

INSPECTION REPORT

Ripon College
Ripon

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique Reference Number: 121688

Headteacher: Mr P Lowery

Reporting inspector: Mr P McGaw
1206

Dates of inspection: 11 – 14 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708209

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Beckwith
Date of previous inspection:	14 – 18 November 1994

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John Lewis	Information Technology	Attainment and progress; Teaching
Adrienne Carmichael	Equal opportunities Vocational Studies	The curriculum and assessment
Marian Burdon	Special educational needs Design and technology	-
Alan Waters David Mason	Geography Art	The efficiency of the school Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Avril Ellis	Music	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
David White	English	-
Chris Savory	Science	-
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Attainment in physical education at Key Stage 3 and in information technology at Key Stages 3 and 4 is similar to the national average and is improving
- Overall attainment at GCSE shows a rising trend over the last five years as do results in English, mathematics, geography and in design and technology
- Progress is good in Key Stage 3 in English and French and in Key Stage 4 in geography
- Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to learning
- A significant proportion of teaching is of high quality
- The curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been improved and is good and gives appropriate opportunities for all pupils to succeed
- Provision for information technology is good and is raising standards
- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are very good and are having a positive impact on standards
- Pastoral care of pupils is good
- The links with the community education programme enrich significantly the provision in the school
- The quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher is high
- The staff are hard working and committed
- The quality of whole-school development planning including the use of the budget is good and well focused

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Attainment is declining in science, art, religious education and in Key Stage 4 French
- II. There are inconsistencies across the school in the application of many school policies and procedures
- III. The behaviour and attitudes of a small minority of pupils are poor and cause disruption at times to some classes
- IV. Teaching is less than satisfactory in one in ten lessons
- V. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in music at Key Stage 3 and in religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form
- VI. The provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is unsatisfactory
- VII. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met
- VIII. The role of middle managers is underdeveloped
- IX. The condition of the well-used youth centre is poor
- X. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of changes and the impact of spending decisions are underdeveloped

The school is an improving school. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

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

The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection. It has tackled the majority of key issues for action fully and in many cases with great success. For example, geography which was a cause for concern is now well taught and results have improved significantly. Information technology resources have been significantly enhanced and are now having a major impact on raising standards. The school has a consistent system for assessment, and information from assessments is often well used to guide work and promote higher standards in some subjects. The Key Stage 4 option system has been revised and now gives good access to a broad curriculum to all pupils. Most other aspects from the key issues have been addressed but some remain to be tackled. For example, a daily act of worship, a statutory requirement, is still not provided, and there remain inconsistencies in the management of behaviour and discipline. Overall, however, the school has improved significantly since the last inspection although there is still room for further improvement.

The appointment of the new headteacher, his skills and clarity of purpose; the appointment of a new deputy head with complementary skills to the headteacher; the development of a sound senior management team and the potential of most heads of department to encompass the planned extension of their role; the high quality of much of the teaching; the developing role of governors; the clarity and appropriateness of planning and budget management - all these factors indicate that the school clearly has the capacity to improve further.

• **Standards in subjects**

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

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

• *Key Stage 3*

Attainment at the end of Year 9 is below the national average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. Standards in information technology and physical education are broadly average but are below average in geography, history, French, design and technology, music and religious education. Standards are well below average in art.

• *Key Stage 4*

GCSE results in 1999 are an improvement over results in 1998, returning to the level achieved in 1997. Taken over the period since the last inspection overall results have shown a rising trend. GCSE results in almost all subjects in 1999 were well below national averages. Results in information technology were close to the national average. In English and mathematics a rising trend is evident. In science there has been a downward trend over recent years. Results have improved significantly in geography to a position where they are now above average for similar schools. In design and technology and physical education results have improved but in history and art they show a declining trend. In French an overall decline masks improvements for girls and sharp declines for boys. Progress is unsatisfactory in religious education at Key Stage 4.

• *Sixth form*

Results in sixth form examinations are encouraging but the small number of candidates makes comparisons with national figures impractical. All students passed A-level English. General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) Advanced level results were sound but whilst GNVQ Intermediate results were less secure, current students are attaining at least in line with expectations and sometimes higher.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	French, physical education	history, personal and social education
Years 10-11	Good	English, physical education	-
Sixth form	Good	GNVQ business studies	GNVQ leisure and tourism
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

The overall quality of teaching in the school is good but there remains a rump of less than satisfactory teaching. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 89 per cent of lessons; of that percentage, teaching was good in 39 per cent and very good in a further 16 per cent. A higher proportion of the 11 per cent of less than satisfactory teaching seen occurred in Years 8 and 11 than elsewhere.

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 except for a small minority of pupils, often low attaining boys, whose behaviour is poor and sometimes confrontational. Exclusion rates are falling.
Attendance	Satisfactory, rates of unauthorised absence have been reduced significantly.
Ethos*	Generally positive, most pupils are keen to succeed. Relationships are usually good. Staff set good examples to pupils and most, but not all, have high expectations for achievement and learning.
Leadership and management	Effective at senior levels but underdeveloped at middle management levels. There is a clear sense of purpose amongst all involved in the school and planning for improvement is well judged and effective.
Curriculum	Broad and balanced at both key stages but music at Key Stage 3 and religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form do not meet requirements. Key Stage 4 curriculum is well structured to meet the needs of pupils. There is a very good range of extra-curricular provision which enriches provision significantly.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils have good access to the curriculum and support is well targeted. Individual education plans lack subject specific detail.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Satisfactory moral and social provision but unsatisfactory spiritual and cultural provision. Requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Soundly staffed but staff training is not always closely focused to needs. The curriculum is under-resourced with a consequent negative impact on teaching and learning. Adequate accommodation although some areas are in need of upgrading.
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

- XI. The school helps children to achieve a good standard of work
- XII. Teachers are approachable and supportive
- XIII. Children are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school
- XIV. Children like school
- XV. The school gives a clear understanding about what is taught
- XVI. Parents are well informed about their children's progress
- XVII. The school shows good provision and support for pupils with special educational needs

What some parents are not happy about

- XVIII. The school does not achieve high standards
- XIX. There are concerns about the amount and
- XX. The way the school handles complaints is patchy

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views expressed by parents. Teachers are approachable and supportive and most give good help to pupils with special educational needs. The extra-curricular programme is good and enriches provision significantly. Pupils are encouraged to take a full and active part in the school's working. Parents' concerns about a small minority of pupils being poorly behaved are supported by inspection findings but the school is working hard to tackle this issue. Homework is usually relevant and appropriate and is used well to further pupils' progress. The school handles complaints sensitively and promptly but does not always inform parents quickly enough about the outcome.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to raise standards further and continue to improve the quality of education provided the headteacher and governors should tackle the issues below.

Improve consistency to that of the best practice across all aspects of the school's work but particularly in:

- XXI. the management of behaviour and the adherence to the school's policy on behaviour and discipline (paragraphs 45, 49, 89, 76, 123, 130, 132, 160);
- XXII. the elimination of unsatisfactory teaching (34, 35, 44, 45, 46, 123, 132, 141, 152, 160, 174, 193);
- XXIII. the expectations of what is required of pupils in terms of work, progress and attainment (45, 123, 174, 194);
- XXIV. the planning of work to ensure the needs of all pupils are met (27, 46, 49, 123, 174, 194);
- XXV. the subject specific detail in individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs (47, 137, 198);
- XXVI. the teaching of personal and social education by form tutors (57, 72, 44);
- XXVII. the use of information technology in all subjects (52, 142, 153, 175, 179);
- XXVIII. the resources available to support teaching and learning (104, 109, 143, 167, 217);
- XXIX. the marking of registers (75); and
- XXX. the quality and usefulness of marking (46, 132, 141, 161, 174).

The key routes to achieving improvements should be through:

- XXXI. close monitoring and evaluation of practice and of the impact of changes by all levels of management (92, 93);
- XXXII. careful analysis of the specific needs for training of staff (102, 194); and
- XXXIII. implementation of a thorough programme of staff development for teachers, heads of department and senior staff (91, 94, 101, 102, 111, 176, 185).

Improve provision through all subjects for the spiritual and cultural development of pupils by:

- XXXIV. ensuring assemblies contain spiritual elements and meet statutory requirements for a daily act of worship (63, 88);
- XXXV. developing and including the spiritual element within all subjects of the curriculum in a planned way (32, 63);
- XXXVI. increasing opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of their own and other cultures (32, 67, 68, 201, 217);
- XXXVII. extending the range and purpose of local visits (67, 167, 175, 217);
- XXXVIII. increasing the use of visitors to the school to enrich opportunities to appreciate at first hand local and wider cultures (61, 217); and
- XXXIX. widening the opportunities to examine a greater range of world cultures (68, 217).

Improve the behaviour and attitudes of the small minority of pupils highlighted in the report by:

- XL. consistently applying the school's code of conduct and procedures for behaviour and discipline (29, 45, 49, 76, 123, 130, 132, 160);
- XLI. ensuring their learning needs are met closely (27, 45, 46, 49, 123, 160); and
- XLII. ensuring setting arrangements do not concentrate behaviour problems into particular groups (53).

Improve attainment in science, art and religious education and in French at Key Stage 4 by:

- XLIII. ensuring teaching and learning are of high quality by responding to the points made in the relevant subject sections of this report (135-146, 147-155, 191-195, 212-218);
- XLIV. improving the management of science (91, 144);
- XLV. improving opportunities in art for pupils to develop personal work and their use of sketchbooks and information technology and to explore the social and historical contexts of other artists (153);
- XLVI. ensuring the statutory requirements for religious education are met at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form (54, 55, 88, 213, 217); and
- XLVII. ensuring staff training needs are identified carefully and met fully in French (194).

Governors must ensure that statutory requirements are also met:

- XLVIII. for the curriculum in music in Key Stage 3 (52, 88, 196, 201); and
- XLIX. for the inclusion of targets for improvement in written reports to parents (79, 88, 144).

The school should also tackle other more minor points for action noted at the end of aspect and subject sections.

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1. Ripon College (until July 1999, Ripon City School) is situated in the city of Ripon, North Yorkshire, an area of relatively high employment and low social disadvantage. The school is much smaller than secondary schools nationally with 469 boys and girls on roll aged 11-18. These pupils come from Ripon city and the surrounding rural area.

2. Ripon city operates a selective system of education having a grammar school which offers places to the top 32 per cent of the ability range based on selection tests. In total there are 11 secondary schools from which parents in Ripon district can choose, of which Ripon College is one. The result of selection and parental choice has meant that the school declined from 905 on roll in 1988 to 368 in 1997. At the time of the last inspection in 1994 there were 402 on roll. Over the recent past numbers have risen steadily to the current 469.

3. The majority of the pupils are white. The school takes a proportion of its pupils from Service families who move in and out of the area throughout the year. In 1998, for example, 31 per cent of Year 11 pupils joined the school after Year 9 with 36 changes between the cohort in Year 7 and the final cohort in Year 11. Currently 11.4 per cent of children on roll come from this regularly changing background. Furthermore, the school has recently taken a number of refugee children from Kosovo.

4. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is well above the national average. There are 12 pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs, which is high in relation to the number on roll.

5. The profile of attainment at entry shows a higher proportion of low attaining pupils than in most schools. Data held by the school indicates that whilst there are pupils on roll from across the whole range of ability, there are relatively few in the highest attaining category.

6. The school's stated priorities for 1999/2000 are:

- to develop the quality of learning across the college;
- to develop the college's management structure to support improved learning;
- to work on a number of whole college developments – for example, in the area of information communication technology; and
- to develop further community education in line with Ripon Community Education Development Plan.

1. The school's aims are given in the prospectus as:

- to provide a high quality education for students in Ripon and the surrounding district;
- to provide an extensive and relevant curriculum;
- to ensure all students are highly skilled in technology, suitable for life in the twenty-first century;
- to provide a caring system in which individual advice and support is available to motivate and encourage student progress;
- to develop strong links and good relationships with the wider community; and
- to support and encourage lifelong learning.

-

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3²

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	33	28	61

- National Curriculum Test		English	Mathematics	Science
Results				
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	17	18	15
	Girls	18	12	10
	Total	35	30	25
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	57 (62)	49 (51)	39 (51)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	12 (9)	25 (12)	15 (14)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)
- Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	17	22	18
	Girls	20	17	19
	Total	37	39	37
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	61 (72)	64 (64)	61 (51)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	30 (13)	37 (11)	30 (6)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Attainment at Key Stage 4³

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	32	35	67

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	4	26	31
	Girls	10	29	34
	Total	14	55	65
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	20.9 (8)	82.1 (79)	97 (92)
	National	47.8 (46.3)	88.4 (87.9)	93.9 (93.4)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of <i>such pupils</i> who achieved all those they studied:	Number	% Success rate	
	School	0	-
	National		-

Attainment in the Sixth Form⁴

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE	Year	Male	Female	Total
	1999	0	8	8

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	0	0	0	0	2.3	2.3
National	-	-	-	-	3.1	3.0

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved this qualification:	Number	% Success rate	
	School	0	-
	National		-

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:	Number	% Success rate	
	School	25	100
	National		n/a (78.9)

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

n/a 1999 figures not available at the time of publication of the report

Attendance⁵

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School	%
			8.4
	Absence	National comparative data	n/a (7.9)
	Unauthorised	School	1.0
	Absence	National comparative data	n/a (1.1)

-

-

- Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	31
	Permanent	2

-

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	16.3
	Satisfactory or better	89.4
	Less than satisfactory	10.6

n/a 1999 figures not available at the time of publication of the report

- **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

- **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

- **Attainment and progress**

- *Key Stage 3 attainment*

1. In the National Curriculum assessments for 14-year-olds in 1999 for the core subjects, English results for pupils achieving Level 5 and above were below the national average; mathematics and science results were well below average. Results in 1999 in English and mathematics were similar to those in 1998 but showed a marked decline in science. Results for pupils achieving Level 6 or above in English were well below the national average and in mathematics and science they were below the average. All were an improvement over previous years. Overall the trend over recent years in English and mathematics has been rising with the most significant improvement taking place between 1996 and 1997. In science, however, whilst the trend is more static, there was a significant decline between 1998 and 1999. Girls generally attained higher than boys in English, whereas in mathematics and science, boys marginally outperform girls. These features match the national trend in English and mathematics but in science nationally girls generally do better than boys.

2. In comparison with other secondary modern schools the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above was in line with the average in all three core subjects. Comparing the school's results with these similar schools for the proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 and above, results in English were below average, in mathematics they were about average, and in science they were above average. These results are generally borne out by inspection findings.

3. In other subjects of the curriculum pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 varies from in line with national expectations to below. In information technology and physical education standards are broadly in line with national averages. In design and technology, geography, history, music and French standards are below average. Standards in religious education are below the standards set by the agreed syllabus. Standards in art are well below average. The performance of boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 3 in these subjects is not significantly different from the national picture in that girls generally outperform boys. These results are generally borne out by inspection findings.

10. *Key Stage 4 attainment*

4. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C in 1998 was very low in comparison to the national average. In comparison to similar secondary modern schools, these results were also well below average. The proportion of pupils who gained five or more grades A*-G was low. The average points score was also low.

5. The 1998 results were lower than the previous year when 21 per cent of pupils gained five or more GCSEs at A*-C grade. Detailed analysis shows that much of the difference between 1997 and 1998 was focused in four subject areas, French, science, mathematics and history, and in the considerable complications from within the cohort of pupils entered for the examination in 1998. The number of pupils entered for GCSE in 1998 was smaller than in previous years and large percentage swings were caused by the performance of two or three pupils. The cohort had some 36 changes in membership since Year 7 resulting in considerable disruption to groups and learning. From the 62 pupils, 31 per cent had joined the school during their Key Stage 4 studies from Services families on short-term placement in Ripon. All of the pupils who gained five or more GCSE at A*-C had been at the school for the full five years. This analysis indicates that the school successfully adds value to pupils' attainment for those whom it can influence over their whole school careers. If all of the pupils who achieved average scores in the end of Key Stage 3 assessments in Year 9 had taken their GCSEs the school's data suggests that the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C pass rate would have been 14 per cent, still well below average but significantly better than the results obtained from the disrupted cohort.

6. Results in 1999 returned to the 1997 levels with 21 per cent of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades. The proportion who achieved five or more A*-G grades and the average total points score were well below national

averages and were also well below average in comparison to similar secondary modern schools. The percentage of pupils achieving one or more GCSE grades A*-G was above the national average. Since the last inspection, results have fluctuated and even though results have been consistently well below the national average a rising trend is evident over time and is reflected in the school's ambitious future targets for pupils' performance. The performance of boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 4 is not significantly different from the national picture in that girls generally outperform boys except in geography, mathematics, science and information technology where boys outperform girls.

7. GCSE results in almost all subjects in 1999 were well below national averages. Results in information technology were close to the national average. There has been an inconsistent pattern at GCSE between subjects since the last inspection. In English and mathematics a rising trend is evident. In science there has been a downward trend over recent years. In information technology there have been significant improvements given that the 1999 results were for the whole cohort compared with previous years of small groups. In geography there has been significant improvement in pupils' performance to where results, although well below the national average, are now above average for similar schools. In design and technology and physical education results have improved but in history and art they show a declining trend. In French an overall decline masks improvements for girls and sharp declines for boys.

