing surfaces is a health risk.

Partnership with parents and the community

81. The school has taken positive steps since the last inspection to address the key issues of reinforcing its partnership with parents and of introducing more efficient home-school communication systems. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting confirmed that they now receive much more information. All parents are asked to sign a home-school agreement which sets out clear responsibilities and expectations. Letters home always include a reply slip, and parents and tutors are required to sign student planners each week.

82. The parent-teacher association organises social and fund raising events throughout the year, and recent donations have included a television, video and editing machine. The association has a small core of enthusiastic, hardworking members and is keen to attract new parents as their children enter the school. The handbook is a clear and helpful guide for new parents. Regular newsletters and a school calendar have proved popular ways of keeping everybody up-to-date. New booklets have just been produced on activities and clubs and on the annual open evening. The school's prospectus has recently been reviewed and has an attractive new design. However, neither this nor the governors' annual report for parents fully meet statutory requirements, particularly as regards reporting on the policy for pupils with special educational needs, and how resources for this are allocated.
83. As well as the annual consultation evening, parents receive regular progress reports throughout the year and find these very helpful. A special evening is arranged for parents of new Year 7 pupils in the autumn term. Although parents receive good information on GCSE options and post-16 choices, there have been no special consultation evenings on these topics. Parents expressed a desire for these, and a Key Stage 4 options evening is on the calendar for the current year. The school has altered the time of the main parents' evenings in order to encourage better attendance. Annual reports are generally helpful, but target-setting sometimes lacks precision. Some parents rightly feel that there is not enough consistency in the way subjects are reported. Arrangements to keep parents of pupils with special educational needs fully informed of their progress are unsatisfactory.
84. The school is developing links with the local community, which contribute to pupils' personal development. There are strong links with the local Catholic Church and schools in the Catholic Partnership. For example, the annual carol service arranged in the local church is shared with five local primary schools. Very good pastoral liaison has been established with partner schools, and Mount Carmel staff attend Year 6 parents' evenings and take part in assemblies. Closer curriculum links have also been developed with primary schools, particularly in the areas of numeracy and literacy. The school has established effective links with receiving colleges and with the careers service, and staff work closely together.
85. Links with business are furthered through the Education Business Partnership and the work experience scheme. The local community uses the school's sports facilities and is invited to attend mass in the hall at weekends. Immediate neighbours were invited into school to share a meal with students last March, and a senior member of staff attends meetings of the residents' association. Regular visitors to the school include a police officer who works with pupils on crime prevention measures. Wider community links are encouraged through the school's active Amnesty International group, which organised a human rights day last year attended by the local Member of the European Parliament and other dignitaries.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

86. Significant changes have taken place over the last year. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed. The senior management team has been extended to six, and four of its members are new to senior management. The headteacher provides leadership of a high standard, consultative but firm and decisive. She has a clear vision, which is shared by the senior management team, and is articulated in the school's mission statement and strategic objectives.
87. The governing body is supportive of the headteacher and staff, and is committed to the school's well-being. There is a well-defined committee structure and an appropriate programme of meetings. Governors are kept fully informed of developments through the headteacher's detailed termly report and other documentation. However, the governing body does not fulfil its function in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, and in actively participating in strategic planning. There has not been enough progress in developing the role of the governing body, which was identified as a key issue by the previous inspection
88. A sound management structure is in place. Line management and other responsibilities are known and understood. The leadership and management of subject areas varies in quality. It is strong in mathematics, science and religious education, but it is unsatisfactory in physical education and in art, where no-one holds responsibility for managing the subject. In a number of areas, such as English and

information technology, curriculum leaders are new in post. The previous inspection identified the need to improve the quality of middle management, and, whilst some progress has been made, there is still a need to improve some areas. The pastoral system is effective, and whilst pastoral and academic roles of tutors are linked well, present timetabling arrangements provide insufficient time for tutors to carry out their role fully. Insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection in the development of provision for pupils with special educational needs. As a result of the hard work and commitment of the co-ordinator for special educational needs, much has been achieved in terms of raising awareness about special educational needs and improving the quality of provision. However, present arrangements for the allocation and implementation of responsibilities do not permit her to carry out her role effectively. There are no arrangements to monitor the quality of provision for special educational needs across the curriculum or to provide appropriate support and guidance to subject leaders and staff.

89. Some initiatives to monitor the curriculum and the quality of teaching have been introduced in the past year, but, as yet, there are not sufficiently effective procedures in place. Whilst systems are being set up which provide a good framework for development, progress in this area since it was identified as a Key Issue by the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. There is some evidence of good practice, particularly in mathematics, but this is not consistently in place in all subject areas.
90. The school has clear and appropriate aims which are reflected in the new mission statement. These aims are evident in documentation and in development priorities, and are strongly reflected in the daily life of the school. In recent years, arrangements to review and develop policy statements covering the major aspects of the school's work have been unsatisfactory. However, significant progress has been made in this area during the last twelve months.
91. Planning for school development is satisfactory and reflects the aims of the school. Although the previous inspection identified this as a key issue, there is little evidence of satisfactory planning until the past year. A clear framework for development planning has been introduced during this last year. It covers a five year period, and the section for the current year contains much essential detail. The plan is clear, well-structured and realistic, and results from widespread consultation. Whilst this is a positive start, the plan does not contain enough detail about resources, time scales and monitoring arrangements.
92. The school is well led and managed on a day-to-day basis. Good communication systems ensure that all staff are kept informed. Well-established routines, understood by pupils and staff, contribute to the smooth running of the school. There is a comprehensive framework of meetings, and meetings are clearly minuted and actions agreed.
93. The school is an orderly community where relationships are good. Core values are reflected in the way pupils are considerate of the needs and feelings of others. Pupils are happy and confident, and grow in an atmosphere which supports and values them as individuals. These factors make an important contribution to creating a positive environment to enhance learning and standards of achievement. However, there is not yet a consistent commitment to high standards throughout the school.
94. When the whole period since the previous inspection is considered, improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. However, there has been significant improvement in the last year. Structures and systems have been put in place which should enable the school to continue to make progress. The capacity for improvement is satisfactory.
95. All statutory policies have been agreed. At present, statutory requirements are not met in a number of areas. Information technology is not timetabled as a discrete subject teaching generic skills for all pupils in Key Stage 4, and subjects across the curriculum are not delivering information technology components. There is no appraisal. The prospectus contains insufficient information on special educational needs. The governors' annual report to parents does not meet requirements. It does not contain information about school security, professional development undertaken by staff, progress on the post-inspection action plan, information on the success of the school's policy for special educational needs, and details of the resources allocated to special educational needs and how they have been used.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

96. The number of suitably qualified and experienced teachers is broadly adequate to teach the school's curriculum. A review of staffing took place last year and this has successfully resulted in a much closer match between teachers' qualifications and teaching programmes than previously. However, some geography lessons are taught by teachers with inadequate qualifications. Although the support provided by administrative, clerical and technical staff is of good quality, the amount available, particularly of technical support, is unsatisfactory. In some areas teachers have to carry out activities which absorb time from their teaching role. For example, there is no technician for food technology. In science, one of the two technicians is shared with information technology, which is not satisfactory for either subject. There is insufficient special educational needs support in classrooms. The time available to the librarian is satisfactory for current library needs, but will not be adequate as use of the library increases. There is no curriculum leader for art.
97. Newly qualified staff, and those new to the school, or working in new posts within the school, are very well supported by the school's excellent induction programme. This programme is carefully planned to meet the requirements of different teachers, and is thoroughly evaluated in order to improve subsequent practice. The programme of support, talks, observations, interviews and other activities is supplemented by good quality summaries of necessary information. For example one booklet is on supervisory duties, and another gives essential information for supply teachers.
98. Priorities in the school development plan are a factor in deciding the appropriateness of attendance at courses, or other staff development activities. For example, whole-school training has taken place on improving literacy. Records of training are kept, and provision evaluated. However, the staff development programme is not as yet monitored sufficiently to make sure that opportunities are provided for, and taken up by, all staff. In most departments, such as history and mathematics, teachers have received recent, relevant training. In others, such as art, this is not the case. All staff require training in special educational needs.
99. There is a programme of lesson observation by the senior management team and by some curriculum leaders, and the headteacher interviewed each member of staff last year. Priorities for staff development are identified through the outcomes of these activities. A current emphasis is on management training for middle managers as the role of curriculum leaders develops. The school's appraisal scheme is in abeyance, waiting for national developments, so the school does not meet statutory requirements for appraisal.
100. The school has made satisfactory progress towards meeting the staffing issues raised in the last inspection report. Staff development is now linked more closely to the school development plan.
101. The accommodation is sufficient to meet the demands of the present curriculum. All subjects have satisfactory specialist teaching areas, and classrooms are grouped together in departmental suites, which facilitates the use of shared equipment and subject displays. The internal decoration of rooms is satisfactory, and the increased budget for maintenance in the coming year will enable some planned refurbishment. In design and technology rooms, dust extraction is inadequate. There are good examples of display work in classrooms and corridors. In the entrance foyer there are displays of pupils' work and of photographs celebrating their achievements. The quality of internal cleaning is high, which ensures a clean and bright environment. Some corridors are narrow and so there is some congestion as pupils move around the school.
102. The external decoration and condition of the buildings is satisfactory, and one leaking flat roof is to be repaired in the near future after an insurance settlement. There is considerable litter on the site.
103. To the side and rear of the school there are large amounts of litter trapped in fencing and around the netball courts, which makes this teaching area unpleasant and poses a health risk with litter on the playing surfaces. The security fencing close to the school, and security barriers on the edge of roofs have helped reduce vandalism. The school's hall is used by the community for Sunday worship, and local cricket and soccer clubs use the sports hall in the evenings.

