

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Springwell Community School**  
Chesterfield

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique Reference Number: 112966

Headteacher: Mr A Kelly

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Reporting inspector: Ms J McKenna

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708078

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Middlecroft Road Staveley Chesterfield Derbyshire S43 3NQ
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr W Burrows
Date of previous inspection:	26 <sup>th</sup> April 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Ms J McKenna, Registered Inspector		Attainment and progress Teaching
Mrs S Drake, Lay Inspector		Leadership and management Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnerships with parents and the community
Mr C R Meakin	Maths	
Mrs E Metcalfe	English Drama	
Mrs C Worthington	Science	Curriculum and assessment
Mrs R Robinson	Design and technology	
Mr C Collinson	Information technology	Efficiency of the school
Mr J F Connor	Modern foreign languages	
Mrs G Murray	History	
Mr D Howorth	Geography Equal opportunities	
Mr J Pickering	Art	
Mr M Pettitt	Music	
Mrs S H Jeffray	Physical education	
Mr F Earle	Religious education	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

The attitudes and behaviour of most pupils in lessons and around the school is good.

- There are good relationships within the school between teachers and pupils; the large majority of pupils are courteous and friendly.
- The curriculum provided for pupils at Key Stage 4 is particularly broad and relevant to their needs.
- There are good extra-curricular opportunities provided for pupils, especially in physical education, drama and music. The Emerald Radio station run by the school is very successful.
- The moral and social development of pupils is emphasised, and is good.
- Most parents are positive about the school; the involvement of members of the community in pupils' learning has a positive impact.
- The school has very good procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils and staff; pupils like school and feel secure.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Pupils do not make satisfactory progress in their learning in mathematics at Key Stage 4, in French and German across the school and in the technology courses of resistant materials and electronics at Key Stage 4, because the curriculum is planned at too low a level. Progress is also unsatisfactory in the youth award because of insufficient detail in the planning.
- II. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and the progress that they make is unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements are not met and arrangements are not in place to ensure that the needs of all pupils are known to the staff who teach them.
- III. The way in which the school plans to bring about improvements is not strong enough. There is a lack of detail in the planning which reduces its effectiveness.
- IV. Evaluation of the school's performance is not comprehensive enough. The information gained from monitoring is not always acted upon in a focussed way in order to bring about further improvements.
- V. Although teaching is satisfactory overall there are shortcomings which restrict pupils' progress. The needs of pupils of all abilities are not always met, activities do not always capture pupils' interest sufficiently and a good pace of learning is not maintained throughout all lessons.
- VI. Pupils' attendance has declined and is unsatisfactory; too many pupils are late to school.

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

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

There has been satisfactory improvement overall since the previous inspection. In some areas, such as the broadening of the Key Stage 4 curriculum to include vocational courses, progress has been good. The focus on improving literacy skills with pupils in Years 7 and 8 is having a positive impact. The school continues to have a positive ethos and the involvement of members of the community in pupils' learning has been strengthened. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have improved. Other actions, such as a restructuring of the management roles held by staff, are helping to create a climate that is more likely to promote effective learning. There are fewer lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory. More opportunities have been created for pupils to take responsibility within the school such as through peer counselling. In some areas progress has not been satisfactory. Although there have been improvements to the provision for pupils with special educational needs it is not yet satisfactory and not enough account is taken of the Code of Practice. Similarly planning for development within the school has weaknesses, which prevent it from being fully effective. Attendance is not as good as it has been in the past. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for pupils. Attention has not been given to devising strategies to promote the development of numeracy across the curriculum, although this is planned for next academic year. Pupils' attainment is still low, and, although it is improving in some areas and most pupils are making satisfactory progress in their learning during their time in school, this remains the key area for further improvement. However,

overall, inspectors' views are that progress has been satisfactory and that the school has the capacity to tackle its weaknesses and make further improvements.

## Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds in national tests and GCSE in 1999:

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

Results in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 were well below average, and were lowest in English. They were lower than the results gained in 1998.

The proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE in 1999 improved from the previous year from 21 percent to 23 per cent, although the results are still well below average. The average points score per pupil, although well below the national average, has improved steadily over the past three years and is in line with that achieved by similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining grades at A\*-G decreased slightly from the previous year, but is in line with the results from similar schools. Eighty nine per cent of pupils gained five or more A\*-G grades and 94 per cent gained one or more A\*-G grades.