8. These findings are reflected in the inspection evidence which indicates that the patterns in weaker performance at GCSE are nearly always linked to the less than satisfactory and inconsistent quality of teaching. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations in information technology and physical education. In English, geography, history, design and technology, and music, pupils' attainment is below national expectations. In mathematics, science, religious education, French and art it is well below expectations. In all subjects there is a minority of pupils who are attaining above expectations for their age as well as a minority whose attainment is very low.

15. *Sixth form attainment*

9. In the sixth form the small number of entries makes comparisons with other schools unreliable. However, results at A-level English and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) were sound. Results for those students who took GNVQ Intermediate examinations were below the national average. Evidence from the inspection indicates that students on both the Advanced and Intermediate courses are attaining in line with national expectations and sometimes above national standards.

16. *Pupils' basic skills*

10. Pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are below national standards. Whilst many pupils talk enthusiastically about their work, they are often unable to speak at length and cannot explain their ideas clearly. Some pupils do not use Standard English well. Pupils do not always listen well to the arguments of other pupils and on occasions a small number respond inappropriately. In reading, higher attaining pupils reach good standards. Some younger pupils, however, struggle to read longer words and understanding is limited to a basic, literal level. Pupils' writing is often not sustained, contains too little detail and uses a limited vocabulary. An above average number of pupils show weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and handwriting.

11. Numeracy skills are also below average but are better than pupils' overall mathematics attainments. Pupils have a below average but improving grasp and confidence of number and whilst their mental calculation skills are not well founded or used well across the curriculum, they too are improving.

12. When given the opportunity to use information technology pupils do so with confidence and to a degree of competence in line with national standards. They use these skills well in information technology lessons and in their work in English, design and technology, music, geography, history and French in both key stages and in GNVQ and A-level courses in the sixth form. Information technology skills are less well developed in mathematics, science and art, however.

19. *Target setting*

13. The school carries out a sound analysis of results and has set targets for improvement at Key Stage 4 as required. Current procedures for analysing results include processes to identify reasons for particular performance and lead to sound strategies to overcome deficiencies - for example, through curriculum changes such as the planned move to reduce the number of GCSE courses to a more manageable and appropriate number for pupils. The meetings between heads of departments and senior managers to review examination results help the school to identify sound broad targets for whole-school improvement. The school has set clear and ambitious targets for improvement in pupils' attainment over time and is currently on track to meet them.

20. *Pupils' progress*

14. From inspection evidence, pupils' progress is highly influenced by the quality of teaching. Where progress is good it is as a result of good teaching. Where progress is less than satisfactory, inconsistencies and weaknesses in teaching or pupils' poor attitudes are often the factors which hinder progress. When judging pupils' progress, the inspection has taken due note of the levels of attainment of pupils when they enter the school and their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and how they have progressed based on their prior attainment.

15. Progress for most pupils in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory in most subjects but with some variations. For example, in physical education and English and in French in Year 7 and 9 progress is consistently good. In science, mathematics, geography, religious education, and music pupils generally make satisfactory progress. In mathematics, science, history and music pupils in higher attaining sets often make better progress than pupils in other groups. In art progress for the majority is satisfactory. However, lower attainers are making unsatisfactory progress. In design and technology pupils in the higher sets in Year 7 and 8 make good progress and pupils in the lower sets make satisfactory progress. In Year 9, however, whilst many pupils make satisfactory progress, some pupils make unsatisfactory progress based on their prior attainment because of poor attitudes. In information technology, whilst most pupils make satisfactory and often good progress, higher attaining pupils do not make as much progress as they might because of the over-prescriptive nature of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work which does not always cater for higher attainers.

16. In Key Stage 4 progress for many pupils is more erratic. In English, geography, physical education, Year 10 French and GNVQ courses pupils make good progress. However, in religious education, and where teaching in French is weak pupils make unsatisfactory progress. In design and technology very good progress is made in graphics in Year 10 but some pupils do not make satisfactory progress in the food or resistant materials areas. Elsewhere pupils' progress is satisfactory. In the sixth form progress is often good.

17. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory and often good progress at both key stages in most subjects. Where pupils with special educational needs make the most rapid progress it is usually associated with a clear awareness by the teacher of the pupils' individual needs, good lesson planning and timely guidance during a task by the teacher. For example, in history carefully structured tasks, such as the use of mind maps, enabled pupils with special educational needs to make links between features of the historical period they were studying and the use of story and visual interpretations enhanced their understanding of Roman Britain. Pupils with special education needs make particularly good progress in information technology and physical education. Some pupils' progress in other subjects is hindered at times because targets in individual education plans are not subject specific enough and so some teachers are unable to closely enough direct their subject specific teaching to support the pupils' fullest progress in the subject.

School improvement action

18. The school has tackled well the issues for action to raise standards from the previous inspection report. For example, the policy and arrangements for the provision of work closely matched to pupils' needs across the curriculum are well embedded although some inconsistencies in classroom practice remain amongst individual teachers and as a result of the lack of subject specific focus in pupils individual education plans. The recommendation to introduce setting (i.e. putting pupils of broadly similar attainment in a subject into the same class for the teaching of that subject) has been carried through and has had a generally positive impact on progress and attainment in most groups and subjects although a consequence has been to concentrate pupils with behaviour problems into some groups, which sometimes slows progress.

25. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

19. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to school and their work in all subjects. However, a small minority of pupils have negative attitudes and do not take an interest in their work. Where attitudes are positive, pupils take a keen interest in their work and are able to sustain concentration for extended periods. The positive attitudes displayed by pupils are directly related to good quality teaching and appropriate tasks. For example, in geography, pupils were enthusiastic and showed high levels of concentration and sustained effort in response to very lively, engaging teaching. In French, pupils showed very good attitudes at times, and were particularly keen to do their work well. In both information technology and physical education, pupils responded enthusiastically to challenging work and were willing to persevere.

20. The negative attitudes displayed by the small minority of pupils across the school are usually from lower attaining pupils, generally boys, and are often, but not always, related to weaker teaching. For example, in history, concentration is poor when introductions to lessons are over-long; in music some lower attaining pupils find it difficult to concentrate on tasks which demand high levels of literacy. In religious education, concentration drifts when pupils are engaged in oral work, whilst in physical education, concentration slips when the work does not hold the pupils' attention. However, even where teaching is satisfactory or better a few pupils still show negative attitudes and require constant encouragement.

21. Pupils develop a sound capacity for personal study where opportunities are provided and teaching is good - for example, in GNVQ, French and music. Girls in Key Stage 4 work well independently in physical education and organise their own warm-ups, and in information technology pupils make very good use of the information technology room outside of lessons. However, pupils do not show an adequate capacity to work independently in science, mathematics, geography, history, and religious education nor in aspects of music and art. This weakness is directly linked to the lack of opportunities provided in these subjects.

22. The majority of pupils behave well in and around school. Behaviour in most lessons is good and is directly linked to good teaching. The behaviour of a small minority of pupils, however, again usually from amongst the lower attaining boys, is poor and sometimes confrontational. This poor behaviour has a negative impact on the progress these pupils make. Whilst the school has a clear procedure for dealing with instances of poor behaviour, this is not always followed consistently by every teacher. Most pupils behave well around the school at lunch and break times. Behaviour in the canteen is good and the pupils use the youth centre facility very well at lunchtimes, with only rare examples of poor behaviour seen. The incidence of fixed-term exclusions increased after the last inspection, but the headteacher and governors are being diligent in their response to serious misbehaviour, and the number of fixed-term exclusions has dropped over the past two years. Whilst most pupils are courteous to their teachers and friends, a small minority are disrespectful to their teachers and sometimes rude, ignoring instructions and arguing with the teachers. Most pupils, however, choose not to be influenced by others behaving badly. The school's system of rewards is well received by the pupils.

23. Pupils show respect for property. They treat the accommodation and furniture well, and look after and use materials and equipment with care. Pupils generally form positive relationships with each other. For example, two Kosovan refugee children were well integrated in a Year 8 science lesson. Relationships between teachers and pupils are mostly similarly respectful. For example, both pupils and teachers demonstrated a clear mutual respect in geography. Positive relationships were also a feature in information technology, physical education and music. However, in a French lesson, several pupils were openly hostile to the teacher and to each other. Pupils work collaboratively, when given the opportunity. For example, in GNVQ business and GNVQ health and social care pupils willingly collaborated over presentations. In English, Year 10 pupils worked well in groups, freely sharing thoughts about a poem by Ted Hughes. The majority of pupils work well with each other during science experiments and the small group of Key Stage 4 pupils in music worked well together. In physical education, pupils showed good co-operation in team games and played to the rules. Opportunities for pupils to collaborate were limited in history and geography, and Year 10 pupils found it difficult to work in groups in food and textiles lessons.

24. When given the opportunity, most pupils will take responsibility and show initiative. For example, in music, a Key Stage 4 pupil organised an ad hoc solo performance during a parents' evening and a Year 8 pupil

helps to collect and sort out handouts on a regular basis, without being asked. Pupils have produced murals for a local primary school and for a site within the city centre. They have also produced posters advertising environmental work undertaken in conjunction with the Rotary Club. The school prefect system is well supported and pupils on the school council have made decisions that have had a positive impact on the quality of school life. In French, history, geography, information technology, religious education, design and technology and art, however, there are too few opportunities provided for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility.

25. Most pupils show respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. Almost all pupils showed good respect for other people's feelings in religious education, and discussed sensitive issues with tact and diplomacy. They clearly respect and appreciate good teaching in French and geography and respond positively to the good example set by teachers in music. Pupils supported a Year 10 girl well in group work in science and three other pupils were quick to help a girl who had fallen on the stairs. In physical education, however, a small number of Year 11 pupils argued about the shortcomings of other players, and a substantial minority of pupils respond intolerantly to other people's points of view in English. Overall, however, pupils do not have sufficient awareness of their own local culture nor of wider world cultures. They do not show well-developed spiritual awareness nor are they adept at reflecting about issues and aspects of life.

32. **Attendance**

26. Attendance is satisfactory with rates in line with those achieved by similar schools nationally. There has been a slight improvement in overall rates since the last inspection. Owing to more rigorous systems for following up absence, rates of unauthorised absence have shown a marked improvement and are now similar to national figures. However, attendance remains below 90 per cent in Year 11 and sometimes in Years 9 and 10 owing to a small number of pupils who have a record of poor attendance. Rates are also affected by a considerable number of pupils who take holidays during term time, sometimes affecting examination coursework. School sessions begin promptly and pupils' movement between classes is mostly without delay.

33.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

33. **Teaching**

Main data

27. The overall quality of teaching in the school is good and is effective in meeting the needs of most pupils. Teachers are hard-working and committed to providing the best education for their pupils. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 89 per cent of lessons observed. Of that percentage, teaching was good in 40 per cent and very good in 16 per cent. The 10 per cent of lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory were split almost equally between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4; in only one lesson in the sixth form was teaching judged to be unsatisfactory. Teaching was of poor quality in one lesson in Key Stage 3 and one in Key Stage 4, however.

28. A larger proportion of good and very good teaching was observed in Years 7, 11 and in the sixth form than elsewhere with almost a third of teaching in Year 7 being very good. Overall a higher proportion of very good teaching was observed in Key Stage 3 than elsewhere. In 10 per cent of the lessons observed in Key Stage 3 teaching was less than satisfactory. Teaching in Year 8 showed the most variation from this general pattern with 15 per cent less than satisfactory. In 14 per cent of the lessons observed in Key Stage 4 teaching was less than satisfactory, with 17 per cent of teaching in Year 11 being less than satisfactory.

29. Examples of high quality teaching were seen in most subjects. In Key Stage 3 the most consistently high quality teaching was seen in French and physical education. High quality teaching was also often seen in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, and information technology. In Key Stage 4 high quality teaching was consistently seen in English and physical education. Good teaching was also consistently seen in mathematics, geography and information technology. In the sixth form high quality teaching was observed in business studies GNVQ courses.

30. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. However, in information technology whilst subject teachers' knowledge, skill, understanding and use of information technology across the curriculum are developing, most teachers' information technology skills and competences are still too underdeveloped for them to be able to help pupils to make fullest progress and move onto the higher levels of attainment. Most teachers plan their lessons well and use a wide range of teaching methods to manage, organise, question, enthuse, encourage, motivate and challenge pupils. Explanations are nearly always clear, and support is helpful without directing pupils too closely - for example, in an information technology lesson in Year 10 where pupils had to amend and sort a complex business letter to a customer. In a religious education lesson in Year 7 a good explanation on the topic of 'belonging' had a positive impact on pupils' learning.

37. *Strengths of teaching*

31. Most, but not all, teachers have high expectations of themselves and their pupils and in the majority of lessons pace is engaging and brisk. For example, in a science lesson on energy in Year 9 all pupils were challenged to reach high levels of attainment in handling apparatus safely and completing an investigation on heat loss and recording the outcomes appropriately. Most teachers maintain good discipline and good behaviour which results in the lessons moving forward well and the pupils making at least satisfactory progress.

Work is normally well matched to pupils' prior attainment. For example, in a Year 12 GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced lesson tasks were well designed to take individual pupils forward from their previous achievements. In a Year 8 lesson in music, high expectations resulted in pupils making good progress in applying their previous knowledge and understanding of music styles including spiritual and ragtime to help them with their own performances. In art and in design and technology, teachers gave clear explanations about the quality expected in presenting portfolios and high quality ceramics. In English teachers gave clear explanations about the quality expected in writing investigation reports and as a result pupils made good progress in this aspect of their work. In many lessons teachers encouraged pupils to use information technology in their work. This improved the quality of presentation of pupils' work significantly - for example, in the English topic in Year 9, communication in the next millennium, the history newsheet topic in Year 9, poetry work in French, surveys of life expectancies in geography in Year 9 and in a wide range of design and technology activities.

32. Teachers often used very good questioning skills to check pupils' understanding of a subject or to promote further enquiry. In geography, music, design and technology and information technology lessons teachers often pay high regard to pupils' answers respecting their thinking, their ideas, their thoughts and continuing to use probing questions to build up ideas for further enquiry. In information technology lessons in Year 10 and in the sixth form, good examples were seen of teachers giving guidance mid-task in both timely and appropriate ways, often encouraging pupils to take risks and question their own understanding of a particular problem.

33. In geography there were some good active learning approaches used. For example, in a Year 11 lesson pupils were actively encouraged to participate in the lesson developing their enquiry and thinking skills by exploring the comparisons between settlements in the 1960s and the 1990s. In a Year 11 Enterprise Skillpower lesson pupils were involved actively in a practical activity to gain an understanding of the production process, basic business structure and fixed and variable costs; this session was effectively managed. In English deliberate, carefully planned grouping strategies take pupils on from their last lesson supported by quick review, structured activities and complemented at the end of the lesson by scope for reflection on what had been learned. For example, in a Year 8 lesson pupils identified elements of the horror genre from video extracts and discussed them in detail. Homework is generally well used to extend pupils' classroom work and most teachers encourage pupils to record their homework in their homework planners.

34. Introductions to lessons are generally lively and purposeful, with clear learning objectives shared with pupils - for example, in a physical education lesson on rugby skills and in a business education lesson in Year 12. In these lessons pupils were motivated to learn and understand the ideas involved. Teachers often exhibited a high level of enthusiasm for the subject and this was infectious in stimulating the pupils' motivation to learn - for example in a geography lesson in Year 10, when discussing shopping patterns and in Year 11 when studying the Alaskan oil exploration. In the latter lesson the teacher's own personal experience enriched both resources and background details for the pupils.

35. Within many lessons teachers gave a clear sense of purpose and good oral guidance and they developed

positive rapport and relationships between themselves and their pupils. For example, in a Year 8 lesson in music and most information technology lessons in Key Stage 3 pupils value the praise given for good work; they worked harder and made good progress as a result. Work is well marked and contains useful comments which help pupils to know what they must do next to improve their work.

36. Most teachers make effective use of the resources available - for example, in developing pupils' research and investigation skills using information technology facilities, as seen in the research of historical fact in history in Year 7. The very good collaboration between many departments in the school - for example, information technology, physical education, design and technology and GNVQ - and the community education centre ensures that resources are used particularly effectively.

43. *Weaker features of teaching*

37. The least effective teaching in Key Stage 3 was in history and in personal and social education lessons taught by form tutors where teaching in a third of lessons was unsatisfactory. Elsewhere only isolated examples of ineffective teaching were seen in individual lessons in Key Stage 3 in mathematics, French, design and technology and in Key Stage 4 in English, mathematics, science, art, French and physical education. In the sixth form only in GNVQ leisure and tourism was ineffective teaching observed.