104. The quality and range of resources for learning are poor: there has been little improvement in provision since the previous inspection.
105. There are insufficient textbooks to support the curriculum in many subjects, such as geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and personal and social education. In English, pupils are obliged to use texts for GCSE English Literature examinations which have been copiously annotated by candidates in previous years. There are not enough modern foreign language reading books for the demands of the National Curriculum.
106. The quality and range of equipment available are also unsatisfactory in many departments. There are insufficient overhead projectors in working order to support interactive whole class teaching, and departments share video and audio recorders.
107. Much of the book stock in the library is irrelevant to the curriculum or is too difficult for pupils to read, such as works of literary criticism suitable for A-Level students. Many of the books are out of date, especially in history, geography and science, and many books are in poor condition. Good quality, popular fiction is underrepresented. Multicultural resources are limited and there are few dual language texts. Few pupils borrow books. The library is inadequate to support and develop pupils' reading skills, or to inspire a love of reading.
108. The provision for information technology across the school is insufficient. In 1999 the school made a major investment in provision in the library area, which is equipped with 24 networked computers running standard office software. There is no Internet access, although there are plans for subject departments to identify a range of CD-ROMs which would support learning in their areas. No departments have adequate provision for information technology to permit them to meet the requirements for this aspect of their subject.
109. A few departments make use of external resources, such as the local museum service in history, and a field centre in geography. History also provides a trip to Northern France to support work on World War I. However, the use of external resources is less than in most schools.

The efficiency of the school

110. The school has made positive improvements in increasing efficiency by producing a long term strategic plan with realistic priorities, and by reviewing and enhancing fiscal systems and procedures. The present standard of day-to-day financial management and control is good. However, systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluation have not yet been finalised. Governors are supportive of the school and its aims, but do not play an active enough role.
111. The school development plan sets out clear objectives, but does not always identify precise performance indicators or quantitative measures to act as a basis for evaluation. Governors have oversight of financial resources through their finance sub-committee, which has recently revised its terms of reference. Progress on the budget is carefully monitored through updated monthly reports. However, governors are not directly involved in monitoring the curriculum in order to assess the benefits of the school's spending in terms of educational outcomes. Arrangements to monitor how funds provided for special educational needs are spent are unsatisfactory, and fail to ensure that the most efficient and effective use is made of the resources provided.
112. The school's budget is firmly based on the educational priorities established in the school development plan, and a new formula funding system, devised in consultation with a departmental sub-committee, was introduced last April. A proportion of capitation is retained to support departmental initiatives in line with the development plan. Income and expenditure per pupil last year were comparatively low by comparison with all secondary schools. Expenditure on teaching staff, on supply teachers and on administrative and clerical staff, was comparatively high. However, spending on educational support staff was very low. The school is aware of the financial consequences of possible future changes such as in staffing and trends in pupil numbers. A small proportion of the budget is set aside annually as a contingency reserve.

113. The standard of financial management has improved considerably since the last inspection and the school closely follows the Lancashire Scheme. The local education authority audit of February 1999 concluded that the school's financial systems and procedures are of a good standard and should provide for the efficient and effective control of school resources. The school has already responded to all the minor recommendations of this report. Further action is in hand on safeguarding stocks, as identified in the financial statement in the headteacher's form. The school fund is independently audited. Governors are presently compiling a register of pecuniary interests to comply with new requirements. The school's bursar plays an efficient role in monitoring expenditure and in financial management. Routine administration is well organised, and the office staff form a hardworking and effective team.

114. Generally the school makes efficient use of available resources to support the curriculum. Teaching staff are well qualified and sensibly deployed throughout the school. However, support staff are not always used effectively, and the current use of special educational needs support is inefficient. The school uses its available accommodation well. Specific grants, such as National Grid for Learning funding, are used effectively. However, funding for special educational needs is not used efficiently at present. In terms of the quality of education and standards achieved, and in relation to its context and income, the school currently provides satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

115. Standards of attainment in English by the end of both key stages are in line with national averages. In 1998, pupils' Key Stage 3 test results are close to the national average, although fewer pupils achieve the highest levels than is found nationally. In comparison with schools with similar circumstances, results are well above average. In 1999, a greater proportion of pupils reach the highest levels. Boys' results are better than girls'. Over the three years from 1996 to 1998 the performance of boys in Key Stage 3 was well above the national average, whereas the performance of girls was close to the national average.
116. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C passes in GCSE examinations in English language and English literature in 1998 is below the national average. In comparison with the results of pupils in similar schools, these results are above average, although they are not so high as the results scored in schools whose Key Stage 3 results in 1996 were similar to those scored in this school. In 1999, however, results in both subjects improved significantly, from 43 per cent to 62 per cent in English language, and from 43 per cent to 67 per cent in English literature. There has been no consistent trend in the results of boys and girls over the past three years, but in 1999, girls gained more A*-C grades than boys.
117. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is close to national averages. In 1999, three per cent of pupils entered Year 7 with Key Stage 2 SAT results at level 3 or below. Reading tests indicate that 25 per cent of pupils are two years behind their chronological age. This profile is broadly average.
118. Attainment in speaking and listening is very good. Pupils of all abilities listen attentively, take account of others' contributions when responding, and respect the views of others. In a lesson in Year 7 where pupils were required to select a limited number of items to take on an expedition, they argue effectively for their choice, using persuasive techniques, and give thorough and detailed explanations in the final summary session. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to express themselves orally in lessons; often this is in direct response to teachers' questioning which provides pupils with a good model. The vast majority of pupils speaks courteously and engagingly to each other and to adults, and has a secure command of standard English when speaking in formal situations. In drama, pupils take on a wide range of roles, adapting their speech appropriately.
119. Standards of reading are generally satisfactory in both key stages, and most pupils read with reasonable comprehension. In Key Stage 3, there is no shortage of volunteers to read aloud in class; higher attaining pupils read with suitable inflection and bring the text to life, but a significant number falter with unfamiliar vocabulary and do not employ the range of strategies they need to decode unfamiliar or difficult texts. Pupils in Key Stage 4 read demanding pre-twentieth century texts as part of their GCSE coursework. All pupils in Key Stage 3 keep reading records and complete one significant piece of writing each half term, which is based on a text read in class. Independent reading is encouraged through the use of library lessons and reading records. The range of texts explored includes prose, poetry, drama scripts, non-fiction and media texts.
120. In both key stages, pupils of all abilities take care in the presentation of their work and the vast majority have fluent and legible handwriting. All pupils are able to write in a range of forms including extended essays, note taking, argument, reflection, critical analysis, narrative, drama scripts and poetry. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate control of language and syntax. They are able to respond to difficult texts and write critically about them, using complex sentence structures and ambitious vocabulary. Lower attaining pupils do not have secure control of punctuation when writing sentences, and there are spelling weaknesses. In Key Stage 3, pupils complete a major piece of written work each half term in response to a particular text. This work is presented well and results in a portfolio of writing in a range of genres: note taking, recounts, descriptive writing, letters, poetry and drama scripts. In Key Stage 4, pupils of all abilities produce GCSE coursework folders covering the range of genres required. These are presented well and show pupils' ability to redraft work in the light of teachers' comments, but there is poor handwriting and spelling in the work of the lowest attainers.