38. Where teaching was less than satisfactory or where, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, there were unsatisfactory features, it was characterised by low expectations and unclear lesson objectives - for example, in a history lesson in Year 8 on the character of Henry VIII and a French lesson in Year 11 on the revision of perfect tense. The lack of clarity and purpose to the lesson meant that many pupils were not sure of what to do and made only slow progress as a result. Some teachers do not follow the school's policy and procedures for behaviour management consistently. This weakness means that on some occasions relationships with a small number of pupils are strained with the effect that the class as a whole does not make as much progress as expected - for example, in a design and technology lesson (food) in Year 9 and a mathematics lesson in Year 8.

39. A few teachers do not match tasks closely enough to pupils' needs. For example, in a history lesson in Year 7 and a vocational information technology lesson in Year 10 some tasks were too easy for some pupils and too difficult for others. Some marking lacks helpful comments to guide pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work - for example, in design and technology. In the weaker lessons pace is slow because pupils often merely repeat previously mastered knowledge and skills rather than moving on to new experiences - for example, in some lower attaining sets in mathematics in Key Stage 3. In some lessons pupils are also not given enough opportunities to think for themselves. Unsatisfactory teaching is often marked by long periods of explanation or questioning where there are simply right or wrong answers rather than opportunities for expanding a variety of possibilities, and this taxes the concentration of pupils - for example, in some lessons in history.

46.

Special educational needs

40. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally good. Relationships are good and pupils are well known as individuals by their teachers. Behaviour is generally well managed through an effective system of in-class support. There were some particularly good examples of support teaching and work that was well matched to pupils' individual needs. For example, in a French lesson in Year 9, a pupil with specific learning difficulties was given good support in order to make progress. In a music lesson in Year 8 a large number of pupils with special educational needs made satisfactory progress owing to sensitive and structured teaching appropriate to the groups' prior attainment. In a science lesson in Year 10, the teacher made good reference to a pupil's individual education plan in order to set appropriate questions relating to the reactivity of metals. However, in the few lessons where there were some weaknesses in provision for special educational needs, teachers were not sufficiently familiar with the pupil's individual education plan and in-class support was not always used by the teacher to best effect. Furthermore targets in individual education plans for some pupils are too vague in terms of subject specific guidance to be useful to subject staff in their planning to meet pupils' needs in the subject. These shortcomings resulted in slower progress being made by these pupils - for example, in a design and technology (food) lesson in Year 9.

41.The provision in place for Kosovan refugee children is limited but the support given to these pupils is effective with every effort being made, in particular in Key Stage 3, to integrate them into the lesson. This integration was particularly effective in information technology and English lessons in Key Stage 3.

48. *School improvement aspect*

42.In response to the previous inspection report, the school has made significant progress in addressing the teaching skills in geography. It has made good progress in reviewing the arrangements for work matched to pupils' various abilities across the curriculum to extend the higher and lower attainers although some inconsistency remains. The implementation of the behaviour and discipline management policy is being put into practice in a thorough way by most teachers but the inconsistency of the application of the procedures by some teachers has a continuing negative impact on some teaching.

43.In order to improve the quality of teaching even further the school should now:

•.work to remove inconsistencies in:

- .teaching in all subjects but particularly in history in Key Stage 3 and in personal and social education taught by form tutors;
- . behaviour management;
- . expectations of what is required by pupils;
- . planning work for all pupils to ensure that it is appropriate to their needs;
- . the use of marking to guide teachers in their planning and to help pupils understand what it is they need to do to improve;
- . the subject detail in individual education plans and the development of more appropriate work for pupils with special educational needs within departments; and
- . using information technology within departments to help pupils with their work, in particular, research, investigation and presentation techniques.

The curriculum and assessment

1. The curriculum provision of the school is in most respects good. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is generally broad and balanced, relevant to pupils' needs and matches the school's aims and values well. It offers a good range of learning opportunities and experiences including, in addition to the subjects required by law, drama and ceramics for all pupils in Key Stage 3.

2. The requirements of the National Curriculum are largely met at Key Stage 3. However, in music the school does not meet the requirements of the most current revision of the National Curriculum as it still works to the previous Orders. In physical education although the curriculum meets statutory requirements, insufficient time is allocated to some aspects including dance and gymnastics. Although improving, the development of pupils' information technology capabilities is not yet fully covered in all subjects in both key stages.

3. Partly in response to the last inspection report, the school now groups pupils by prior attainment in all subjects in Key Stage 3. Such setting also takes place in English, mathematics, science, French and religious education in Key Stage 4. The school's setting policy is good and is operated flexibly by using half-termly reviews of pupils' progress to move them between sets if appropriate. Pupils, often but not exclusively boys, with poor attitudes to learning predominate in some sets and this sometimes affects the way in which these pupils interact and respond in lessons.

4. Curriculum provision in Key Stage 4 combines legal requirements with a degree of choice appropriate to pupils of this age. It ensures that all pupils study a suitable core of subjects leading to GCSE accreditation, supplemented by a choice of courses in two option blocks which are likely to motivate and challenge all pupils across the ability range. A wide range of good options is available in design and technology and in information technology which supports the application for Technology College status well. Alternative accreditation opportunities to GCSE are developing well – for example, through the provision of a basic skills course in the Key Stage 4 vocational programme. There has been a great improvement in the curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 since the last inspection. There is, however, no provision for pupils to study a second foreign language within the curriculum and the provision for religious education does not meet statutory requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.

5. The school has a small but growing and increasingly successful sixth form that offers a sound range of GNVQs in four vocational areas at Intermediate and Advanced levels. These courses are carefully selected to meet the needs of pupils who want to continue in full time further education within the school. In addition to the GNVQs four GCE Advanced levels are offered in English, mathematics, psychology and information technology together with GCSE resits in English and mathematics to support progression to higher education. The school's community education programme also enables sixth form pupils to gain access to additional qualifications and learning opportunities in, for example, Spanish and NVQs in information technology. The school does not provide religious education for all students and so does not meet the statutory requirement for religious education in the sixth form. There is also insufficient access for students to take part in formal physical education lessons.

6. Careers education is a planned component of the curriculum. Good guidance on options choices is given to pupils in Year 9, on post-16 opportunities in Year 11 and on further and higher education and employment opportunities in the sixth form. The careers programme makes effective use of the school's good links with the local careers company. Work experience placements in Year 10 are well organised and have strong links with the local education business partnership. These placements provide positive, accredited experiences of the world of work.

7. The school has a well-planned, relevant programme for pupils' personal, social and health education which incorporates clear policies for sex, health and drugs education. In Year 9 a small core of staff teach the programme well. However, the majority of provision is taught by form tutors and there is inconsistency in the quality of teaching in these lessons. In some cases the teaching is good but in too many lessons it is unsatisfactory, especially in Key Stage 3. Good use is made of external expertise to supplement the taught programme across the age range. Timetabling arrangements in the sixth form mean that pupils do not have

access to the full personal and social education programme.

8. Curriculum provision for pupils who have special educational needs is generally good. The school effectively integrates its own special educational needs support and that provided by the local education authority (LEA) into all curriculum areas to ensure these pupils have good access to the curriculum. Very good profiles of pupils have been drawn up and all pupils who are on Stage 2 or above on the register of special educational needs have individual education plans.

9. The school has a comprehensive, helpful assessment policy that guides practice across subjects effectively and marks a significant improvement in assessment procedures since the last inspection. Information on attainment and progress is held centrally and is used appropriately to guide a range of developments and procedures including review of setting and whole-school development planning. Assessment information is used particularly well to guide aspects of curriculum planning in English, mathematics and information technology but in other subjects, particularly history, such information is underused.

10. The quality and extent of the extra-curricular provision offered to pupils across a wide range of subjects, interests and activities are very good and this marks a considerable improvement since the last inspection. The physical education department is committed to the provision of high quality extra-curricular sporting activities in which over two-thirds of pupils, across the age range, participate during the course of the year. The school encourages participation in a good range of community and charity work and makes effective use of links with adult and youth education programmes through the community education link. Most departments offer at least one extra-curricular activity and the school's programme of residential visits makes a good contribution to pupils' social development.

11. Overall the curriculum makes a good contribution to the educational standards achieved by pupils. The school should now:

- ensure music at Key Stage 3 and religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form meet statutory requirements;
- improve the balance within physical education at Key Stage 3;
- ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to information technology within the subjects of the curriculum;
- review the absence of provision for pupils to study a second modern foreign language;
- ensure the setting process does not concentrate pupils with behaviour problems into the same set;
- review the provision for pupils in the sixth form to have equal and full access to physical education opportunities and the personal and social education programme; and
- develop the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning across all departments.

• **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

1. The school's provision for the moral and social development of its pupils is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is unsatisfactory. The school has made only limited progress since the last inspection in terms of its planning for the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but has recently produced a draft position statement which will help it develop its work in this area.

2. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The school does not comply with statutory requirements in terms of providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Assemblies provide a clear moral message and celebrate the achievements of pupils, but do not always contain an act of worship or provide opportunities for spiritual reflection or contemplation. Pupils are not always encouraged to take an active part in assemblies. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is poor across most subjects. In religious education, pupils are encouraged to reflect on the creation and other spiritual issues. In science pupils were given opportunities to reflect on environmental issues while on the Farne Islands trip. In other subjects, spiritual provision is either underdeveloped or not considered.

3.The school's provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. Teachers generally provide secure role models through their behaviour and pupils are provided with a clear sense of right and wrong through the school code of conduct. The school's personal and social education programme covers all important moral areas and provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of important and complex moral issues. For example, Year 10 pupils dealt with issues of juvenile alcohol dependency effectively, through the well-planned and sensitive treatment of the issue. In lower year groups, however, the quality of the personal and social education programme is diminished through a lack of expertise on the part of some teachers. Moral issues are covered across the English curriculum, and in physical education there is a strong emphasis on fair play. Coverage of moral issues in geography is erratic, however, and an inconsistent application of the school's rules and sanctions in some other subjects does not support pupils in establishing a clear framework of right and wrong.

4.The school's provision for pupils' social development is satisfactory overall. The school provides some good opportunities for pupils to work together and relate to one another, but there are also areas within the school where too few such opportunities are provided. In English, pupils work in groups in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. There are also good opportunities for pupils to develop social skills through drama. Very good opportunities are provided in music, with the school choir providing extended opportunities for social musical activity. In both art and science, pupils are encouraged to co-operate and share equipment in groupwork. The school's personal and social education programme provides good opportunities for pupils to work together, and physical education provides many good opportunities for pupils to develop the social skills of co-operation within a team context, including the provision of a very good and extensive extra-curricular programme, as well as team practices and inter-house matches. The school's extra-curricular programme is extensive – providing many opportunities for pupils to develop socially. However, in some subjects, opportunities for pupils to relate positively to others are underdeveloped - for example, in geography and religious education. Little evidence of any such opportunities was found in other subjects. The youth centre provides a very popular and useful social resource during lunchtimes and evenings and is highly valued by the pupils.

5.The school provides some good opportunities for pupils to participate in the community, but there are some areas which are underdeveloped. The school's work experience programme provides some excellent opportunities for pupils to experience aspects of life within the working community and is well supported by both pupils and employers. Project Trident and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme also provide good opportunities for the pupils to become involved in community action and projects. However, in some subject areas, opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and participate fully in the community are limited. For example, little evidence was seen in history, and there is little work done on what local voluntary groups do within the community in religious education. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and participate are limited in school assemblies. The prefect system and the school council provide good opportunities for pupils across the school to take responsibility for aspects of the workings of the school and to develop a sound understanding of citizenship.

6.The provision of opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of their own cultural tradition is unsatisfactory overall although such provision in English is good. For example, pupils are given an insight into their own literary heritage through the work of Shakespeare and Hardy. Visits out of school extend pupils' horizons and include theatre, story-telling and museum visits. Some visits take place within history, but local visits and fieldwork to develop pupils' understanding of their own cultural traditions are underdeveloped within the school. For example, in art, there is only limited use made of the local environment or of the work of local artists. There are no visits made and no visitors used to enrich the curriculum in religious education, despite the presence of Ripon Cathedral close by. In geography not all year groups use local fieldwork to develop awareness of local features. There was no evidence of any provision to develop cultural awareness in design and technology or information technology.

7.The provision of opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures is underdeveloped. Much of the planned provision is focused on European cultures and in particular, about French culture. The resources available in French lessons provide pupils with a clear perspective of French as a global language. The use of a French language assistant for three hours per week adds to this perspective as does the planned provision for a future school visit to France. The extent of provision to develop understanding of other world cultures is less secure, however. Texts from other cultures form part of the English curriculum, and there is a study unit on coloured people of America within the history curriculum. In

both music and art, materials from other cultures are used, but these are treated superficially and not explored fully. In religious education, pupils are taught about the festivals of other cultures and religions but do not experience them directly. There was no evidence of any provision in this area in mathematics, design and technology or information technology.

8. The school should now:

- improve provision through all subjects for the spiritual and cultural development of pupils by:
 - ensuring assemblies contain spiritual elements and meet statutory requirements for a daily act of worship;
 - developing and including the spiritual element within all subjects of the curriculum in a planned way;
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of their own and other cultures;
 - extending the range and purpose of local visits;
 - increasing the use of visitors to the school to enrich opportunities to appreciate at first hand local and wider cultures;
 - widening the opportunities to examine a greater range of world cultures; and
 - consistently applying the school's code of conduct and procedures for behaviour and discipline.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

1. The school provides good personal support for pupils and effective arrangements for providing educational guidance are in place. A member of the senior management team has been given overall responsibility for pastoral issues and liaises well with form tutors and with other members of the team to try to ensure that the individual needs of pupils are met.

2. Concern for the welfare of pupils begins before they join the school. The school liaises well with primary schools and provides a summer school for targeted pupils to prepare them for their first experience of secondary education. A trained counsellor is employed in school, providing very effective support for pupils with emotional problems.

3. Provision for the welfare and guidance of pupils is well supported by a programme of personal and social education which covers topics relevant and useful to pupils. In response to the last inspection report this has been widened to cover environmental and community issues. However, the teaching of this programme by form tutors is inconsistent and consequently pupils' experiences and the benefits derived from it vary considerably.

4. The school has very effective arrangements for child protection with appropriate training and useful guidance for all staff. There is good liaison with health care professionals and other support agencies. Procedures for the identification of pupils with special educational needs are thorough. Their progress is tracked well and support for their general needs is sound.

5. Effective measures are in place to promote the health and safety of pupils and these are generally carried through into classroom practice. However, there is insufficient rigour in the monitoring of the implementation of safety procedures in science laboratories.

6. Although form teachers and senior staff carefully monitor the attendance of individual pupils, there is some inconsistency in the completion of registers with the reasons for absence sometimes remaining unclear. The school has regular contact with educational social workers who work well with staff to follow up unexplained or persistent absence.

7. Useful strategies have been introduced to monitor the behaviour of pupils and these have had a positive effect on behaviour in and around the school. There is a clear code of conduct of which pupils are aware and the majority support. However, there is a degree of inconsistency in the application of these procedures which

limits fullest effectiveness in promoting good behaviour and discipline. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson the learning opportunities of the rest of the class were adversely affected as the teacher had to spend too much time on one boy trying to get him to conform and to work. The continual disruption caused by this one boy was not dealt with in line with school procedures - for example, sending for support from a senior manager. There is a clear policy for dealing with bullying and pupils report that bullying, when it occurs, is dealt with firmly and quickly.

8. Academic progress is monitored carefully through a system of termly grades of which parents are informed. As a result of this monitoring pupils who are identified as requiring help are set targets and achievement is celebrated. Although this system is in its early stages, the results of this monitoring are used well by pastoral and academic staff and are being instrumental in raising attainment. Senior staff also act as mentors to some Year 11 pupils to advise on the organisation of coursework and meeting deadlines and this system is proving successful in raising standards.

9. Overall the school provides a caring environment where pupils feel valued and are encouraged to fulfil their potential. The school should now:

- ensure that registers are marked consistently by all staff so that reasons for absence are clear;
- take steps to ensure that all teaching staff adhere to the school's policy on behaviour and discipline;
- ensure that the science department monitors the application of the health and safety policy rigorously.

Partnership with parents and the community

1. Parents are supportive of the school and clear communication is promoted by staff who are viewed as approachable and helpful. Parents are not only informed quickly if the school has concerns about a pupil but also when pupils have achieved well or made good efforts. Pupils' planners are checked regularly by tutors and signed by parents. Some are used as a helpful means of communication between home and school. Parents receive regular information on pupils' progress in terms of grade reports which they find informative. Consultation evenings are well attended and said by parents to be useful. Although annual written reports are very useful to parents with clear information on topics covered, strengths and weaknesses, they do not include targets for improvements and therefore do not meet statutory requirements fully. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed of their child's progress and are invited to be involved in annual reviews. Information sent to parents about the school is good and the school has addressed successfully the issue from the last inspection regarding the publication of unauthorised absence figures and comparative data on external examination results. The school has an active friends association which works hard to provide social and fund-raising events, most of which are well supported by staff and parents.

2. The school has made significant advances in its links with the community since the last inspection and its involvement in community education is a major strength of the school. Vocational and leisure courses are provided on site both during the day and in the evening. They provide a very useful resource for the community, involving almost 4000 participants. Older pupils at the school have access to these courses and this has had the effect of providing more opportunities and a broader curriculum for post-16 students. The sharing of resources, as in information technology, has had a positive effect on raising the aspirations of parents and consequently on the aspirations and attainment of pupils. Community education has also had the effect of raising the status of the school within the community to a position of strength. The school's good links with the local press provide another useful avenue for celebrating its achievements with the local community.

3. Community involvement is also apparent in some curriculum areas. The art department has been involved in producing a mural on a disused building in the city and the mathematics department has worked with the police on a traffic survey. In religious education, however, there is too little involvement with the local religious community. The school has developed a wide range of links with business in its work experience programme which have a positive impact on pupils' development. The school also works successfully with other support agencies, in the provision of the Powerhouse Project which is designed to help disaffected young people to develop key skills and raise their self-esteem. Some Year 11 pupils are also actively involved in an area based youth council.

4.Relationships are very good with primary schools and local colleges of further and higher education. During the inspection a good example of curricular liaison was seen where Year 6 pupils from a local school were taught in the design and technology department and a student from a nearby institute of higher education was heavily involved in producing a school performance for Christmas.

5.Overall, the school's close partnership with parents and with the local community through the community education programme together with its many and varied links with business and community groups have a very positive effect on the aspirations and attainment of pupils.

6.The school should now:

- .ensure that the annual written reports to parents meet requirements by including targets for improvement;
- .develop links with local religious communities.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

1. The school is well led and managed and there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection. Although there are aspects which require further work there is a clear capacity to enable these further improvements to be tackled successfully.

2. The school's ethos reflects a clear commitment to high achievement, an effective learning environment, good relationships and equality of opportunity for all. Its clear aims, values and policies are well reflected in its work. There is a shared sense of purpose amongst staff and governors to raise standards further and improve the quality of provision.

3. The governing body is developing its role appropriately. It is well led by an enthusiastic and committed Chair of Governors who involves herself fully in the work of the school and is keen for the school to advance its status in the community through raised standards and improved provision. The governing body is supportive and keen and is becoming involved actively in the work of the school. For example, each governor is linked to a subject area and receives regular briefings and updates about his or her subject area. However, the governing body has yet to become involved in evaluating the impact of changes and outcomes of their decisions or spending in terms of improvements to standards. Working relationships between staff and governors are good and are based on mutual trust and respect.

4. Governors take their legal responsibilities seriously and most statutory requirements are met except: in the implementation of National Curriculum music in Key Stage 3; in meeting the Agreed Syllabus for religious education at Key Stage 4; in providing religious education in the sixth form; for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils; and in the inclusion of targets for improvement in annual written reports of pupils' progress.

5. The headteacher provides assured, effective leadership. He has a clear vision for the future development of the school and has brought about significant improvements in the time since his appointment. For example, he has made significant inroads into reducing the incidence of poor behaviour through introducing appropriate whole-school procedures which, although not yet applied consistently by everyone, have been welcomed by staff and have brought about improved support for teachers and better behaviour from pupils. He has also made significant advances in reducing the incidence of weak teaching and management, dealing with the most serious examples first and now moving on to tackle the few remaining weak teachers and managers. He leads by example, providing a clear direction for improvement and works hard to achieve a consensus for the aims and vision for the school. He is particularly adept at employing an appropriate range of management strategies to fit the purpose, stage of the school's development, personnel and objective of changes and this has led to some notable successes - for example, in instilling a desire and focusing attitudes amongst staff for improving learning and raising standards. His initiative is complemented by the recently appointed deputy headteacher who provides good support in terms of developing sound systems and procedures for carrying through changes. The recently formed senior management group is beginning to work well together. It provides sound management on a day-to-day basis but has yet to develop its leading role fully. This group has been enhanced significantly by the inclusion of a new post of director of learning to focus developments on the work in classrooms, building on innovative approaches and sharing widely best practice in teaching and learning. Whilst in the early stages this focus is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of provision - for example, in English.

6. The management and leadership of special education needs provision are satisfactory. However, the co-ordinator does not have sufficient time to carry out the role as fully or effectively as necessary given the large number of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs. This lack of time leads to inconsistencies in practice - for example, monitoring of provision is limited and consequently disparities occur in the way teachers tackle and provide for pupils' need. The governor who overviews special educational needs provision has excellent knowledge and understanding of the issues and provides very good support in this area.

7. The quality of middle management in the school is mixed. Some heads of subject departments carry out their roles and responsibilities with growing effectiveness. The leadership and management in information technology, French, physical education, geography and pastoral aspects are good. In most other subjects, whilst administration is generally satisfactory, management, leadership and planning skills are underdeveloped. In these subjects whilst most of the subject leaders have clear potential and enthusiasm to be effective managers they often lack the skills and understanding of their roles which would enable them to be fully effective. In design and technology the division of the subject into two departments has a negative impact on development and consistency. In science, religious education and history management and leadership are unsatisfactory. The school has already begun to address these specific weaknesses - for example, through a clear and appropriate action plan in science. The school recognises the issues within middle management and the development of these roles is a key priority in the current school development plan, the creation and development of the senior management team having been the previous and necessary focus and precursor to this work.

8. The school development planning process is good. The annual whole-school plan is formed following a wide consultation and involves staff and governors fully. The plan includes all the important details to enable targets to be tackled effectively and success monitored in the future. As yet, however, the outcomes of changes and developments are insufficiently formally monitored and evaluated. Formal monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school overall is similarly underdeveloped and this has resulted in inconsistencies in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school policies and approaches - for example, in applying the school's code of conduct, completion of registers and provision for pupils' moral and social development.

9. The process of monitoring teaching and learning has been started effectively at senior management level with a clear target to include heads of subject in this process as their role is developed during the next phase of improvement of management systems and skills. The monitoring of classroom work by senior staff has resulted in relevant actions and targets being formulated and although this process is still young there are indications that positive outcomes have resulted from this approach - for example, in improving teachers' confidence in the use of information technology in a some subjects.

10. Most departmental development plans are allied closely to the priorities in the whole-school plan and therefore the focus and direction for change is consistent across the school. Some subject plans also contain clear and appropriate targets related to the specific needs of the subject and of the subject staff - for example, in English geography and information technology. Other subject plans lack this specific focus. These limitations in subject plans mirror the weaknesses in skills and understanding of subject managers.

11. Planning over the long term is very good. This strategic planning includes the timely bid for Technology College status. This bid includes clear, well-judged and very appropriate targets for improvement and fits closely with the school's needs for change and its vision for its future. The school's stage of development - for example, the significant improvements in information technology that have already occurred - make it ideally placed to take maximum advantage of Technology College status for the benefit of its pupils, were it to be successful in its bid.

12. The school has well-developed systems of administration and communications. There is a very competent team of administrative and clerical assistants. All administrative staff support each other well and use information technology effectively to aid them in their work. Members of this team provide a welcoming reception to the school and also form a very knowledgeable and helpful focal point for parents and visitors to the school. Finance and resources are very well administered.

13. In order to improve further the management of the school, governors, headteacher and staff should carry through the school development plan targets:

- to develop further formal monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school and of the impact of change on pupils' attainment and the quality of provision at all levels including governors and heads of subject; and
- to train senior and middle managers to develop their leadership and management skills fully including those needed for effective monitoring and evaluation, and development planning.

1. Governors must ensure that statutory requirements are met for:

- music at Key Stage 3;
- religious education at Key Stage 4;
- religious education post 16;
- a daily act of collective worship for all; and
- the contents of the annual written report to parents of pupils' progress.

· **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

1. The school benefits from a team of hard-working and committed staff. There is an appropriate number of well-qualified and experienced teachers for the size of the school. However, many teachers work outside their immediate subject area, though for the most part this has no adverse impact. However, whilst staff who teach the GNVQ courses make very good use of their specialist skills, the teaching of the leisure and tourism course is adversely affected by a lack of subject expertise. Furthermore this imbalance places limitations on the planning of future programmes for older pupils – for example, the change in GNVQ to travel and tourism. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported by an appropriate number of suitably qualified and experienced staff. The amount of support has increased since the last inspection and is now good and continuing to improve. In French the work of the foreign language assistant makes a positive contribution to the department. There have been many changes in staffing over recent years and the school has benefited significantly from these appointments. New staff have had an invigorating influence and their new ideas and approaches have had a positive impact on the school's development.

2. Technical support staff have a positive impact on the work of the science, design and technology and information technology departments. There is no technical support available for food technology, however, and this is having a detrimental effect on the work of the department. The school is well served by a team of efficient administrative and clerical staff who make a valuable contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school.

3. Arrangements for supporting newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school are generally effective. Teachers joining the school feel well supported by their colleagues and regular scheduled meetings take place with mentors. Induction arrangements currently emphasise the pastoral needs of staff and in this they are successful, but the planned induction programme places too little emphasis on the specific needs of staff who have been appointed to management roles. The staff appraisal programme is generally satisfactory and is awaiting review to take into account new national requirements.

4. Previous arrangements for the professional development of the staff were weak, but the new senior management team has very clear plans for improving opportunities for the development and training of staff. In some departments such as music and French staff training needs have not been properly identified and this has led to poor staff development with a consequent negative impact on standards. There are inconsistencies among departments in relation to taking up opportunities for professional development, and the most beneficial effects are noticeable in those departments where staff training needs have been linked closely to the priorities identified in the school's development plan. The impact of staff development and training has not been monitored effectively in the past, although the senior management team has begun purposeful work in this area.

5. The recent major refurbishment programme has significantly improved the environment and facilities in the main entrance, the administrative area and the adult education corridor. The accommodation for information technology has been substantially improved since the last inspection and the school's bid for Technology College status plans further necessary improvements. The accommodation for physical education is very good and has a positive impact on pupils' work. Overall, the school buildings and grounds are in a generally satisfactory condition and are very well maintained, but there are some significant areas of weakness. For example, specific areas within the youth centre are in urgent need of refurbishment and improvement. A number of toilets are broken and unhygienic, the general decorative state is poor and the narrow metal spiral staircase is a potentially dangerous feature, particularly when the centre is used on a daily basis by so many pupils. The accommodation for food technology is poor and has a negative impact on standards. The walls are unsealed and unpainted posing health and safety problems. The teaching room is too small to accommodate the numbers of pupils in classes, storage facilities are poor and noise causes problems. All of these weaknesses have a negative impact on teaching and learning. The art centre, which has recently been developed on the site of the old rural science block, has greatly improved the facilities for teaching and learning and is well used by the adult community.

6. The curriculum is generally under-resourced and shortages in many subject areas are having a negative impact on the quality of education provided. In science and religious education, for example, there are too few reading books available and the cassette replay equipment is substandard. In history there are too few text

books for the numbers of pupils and not all of the ones the subject uses are suitable for all ability ranges, and in geography the range of resources is narrow and imposes limits on pupils' learning. In music there are sufficient keyboards to meet the needs of whole classes, but the department lacks a suitable range of other instrumental resources. Information technology resources have improved substantially since the last inspection and the level of resource is now above average and continuing to improve. The library is well used by pupils but its contents are generally inadequate for most subjects and many books are old and outdated. Plans are in place for a major programme of improvement to the library in the near future. Learning resources outside the school are underused to supplement and enrich the curriculum. For example, in religious education pupils have had no access to resources or visits that would enhance their understanding of the beliefs of different religious communities and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to visit galleries, exhibitions and concerts or to experience live musical performances by professionals.

7. In order to ensure that the staffing, accommodation and learning resources contribute most effectively to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved, the school should:

- implement a programme of staff development that results from a careful analysis of the specific needs of departments and individual staff and put in place a system for monitoring its impact on standards;
- improve the resources available in subjects for teaching and learning;
- seek to improve the subject specialist balance or expertise in all areas but particularly for the travel and tourism course; and
- continue to pursue plans for improved accommodation in areas where provision is unsatisfactory.

• **The efficiency of the school**

1. Educational developments are supported effectively through good financial planning. Clear long-term plans and detailed annual development plans provide an effective mechanism within which the school deploys its budget. This sensible approach ensures that spending is linked carefully to the school's priorities for improvement and the budget is well deployed to stimulate and support improvements. The headteacher, governors' finance committee and the community education finance sub-committee keep a careful track of the budget decision-making process. Priorities are costed carefully and spending is monitored to ensure that decisions are carried through. The evaluation of the impact of financial decisions in terms of educational outcomes is currently underdeveloped, however.

2. The deployment of staff is generally good, both teaching and non-teaching. Whilst there is a high proportion of non-specialist teaching in some subjects such as geography teaching in Key Stage 3, staff are deployed to best effect in terms of their experience and expertise and there is no negative impact overall. The sympathetic timetabling of teachers across groups of subjects for the lowest attainers in Key Stage 3 has a positive impact on progress for these pupils. The joint teaching of both Intermediate and Advanced level GNVQ courses which contain both Year 12 and Year 13 students, whilst efficient, is not effective.

3. Accommodation is used efficiently in most subjects. The remodelled entrance to the school provides an attractive area where display is used to good effect to celebrate pupils' achievements. The use of specialist teaching rooms is effective within the limitations of provision. The library and adjoining information technology suite are generally very well used as are the sports facilities. However, there are exceptions. For example, teaching large numbers of pupils in open technology areas creates some problems of noise which limits learning and occasionally the information technology suites are unavailable when some subjects need access – for example, French. Office accommodation is well managed and well used.

4. The process of allocating funding for learning resources for subjects is sound though not all staff are fully aware of the basis upon which these allocations are made. The identification of needs by subject managers, however, is not always well judged. The use of the learning resources themselves is good by both teachers and pupils.

5. The control of finance in the school is very good. The computerised financial management system allows the school to profile expenditure and to provide regular updates to all budget holders. This system provides valued

support to teachers in reducing their administrative workload. Spending is regularly monitored and reviewed by senior managers and governors, and adjustments are made to make maximum use of the finance available. In this way the match between spending and any priorities awaiting finance is kept under close scrutiny. Clear reasons and plans exist for the most recent budget surplus, slightly in excess of five per cent. The school has responded effectively to the minor items mentioned in the most recent auditor's report.

6.The school makes good use of additional sources of funding to pursue its aims and its wider role in providing community education. Wherever possible economies are made to make sensible use of joint sources of funding. Funding for staff development is used appropriately if not always effectively. Unusually, the school receives no additional funding for special educational needs from the LEA but instead is allocated staff to support pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need. The LEA's deployment of these staff on different days across the week limits joint planning and liaison between the LEA staff and school support staff. The school uses its own budget extensively to supplement external provision and these arrangements have a positive impact on the progress of pupils with special educational needs.

7.The school gives satisfactory value for money in relation to its income and expenditure per pupil and the standards achieved.

8.The school should now:

- develop strategies for evaluating the impact of spending decisions on educational standards;
- improve the effectiveness of provision for GNVQ courses, eliminating both the teaching of two years and two courses in the same class.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

1. In the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999 the number of pupils reaching Level 5 was below the national average but similar to the standards achieved in the majority of secondary modern schools. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 was well below the national average and low compared to the majority of similar schools. Results in these tests showed improvement in the period from 1996-1998. Although the trend since the last inspection is rising, results for 1999 were slightly lower than the previous two years for Level 5 and above but were an improvement for Level 6 and above.

2. GCSE results in English and English literature have shown a rising trend since 1996. Results in 1999 for the higher grades A*-C were well below the national average and low when compared to similar schools. Results in 1999 were higher than those in 1998.

3. There were too few candidates to make meaningful comparisons of the school's results in A-level English language to national figures. In 1999 all candidates passed the examination though none achieved the higher grades.

4. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 is below average but in line with that expected of pupils from similar schools. There is evidence that standards in the present Year 11 are higher than those achieved by previous year groups; therefore standards by the end of Key Stage 4 are judged to be below average rather than well below average. Standards for post-16 students are below average but in line with their prior attainment.

5. Higher attaining pupils communicate effectively in speech. For example, some Year 11 pupils taking part in group presentations spoke fluently and persuasively about a new product they had developed and were able to express their opinions clearly when evaluating this work. Most pupils, however, show a range of weaknesses in speaking and listening. Listening is usually satisfactory but when responding or presenting their own ideas, pupils are often unable to speak at sufficient length and do not explain and exemplify their points of view. Some pupils do not use language which is appropriate for the context and have problems using Standard English.

6. In reading, higher attaining pupils reach good standards. For example, Year 10 pupils were able to investigate for themselves the meaning of Ted Hughes' poem 'Hawk Roosting' and achieve a reasonable level of understanding. Some younger pupils, however, struggle to read longer words and understanding is limited to a basic, literal level. Pupils respond well to literary texts at the level of plot and character but struggle to respond to style and find it difficult to develop and express a personal response as this aspect is not focused on sufficiently in the teaching.

7. In writing, a strength is the pupils' ability to enhance the quality of their writing through the use of information technology. Some tourist information brochures produced by Year 11 pupils were examples of work at the highest standard. The weaknesses are that writing is often not sustained, contains too little detail and uses a limited vocabulary. An above average number of pupils show weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and handwriting.