121. In both key stages, pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding in English. In drama, progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Progress is satisfactory because pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and teachers have established good working relationships within the classroom. Lower attainers make particularly good progress in Key Stage 3. This is particularly evident in those pupils who have taken part in the paired reading programme. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress in reading but unsatisfactory progress in writing. All pupils make good progress in speaking and listening.
122. In general, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Most pupils are well motivated and show interest in their work. They are able to talk confidently about what is expected of them and demonstrate their understanding. The overwhelming majority settle to work quickly and concentrate throughout the whole lesson. They listen attentively to explanations and to texts read to them, and they are keen to answer questions, but boys are noticeably more forthcoming than girls in class discussion. When given the opportunity, pupils work co-operatively in small groups, and cope with individual tasks. These opportunities are fully exploited in drama lessons. Pupils are willing to offer ideas, to discuss their work, to explain their thinking and to justify their reasoning. Pupils behave sensibly, have good working relations with each other and with teachers, and show respect for others' views and for resources in lessons.
123. Teaching in English is never less than satisfactory, and it is good in one fifth of lessons, with an example of very good teaching. Teaching in drama is always good: learning objectives are made explicit and there is an appropriate balance of activities. In the lessons judged to be satisfactory, there were some common shortcomings. Teachers have satisfactory literary subject knowledge but do not take enough account of recent developments in the teaching of literacy. Planning is unsatisfactory on the whole. Although pupils know what the activity for the lesson is, they are not always made aware of what they are expected to learn from it. Insufficient attention is paid to providing suitable materials for pupils of differing abilities; in particular some texts given to lower attaining pupils are far too difficult for them to read unaided. On the whole, there is too much use of question and answer sessions led by teachers, and lesson planning does not provide an appropriate balance between this type of activity and group and individual work. In lessons where teaching is good, teachers make the learning objectives clear, and make it possible for pupils to take responsibility for and manage their own learning. For example, in a drama lesson where pupils were planning their assessment pieces, the teacher gave helpful guidance on maintaining a role. Pupils worked in small groups, pausing to discuss how successful they had been, and were able to comment in detail on other groups' performance in the plenary. In a lesson on persuasive writing, good advice was given on techniques to persuade when writing. Homework relevant to the lesson is set and marked regularly. The management of pupils and discipline is a strength of the department. In both key stages teachers maintain good relationships with the vast majority of pupils and give appropriate help to individuals. All teachers encourage pupils to offer ideas, to discuss their point of view and justify their arguments.
124. The curriculum leader has recently taken up the post. Her leadership provides good direction for the subject, but there are many things to be done. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, except that pupils do not receive their entitlement to Information Communication Technology in English lessons. Schemes of work are not referenced to National Curriculum programmes of study. The assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' attainment is satisfactory, but the information gathered through assessment is not used to set targets for individual pupils. There are no systems for evaluating the department's work, in particular the monitoring and development of effective teaching and learning styles to raise pupils' achievement. The curriculum leader has established this as a priority. The resources for learning are poor. There are insufficient textbooks, and pupils are using texts for GCSE English literature examinations which have been copiously annotated by previous pupils. Much of the book stock is out of date and shabby. There is not enough fiction and poetry to support wider reading, and there are few texts from other cultures and traditions. There is not enough equipment, including information technology equipment. The books in the library are inappropriate for pupils, and many are in poor condition.
125. The department has maintained the standards identified by the previous inspection, although resources have become inadequate in the meantime.

Mathematics

126. When pupils enter the school, their standard in mathematics is in line with that expected for their age group, but towards the lower end of the range. This is supported by external data on pupils' attainment levels, for example the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2. Information from standardised test scores show that there is some fluctuation in the average level of attainment of each cohort on entry to the school.
127. In the 1998 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the results are below the national averages. They are well above the national averages for similar schools. The 1999 results are better than the previous year, and maintain the upward trend of the last four years. These improved results, together with inspection evidence, indicate that standards of attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3 are now in line with national standards, with some pupils reaching above, and some well above, average standards. Teacher assessment and test results are broadly similar
128. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils can solve linear inequalities by drawing graphs, and by calculation; they can also solve simultaneous equations. They can calculate percentage increase and decrease, for example in money problems, and can enlarge drawings by a given factor. All pupils can use all four operations to find answers to problems requiring arithmetical calculations, lower attaining pupils needing to use calculators more frequently than the others. Average attainers can identify lines of symmetry, calculate the relative frequency of events occurring and interpret data presented graphically. Lower attainers can find the probability of certain events occurring and can read information presented in tabular form, for example bus timetables. Most pupils can calculate unknown angles in a number of polygons, higher and average attainers working with more complex examples.
129. The GCSE examination results in 1998 are below national averages for both the proportion receiving A*-C grades, and that for A*-G grades. The results are well above the average for similar schools. The 1999 GCSE results are higher than those in 1998 in both grade ranges. In 1999, almost all pupils were entered for the examination, and all those who entered the examination gained passes. The percentage achieving A*-C grades improved considerably in 1999. These results, and direct inspection evidence, indicate that pupils' attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4 is now in line with national standards, with some pupils reaching above, and some well above, average standards.
130. In some years, boys achieve higher standards than girls in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE results. In other years, the reverse is true. There is no obvious pattern to boys' and girls' attainment in classes observed. Information from standardised test scores on entry shows that there is some fluctuation in the average level of attainment of boys and girls in different year groups.
131. At the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils can simplify different types of algebraic expressions, including those containing algebraic fractions. They can use trigonometric functions to find unknown sides and angles, and calculate rates of change. Average attainers can calculate the area of compound shapes, using appropriate formulae and using diagrams effectively to guide their work. They can use Pythagoras' theorem, and draw scale diagrams. Lower attainers can substitute in simple expressions or formulae and calculate the results. They can find the order of rotational symmetry, and calculate simple fractions and percentage equivalents. All pupils can present data graphically, for example lower and average attainers use pie charts and bar charts. Higher attaining pupils can construct frequency tables and draw cumulative frequency polygons.
132. Throughout both key stages pupils develop their skills in applying taught techniques to investigative problems. They produce work, at an appropriate level, that demonstrates their skills in deciding how to tackle problems, collect information and present it in a manner that aids solution. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils produce work which includes skilled use of algebra in the communication of results. In many lessons in Key Stage 3, a short time is allocated to improving speed and skill in mental arithmetic. Pupils enjoy this, and their level of numeracy is enough to assist progress in other subjects.
133. Most pupils of all levels of prior attainment make satisfactory progress through Key Stages 3 and 4. They make this rate of progress due to their own hard work and to well-structured teaching, which give them a solid base of knowledge and skills across all aspects of mathematics. They also make satisfactory

progress in developing recording techniques, which provide a clear framework for their solutions. In addition to this, higher attaining pupils achieve a sound foundation in algebraic skills. The highest attainers, including those who are entered for the Higher tier examination at GCSE, make good progress in Key Stage 4. This good progress is due to good teaching which allows them to move quickly to work of a higher level, as well as to their own hard work. Their progress in Year 11 is also helped by the classes held once a week after school in conjunction with St. Mary's College.

134. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages, thanks to an appropriate curriculum and some additional in-class support. Where this support is available, it makes a positive impact on pupils' progress by helping them to gain confidence, and also by the amount of attention that can be given to individual problems.
135. In both key stages, pupils' progress is also helped by the setting arrangements throughout the school and by consistent implementation by staff of departmental policies, for example on marking. An appropriate, well-planned curriculum, including different accreditation routes in Key Stage 4, is also a factor.
136. Most pupils' attitude to mathematics is good throughout the school. Their behaviour in lessons is usually good and they settle down to work quickly. They respond to good teaching by showing interest and enthusiasm for the subject, and are keen to take part in discussions. Those few pupils, who are not concentrating, perhaps through talking to friends, respond quickly to a quiet reminder from the teacher. Pupils feel confident to ask for help if they do not understand something, and they value the support they get from staff. When given the opportunity, for example in a paired discussion, pupils work well together. The presentation of pupils' written work is usually good, showing care taken in drawing diagrams and recording working.
137. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of lessons. It is very good in 5 per cent, good in about 40 per cent, and satisfactory in about 50 per cent. Teaching is unsatisfactory in 5 per cent of lessons.
138. Teachers have a sound knowledge of their subject and use it well to provide clear explanations. They break the lesson down into small, manageable steps, and use relevant examples illustrating practical applications of mathematics. In lessons when teaching is good or very good, pupils become enthusiastic and take an active part in the lesson. In most lessons there is an appropriate variety and level of tasks; however, sometimes the higher attaining pupils within each class are not moved on quickly enough to more difficult work. Lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives. All teachers make sure that pupils understand, and can use appropriate mathematical terminology. Lists of key words, and writing guides for investigative work, help pupils to make progress and to improve their literacy skills. Management of pupils is usually good and there are clear guidelines as to expected behaviour, which provides an environment in which pupils can learn. When the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because class management is weak. Homework is set and marked regularly, and teachers use it to identify which topics need more coverage, either for an individual or the whole class. Teachers assess pupils' work continually, through oral questioning, through class work, through homework and through end of module tests. Good use is made of this information to alter the emphasis of lessons.
139. The curriculum is well planned. Detailed schemes of work provide good coverage for all aspects of mathematics, but do not yet include many opportunities to use information technology. Assessment systems in the department are good; they are linked to National Curriculum and GCSE standards, and are used effectively to monitor progress and guide curriculum decisions.
140. The mathematics department is well organised. Staff work well together and the curriculum leader provides strong leadership. The curriculum leader monitors standards through the recording and analysis of assessment data, classroom observation and scrutiny of samples of pupils' work. Schemes of work for different groups of pupils are linked to appropriate National Curriculum and GCSE targets. This aids their progress.
141. The quality of textbook resources is good, but there are not enough for pupils to have one each. This restricts homework and the ability of pupils to review and further practise their skills.

142. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards of attainment have improved, as has the quality of teaching. Teachers use a wider range of methods and there is an improvement in the quality of marking. A good scheme of work has been developed. However, there is still insufficient use of information technology and still a need for additional resources.

Science

143. Attainment in science by the end of both key stages is close to the national average. In Key Stage 3 national tests in 1998, 63 per cent of pupils achieved at least level 5, compared with the national average of 56 per cent, and 28 per cent achieved at least level 6, compared with the national average of 27 per cent. At both levels, boys achieved better results than girls. These results are well above those obtained by pupils in similar schools, particularly for those achieving at least level 5. Until 1999, when there was a sharp fall in the numbers achieving both levels 5 and 6, results in science followed the national trend.
144. Attainment in lessons in Key Stage 3 shows a range centred on the average. All pupils across the key stage have practical skills at least in line with expectations, and many achieve better than this as a result of well established routines. In a group of pupils in Year 7 with high prior attainment, pupils who had been in the school only three weeks were measuring time with a stop watch, recording results carefully and some were able to show that they were beginning to relate dissolving to the behaviour of molecules. In a Year 8 lesson on forces, some pupils with low prior attainment were beginning to grasp the concept that equal forces produce equal extension in a spring. A group of higher attaining pupils in Year 9 showed an above average understanding for their age of the process of photosynthesis, and were confidently using technical language in their verbal responses to questions from the teacher.
145. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE examinations is similar to the national average for double award science. In 1998, 43 per cent of pupils achieved at least grade C and this rose to 47 per cent in 1999. Similar proportions of boys and girls achieve at least grade C, but a larger proportion of girls achieve at least grade B. GCSE results show a steadily rising trend from 32 per cent grades A*-C in 1995.
146. Attainment in lessons in Key Stage 4 showed, as in Key Stage 3, continuing development of practical skills. This was demonstrated by some first rate investigations which included all the elements of planning, carrying out, concluding and evaluating results, executed to a high standard. In a very good Year 11 lesson, about half of the pupils investigating the take-up of water by potatoes were able independently to modify their experiment plan in the light of preliminary testing. In a lesson on car brakes, Year 10 pupils with low prior attainment had difficulty in remembering earlier work on pressure, but were able to correctly interpret a diagram on the brake system, and most knew that the brakes transferred kinetic to heat energy. A group of high attaining pupils working on the periodic table showed very secure knowledge of the electron structure of elements and the relation of reactivity to position in the table.
147. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress in all four attainment targets in each key stage. In Key Stage 3, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make the progress to be expected from their prior attainment on entry to the school. GCSE results show that pupils of all levels of prior attainment achieve the results predicted for them on their Key Stage 3 results. Pupils make good progress in scientific experiment and investigation across both key stages, and this gives a firm basis for their learning in the other three attainment targets. This good progress stems from a very well-structured course on practical skills beginning right at the start of Year 7, which gives pupils confidence in their abilities to handle apparatus safely and to take a good deal of responsibility for their own experimental work. The very positive attitude of pupils to their work in science, and their relationships with each other and their teachers, are also major factors aiding their progress. In a very good lesson on seed dispersal, Year 8 pupils progressed rapidly as a result of their own enthusiasm, fired in turn by a challenging lesson which went at a rapid pace through a range of activities including a quiz, use of question and answer cards and a practical activity. A group of pupils in Year 9 with low prior attainment made good progress in a lesson on sound and vibrations, in which the demonstration by the teacher of the sounds of a selection of musical instruments, including pupils' own attempts to play, caused much amusement and was a motivating factor promoting good progress.

148. Pupils enjoy their work in science and there is a hum of purposeful scientific activity in most lessons. They can concentrate well on their work for long periods, are good listeners and articulate in speaking about their work. Pupils in a Year 8 lesson were keen to present their results to the class. Pupils work well together on shared tasks, particularly when carrying out experiments, in which they handle apparatus carefully and move safely around the laboratory. Almost all pupils, of all levels of prior attainment, take pride in keeping neat records of their work. Lessons seen were characterised by an atmosphere of mutual trust between pupils and teachers. In work on scientific investigation, pupils are keen to take the opportunity, when given, to plan their own work and some very good examples of this were seen in both key stages.
149. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, just under half of teaching is satisfactory, and just under half is good, with examples of very good teaching in each key stage. The teachers, who are well-qualified and experienced, demonstrate confident knowledge of their subjects and teach with good scientific authority. Lessons are universally well prepared and, in most cases, well matched to the prior attainment of pupils. Lesson objectives are clearly identified and made clear to pupils. In this respect, there has been good progress since the last inspection. Teachers use a good range of strategies and approaches, and most lessons contain some variety of activity to move pupils on at an appropriate pace. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, in which pupils were planning a GCSE coursework investigation, there was a constant hum of genuine scientific enquiry engendered by a teaching approach which had carefully laid the ground rules for establishing independent working by the pupils. In this atmosphere, the pupils thrived on the freedom to develop their own ideas, and made very good progress. In a few lessons, teaching is too narrowly focused and does not provide sufficiently well for the highest and lowest attaining pupils. The teaching of experimental skills is particularly strong throughout both key stages and progressively builds confidence in pupils' abilities both to carry out routine experiments and to plan investigations. Pupils are continuously assessed effectively in lessons, with question and answer sessions both to establish their baseline knowledge and to challenge them to think about the scientific concepts being developed. Homework is set and marked regularly according to a departmental policy, but this lacks a clear focus. In consequence, the quality of marking is variable and there is generally insufficient effective feedback to pupils to tell them what they need to do in order to improve.
150. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in developing schemes of work which now provide a broadly balanced curriculum in both key stages. The policy of placing pupils into different groups according to their prior attainment works well, and there is some effective in-class support for pupils with special educational needs. However, there is a need to extend the depth and range of activities to cater for the needs of pupils with both high and low prior attainment. The department has virtually no equipment for using information technology and cannot make any significant contribution to the teaching of this subject.
151. Assessment is very good, and is a significant strength of the department. Pupils are assessed regularly from Year 7 onwards, and very good records are kept throughout each key stage. In Key Stage 3, each pupil has a folder with examples of assessed work in all four attainment targets, annotated with national curriculum levels. Results of tests, together with other information on attainment, is used to place pupils into teaching groups and, if necessary, to move them. The department is beginning to analyse results of external tests, such as national Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE results, to detect trends and patterns in attainment. These results are not yet being used effectively to develop the curriculum.
152. The enthusiastic curriculum leader provides very good leadership and educational direction for the team, and good progress has been made since the last inspection in developing schemes of work and assessment procedures. A good ethos for learning has been established: there is a positive atmosphere in which pupils expect to learn. Routine administration is very good, and the department has a sound development plan which identifies priorities and is effectively linked to the school plan. Monitoring of the work of the department, including teaching, is done at present on an informal basis only, and there is a need for this to be more sharply focused in the future.
153. The supply of books is improving, but Key Stage 4 pupils do not each have a textbook, although sets of books are available for use in lessons. Storage and preparation facilities are very good. The provision of support staff in science is unsatisfactory. Although there are nominally two technicians, one of them is now mainly committed to information technology. Within the limitations of the provision, the technicians provide a very good service which strongly supports the work of the teaching staff.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Information technology

154. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with average levels. Results of teacher assessments, which were below average, have improved. Boys' results, similar to girls' in 1998, are somewhat higher in 1999. Pupils attain expected levels in basic skills, but are below average in applying information technology in National Curriculum subjects.
155. Pupils can handle, communicate and model information satisfactorily through a range of appropriate applications. Year 7 pupils are able to use the keyboard and control the mouse satisfactorily as they familiarise themselves with simple word processing skills. In Year 8, pupils construct and use a formula for a specific purpose. Higher attaining pupils insert customised headers and footers correctly without support, and amend information precisely. By the end of Year 9, through an integrated project on running a fast food restaurant pupils know how to organise and prepare information suitably for entering it into a database. They are competent in the use of computers and appropriate software applications. Higher attaining pupils in this year group show good levels of understanding of the problems of poor information storage in running a small business. Lower attaining pupils in Year 8 and those with special educational needs in Years 7 and 8 are able to follow simple step by step instruction sheets for entering the network and accessing appropriate software. However, they have difficulties in setting up simple spreadsheets and are unsure of how to use tool bars and icons without close support.
156. At the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of the majority of pupils is below average, because not all pupils are taught the basic skills, nor do all have access to a GCSE course. Those following the taught courses attain average levels in basic skills, but attainment in applying information technology in other subjects is below average.
157. There is now a word processing module as part of the personal and social education programme for all pupils in Year 10. Some pupils follow a GCSE information technology course. Some lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to OCR CLAIT level 1 as part of the vocational course. Year 10 pupils following the GCSE course are able to format layouts, wrap around text, and select and import images for a school newsletter. Pupils in Year 11 working towards assessment for stage 1 CLAIT are successfully using the techniques and skills of word processing. For these pupils attainment meets expectation.
158. In Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress in the basic skills of software management in discrete lessons. Pupils consolidate their skills in handling and communicating information through their work on databases, spreadsheets, word processing and through the integrated module in Year 9. In Year 9, pupils successfully apply what they know to the range of problems associated with running a business. Most lower attaining pupils in both key stages make satisfactory progress, although some remain insecure using a computer without support. Some have very low levels of technical knowledge and language as they enter Year 7, but make steady progress in manipulating text and graphics, and in preparing information for spreadsheets and databases. Higher attaining pupils make good gains in expressing of data through a range of applications, and extend their knowledge of technical language. They use computers confidently. Teachers' meticulous planning to match pupils' needs, and good classroom management enable pupils to make progress.
159. In Key Stage 4, pupils who have no opportunity to use information technology in other subjects, and no discrete lessons, do not make satisfactory progress. Most subjects do not have enough appropriate hardware and software for pupils to have the appropriate depth of experiences. However, pupils following GCSE and CLAIT courses make clear gains. The planning of work and the good balance of whole class teaching and individual support enables pupils in these courses to make steady progress. Gains are also made in the skills of handling and communicating information, and in measurement and control, for example in design technology, and more generally by those pupils who use home computers to enhance coursework. The Amnesty group compile a database to support their activities.
160. Pupils are generally enthusiastic and enjoy working with computers. They share facilities and support each other willingly. Concentration is mostly sustained, and there are good working relationships between pupils and teachers. Pupils actively listen, and respond well to the tasks set them by teachers.

Pupils are trusted, and many exercise responsibility sensibly, particularly older pupils. Pupils are very keen to book the computers in the learning resource centre.

161. There is no unsatisfactory teaching, and nearly all teaching is good. Classes are well managed. Teachers are secure in their knowledge, and use it well to develop pupils' understanding. They use technical language consistently as a model for pupils. Work is well planned, with a good balance of teacher input and pupils' activities. Expectations of achievement are high. In the lesson where teaching was satisfactory, classroom management was less secure, and the range of teaching strategies was not wide enough for pupils to attain higher levels of attainment.
162. The co-ordinator has very recently taken up her post, and the school has recently invested in modern equipment for discrete classes. However, there are no formal arrangements for co-ordination across subject areas, who have little appropriate hardware and software. Statutory requirements are not met, because some pupils in Key Stage 4 have no access to the subject. Since the last inspection improvement has taken place in extending the range of experiences beyond word processing skills at Key Stage 3 with the discrete lessons, where assessment procedures are in place. Little progress has been made in provision within subjects, and no assessment takes place here. There is insufficient technician time to support the department. However, there is now a detailed development plan.

Art

163. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils work confidently with textile and collage materials, and apply a range of surface pattern-making techniques. They use colour with sensitivity and enjoyment, and employ machine stitching confidently to produce exciting and original textile relief pieces and objects. Year 8 pupils' wall hangings and Year 9 pupils' decorative cushions demonstrate an understanding of the use of texture and shape to develop subtle compositions. Pupils also cover a range of basic drawing concepts, including proportion and tonal quality. They become aware of the work of a range of artists and craftspeople, such as Clarice Cliff and the North American Indians.
164. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average, judged on GCSE results and the standards attained by Year 11 pupils following an GCSE endorsed textiles course. Within the parameters of this course, pupils produce work of above average quality. In 1997 and 1998, the percentage of GCSE passes at grades A* - C in this course were just above and just below the national averages respectively. Provisional figures for 1999 indicate that results are well above the national average for grades A* - C. There is no significant difference in attainment levels of boys and girls. Pupils use the work of artists as starting points to produce extended projects. Year 11 pupils following the endorsed textiles course tackle a limited amount of drawing, but continue to develop surface pattern, design and construction skills to produce sophisticated outcomes which show evidence of exploration of processes and involvement in the use of materials. Current Year 10 pupils are following a GCSE unendorsed art and design course and are being offered a grounding in drawing and painting, as well as the development of the textiles skills acquired in Key Stage 3. When the school was inspected in the third week of the autumn term, there was insufficient evidence of their attainment to contribute to the judgement.
165. Progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress in the use of shape, composition, colour and texture. Progress is satisfactory in gaining knowledge and understanding. Although pupils are introduced to the work of a range of artists, their knowledge and use of specialist vocabulary is insecure. Pupils' progress in the use of three-dimensional materials, information technology and in drawing from observation is currently unsatisfactory because they do not have enough opportunities for these activities, although efforts are being made to improve pupils' observational drawing skills. In Key Stage 4, progress is good overall. Pupils following the GCSE endorsed textiles course make good progress in the development of compositional skills and the use of surface pattern and construction techniques, and in developing ideas from the work of artists. The change of GCSE syllabus will require more use of pupils' sketchbooks for independent research, and more use of information technology, and pupils' confidence in developing work from first-hand observation will need to be strengthened.
166. Pupils' response is good. They enjoy their work and behave well. Homework is regularly completed by the majority of pupils, and relationships with each other and with teachers are constructive. Over the past

three years, the number of pupils choosing art has increased steadily. It is a strength of the department that many boys engage in textiles work with enjoyment and commitment, producing outcomes of high quality.

167. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and it is good in half of lessons and very good in almost another half. Teachers are well qualified and tend to work within narrowly defined specialist areas. Pupils are well managed and teachers create an orderly and productive working atmosphere. The best lessons are characterised by the teacher's enthusiasm and dynamic approach. Although teachers' individual planning is sound, the lack of co-ordination of schemes of work and assessment procedures within the department makes it difficult to ensure that pupils are following a coherent curriculum or that progress is being monitored consistently.
168. None of the issues raised in the previous inspection has been addressed. There is no curriculum leader, so there is little documentation, such as a departmental handbook and schemes of work, and no established and documented procedures for marking, assessment and feedback to pupils. Lines of communication are uncertain. There is no coherent curriculum planning or development planning. The department seldom offers gallery visits, artists' residencies or any other methods for broadening pupils' experience of the world of art and design. The accommodation, although adequate for the current curriculum and numbers of pupils, is inadequate if three-dimensional work is introduced, and if the take-up rate at Key Stage 4 continues to increase. Individually, the two art teachers are committed to developing good relationships with pupils, an attractive environment and a positive ethos for learning.

Design and technology

169. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations in all material areas. In teacher assessments, results are above national averages, and girls consistently score higher than boys. By the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils have a firm grasp of design processes and show high levels of craft skills. Attainment in both designing and making is well balanced. Pupils successfully apply what they know in the production of good quality projects, for example with board games in Year 9. Lower attaining pupils show lower levels of skill in using tools and manipulating materials, for example in Year 9 food technology. However, the majority of pupils use technical language correctly to express ideas. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are successful, for example, in explaining their understanding of nutritional allowances when planning for lacto-vegetarians. Numeracy skills are satisfactory.
170. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national averages. In 1998 GCSE examinations, at grades A*- C, the combined results for full course systems and control and food technology were slightly below national averages. Boys performed better than girls. However, in the 1999 examinations, results at A*- C were significantly higher for both boys and girls. Over the last three years, results have varied, dropping slightly in 1998 and rising significantly in 1999. Over this period, the department has used assessment data to target efforts for raising attainment. A number of pupils attain above average levels in Key Stage 4. Designing skills are good. Research and analysis, and problem solving skills are strong in both year groups. Higher attaining pupils have a firm grasp of evaluation techniques. Presentation of design work by Year 10 pupils, for example in the bedroom project, is good and shows a clear understanding of materials and processes. Some lower attaining pupils have immature design skills and poor drawing techniques. When there is the opportunity to use information technology, pupils use it successfully, for example for text layout in food technology, and for circuit design and report writing in systems and control.
171. In Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in designing and making skills, but slower progress in information technology skills. Many pupils extend their understanding of systems, control and construction techniques as well as consolidating skill in the use of tools and processes. Research techniques, and the presentation of ideas develop steadily. Most pupils make gains in numeracy as they use a range of drawing, weighing and measuring techniques in all the material areas. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and consolidate their understanding of how to work to a design brief in a range of projects. Higher attaining pupils make good progress. They have good knowledge of manufacturing and modelling techniques, and can write extensively about their understanding and application.

172. Rapid gains in knowledge and skill take place as pupils enter Key Stage 4. In all material areas in Year 10, portfolios contain good quality presentation and graphic techniques to illustrate the design processes. In Year 11, major project work of higher attaining pupils shows a widening understanding of design matched to very good levels of knowledge. In this key stage, all pupils make satisfactory progress, and many make good progress.
173. The careful structuring of courses and activities in both key stages and the use of appropriate assessment procedures contribute to progress. The series of work and homework booklets provides a framework in which to develop understanding and application of design technology. Teachers have high expectations. Good quality exemplar materials by pupils are constantly in use and on display in most areas, which informs pupils what is needed to raise attainment.
174. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They maintain concentration, and most apply themselves to the tasks in hand. Pupils take considerable care with high quality presentation of all aspects of their work. Relationships with teachers are good, and most pupils show consideration for each other and listen supportively to discussion. Pupils develop good independent working skills in Key Stage 4 as they manage a range of materials, meet deadlines and complete manufacturing activities as part of coursework requirements. They exercise responsibility as they carry out research independently and make good use of home computers. All pupils pay due care to health and safety.
175. All teaching is at least satisfactory, and half of teaching is good. The strengths of the good teaching are teachers' security in their knowledge and expertise, positive relationships with pupils, well managed classes and consistently high expectations. Time is planned and used effectively, particularly in systems and control, so that pupils are able to achieve set objectives at an appropriate pace. Planning and assessment are effective. Homework is used regularly. Where teaching is satisfactory, time is not used as effectively and momentum slows, so that pupils do not make such rapid progress.
176. Leadership and management of the department are sound. Staff work hard, using their skills to extend pupils' understanding and application of design technology. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met in Key Stage 3 through appropriately designed modules of work. However, pupils do not have a broad experience of design technology and do not have access to textile technology. In Key Stage 4, only systems and control and food technology courses are offered. The department cannot meet fully the requirements for the application of computer aided design and computer aided manufacture at Key Stage 4. The food technology rooms are in urgent need of refurbishment, and there is no technical assistance for food technology. Since the previous inspection, the strengths identified have been maintained. However, there is still no vision or strategy for design technology to allow pupils a wider, balanced experience.

Geography

177. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national averages. In teacher assessments, attainment was well above average in 1997 and 1998, but in 1999, results were considerably lower, and closer to previous national averages. The trend for girls to achieve better results than boys was also reversed in 1999.
178. All pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3, and, in some areas, progress is good, for example progress with fieldwork. In Year 7, pupils collect data and interpret this in simple graphs. By the end of Year 9 they present satisfactory conclusions based on evidence, explain methods and identify problems. Pupils also show more variety in graphical skills. By the end of the key stage, pupils use appropriate terminology and have satisfactory knowledge of places.
179. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is also in line with national averages. GCSE results in 1998 are below the national average, with 32 per cent of pupils achieving grades A*-C. Whereas boys' results are well above the average for boys, girls' results are below their average. In the previous year, results were above the national average, with a much larger group of pupils entered for the examination. In 1999, results improved to 50 per cent grades A*-C, and in this year, girls' results are higher than boys'. Pupils demonstrate a clear knowledge of issues in written work, and the ability to make judgements based on

information, for example, flood management in Bangladesh, and the selection of road routes in the United Kingdom.

180. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. Pupils make good progress with data collection and its collation for more complex hypotheses, and graphical ability is satisfactorily developed. Pupils make good progress with developing geographical skills, including annotation of photographs and use of maps and diagrams. They make satisfactory progress in writing more detailed answers to questions, and in field sketching. Pupils in both key stages make good progress in writing and presentation of work, and satisfactory progress in oral skills.
181. Pupils behave well in class and have good listening skills. They concentrate well on tasks and readily answer questions. Many pupils enjoy the work and are enthusiastic about learning. They are willing to ask questions. Some make a good contribution to discussion, as in a lesson on earthquakes when there was an active exchange of ideas. However, some teachers do not provide opportunities for pupils to extend their responses, and in some classes there is little discussion.
182. Teaching is satisfactory in about one third of lessons, good in another third, and unsatisfactory in the remainder. The best lessons are well planned and well managed. Varied resources are used effectively. For example, a compilation of news reports of recent earthquakes was complemented by atlases and a video. Rock samples fascinated pupils in a lesson on landscape systems. In these lessons, there is a variety of activities. The use of fieldwork studies and enquiry projects in all years encourages pupils to express their own ideas, for example, posters comparing Amerindian interests in Brazil with those of big business. In lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, specialist knowledge is sometimes inadequate. Some lessons do not meet the needs of average and higher attaining pupils. For example, in a lesson on rivers, geographical terms were over-simplified, and the teacher's explanation was too long. In a lesson on map skills, the teacher ignored pupils' previous knowledge, so that most pupils learned nothing new in a lesson where the pace was too slow for nearly all pupils. Sometimes questioning is poorly phrased, and pupils are not led to expand their answers and develop their thinking and understanding.
183. Departmental leadership is enthusiastic and supportive. This is one of the few departments to incorporate some information technology: teachers use the resource area to enable pupils to access data from computer software. The information technology department also teaches geographical skills for one topic. The curriculum leader is a qualified geography teacher, but the remainder of lessons are taught by non-specialists. Their lack of depth of knowledge restricts progress in some lessons.
184. The department is working to refine its assessment procedures. Some pupils are involved in self-assessment. The departmental marking policy is consistently implemented: work is regularly marked, but includes insufficient help for pupils to improve the standard of their work. The information gathered through assessment has been used to make some adjustments, for example, end of unit tests, and the timing of field work in Year 7. There are not enough textbooks for Key Stage 3 pupils to have a personal copy. Atlas provision is poor and library resources are inadequate.
185. Since the last inspection, most issues raised have been addressed. GCSE grades have improved, good fieldwork has been developed, and assessment systems are much improved. In addition, information technology has been integrated into the teaching of geography.