8. Evidence from the analysis of tests suggests that pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. In lessons most pupils were observed to be making good use of opportunities to develop skills and made good gains in knowledge and understanding. In Key Stage 4 evidence from the analysis of tests and examinations suggests that many pupils have made slower progress than their results in Key Stage 3 would suggest they should. However, most pupils presently in Key Stage 4 are making good progress as a result of improvements in

teaching. Progress is unsatisfactory for a small minority of pupils in both key stages because of poor behaviour. Overall, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

9. Most pupils respond well to their lessons. Students in the sixth form show very good attitudes to work and are developing their capacity for personal study. In Key Stages 3 and 4 most pupils listen well and concentrate on their work. They are polite, show proper respect for their teachers and work together co-operatively when required to do so. A minority of pupils show negative attitudes and behave in an unsatisfactory way. These pupils can be argumentative and aggressive. In some lessons this makes the teacher's task very difficult and prevents the teaching from receiving the response it deserves.

10. The quality of teaching is good at all stages. In Key Stage 3 two-thirds of lessons seen were judged to be good or very good and in Key Stage 4 three-quarters were good or very good. One lesson in Key Stage 4 was judged to be unsatisfactory. Strengths in teaching are the effective planning of lessons to provide a programme of work that is appropriate and interesting to the pupils; good classroom management allowing for a wide range of effective learning experiences such as drama and group discussion; and good quality marking of written work. Good teaching was always characterised by a positive approach to pupils' work and behaviour in which pupils were given both praise and correction clearly and consistently. Where there were weaknesses in teaching it was because of difficulties with class control wasted lesson time and, in one case, prevented effective whole-class teaching. Occasionally work was not well matched to all the pupils in the group or there was insufficient focus in the teaching because of lack of clarity in the planning about what the pupils were supposed to be learning.

11. Since the last inspection, the English department has shown good improvement in the use of drama and information technology, and satisfactory improvement in its assessment procedures. The department, under enthusiastic new leadership shows a clear commitment to raising standards.

12. The school should:

- implement its planned strategies for improvement, monitoring their impact closely;
 - ensure that lesson plans include a clear statement of the expected learning outcomes for pupils so that teaching is sufficiently focused;
 - put a greater emphasis on the development in pupils' personal response when teaching literary texts.

• **Mathematics**

1. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below the national average for the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above but close to the average in other secondary modern schools. The proportion achieving Level 6 and above was below the national average but again in line with those found in similar schools. Results from 1996 to 1998 showed a rising trend. In 1999, the results showed a slight decline on the 1998 figures for Level 5 and above but were a significant improvement for the proportion achieving Level 6 and above.

2. Results in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 were well below national averages and low compared with results from similar schools for the higher grades A*-C. Results from 1996 to 1998 improved at the same rate as national averages. The 1999 results were an improvement on those for 1998. At each key stage, girls perform better than boys, similar to the national picture. The very small number of candidates in public examinations post 16 makes analysis unreliable.

3. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 is well below national averages but is in line with attainment at similar schools, which is similar to the situation at the time of the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils have developed their confidence with numbers and can use patterns to make predictions of mathematical events. They use simple algebra, know properties of plane shapes and carry out calculations of perimeters and areas of composite shapes. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is also well below national averages but in line with attainment in similar schools. This is similar to the situation at the time of the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' knowledge and understanding has increased so that they can use statistical processes to make use of collected data. Most pupils are able to solve

equations, while some use trigonometrical ratios to find solutions to practical problems. At each key stage there are no significant variations in attainment between different aspects of the subject, although as a result of extra emphasis being placed on numeracy skills, this aspect of mathematics is rather stronger than others.

4. Throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory overall. In both key stages pupils improve skills, increase knowledge and develop understanding in a steady way, building systematically on previous experiences. Higher attaining pupils often make better progress than others because work is often closely fitted to their needs and teachers have high expectations of the pupils. A small minority of pupils in most classes, however, cause problems which in turn slows progress for the rest of the class even where teaching is good. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Progress post 16 is satisfactory.

5. At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils listen attentively, show an interest in their work and sustain concentration for extended periods of time. Pupils work co-operatively when required. Relationships between pupils and other pupils, and between pupils and teachers are sound and this has a positive impact upon the quality of learning in the classroom. The response of a minority of pupils is, however, unsatisfactory. Such pupils do not listen carefully; they talk out of turn and generally disrupt the flow of lessons which disturbs the work of others. Post 16, students are well motivated and have a positive attitude to their work

6. Overall mathematics is generally well taught throughout the school and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. At Key Stage 3 teaching in a quarter of lessons observed was very good, in almost two-fifths it was good and in a quarter it was satisfactory. Teaching in two lessons was unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 all of the teaching observed was good except for one lesson where it was unsatisfactory. All of the teaching observed post 16 was good.

7. Where teaching is good or very good the work is carefully planned with clear learning objectives for the lesson. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on linear sequences the objectives were shared with the class at the outset. Explanations are clear, using contributions from the class to check understanding and maintain motivation. A good example was seen in a practical lesson on measurement with a Year 7 low attaining group. Teachers build up pupils' confidence using praise and encouragement and this was particularly noticeable in a Year 11 lesson on trigonometry. Exchanges between teachers and individuals during work sessions are of good quality with the teacher using the opportunity to check progress and enhance learning. Good examples of this were seen in most of the observed lessons. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the behaviour of some pupils interferes with the learning process. In such lessons the presentation of the learning material is not sufficiently interesting and the teacher does not use behaviour management techniques effectively. Overall, during the inspection week only a limited range of teaching styles was observed. The marking of pupils' work varies from very good to barely adequate. Where marking is good, work is marked regularly and includes comments to motivate and help the learning process. In many books, however, there is a high proportion of self-marked work with little visible marking by the teacher for considerable periods of time.

8. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The department has an experienced, committed and hard-working team of teachers who work well together to manage the work of the department. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection and are effective. The department is beginning to make use of the data this relatively new system is producing. The quality of supporting documentation developed by the department working together is very good. Monitoring of the work of the department is in an early stage of development. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 provides good coverage of all aspects of the National Curriculum. The new book resources which are being phased in have significantly helped to ensure that the work presented more closely matches individual attainment levels and this in an improvement since the last inspection.

9. In order to make further improvements the school should:

- ensure that there is greater variety in teaching styles;
- help staff to share techniques for managing pupils' behaviour;
 - ensure that the marking of pupils' classwork and homework is brought up to the standard of current best practice within the school;
- develop and enhance processes for monitoring the work of the department;
 - build on the recently introduced assessment and recording system to enable the data to be used even more effectively in planning pupils' work.

Science

1. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were well below the national average for the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above and below average for the proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 and above. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above was similar to that found in other secondary modern schools and for Level 6 and above it was better than the average in these similar schools. Whilst over recent years the trend has been broadly static in 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in tests was lower than that for 1998 whilst the proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 and above increased slightly compared with 1998. Boys performed better than the girls against the national trend.

2. GCSE science results in 1999 did not reflect the trend in the school as a whole. The 1999 results are below those of 1998. GCSE results for the higher grades A*-C in double award science have declined over the past four years and are well below the national average. When compared with similar schools, performance was close to the top 25 per cent in 1996, the bottom 25 per cent in 1997 and declined further in 1998 and 1999. Over the past four years boys have performed better than girls although nationally boys and girls perform similarly. The department carries out little analysis of results at either key stage but is aware that in 1999 the performance of pupils in biological aspects of science was weaker than that in chemistry and physics.

3. On the evidence of the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment overall towards the end of both key stages is well below the national expectation. Some pupils are however, attaining highly at both key stages. At both key stages pupils' attainment in experimental and investigative science is slightly below their attainment in the other three attainment targets. Towards the end of Key Stage 3 many pupils are aware of the main functions of the heart and aspects of the digestive system, and are able to suggest how mixtures might be separated. More highly attaining pupils recognise the transfer of energy by, for example, conduction, show an understanding of the nature of eclipses and can identify similarities between chemical reactions. Towards the end of Key stage 4 many pupils can, with help, produce simple word equations and distinguish between reflection and refraction. More highly attaining pupils have an appropriate grasp of inheritance and the role of DNA, and can work out nuclear makeup and electronic structures when given atomic and mass numbers. Many pupils at both key stages have satisfactorily organised and presented notes and more highly attaining pupils handle number and graph work satisfactorily. Although information technology was not seen being used in lessons pupils at Key Stage 4 use information technology well in producing their GCSE coursework. Most pupils carry out experimental and investigative work with appropriate care but not always with sufficient attention to health and safety. At Key Stage 4 some well-produced investigations were seen, for example on Hooke's Law, reaction rates and enzymes. In many the analysis and evaluation aspects were less well developed than the planning and observing aspects.

4. Progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, based on analysis of attainment in tests. Using the results from Key Stage 3 tests against GCSE results, progress in Key Stage 4 has been slower than would be expected. On the evidence of work seen during the inspection most pupils are making satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and some are making good progress. Where pupils are making good progress this is linked to good or very good teaching. For example, a lower attaining Year 8 group made good progress in their use and understanding of separation techniques aided by good lesson organisation, appropriately high expectations, a calm atmosphere, skilful questioning and the good use of specific praise. At Key Stage 4 most pupils make satisfactory progress. Where progress is unsatisfactory it is linked to weaknesses in teaching such as a lack of clearly defined routines or inappropriate expectations. For example, in a Year 11 lesson a task on linking the chains in DNA was allowed to take almost an entire lesson whereas it could have been accomplished in about a third of this time. In most lessons at both key stages pupils' knowledge and understanding of their work were better at the end of lessons than at the beginning. However for many pupils recall of information over time was less secure. Generally pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them. These targets are mainly generic and staff keep a careful check on individual education plans. Where in-class support is available pupils make good progress towards their targets helped by joint planning between the teachers and learning support assistants.

5. Pupils' attitudes to learning in almost all lessons seen were at least satisfactory; at Key Stage 3 they were good or very good in nearly half of lessons and good in a fifth of lessons at Key Stage 4. Most pupils show interest in their work and the majority behave well. Occasionally disruption occurs owing to the over-

enthusiasm and immaturity of a few pupils. Despite this most pupils sustain their concentration on work appropriately. Most are courteous, trustworthy and generally respond well to their teachers and one another. Most show a satisfactory respect for equipment which they collect and return appropriately. The majority of pupils work well together during experimental work. At Key Stage 4 many enhance the presentation of their investigative work by good use of information technology. Most pupils show respect for one another's feelings, well demonstrated in a Year 10 lesson where one pupil who was getting upset was comforted by two others.

6. Overall teaching is satisfactory. In Key Stage 3 all teaching was at least satisfactory with about an eighth being good and about a further quarter being very good. In Key Stage 4 three-fifths of the teaching was satisfactory with a further fifth being good. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of their subject and most sustain a good level of interest and enthusiasm. Expectations of pupils are generally appropriate but not always sufficiently high. A few teachers do not apply procedures to tackle poor behaviour consistently and as a result a few pupils cause undue disruption in some lessons. Planning is soundly based on the schemes of work and in some cases is very good with clear targets for pupils and alterations to detail based on previous experience. Methods and lesson structures are usually appropriate although there is a tendency to stick with an approach even when it is not working well. Time and resources are generally well used and the provision of a live python and gecko in a Year 8 lesson on predators had a positive effect on pupil motivation. Similarly the use of a "cold pack" in a Year 10 lesson provided a context to which the pupils could relate in their study of exothermic and endothermic reactions.

7. The best lessons were calm and ordered, the purposes of the lesson were shared with pupils, expectations were different for different groups within the class, there was a genuine interest in pupils' attainment and the progress in the lesson was reviewed. For example, in a Year 8 lesson separation techniques were clearly explained while giving pupils the chance to show what they knew. Skilful questioning then advanced pupils' thinking about why the separation occurs. Experimental work was set within clear time targets and as well as a summary at the end of the lesson pupils were asked if and how they could improve next time. Although teaching in most lessons was at least satisfactory, in one lesson in Key Stage 4 it was unsatisfactory and in a number of lessons across the school it included unsatisfactory features. These included a noise level too high for effective working, a lack of clear working routines, insufficient attention to health and safety matters and expectations that were pitched too low - for example, allowing too long for routine or mundane tasks. Pupils' work is regularly marked though the quality of marking varies. Some of the better marking sets targets for pupils' learning and indicates how they might improve both in terms of knowledge and understanding as well as in investigative work. A few examples of incorrect work accepted as correct were seen; examples included "heat molecules", a model drawing of a solid with gaps between the particles, ray diagrams with curved lines and freehand drawing of apparatus. This inconsistency does not promote high expectations and standards. End of Key Stage 3 reports do not clearly identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for development.

8. The curriculum broadly meets statutory requirements at both key stages and most pupils follow a double award course at Key Stage 4. The department recognises the need to develop the use of information technology, as noted in the last inspection report, within the curriculum at both key stages as well as further developing investigative work, particularly at Key Stage 3. The department also recognises the need to continue to develop the schemes of work, particularly some of the short-term planning. The department has responded to the previous report by providing work that is better matched to higher and lower attaining pupils - for example, use of the special educational needs support materials at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 the department does not ensure that the links across the different areas of science are as strong as they should be nor are they exploited in lessons to help pupils make connections and hence raise attainment. Primary science liaison over the past two years has been met by a positive response from pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities including visits to the Farne Islands, Eureka and the Salters Chemistry Festival as well as Spotlight Scientist of the Year. Staff also provide revision clubs and gold, silver and bronze awards for science have been introduced at Key Stage 3.

9. The work of the technician has a positive effect on the quality of education and standards achieved by pupils. Overall the laboratories have clear shortcomings and staff have worked hard with pupils to provide some attractive displays which enhance the learning environment. Displays on ideal imagined predators, safety and investigations for example are well presented and some invite comments from the observer. Resources for learning are barely adequate and although there are good books at Key Stage 3, pupils at Key Stage 4 lack texts that they can take home for study. Particular shortages noted include power packs and information technology

equipment for use in lessons. Library provision is limited; it contains a reasonable number of science books but most are old and outdated.

10. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory although the appointment of a Key Stage 3 co-ordinator has been a positive step. The school and the department are aware of the shortcomings in this matter and have just drawn up an action plan to overcome the weaknesses. Staff are committed and hard working and show a genuine interest in their pupils. They give of their time to help pupils with revision and coursework. The departmental documentation is helpful but contains no specific references to spiritual development or reflection, a commitment to high standards, teaching and learning styles or any detailed analysis of performance. The department development plan does not clearly show how action is linked to achieving higher standards or continuing professional development, although staff share a determination to want to raise standards within the science department. Monitoring and support for teaching is at an early stage of development and procedures are in place for more closely tracking progress in Key Stage 3. The minutes of departmental meetings indicate that these are largely administrative.

11. In order to raise standards the school should:

- improve the leadership and management of the department by:
 - linking the departmental development plan more clearly to raising standards linked to in-service needs and budget;
 - developing monitoring procedures to review pupils' attainment and progress;
 - using departmental meetings in part for professional development;
 - analysing test and examination results to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for development;
- continue to develop schemes of work including short-term planning;
- develop investigative work further especially at Key Stage 3;
- extend the range of teaching and learning styles, including questioning; and
- improve the use of information technology in science lessons;

1. The school also needs to ensure that the health and safety policy is rigorously applied and regularly monitored.

146. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

146. **Art**

2. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below the national average. At Key Stage 4 GCSE results in 1999 were well below the national average and very low in comparison with results achieved by similar schools, but showed a distinct improvement in comparison with the results for 1998. Since the last inspection GCSE results have shown a declining trend, however.

3. Both in lessons seen and through examination of pupils' work, attainment at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 is well below national expectations. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' drawing is well below expectations, being characteristically flat, with insufficient use of tone to describe form. Painting skills are also well below expectations, with pupils tending to rely on pure colour or simple mixtures. Higher attaining pupils do produce some neat and accurate painted work, however. Printing work is generally in line with expectations. Large, irregular shaped block prints and repeat prints based on two-colour overlays are well executed and effective. Three-dimensional work shows some good technical control and sensitive use of clay - for example, in the work of Year 8 pupils. Sketchbook work is unsatisfactory, with little evidence of the pupils using sketchbooks to undertake independent research and development work. Whilst pupils do learn about the work of some artists, they do not make constructive use of this in the development of their own ideas.

4. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' drawing is again rather flat, but higher attaining pupils do make effective use of a full range of tones in order to convey three-dimensional form. The overall lack of objective drawing

skills has an adverse impact on the quality of pupils' imaginative compositions. Three-dimensional work is close to expectations and that produced by higher attaining pupils is above expectations. In this work, pupils combine materials imaginatively and to good effect in abstract work. In Year 11 mock GCSE pieces, some pupils make effective use of other artists' work, but otherwise this area is underdeveloped across the key stage. Sketchbook work is underdeveloped both as objective drawing in its own right and as source material for further developmental work.

5. Most pupils make satisfactory progress across both key stages. Within Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils generally make better progress than those of lower attainment in terms of developing technical skills. The progress of small groups of lower attaining pupils, usually boys, is often unsatisfactory. This slow progress is directly related to the behaviour of these pupils. Across Key Stage 4, progress is again mostly satisfactory, with some higher attaining pupils gaining in confidence in using their own ideas in their work. Whilst progress in terms of both consolidating and developing technical skills is satisfactory, progress in terms of developing and using knowledge and understanding of other artists' work is unsatisfactory. Insufficient use is made of GCSE assessment objectives to make sure pupils know how they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work.

6. Pupils take an interest in their work and are usually enthusiastic about the subject. Many pupils find it hard to sustain concentration, but the majority manage to apply themselves to the task in hand. A minority of higher attaining pupils develop a capacity to work independently but this is underdeveloped in the majority of pupils. Most pupils behave well, but a small minority, usually, but not exclusively, boys with learning and behaviour difficulties, are poorly behaved and do not listen to the teacher or follow instructions. This poor behaviour affects both their own and others' progress at times. Pupils respect the materials and equipment in the art rooms and are efficient in setting up and clearing up after lessons.

7. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in nearly all lessons, with one very good lesson seen in Key Stage 3 and one unsatisfactory lesson observed in Key Stage 4. In the best lessons, the teacher has very good subject knowledge and conveys this to the pupils with much enthusiasm. Lesson planning is thorough and good clear targets are set for, and shared with, the pupils. Good use is made of questioning to lead pupils and develop responses. For example, in a Year 8 ceramics lesson, the teacher checked the pupils' knowledge through careful questioning, which then led to an open discussion about advanced ceramics techniques. During this, the teacher was constantly reinforcing learning, and using questions to ascertain the level of the next input. Where teaching is weaker, standards of discipline are variable. For example, Year 11 pupils were not challenged effectively over their lack of effort and attention to the task, whilst the disciplinary approach to pupils in lower years was at times too blunt. There is also too much reliance on one-to-one teaching at times, when a use of group or whole-class teaching would be more efficient and effective.

8. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a balanced programme for the acquisition of technical skills. Pupils at both key stages, however, are given insufficient opportunities for independent study in order to initiate and develop personal work. Pupils are given some opportunities to make use of the work of other artists but too few chances to explore the social and historical contexts behind such work, and to use it in developing their own personal responses. There are not enough opportunities provided at both key stages for the use of the sketchbook as a research and development tool. There are also limited openings for pupils to use information technology in their artwork, with facilities in the department still being limited.

9. The day-to-day management of the subject is satisfactory and good plans exist for the development of the subject, in line with whole-school priorities. Such plans are not clearly enough linked to targets for pupils' art attainment, however. The accommodation provided for the subject is good overall and resources are generally satisfactory, with the exception of information technology resources and materials to support the study of other artists' work.

10. The subject has made some improvements since the last inspection but in order to improve further the school should now:

- provide structured opportunities for independent study in order to initiate and develop personal work at both key stages – using the sketchbook as a major research and development tool;

- provide carefully planned opportunities for pupils to use information technology facilities in the production of their artwork; and
- make fuller use of GCSE assessment objectives, in order to assure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

155.

Design and Technology

155.

11. Attainment in design and technology is below the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 GCSE results in 1999 for the higher grades A*-C were well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. However, in 1997 and 1998, many pupils achieved higher grades in design and technology than they did in their other subjects. In 1999 results for the higher grades were better than in 1998. GCSE results show an improvement since the last inspection.

12. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils towards the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 is below national expectations in both designing and making products. A small minority of higher attaining pupils achieve standards in line with expectations in making products in resistant materials. The presentation of pupils' design work at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory and their ability to research and evaluate is poor. There is also insufficient use of information technology to support their work. Girls are attaining better standards than boys are at both key stages.

13. At Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils are making good progress in Years 7 and 8. Other pupils are making satisfactory progress. In Year 9 many pupils are making satisfactory progress whereas the progress of others is too slow, particularly in food and textiles lessons. Slow progress is often caused by the poor attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of pupils in large groups. Many pupils made good progress in Year 7 designing and making a fuse tester and in Year 8 designing and making a wind turbine; they were able to explain their designs, use the knowledge they had acquired from previous lessons and apply the range of skills they had learned to their work. At Key Stage 4, Year 10 pupils are making very good progress in graphics but some pupils following examination courses in food and resistant materials are making slower progress. Slower progress is often related to poor attitudes and behaviour. Pupils following the graphics course are making good progress in their perspective drawing skills and are keen to develop their work further at home. Pupils making slower progress pay little attention to design work, in particular how to research and investigate, and do not work hard enough to make sufficient progress. In Year 11 most pupils are making satisfactory progress but a small minority are making slow progress. Poor progress is again often linked to poor attitudes. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress.

14. At Key Stage 3 attitudes of most pupils are satisfactory. Pupils in Year 7 and the higher attaining pupils in Year 8 have good attitudes to work; they are highly motivated and enthusiastic. For example, pupils in Year 7 were very keen to talk about the fuse tester they were manufacturing, were willing to answer questions and persevered with problems. In food technology pupils worked well together identifying the names of the equipment they were going to use and the safety points when using them, and pupils in Year 8 worked well in groups manufacturing their wind turbine models. However, there is a small minority of pupils in Year 9 who have poor attitudes to their work and demonstrate this by their poor behaviour. These pupils find it difficult to concentrate for any length of time, they often refuse to co-operate and have poor attitudes towards other pupils and the teachers. This poor behaviour was significant in food and textiles lessons where there were over fifty children in an open plan environment. At Key Stage 4 pupils' attitudes are generally satisfactory with pupils showing particularly good attitudes to work in Year 10 graphics lessons. However, there is a small minority of pupils in Year 10 resistant materials and food technology courses and in Year 11 who have poor behaviour and attitudes to their work and this is adversely affecting their progress and sometimes the progress of others in the class. These pupils show little respect for others, they find it difficult to concentrate and are generally uninterested in their work. They were very dependent on the teacher for support and found it difficult to work by themselves.

15. Teaching at Key Stage 3 in over a third of the lessons observed was satisfactory, with a further quarter being good. Teaching in one lesson was very good. In one lesson the teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching at Key Stage 4 was satisfactory except for one lesson, which was very good. In the best lessons teachers make the best use of their specialist knowledge, lessons are well planned and activities offer pupils a range of challenging

experiences with high expectations of pupils. Skills are often taught well and pupils of all abilities are catered for and encouraged. For example, pupils in Year 7 had been taught how a light emitting diode (LED) circuit worked and the teacher prepared a challenging purposeful task requiring them to manufacture a fuse tester using an LED circuit. The terminology and the knowledge required for this project was taught in such a way that all pupils understood the concept and were able to achieve. In the unsatisfactory lesson, the pupils achieved very little in the lesson and their behaviour was poor. The lesson had not been sufficiently well planned to take account of the challenging behaviour of the pupils.

16.The separate management of the food and textile technology department and the construction department does not support the overall requirements of design and technology. As a result planning of the programmes of study across the full range of design and technology is inadequate. Assessment is poor in both departments. Projects are often marked without offering pupils guidance on how well they have achieved and what they need to do to improve and develop their work. Many pupils at Key Stage 4 have very little understanding about the grade to which they should be seeking to aspire.

17.The subject has made some improvements since the last inspection but in order to make further improvements the school should now:

- improve lesson planning to take account of pupils with challenging behaviour;
- plan for the programmes of study as a department; and
- improve the procedures and use of assessments.

• **Geography**

1.Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national average although some pupils' attain highly and some very low. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is better. GCSE results have shown a very significant improvement since the last inspection. The percentage of candidates gaining A*-C grades has risen consistently in recent years and although well below the national average, was above the national figure for similar schools in 1999. Evidence for the pupils currently in Key Stage 4 suggests that improvement in standards will continue and on current performance, some pupils are working towards the highest grades A*-A. Boys attaining higher grades than girls has been a feature of this improvement in recent years and this is contrary to the national trend.

2.A particular strength of many pupils in both key stages is their use of correct geographical vocabulary. Pupils of all abilities in Key Stage 3 were able to apply the correct terms to types and patterns of settlement and to the various features and processes associated with river study. The learning of appropriate geographical terms is emphasised in the teaching and this is effective. Similarly in Key Stage 4 pupils had a secure knowledge of terms linked to the study of topics such as population and natural hazards. A recurring weakness, however, again for many pupils in both key stages, is their relatively shallow understanding of the processes which produce these geographical features and patterns and also the underlying weaknesses of lower attainers in their use of language to describe and explain in detail. Also locational knowledge is a weakness, particularly in Key Stage 3.

3.Progress in relation to prior attainment is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. This overall pattern is evident throughout the ability range and includes those with special educational needs. As already mentioned boys make particularly good progress in Key Stage 4. Whilst progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, there is a clear link between progress and the high proportion of lessons taught by non-specialist teachers. For example, the quality of explanations and definitions provided for important key ideas varies between teachers and this adversely affects the depth of understanding which pupils acquire. Here the absence of a more detailed scheme of work, especially in Key Stage 3 where a number of non-specialist teachers are involved, and the absence of an agreed view of standards and expectations of progress are having a curtailing influence on progress for some pupils.

4.Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are positive and many pupils are motivated and enthused by their lessons and by their teachers. Parents commented on their children's positive view of geography, saying they felt

inspired to learn and inspection evidence confirms this view. The high proportion of pupils choosing to continue studying geography in Key Stage 4 is a measure of the confidence pupils have in the subject and the teaching. Behaviour in lessons is always good. Teachers place a heavy emphasis on good working relationships and this is effective. However, there is little evidence of pupils developing their capacity for personal study. Lessons and tasks are frequently very closely controlled by the teacher to the exclusion of opportunities for pupils to work together under their own direction.

5. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory or better: in Key Stage 3 almost all teaching was satisfactory with one case being good whereas in Key Stage 4 teaching was always good. Examples of the most effective approaches to teaching included the following: teachers were able to draw upon their own enthusiasm and experience to enrich both learning resources and background details, clearly seen in the presentation on the Alaskan oilfields; teachers attach both importance and respect to pupils' ideas and answers and cleverly steer the lesson towards the intended outcomes; clear instructions gave pupils a secure knowledge of how to proceed, evident in all lessons; and lessons where the learning resources were selected and adapted to match a range of needs. Where teaching was less effective the following features were seen: the overuse of questions, some of which were either unclear or too narrow to prompt real discussion to support learning; the underuse of placing the lesson in a wider context at the outset in order to reinforce wider understanding; the under-emphasis on presenting and recording ideas in maps and diagrams to reinforce pupils' understanding of patterns and locations in geography; the over-reliance on pupils listening and responding individually rather than developing ideas together. Fieldwork and enquiry activities are underused in Key Stage 3 to support the development of geographical skills and to underpin GCSE coursework.

6. The subject is led by an enthusiastic and successful teacher whose willing support is clearly valued by the team of equally committed non-specialist teachers. The subject has made significant improvements since the last inspection and in order to ensure the consistency of teaching and to underpin future improvement the school should:

- produce more detailed schemes of work for both key stages, but particularly in Key Stage 3;
- develop a shared understanding of the expected learning outcomes from such schemes, in terms of detail and accuracy, especially to support non-specialist teachers; and
- to establish a sequence of fieldwork and enquiry activities throughout Key Stage 3 especially to support the development of geographical skills and to underpin further improvement to GCSE coursework.

• **History**

1. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. Pupils of all levels of attainment demonstrate appropriate factual knowledge of key events and people. Higher attaining pupils are attaining at or above expectations for the end of the key stage, and they are able to describe events, people and changes and to make links between relevant reasons for, and results of, events and changes. In a lesson on the Swing Riots, for example, pupils in a higher attaining class were able to discuss the riots and compare the actions and motives of the rioters with those of the Luddites. These pupils can structure extended written work, but are not able to follow independent lines of enquiry. Their ability to show how and why different historical interpretations have been reached is weak. For lower attaining pupils, extended writing is limited to narrative or comprehension answers from a textbook. They show some basic understanding of cause and effect, similarity and difference. Pupils in a lower attaining class could describe some of the changes between the domestic and factory systems. There is no marked difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The attainment of pupils at Key Stage 3 has not improved significantly since the last inspection, which judged that pupils achieved only modest standards in locating, selecting and organising information and ideas independently.

2. Over the past three years results at Key Stage 4 have not been consistent. Results in 1997 were good and were similar to the national average. In 1998 there was a sharp drop to a point where no pupils achieved a higher grade A*-C. Results in 1999 were an improvement on 1998 but remained well below the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of Year 11 pupils is slightly better than attained by pupils in the 1999 examination. High attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of main events. Some Year 11 pupils were able to suggest accurately Hitler's motives in 1923,

based on their reading of excerpts from his speeches, and to make valid suggestions as to why the Munich Putsch failed. Their ability to understand historical sources and identify their usefulness to historians is also good. Their ability to write extended answers to historical questions is less good because it is not securely based on independent enquiry, although they write well in a descriptive or narrative form. The use of the Certificate of Achievement as alternative accreditation for the lowest attaining pupils is a strength of the department. These pupils demonstrate satisfactory knowledge but their ability to make links between the various sections of the course is weak.

3. In Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress in the acquisition of historical knowledge. The highest attaining pupils make good progress in knowledge of change but slightly slower progress in terms of historical understanding and interpretation. Lower attaining pupils make less progress in historical understanding when they are given insufficient structure to their thinking. In a written description of an attack on Maiden Castle, while the highest attainers were able to write with structure and make use of descriptive and key words, the lower attainers in the class were able to construct a narrative only by heavy reliance on often chance selections of phrases from the textbook. Lack of structured tasks to develop their thinking restricts progress across the key elements. Pupils in Year 7 with special educational needs are making good progress. Carefully structured tasks, such as the use of mind maps, enable them to make links between features of the historical period they are studying and the use of story and visual interpretations enhance their understanding of Roman Britain. Support is well focused through the class teacher, although subject-specific targets in individual education plans are not clearly aligned with the key elements of the subject.

4. Satisfactory progress is made by pupils in Key Stage 4. Pupils of all levels of attainment acquire and consolidate new knowledge well. In some areas - for example, the First and Second World Wars - knowledge and understanding clearly builds on learning from Year 9. Good progress is made in skills and understanding of source analysis. Less progress is made in rooted understanding of significant concepts and in independent explanation of the causes and effects of significant events. For example, the highest attainers in a Year 11 class on Nazi Germany made relatively less progress because the material they were working with was not sufficiently challenging or complex. The lowest attainers, on the other hand, made least progress because of the lack of detailed structure hindered their understanding. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls.

5. Pupils' response in class is always satisfactory and sometimes good. Some pupils are keen to answer questions and participate in the lesson. This was particularly so in a Year 7 class. In other classes, however, the majority of pupils were content to remain passively compliant. Behaviour is good and pupils settle quickly to written work and stay on task. Where pupils lost concentration it was in response to over-long teacher expositions at the beginning of a lesson. Pupils' response was most positive to lively and brisk pace - in a Year 7 class on the Roman army where pupils responded enthusiastically to quick questions on Roman weapons, and in a Year 8 class which ended with a quick-fire oral test on learning from the lesson which pupils clearly enjoyed. The number of pupils choosing to study history in Key Stage 4 is low compared with similar subjects. Homework is almost always completed. This is a strength and reflects good attitudes to homework.

6. In Key Stage 3 teaching was satisfactory in half of the lessons observed and good in one lesson. However, teaching in a third of lessons was unsatisfactory. All teaching in Key Stage 4 was satisfactory. The most effective teaching showed several notable features: good use of questions, some needing short and factual answers whilst others sought more developed open-ended thinking, drawing out pupils' responses, as in a Year 8 lesson on the character of Henry VIII; and appropriate visual sources increased pupils' understanding of place and period. A particular strength of teaching is good subject knowledge and local knowledge, allowing reference to be made to the broader and local contexts of what is being studied. It was pointed out in a Year 9 lesson that the school field was the hiring ground in the 19th century and references were made to the local workhouse, which pupils knew. Less effective teaching included long expositions or readings by the teacher at the beginning of the lesson. This inhibits pupils' development as learners, leaving insufficient time for pupils' reflection or activities. Across both key stages too few opportunities are provided for collaborative pair or group work, or for pupils to show initiative, plan and decide and carry through their own approaches to learning tasks. There has been no significant improvement in this since the last inspection report which judged that there were too few opportunities for independent learning and research or for extended writing or group discussion. In all lessons observed, except one, there was too heavy a reliance on a single textbook. Not all textbooks are appropriate for the full ability range and although some provision has been made for sets of books

for lower attainers, there is inadequate provision for pupils' differing needs. In a Year 8 lesson the textbook was too difficult and complex in layout for the lowest attainers in the group, and restricted their understanding.