History

186. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above average; results in teacher assessments are well above average. Work seen in lessons and in the limited sample of written work available supports this. When the school was inspected during the third week of the autumn term, higher attaining and average attaining pupils achieved levels of attainment that are more usually seen at the end of the school year.
187. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is in line with national averages. Results in GCSE in 1998 at grades A* - C meet the national average while those at grades A* - G are close to average. Girls' results are better than boys', but as a whole, pupils achieved better in history than in most other subjects. Results in 1999 are lower, in contrast to the previous trend of improvement.

188. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in history. They follow a scheme of work adapted to their needs and teaching is carefully planned to involve them effectively in learning. All other pupils make good progress in both key stages, thanks to good teaching, which, in Key Stage 4, is clearly focused on examination requirements. Pupils in Year 8 know about poverty in sixteenth century England. In their spoken presentations, they are able to list in order of priority those factors they see as affecting the growth of poverty. They are able to draw contrasts between the lives of rich and poor people. Pupils in Year 9, studying population changes and public health in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, can use information about particular families to produce bar graphs recording births, marriages and deaths. They can analyse and investigate the information provided and make judgements on the evidence. In this way they gain understanding and insight into the quality of life experienced by the various generations of one family. Pupils with special educational needs, studying the same topic, make satisfactory progress because they are involved in well-planned learning activities which enable them to understand the changes that happened within one person's lifetime.
189. In Key Stage 4, pupils in Year 11 studying the contribution of Ambroise Pare to the development of medicine in the sixteenth century, understand the importance and nature of his discoveries, and also appreciate that these discoveries are based on techniques used by the Romans. They produce structured accounts, based on evidence, and can write analytically of the factors which affected the growth of medicine. Their written work shows effective use of sources.
190. Pupils listen attentively and concentrate on the work set. They enjoy the various learning activities which are a feature of the teaching and become involved in them. For example, they work well in groups. Their written work is well presented. The department is encouraging the development of extended writing by introducing project work in Key Stage 3. The project on the Accrington Pals produced some examples of careful research and good information technology skills. Year 10 pupils found their recent visit to the battlefields of the First World War an interesting, informative and moving experience.
191. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and it is good in over half of lessons, with examples of very good teaching. Lessons are well planned and well organised with clear learning objectives. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to add depth to the topics studied. Lessons are taught at a steady pace with well-structured, interesting activities which involve pupils in learning. In the best examples, teachers continually assess how pupils are progressing, and provide support which motivates, informs and corrects misapprehensions. These lessons are pitched at the right levels to promote progress, and expect high standards.
192. During the absence of the curriculum leader, the subject is well led by the teacher in charge. There are some weaknesses. The scheme of work is being rewritten; at present, provision for extended writing is limited and information technology is not yet integrated in the curriculum. Assessment procedures, which were a strength at the time of the last inspection, are unsatisfactory. National Curriculum levels are used, but levels achieved are not recorded and analysed systematically. Marking is regular, but there are inconsistencies of approach within the department. Monitoring and development planning are unsatisfactory, and target setting is not firmly established. Textbooks are adequate in Key Stage 3, but insufficient in Key Stage 4. The audio-visual hardware in the department and the history section of the school library are unsatisfactory.
193. Since the last inspection, standards and the quality of teaching have been maintained, and GCSE results show an improving trend to 1998. However, pupils still do not evaluate their own progress or set themselves targets for improvement.

Modern foreign languages

194. All pupils study French throughout Key Stage 3. The majority of pupils study French in Key Stage 4, but approximately 20 per cent are withdrawn into a work-related curriculum and 13 per cent study Spanish in Year 10.
195. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is below national expectations. In 1997, results in teacher assessments were just below national expectations with 55 per cent achieving level 4 and above compared to the national average of 59 per cent. In 1998, results remained below expectations at 52 per cent, but in

1999, results were well below the national average with only 30 per cent of pupils achieving level 4 and above. Boys' results were better than girls, but there is no clear explanation for this. However, in lessons observed and in current work scrutinised, attainment is now in line with national expectations.

196. In Key Stage 4, attainment is below the national average. Pupils have been entered for GCSE examinations in French and German in alternate years. Results in French in 1998 are well below average, and boys score particularly badly. Results in German in 1999 are again very low, with 17.5 per cent A*-C grades. In 1997 they were only marginally higher at 21 per cent. In lessons observed and current written work, higher attaining pupils are on course to meet national expectations in French but the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve below national expectations.
197. Pupils show a good understanding of the vocabulary taught them and some understanding of instructions and explanations in French. Pupils can pick out simple detail from short spoken and written texts, and some older pupils work competently with longer ones. The use of glossaries and dictionaries is developing. There is not enough extended reading for information and enjoyment. Pupils speak in words and simple sentences on the current topic, but rarely use French to seek information or express their own meaning. Pronunciation and accents vary in quality. All pupils copy reasonably accurately, and presentation is good. Some pupils can write words and simple sentences from memory, and higher attaining and older pupils adapt models to write short paragraphs. For example, Year 11 pupils wrote a variety of good paragraphs about their recent holidays. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to show knowledge of grammatical form, such as gender, agreements and tense.
198. The prior attainment of most pupils in Years 8 to 11 is low, due in part to unstable staffing in this department in recent years. However, in Key Stage 3, in lessons and in recent written work, pupils of all abilities and in all year groups make sound progress both during each lesson and from previous lessons, and in over 40 per cent of lessons progress is good. For example, good progress was made in a low attaining Year 8 class where the teacher's good preparation and enthusiasm fired the enthusiasm and commitment of the pupils, who greatly enjoyed the lesson. All pupils learn new vocabulary or consolidate knowledge from previous lessons. Higher attaining pupils progress more quickly to speaking and writing from memory without support.
199. In Key Stage 4, pupils in Year 11 make satisfactory progress, but in Year 10, with the exception of a higher attaining class, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory, because of poor behaviour, weak management of disruption and inadequate planning. Where progress is satisfactory, pupils learn to give longer and more fluent responses in spoken French, to write at greater length using dictionaries independently, and to use the future tense.
200. Pupils' attitudes are good, and they behave well in Key Stage 3 and Year 11. In Year 10, whilst many pupils are eager to learn, a significant proportion shows disinterest and a minority is disruptive. In the vast majority of classes, pupils concentrate very well and sustain their involvement over the full lesson. They listen well, understanding that this is a necessary language learning skill. They organise themselves well in pair work and in active parts of lessons, settling successfully to a variety of types of learning. When required, they work independently, and many are beginning to consult reference material without being bidden. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, are good and support learning.
201. In almost all lessons teaching is satisfactory and in a third it is good. Satisfactory teaching is characterised by thorough planning of a variety of activities to achieve the language learning objectives and consistent checking for understanding of the foreign language. Teachers draw on pupils' learning from previous lessons. Classes are well managed, and relationships are sound, which creates a calm and pleasant learning environment. Good teaching also sets high expectations of pupils' performance, with challenging content planned for all pupils according to their need. There is effective exploitation and extension of the coursebook, opportunities are taken to extend pupils' learning as they arise, and more teaching in French throughout the lesson. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by insufficient planning, and missing opportunities to extend pupils' learning and communicative competence. English is used unnecessarily.
202. The new curriculum leader has been in post just one year, and the department is soundly led and relatively stable. There is a determination to ensure pupils' success. Whilst improvement since the last inspection in 1994 is poor, there is now the capacity within the department to make improvements and a start has

already been made. A scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is being written and some departmental policies have recently been developed. There are no Key Stage 4 schemes of work, or policies for the use of assessment, marking, and information technology. Development and action planning are under way, but, as yet, lack a clear, strong focus on raising attainment. Marking and reports to parents do not clearly identify how pupils might improve their work, and assessment procedures are inadequate. There is no systematic monitoring of the work of the department. Resources are unsatisfactory. There are not enough coursebooks, and some are in poor condition. There are no overhead projectors, reading books or library books.