In a Year 11 lesson the textbook was not sufficiently challenging for the highest attainers and therefore limited their progress. There was no matching of tasks or resources to pupils of differing abilities within the classes, which although setted in Key Stage 3 still cover a broad ability range. Weaknesses in teaching include too much reliance on over-generalised planning and a lack of detailed learning objectives within or across the key elements of history. The use of a non-specialist teacher for the lowest attainers in Years 7 and 8 does not have a negative impact on standards. Pupils' work is marked very conscientiously but there is insufficient guidance in either Key Stage 3 or 4 on ways for improvement for individual pupils. No explicit criteria are given to pupils for the allocation of marks, and the use of marks or grades is inconsistent across the department. Assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 is insecure. There is no departmental evidence base to substantiate judgement, although a portfolio of assessed pupils' work is being developed.

7.The department's scheme of work is being revised. The recent use of schemes of work written before the New Orders (1995) came into effect, and which include references to old attainment targets and levels of attainment has led to an over-emphasis on content. It has inhibited the proper use of the key elements in history as a framework on which to build the content of the curriculum and as a tool for planning for carefully graded steps in learning in Key Stage 3. It has also made it difficult to use level descriptions at the end of Key Stage 3 to judge pupils' attainment. Fieldwork is not planned into the scheme of work for all pupils, although some use is made for some groups of visits to local and national sites. Key Stage 4 pupils are able to undertake fieldwork on a visit to the battlefields of the First World War. Information technology is not sufficiently carefully planned into the schemes of work, although it is used. Pupils use it in lessons to produce history work - for example, the front page of newspapers of a relevant date. Year 7 special educational needs pupils had used a CD ROM program on Roman Britain which had provided a good structure for their learning of the Roman Army.

8.The management and leadership of the department are unsatisfactory in terms of managing people, developing policies and monitoring whole-school strategies and procedures. Lack of monitoring of teaching within the department has led to false assumptions about pupils' prior learning which has led to gaps being left in pupils' learning. For example, Year 8 pupils were unable to recall information about the church in the Middle Ages because they had not learnt it in Year 7. Lack of departmental planning for well-judged stages and firm topic links within Key Stage 3 means that the non-specialist teachers in Years 7 and 8 do not have clear, long-term planning for staff development within the department. Planned strategies for improving uptake of history in Key Stage 4 are the increasing use of fieldwork in Key Stage 3 and making a foreign educational visit an integral part of GCSE coursework.

9.In order to develop further provision the school should now:

- .improve the management and leadership of the department;
 - .revise all long-, medium- and short-term planning of the history curriculum to ensure fullest coverage of the key elements
- .plan for and implement the use of information technology as a teaching and learning resource for all groups;
- .devise and implement monitoring and evaluation procedures within the department;
 - .plan for and implement a wider range of teaching and learning methods and resources across the department;
- .plan for the differing needs of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4; and
- .incorporate planned fieldwork into schemes work for all groups in Key Stage 3.

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Information Technology

1. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 is in line with national standards. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations in information technology were good and were close to the national average and show an improvement in attainment in information technology over time. Pupils' results in information technology were significantly better than their performance in other subjects with just over half of the pupils achieving grades A*-C. 1999 was the first time all pupils took the GCSE information studies examination at the school as part of a core entitlement. Prior to this the subject was optional and results were below the national average.

There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in GCSE information studies. From inspection evidence pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 is in line with national standards.

In the sixth form information technology courses are new. However, pupils' attainment is also in line with national expectations. In both key stages and in the sixth form, pupils' keyboarding skills and basic understanding of computers is satisfactory and not significantly different from that found nationally.

2. Pupils have regular and equal access to information technology through planned integrated programmes of work in Key Stage 3 and 4, and through opportunities in some subjects they are studying - for example, English, design and technology, geography and French in Key Stage 3 and predominantly, English, design and technology and physical education in Key Stage 4. In the sixth form students following GNVQ courses have similar access. Through the opportunities in Key Stage 3 pupils attain in line with national standards in communicating and handling information, modelling different scenarios, and in part programming and controlling devices. In other subjects information technology does not feature in schemes of work resulting in some pupils not having an opportunity to attain as highly as should be expected. At the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form attainment is broadly in line with national standards in communicating and handling information, modelling different scenarios, but below national standards in programming and controlling devices.

3. Many pupils have good access to computers at home; this has a very positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. Throughout the inspection there were some excellent examples seen of pupils presenting project work in a creative and imaginative way using a wide range of computer software tools. For example, in English, pupils in Year 9 use desktop publishing to produce a holiday brochure. In Year 10 they use the word processor and scanned images to present a good synopsis of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'. In history in Year 10, pupils have used CD ROMs to research historical fact to prepare newsheets. In French pupils have used the computer's capacity to enable communication in another language to write poems. In geography in Year 9 pupils have used a database successfully to record data as part of a project on life expectancy. In GNVQ leisure and tourism pupils have produced questionnaires, surveys, brochures and business guidance information to gain a greater awareness of the leisure and tourism business. In information technology at A level, pupils are beginning to interrogate spreadsheets to model different scenarios. In music, pupils use keyboards successfully to perform musical renditions. Whilst computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacture (CAM) feature in design and technology at Key Stage 3 - for example, in designing electronic circuits and designing and making embroidered logos - pupils' programming and control skills are limited. The school is aware of this and has planned to extend this entitlement through the school's timely bid for Technology College status.

4. Since the previous inspection the school has made major and significant improvements to the information technology provision enabling pupils to have the opportunity to use computers regularly to apply their knowledge and understanding of word processing, databases, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, research and investigation using CD ROMs and the Internet. These opportunities have enabled all pupils including those with special education needs to make at least satisfactory and often good progress. A significant minority make very good progress when they apply their skills to the presentation of investigative writing, presentation of facts and designing activities - for example, in English, geography and design and technology. Many pupils take the opportunity to make better progress and refine their information technology skills by using the computers after school, during break and lunchtimes and through open access during the school day when facilities are available.

5. Higher attaining pupils' progress, however, is hampered at times when the tasks they are asked to do are not always well matched to their level of knowledge, skill and understanding - for example, some tasks in the

interactive programme in Year 9 and examination courses in Year 10. In both key stages and in the sixth form some pupils make good progress in developing their research, investigation and analysis skills - for example, in GNVQ lessons in Year 12, historical and geographical research and investigation in lessons in Key Stage 3 and 4, and the detailed critical appraisal of Shakespearean plays in English in Year 10.

6. When tasks are challenging pupils respond with enthusiasm and commitment. Their enthusiasm for information technology work is infectious and clearly demonstrated in many aspects of their work. Pupils are busy learners, they remain on task; they persevere, they show interest; they work independently and are sometimes willing to take risks in investigating, testing and solving problems. There are fewer opportunities for this to happen in Key Stage 3 however, where activities are often quite prescriptive. Some activities enable pupils to experiment a little outside the laid-down limits of the task and they enjoy this approach - for example, in information studies, GNVQ courses, and robot activities in Year 9. Relationships are good. Pupils are very courteous, trustworthy, helpful and mutually supportive of one another when using information technology. When activities are less challenging and not wholly matched to pupils' prior attainment, pupils are usually tolerant of the provision but sometimes demonstrate a lazy approach.

7. The quality of teaching in both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. Three-quarters of teaching observed in Key Stage 3 was good or very good and all teaching in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form was good. Good lessons are characterised by good planning, good organisation and resource management, good subject knowledge, an enthusiastic approach, good pace, appropriately high expectations, and focused guidance - for example, in the Key Stage 3 information technology lessons using the interactive programme, the GNVQ lessons in Year 10 and 11 and information technology GCSE and Advanced level courses. Planning is usually good although at times it is not always focused on building on pupils' prior attainment, resulting in some higher attaining pupils not progressing as quickly as they might otherwise do.

8. Subject knowledge is good for the experienced information technology teachers. Many staff have some expertise in aspects of information technology. However, many teachers still lack the expertise in the use of computers in their subject and as a result are reluctant to take responsibility for integrating information technology into their schemes of work. The planned programme of professional development for teaching staff, if implemented fully, should enable information technology to reach its potential as a cross-curricular tool for learning at the school.

9. Long- and short-term plans for the subject are clear and precise in their aims and objectives for teaching and learning information technology. However, in some subjects pupils do not have a planned opportunity to attain as highly as they might using information technology although ad hoc examples of good use were seen in these subjects - for example, in history, religious education and science. The science department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection in addressing the issue of integrating information technology fully into the subject's scheme of work. Design and technology does not play as significant a role in developing pupils' programming and control skills as was shown to be desirable in the last inspection report.

10. The assessment and recording arrangements in information technology lessons are rigorous and used effectively to help teachers with their long-term curriculum planning. However, measuring pupils' attainment in other areas of the curriculum, and the monitoring and evaluating of the department's work across the school are underdeveloped. The school has addressed this in part through its Technology College bid. Information technology reports to parents on their children's progress and attainment deal too exclusively with attitudes rather than focusing on pupils' strengths and areas for development in the subject.

11. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The management is supported effectively by a competent and enthusiastic technician. All involved are well qualified and work with exceptional commitment to ensure that the facilities remain 'on line'. The long-term development plan is good but lacks an equally long-term plan for upgrading and maintenance of the equipment and software.

12. The school has made significant progress since the last inspection in addressing the key issue for action to improve the information technology facilities. The resources are now of very good quality and new facilities are coming on stream at a brisk pace.

13. In order to continue to improve the school should now:

- sustain the improvements to the information technology facilities;
- develop further the cross-curricular links between information technology and other departments by:
 - reviewing other subject schemes of work to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their information technology skills;
 - implementing the professional development programme for teachers to develop subject expertise and in the use of information technology across the curriculum;
- fully implement the school's monitoring and evaluating policy in respect of the department's work across the school;
- focus more on matching pupils' work to their prior attainment in particular for the higher attainers; and
- prepare a long-term contingency plan for the maintenance and upgrade of the information technology provision in the school.

• **Modern Foreign Languages (French)**

1. French is the modern foreign language studied in the school. Attainment in French is below the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. Results at GCSE for the higher grades A*-C in 1999 were well below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. Since the last inspection the trend has been downwards. Within this overall picture there has been an improving trend in the performance of girls alongside a sharply declining trend in the performance of boys.

2. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations. The higher-attaining pupils in the school achieve standards in line with national expectations in their listening, reading and writing. Speaking skills are below expectation. Speaking is frequently accurate when they use written prompts. Pupils' pronunciation, notably with word endings, and their ability to speak without notes are unsatisfactory. At the end of Key Stage 4 it is well below national expectations. Higher attaining pupils lack basic knowledge of nouns and adjectives and too many pupils lack the confidence and the ability to speak more than short phrases in the foreign language.

3. The department is making very positive strides towards improving on this history of low attainment. In Key Stage 3 and 4 most pupils make satisfactory and often good progress. High, average and low attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress in Year 8 and often good progress in Years 7 and 9. Year 7 pupils, for example, show good understanding of classroom instructions in the foreign language and virtually all are keen to have a go at new words and phrases. The good progress is a result of good teaching, with clear strengths in the positive attitudes, the good relationships and the classroom atmosphere of enjoyable learning. Similarly in Year 10, pupils respond well to good teaching and make good progress towards their GCSE. They work quickly, make good use of their time and help each other well. At both key stages boys are equally as positive as girls. The involvement of all pupils improves where tasks are appropriate in terms of challenge and maturity. For example, the response of pupils in Year 10 improved when they had individual access to a computer to word process their writing tasks. However, where teaching is weak, progress is unsatisfactory – for example, in lessons seen in Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

4. The quality of teaching is improving. In Key Stage 3 teaching was very good in almost half the lessons observed, good in a further two lessons, satisfactory in one lesson but poor in one lesson. In Key Stage 4 half the teaching was satisfactory. Teaching in one lesson was good and in one it was poor. In the good and very good teaching, planning was good and the foreign language was presented skilfully. For example, pupils in Year 9 responded very well and made good progress as a result of a well-planned and entertaining activity involving different types of weather and clothing. The teacher's high expectations ensured that all pupils were alert and involved; pupils' efforts were recognised and valued through a sharp and respectful attention to their progress together with a sympathetic and helpful understanding of their difficulties. Some pupils had good

opportunities to speak briefly with the French foreign language assistant. The poor teaching was characterised by tasks which were either too difficult or too easy because pupils' skills and abilities were not assessed accurately; relationships were strained and poor behaviour, lacking respect and courtesy, was too often taken as acceptable or unavoidable. Staff training needs have not been identified carefully enough and as a result clear development needs have not yet been met.

5. The management and leadership of the department are good but monitoring is underdeveloped. Since the last inspection the school has improved resources and pupils' access to information technology in language learning. Improvement in attainment has not taken place. The school should now build on the current improving trend in pupils' progress and should:

- introduce opportunities for some pupils to learn a second foreign language;
- ensure that all language teaching is at least satisfactory by fully assessing and meeting professional development needs;
- raise standards in speaking by ensuring that language learning is planned to improve pupils' confidence and their ability to speak more than short phrases;
- ensure that the assessment of pupils' skills and abilities is used consistently to set appropriate tasks for their learning.

Music

1. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is below the expected standard in most areas of the music curriculum. Pupils' composing skills are less well developed than their performing abilities in music. Performance in singing is underdeveloped and pupils have few skills or the necessary techniques to improve their work. Their ability to listen attentively to short pieces of music is generally good, however. In lessons, pupils enjoy performing on keyboards and most acquire the necessary skills to attain a satisfactory standard. Teachers' assessment in music has not been carried out at the end of Key Stage 3 and this is in breach of statute. Trends in attainment over the past three years have therefore not been satisfactorily monitored. No composing work was observed during the inspection.

2. Few pupils opt for music at Key Stage 4. Judgements relating to trends in pupils' attainment over time are therefore insecure. In 1998 there were no candidates for GCSE music. In the 1999 examination both candidates attained a pass grade. Attainment as judged in lessons is slightly below the national average and since the Key Stage 4 course is taught at lunchtimes pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their composing skills or to attain the necessary technical vocabulary and knowledge to ensure confidence in tackling the written paper. The candidates in this small cohort could achieve pass grades if present standards are maintained, however,

3. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 with higher attaining pupils making faster progress. One group observed made unsatisfactory progress because the work was too difficult, the pace of the lesson was laboured and the objectives were unclear. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress, although their individual education plans are not used to guide departmental planning or teaching methods. Pupils make good progress when the work is set at the correct level so as to engage and interest them. Most make good use of opportunities to apply the knowledge, skills and understanding they have acquired in previous lessons, particularly when the content of the work is lively and interesting. In Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory but fullest progress is limited because the course is taught at lunchtimes. However, pupils know how to improve and refine their performances and listening skills. They can apply previous experience and knowledge to guide and develop a new piece of work, but their progress in composing is relatively slow owing to the time constraints on the curriculum.

4. Attitudes to music in Key Stage 3 are always satisfactory and sometimes good. The Key Stage 3 curriculum currently provides too few opportunities for pupils to work together in small groups on composing tasks, thus restricting their potential for developing a wide range of strategies for working co-operatively with each other. When they are given such opportunities, however, they work sensibly, productively and collaboratively. The level of some tasks is unsuitable for a few pupils, particularly those in the lower sets, and they occasionally experience difficulty in maintaining their concentration and interest throughout the lesson. At Key Stage 4

pupils' response to the work is very good. Their attitudes are positive and they are mutually supportive of each other's efforts. They concentrate well and reflect maturely on the quality of their work, accepting and acting upon advice with good grace. They are eager to discuss their musical achievements and listen attentively to comments intended to help them improve their work. Relationships within the department are very good among pupils and between pupils and teaching staff. Pupils in both key stages learn from the excellent example set by the teacher and treat each other courteously. Their admiration and respect for the teacher and a consequent willingness to please mould their attitudes towards their work.

5. Teaching at Key Stage 3 was good in three-quarters of lessons and was satisfactory in the remaining quarter. The teacher has strong personal qualities, a kind and approachable manner and very good subject knowledge and expertise that are communicated clearly and unambiguously to pupils. Pupils are expected to behave well and good behaviour and positive attitudes are constantly reinforced with praise. These high expectations are not always applied to standards of attainment in music, however. When teaching is good the pace of the lesson is brisk, activities are sufficiently varied to maintain pupils' interest and instructions are crystal clear. The work is well matched to the needs of all pupils and they receive positive and encouraging feedback. In Key Stage 4 teaching is good. Useful supporting documentation is in place to help guide the pupils through the demands of their course. The teacher challenges pupils appropriately, whilst providing praise and encouragement. They have access to good quality verbal feedback that directly helps pupils to improve their work. However, the teaching of the course at lunchtimes limits fullest development for both pupils and teachers.

6. The curriculum content is traditional with a western European bias. Recent efforts have been made to introduce elements of a wider range of musical styles, cultures and traditions, but this area is insufficiently developed. The music curriculum as planned currently fails to meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 as it is not planned to the current National Curriculum but the previous version.