203. A successful trip to France was arranged in 1999 and planning is already underway for 2000.

Music

204. For some years, there has been no permanent music teacher in post. Since the beginning of the current term, a qualified and experienced teacher has been teaching this subject. Because of this situation, the only evidence available for inspection was the limited work of the term in which the school was inspected in the third week.
205. The attainment of pupils in music in Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with what is expected. In lessons, pupils perform, compose and listen to music of varying styles and genres. Year 7 pupils compose and perform simple rhythmic patterns and many are able to sing, both in unison and in rounds, successfully. Year 8 and 9 pupils use electronic keyboards and drum machines effectively to compose in a blues style or to compose a set of variations. No evidence was available to judge pupils' attainment by the end of the key stage. There are no pupils currently taking music in Key Stage 4, and no work from previous years was available for inspection.
206. There is therefore insufficient evidence to judge progress over time through each key stage. In Key Stage 3, the progress made in lessons by the majority of pupils of all abilities is satisfactory and some pupils make good progress. For example, in a lesson where pupils learned to play a melody and accompanying chords on electronic keyboards, a worksheet setting out clear steps, and ideas for further development helped many pupils to make good progress, so that some pupils were able to write down their own versions. Many pupils improve and refine their musical skills through a range of activities. When working in groups, progress is often enhanced by the interaction of the teacher offering useful suggestions and advice.
207. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards music, although no pupils have opted for music in Key Stage 4 for the last two years. Some pupils are enthusiastic about their music making and extra-curricular activities are developing. Relationships and behaviour in lessons are good, with only a very few isolated examples of unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils use musical instruments sensibly and responsibly, and many are able to work on practical activities independently.
208. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and in half of lessons it is good. Subject knowledge is good. For example, in an 'introduction to music' lesson in Year 7 the teacher gave a graphic description of note shapes and note values. Activities are well directed to sustain pupils' interest. Lessons are well-prepared and structured, and lesson content is matched to the needs of pupils of all abilities. A variety of strategies is employed, including helpful guidance to individuals and groups. Effective use is made of resources and time, and the pace of lessons is good. Homework relating to class activities is set regularly. Pupils' work is continually assessed verbally, with a more formal written assessment at the end of a project.
209. A comprehensive scheme of work has been implemented recently, which is based on the National Curriculum and fulfils statutory requirements. A choir and a band have also recently been formed and they meet regularly on a weekly basis. Accommodation and resources for music are good and the department is beginning to develop the use of information technology in lessons.

Physical education

210. Attainment at the end of both key stages is at the level found nationally in most schools. Results of GCSE examinations in 1998 are above average, with 53 per cent of pupils gaining grades A*-C. Results in 1999 show improvement.
211. In gymnastics in Year 7, the majority of pupils are able to perform short gymnastic sequences, and higher attaining pupils use a good range of movements and balances. In Year 7 netball, pupils understand the rules relating to footwork, and higher attainers are able to pass and catch the ball consistently well. In Year 8 soccer, the majority of pupils are able to demonstrate good control when passing and dribbling, at the level expected of their age group. Higher attainers are able to turn quickly with the ball. In Year 9 soccer most pupils are able to lift the ball when practising but find this skill more difficult in a game. In netball in Year 9 pupils understand the importance of the footwork rule when catching the ball. Pupils studying for GCSE in Year 10 show good control in passing and dribbling in basketball, although they lack consistency in lay up shooting. They have a satisfactory knowledge of the function of the heart and circulatory system. In Year 11 GCSE pupils have a good understanding of the circulatory, muscular and skeletal systems. In soccer in Year 11 most pupils have sufficient skills to play organised and controlled games, and are working at the level expected for their age group.
212. Pupils of all prior attainment make satisfactory progress in both key stages. Pupils make good progress in the GCSE course. In netball, Year 7 pupils are developing the skills of passing and catching, whilst in gymnastics many pupils improve their techniques. In badminton in Year 8, pupils have learned the high clear shot and are able to play this in short rallies. Girls in this year make very good progress in gymnastics, developing balances with a partner, and higher attainers make more complex sequences. In Year 9 pupils learn methods of dodging to create space in netball. GCSE pupils make good progress in understanding how body systems interrelate.
213. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards the subject. They are well equipped, and quick to change for lessons. They show respect for each other, and good co-operation when working together in groups in games and gymnastics. They are well-behaved, enthusiastic about the subject, and stay focused on tasks set.
214. The majority of teaching is at least satisfactory. Teaching is good in about one third of lessons, with examples of both very good and unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give clear explanations and demonstrations. Pupils are well managed, and relationships are good. Practices are well selected to make the most effective use of time and space, as in a Year 8 badminton lesson with a large class. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils, although in some lessons, higher attaining pupils are not provided with enough challenge. Lessons are closely directed by teachers, and there is a limited range of teaching styles, although there is some reciprocal teaching in Year 7 gymnastics. Warm up at the start of lessons is often led by teachers, who give little opportunity for pupils to have some independence and responsibility for this. Sometimes warm up is not effective. The unsatisfactory lesson was poorly planned and did not develop pupils' skills. In the GCSE course, planning is good. For example, a lesson on joint movements included an effective question and answer session and a worksheet for revising in pairs. A basketball lesson was well paced, and assessment was used to set appropriate tasks for pupils, which is not a regular practice. The example of very good teaching in Year 8 girls' gymnastics gave pupils opportunities to plan and evaluate each others' work.
215. Extra-curricular activities are well supported by both staff and pupils, and high standards are achieved in cricket, netball and soccer. The school has been awarded a Sportsmark. Accommodation is satisfactory, but playing fields are in poor condition and often waterlogged early in the season.
216. Management of the department is unsatisfactory. The time allocation for the subject is similar to that in most schools, but the timetable structure and the gender imbalance amongst pupils create problems for planning, for which the department has not found appropriate solutions. Curriculum documentation for GCSE is good and well structured, but documentation for Key Stage 3 and non-examination classes in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 3 it does not fully reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum, and there is no scheme of work for non-examination pupils in Key Stage 4. Development planning and monitoring the work of the department are inadequate.

217. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have been maintained, but the proportion of teaching which is good is lower. Documentation is no longer detailed.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

218. The school was inspected by a team of 12 inspectors, who, between them, spent 47 days in school. During the week 159 lessons were observed in whole or in part, covering 126 hours of lesson observation.
219. A further 20 hours were spent in discussion with pupils and in scrutiny of their work. All teachers present were observed teaching at least once, and most were observed on several occasions. All assemblies, many registration sessions, and a range of extra-curricular activities were inspected. More than 47 planned discussions were held with teaching and non-teaching staff, with governors, with staff in primary schools and colleges, and with representatives from support services.
220. Inspectors scrutinised all the available work of a representative sample of pupils from each year group, and examined the work of many more. Planned discussions were held with pupils from each year group, and many more pupils were involved in informal discussions. Pupils' reports, registers and records were examined. The extensive documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection.
221. The Registered Inspector and one other inspector held a meeting attended by 24 parents, and the team considered responses from 301 parents to a pre-inspection questionnaire about their opinions of the school. Prior to the inspection, meetings were held with staff and with the governing body.

DATA AND INDICATORS

222. **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	688	18	107	152

223. **Teachers and classes**

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	40.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.16

Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of education support staff:	3
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	39.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	77
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	24
	KS4	20

224. **Financial data**

Financial year:

1998

	£
Total Income	1421149
Total Expenditure	1446535
Expenditure per pupil	2093.39
Balance brought forward from previous year	112465
Balance carried forward to next year	87079

225. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:

688

Number of questionnaires returned:

301

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	15	72	10	4	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	23	67	6	4	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	16	54	22	7	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	19	62	14	6	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	32	55	9	4	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	30	61	7	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	27	60	11	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	24	64	5	7	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	21	61	15	3	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	18	65	13	3	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	31	53	11	4	1

226. **Other issues raised by parents**

A very few parents expressed concern about non-specialist teaching in a few subjects in the past.