7. The assessment of pupils' work does not match evidence relating to what pupils know, understand and can do in terms of the requirements of the National Curriculum. Arrangements for the logically staged development of pupils' skills are unclear. Lessons are taught in an intuitive, ad hoc way, and whilst enjoyable, do not always reap the full benefit of careful planning. This can lead to disjointed provision for some pupils. The teacher is highly skilled, enthusiastic and experienced, however, and successfully uses his high levels of personal musical expertise to motivate the pupils.

8. In order to raise standards the school should now:

- implement the statutory requirements laid out in the National Curriculum order for music and for teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3;
- develop a system for assessing pupils' work that specifically reflects the learning objectives in the planned curriculum; and
- plan work to meet needs of all pupils, particularly those whose literacy skills are weak.

· **Physical education**

1. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 matches that expected nationally by the age of 14; a significant proportion of pupils reach higher standards in games. Many pupils achieve above average levels of physical fitness. Pupils have a good understanding of how to prepare the body for exercise and many are able to identify the changes that occur in the body during exercise. In games of netball, hockey and rugby pupils are competent in using the basic techniques of passing, dribbling and shooting. In rugby and soccer higher attaining pupils show more advanced skills in anticipating the response of other players and in developing team play. Pupils show competence in outwitting opponents in games of hockey, netball and rugby although knowledge and understanding of tactics, principles of play and how to create space are underdeveloped. Attainment in the performance element of the attainment target is higher than in planning and evaluation; but pupils show improving standards in evaluating their own performance and that of others. Poise, balance and versatility of movement meet national expectations.

2.The proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C grades in 1999 was well below the national average. Results in 1999 showed an improvement over those of 1998. Inspection evidence indicates that at the end of Key Stage 4 the substantial majority of pupils meet expectations for pupils aged 16 and a minority achieve beyond this standard. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils show good understanding of how to exercise effectively and many are knowledgeable about muscle groups and can lead warm-up activities confidently. Many girls understand the importance of using particular passes in netball and are becoming increasingly confident about planning and evaluating their work as a result of opportunities to adopt the role of teacher, observer and umpire. A small number of girls are beginning to analyse strengths and weaknesses in attacking and defensive play in netball. A small number of pupils show invention, flair, improvisation, intelligent individualism and elusive running in games.

3.The progress of pupils across the school is good. At Key Stage 3 pupils improve their techniques in games by constant practice of skills drills, work in group activities, and participation in small-sided games. In GCSE lessons pupils make clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of physical fitness and its various dimensions. In rugby many pupils make good progress in knowledge, understanding and skills in respect of scrummaging, support play, ball handling and positional play. In netball in Key Stage 3 progress is satisfactory overall with gains in understanding emerging only slowly in relation to principles of play, use of space and tactical awareness. However, in Key Stage 4 progress in netball is good with skills of planning, observation and evaluation developing well. Progress in soccer is unsatisfactory in relation to improvement of techniques and in knowledge and understanding about tactical and positional play and the principles which underpin high quality attainment. At both key stages pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are attentive and work hard; they are well integrated into lessons.

4.Pupils enjoy physical education. The level of non-participation in lessons is low. The response of pupils in lessons is in most cases good. Only rarely is it unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 3 pupils listen attentively and sustain their concentration. In games they practise hard during skills work and try to improve their techniques and understanding. They co-operate well in pairs and in larger groups. At Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils show an appropriate level of maturity to match their developing physical, intellectual and social awareness. Pupils behave well and unsatisfactory behaviour is seen only amongst a small number of older boys in Year 11. In GCSE lessons pupils are developing their capacity for personal study well. The substantial majority of pupils present high standards of dress although some boys in the later stages of Key Stage 4 fail to uphold these desirable levels. The response of the majority of pupils as reflected in their attitudes, behaviour, relationships and work-rate has a positive effect on their quality of learning, attainment and progress.

5.Physical education is almost always very well taught. In Key Stage 3 teaching in half of the lessons observed was good and in the other half it was very good. In Key Stage 4 two-thirds of the teaching was very good but in one lesson in Year 11 it was unsatisfactory. The characteristics of this very good teaching embrace effective planning, secure teachers' knowledge of the subject and high expectations of pupils in terms of their concentration, attentiveness, work-rate and behaviour. Lessons are conducted at a good pace, questioning is very good and teachers give clear explanations and very good demonstrations. Pupils are given praise and encouragement. Good provision is made for practice, consolidation and refinement of skills. Teachers know their pupils very well. In the unsatisfactory teaching there were shortcomings in planning, poor management and practices which were undemanding in terms of their physical and intellectual challenge to pupils. Practices were not built up in challenging stages and failed to highlight key elements of skills and tactics; the concentration of pupils wandered and behaviour deteriorated.

6.The curriculum is planned to give breadth and links between the various aspects over Years 7 to 11. However, the curriculum at Key Stage 3 lacks balance and is heavily weighted towards games with insufficient time allocated to gymnastics and dance. The time allocated to physical education at Key Stage 4 is barely sufficient to cover the National Curriculum.

7.The department is well led. A good and increasing amount of extra-curricular activities is offered which extends and enhances the curriculum. There is good, well-maintained accommodation for physical education. The department has made improvements since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and provision for extra-curricular activities has increased. The attainment and progress of pupils has at least been maintained and for many pupils at Key Stage 3, including high attainers, attainment is improving rapidly

because of effective teaching.

8. The school should:

- ensure the curriculum at Key Stage 3 is balanced; and
- bring all teaching up to the quality of the best in the department.

Religious Education

1. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the standards set by the Agreed Syllabus of the North Yorkshire Education Authority. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 have been maintained since the previous inspection. In top sets, however, pupils' attainment is generally in line with expectations and within those top sets one or two pupils have attainment higher than that. There were no GCSE entries in 1998 or 1999. In 1997 a very small entry gained grades well below the national average. Only one lesson at Key Stage 4 was observed, but from that and from the scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions held with them, inspection evidence shows that attainment is well below the standards set by the Agreed Syllabus. The main reason for this is the failure of the curriculum to cover more than a small part of that which is required. The apparent considerable decline in standards at Key Stage 4 is also accounted for by the fact that the Key Stage 4 classes inspected previously were the small GCSE classes, whilst on this occasion lessons containing pupils from the whole of the key stage were inspected.

2. At Key Stage 3 pupils have a superficial knowledge of the main features of the religions studied. They know the basic details of the life and teaching of Jesus, but do not understand the impact he had on his contemporaries and has on his followers today. They know how and where Muslims worship, but do not appreciate what it means to fast during Ramadan. Higher attaining pupils, however, understand why Nathan's story of the poor man's ewe lamb was so sharply applicable to David in his pursuit of Bathsheba, and know why, as well as how, Moses was preserved from Pharaoh's wrath. Many pupils can write sensitively and reflectively, as in Year 7, on being lost, as Jesus was lost in the Temple, though such writing is invariably brief and literacy skills are not significantly extended. At Key Stage 4 pupils have a superficial awareness of social and moral issues such as homelessness, substance abuse and relationships within and without marriage. However, they lack an adequate appreciation of the religious response to the issues they study and a group of Year 11 pupils thought all Christian churches are opposed to divorce. They know far too little about the principal religions, religious concepts and religious language as required by the Agreed Syllabus. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

3. Most pupils make satisfactory progress over time at Key Stage 3. Pupils of higher attainment make sound progress because many tasks, such as designing a symbol to represent infinity in Year 9, offer adequate challenge. Pupils successfully build on that which they have learned previously. For example, a Year 9 pupil used his knowledge of the Biblical account in Creation learnt in Year 7 to ask, "Would God agree with capital punishment?" Progress in the lessons observed was often good because of effective teaching and the positive attitudes of the pupils. However, progress over time at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory because the course lacks rigour and does not cover sufficient content to allow pupils to make appropriate progress. Setting is proving to be advantageous in promoting the progress of pupils at all levels of prior attainment.

4. At Key Stage 3 the large majority of pupils respond well to religious education and enjoy it. The response at Key Stage 4 is much more muted. In recent years insufficient pupils have opted for it at GCSE for the course to run. At Key Stage 3 in almost all classes behaviour is good and learning takes place in a pleasant atmosphere. Pupils respect the views and opinions of others. Concentration spans tend to be brief except in the top sets. Very few pupils can undertake their own research and take responsibility for their own learning.

5. Teaching is always at least satisfactory with teaching in four-fifths of lessons seen at Key Stage 3 being good. Strengths in teaching are knowledge of the subject, clarity of teaching, the variety of activities provided and effective class management in a pleasing style to which pupils respond well. In the best lessons the teacher uses his detailed knowledge of the subject to make connections to help pupils understand – the responsibilities attached to belonging to a group, for example. A variety of short activities is used to maintain pace, interest and concentration. Good use is made of a reasonable range of resources that include textbooks, quality

worksheets and video, as seen in a Year 9 lesson focusing on God's self-revelation to Moses. The teaching methods used are straightforward, mixing teaching with activities for pupils to do on their own. However, less effective features of the teaching are that pupils are rarely given the experience of working in a group nor are they taught how to undertake their own research.

6. This is a single person department in which there has been too little development since the previous inspection. Pupils in the sixth form have no religious education, and the school fails to meet this statutory requirement. That all pupils at Key Stage 4 study religious education is an improvement since the previous inspection, but their curriculum fails to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. Assessment procedures are informal. They do not make use of the end of key stage statements in the Agreed Syllabus, and do not provide accurate information on what individual pupils know, understand and can do. The information necessary to plan the next stages of learning is not available, and so improvements in pupils' performance cannot be measured. Resources are merely adequate, despite recent purchases. Insufficient use is made of information technology. The limited range of books, small number of artefacts and dearth of posters or pictures restrict the variety of work that pupils can do and adversely affect the quality of their learning. Library stock, though improving, is insufficient to extend learning. Visits to religious sites are not made and neither are representatives of religious communities invited to visits, so pupils lack first hand experience.

7. The school should now:

- provide a curriculum for the sixth form and Key Stage 4 that meets Agreed Syllabus requirements;
- improve assessment procedures to produce accurate and useful information; and
- with improved resources extend the range of activities available to promote learning.

General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and Key Stage 4 vocational programmes

1. The school offers a range of GNVQs. This year courses are running in business at Advanced level, and in leisure and tourism and in health and social care at Advanced and Intermediate levels. Since 1998 the school has offered a vocational bridging project for pupils in Key Stage 4 which involves following a Skillpower programme in school supplemented by college link courses and extended work experience. Pupils on the bridging project are appropriately disapplied from French.

2. Standards attained across GNVQ programmes at Advanced level in 1999 were generally in line with the national averages but comparisons are unreliable owing to the small numbers involved and the absence of national benchmark data. This represents an improvement in standards of attainment from 1998. On GNVQ Intermediate courses standards attained by pupils were below national expectations in 1998 and 1999 largely owing to non-completion. Numbers involved in both years are again very low. The standards attained on course completion are not representative of the levels of attainment observed in lessons and through the scrutiny of pupils' work where attainment on both Intermediate and Advanced programmes is at least in line with and sometimes exceeds national standards.

3. Pupils across GNVQ courses make at least satisfactory progress and often make good gains in knowledge, understanding and the application of relevant skills. Good progress is invariably made by pupils on Intermediate leisure and tourism and health and social care courses but this is difficult to sustain owing to the constraints posed by joint Intermediate and Advanced level teaching. Good gains are made by the majority of pupils in the acquisition of vocationally relevant knowledge and understanding as, for example, in marketing concepts and vocabulary in Advanced level business. Good progress is also made in application of number skills for all GNVQ students but particularly for those of lower prior attainment. All students, across the ability range, are making good progress in the acquisition of information technology and communication skills. In Key Stage 4 the great majority of pupils make good progress. They acquire and consolidate knowledge and understanding well, particularly when taking their prior attainment into account.

4. On GNVQ programmes pupils' attitude to their learning is invariably positive, behaviour is good and personal development is at least satisfactory. The great majority of pupils show interest in their work and sustain good concentration when listening to teachers' explanation and when applying themselves to set tasks. Generally independent study skills are developing well but occasionally Intermediate level pupils lack confidence in their ability to complete tasks successfully and are reliant on support from the teacher to make

progress. When given the opportunity pupils can work effectively in pairs and in small groups. Many pupils show initiative and actively show they can select their own best ways of pursuing a task and follow their choices through, although this does not always extend to putting themselves forward to claim achievement of relevant unit elements and key skills. Good examples of effective group work were seen - for example, in health and social care and in business. In Key Stage 4 lessons the motivation and interest levels sustained by the majority of pupils are often noteworthy when judged in the context of the behavioural difficulties present in the groups. Pupils are beginning to work well both independently and in groups. These positive attitudes are a direct result of the high quality support provided by teachers.

5. Overall the quality of teaching is good and in a quarter of observations it was very good. Teaching is most effective in GNVQ business studies and least effective in the GNVQ leisure and tourism course. Overall, however, teaching has many strengths and few weaknesses. Good teaching includes secure subject knowledge that is used to devise activities that meet the demands of the course and match pupils' learning needs. Good planning and preparation effectively supports and ensure pupils' achievement and teachers use clear time-related learning objectives to keep pupils on task. There is also a good match between prepared learning activities and pupils' needs - for example, in a GNVQ application of number lesson where tasks were closely matched to the full range of pupils' abilities. Teachers have high expectations of pupils both in terms of attainment and behaviour. Strong and effective management of pupils is much in evidence and this supports positive and purposeful relationships. Teachers make astute in-class assessments of pupils' progress and use this effectively with good oral guidance to generate improvements in pupils' performance. In GNVQ and Key Stage 4 lessons teachers manage assignment work effectively and there is very good use of a variety of learning activities and strategies to engage and enthuse pupils. Where teaching is less effective there is a lack of attention to planning and poor use of time.

6. GNVQ and Key Stage 4 vocational provision is well led and managed. A hard-working and committed team of teachers makes strenuous efforts to ensure high quality provision. The ethos in which the courses are taught closely reflects the school's aims. Whilst development planning and monitoring of the department's work are undertaken effectively decisions over curriculum planning are not shaped closely enough by rigorous evaluation. In addition, the decision on joint teaching of Intermediate and Advanced programmes, whilst justifiable in terms of small numbers, places considerable demands on teachers and pupils alike and has a negative impact on standards.

7. Overall the GNVQ and Key Stage 4 vocational programmes make a positive contribution to standards achieved by pupils. However, the school should:

- reconsider the joint teaching of GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced level programmes in Years 12 and 13.

· **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

· **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 1.The team consisted of 15 inspectors who spent in total 43 inspector days in school over four consecutive days.
- 2.During the inspection 141 lessons, many registration sessions and some year and school assemblies were inspected. In total over 130 hours were spent in classes, in discussions with pupils and in evaluation of their work.
- 3.Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils. All the available written work of a representative sample of three pupils from each year group was inspected together with the work of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need. Formal discussions were held with these pupils and informal discussions were held with many more throughout the school.
- 4.All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education were inspected along with provision for pupils with special educational needs. Other subjects at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form were also inspected.
- 5.All teachers were observed teaching, the majority on several occasions. Non-teaching staff were also observed in their roles. Extra-curricular activities were observed. Observations were made of pupils arriving at school, during breaks and lunchtime and when leaving school. Assemblies, registrations and tutorial sessions were observed.
- 6.Meetings were held prior to the inspection with the senior managers, including governors, and the whole staff. During the inspection planned discussions were held on many occasions with members of the teaching staff, other staff, Chair of Governors, other governors and the governing body as a group. Daily meetings were held between the Registered Inspector and the headteacher.
- 7.Documentation provided by the school was analysed both before and during the inspection, including the school's aims, prospectus, school development plan, budget details, curriculum policies, whole-school policies, minutes of meetings of the governing body, annual report of governors to parents, National Curriculum results, and GCSE, A-level, GNVQ and other external examination results. Attendance registers, pupils' records and reports to parents were also inspected.
- 8.The Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by eight parents prior to the inspection. The team received and analysed 123 responses from parents to a questionnaire sent to them about their opinions of the school.

233. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

233. **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 - Y13	469	12	202	69

233. **Teachers and classes**

233. **Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	26
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	16.26

233. **Education support staff (Y7 - Y13)**

Total number of education support staff:	8
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	175.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 78.2

Average teaching group size:	KS3	22
	KS4	20

233. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1999
	£
Total Income*	1245105
Total Expenditure*	1225175
Expenditure per pupil*	2771.89
Balance brought forward from previous year	61935
Balance carried forward to next year	81865

* Include elements allocated for the community education programme.

233. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 469
 Number of questionnaires returned: 123

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	23.1	61.2	10.7	4.1	0.8
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	39.0	48.8	8.9	2.4	0.8
The school handles complaints from parents well	28.2	48.7	15.4	4.3	3.4
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	24.0	61.2	8.3	4.1	2.5
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	33.6	51.3	9.2	2.5	3.4
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	30.6	62.0	4.1	1.7	1.7
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	29.8	51.2	13.2	4.1	1.7
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	23.0	59.8	9.0	4.9	3.3
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	21.5	59.5	13.2	4.1	1.7
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	14.2	58.3	17.5	7.5	2.5
My child(ren) like(s) school	35.0	53.7	5.7	4.1	1.6