The 1999 GCSE results were best in drama, communication studies and music where they were above average, and in physical education and religious education where they were close to the average. Results in information and communications technology were just below average. In other subjects results were well below average especially in languages, mathematics, art, resistant materials and electronics. Results in the youth award were very low with no pupils gaining the award. Of the pupils taking the general national vocational qualifications (GNVQ) business course 50 percent gained the qualification, and 36 percent gained the GNVQ health and social care qualification. There are no national figures with which to compare these.

Standards being achieved by pupils in the current Year 11 are higher than those indicated by the 1999 results, although they are still below average overall.

• **Quality of teaching**

	<b>Overall quality</b>	<b>Most effective in:</b>	<b>Least effective in:</b>
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	Drama, physical education, geography	Languages.
Years 10-11	Satisfactory	Art, drama, physical education, information and communications technology, religious education	Mathematics, languages, resistant materials, electronics, youth award
English	Satisfactory	-	-
Mathematics	Satisfactory	-	-

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

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 94 percent of lessons. It was good in 33 percent of lessons and very good in 8 percent. The six percent of lessons where teaching was not satisfactory were spread across several subjects mainly those named above as least effective. The quality of teaching was similar for pupils of all ages. There were fewer lessons where the quality of teaching was not satisfactory than at the previous inspection.

Teachers are generally well qualified and competent and they work hard to create a supportive learning environment for pupils. Although there was relatively little unsatisfactory teaching, and considerably more that was good, there are shortcomings which restrict pupils' progress. These include not planning fully enough to meet the needs of all groups of pupils, and not ensuring that pupils' interest and a good pace of learning is maintained throughout all of the lessons.

• **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Behaviour is mainly good in lessons and around the school; most pupils are friendly and helpful. All year groups have a small number of disruptive pupils, mainly boys, who are immature and who making teaching difficult. Exclusions are high.
Attendance	Had improved for several years, but declined over the past two years and is unsatisfactory. Too many pupils are late at the beginning of the day.
Ethos*	Positive. Relationships are good, staff show a strong concern for the pupils, and create a supportive environment within which pupils feel secure and valued. Most pupils have good attitudes towards their work.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory overall. There is a commitment to improving standards and there have been some positive developments aimed at bringing this about, but weaknesses in planning, in monitoring and in evaluation are limiting the rate of progress.
Curriculum	Satisfactory overall with good, broad and relevant provision at Key Stage 4, including vocational courses. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good, especially in physical education, music and drama, with high participation rates. There is insufficient time devoted to providing a careers education programme and to gymnastics. Form time is not always used effectively.
Pupils with special educational needs	Despite some improvements having been made, the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the progress that they make is unsatisfactory. Not all statutory requirements are fulfilled. Individual education plans are not in place for all pupils who should have them; arrangements for reviewing the progress of pupils at stages 1 to 3 on the register of special educational needs are not adequate; teachers are not well enough informed of the needs and targets of pupils with special educational needs, and the success of the policy is not reported on in the governors' annual report to parents.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	The moral and social development of pupils is good. The other aspects receive less attention; cultural development is satisfactory but spiritual development is weak. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory. Sufficient staff mainly appropriately qualified. Adequate resources. Despite some deficiencies, such as rainwater leakage, accommodation is used well.
Value for money	Satisfactory. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress during their time in school, although there are exceptions to this.

*\*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**

- VII. Their children enjoy coming to school.
- VIII. Staff are approachable and parents feel happy about asking them questions.
- IX. The school keeps parents well informed about their children's progress; parents particularly like the short assessments sent out termly.
- X. The school gives pupils opportunities to get involved in more than just their work.

**What some parents are not happy about**

- XI. The standards of behaviour achieved.
- XII. The information the school gives to
- XIII. The amount and consistency of
- XIV. That some bullying occurs and the

• Inspectors' judgements support most of the parents' positive views. Pupils report that they like school, and staff make good attempts to keep parents informed about their children's progress. Reports could give more information to parents about attainment, but these are due to be revised and improved by the school. Extra-curricular opportunities provided are good. The behaviour of the majority of pupils within lessons and around in the school buildings and grounds is good; a minority misbehave. Behaviour is more boisterous when pupils are off the school premises. There are appropriate systems in place for dealing with behavioural problems such as the referral system within school and good liaison with outside agencies. Most pupils report that they are confident that bullying will be dealt with to their satisfaction. There are some outstanding cases of bullying which remain a problem, and the school is devoting a lot of time to resolving them. Inspectors agree with parents that the provision of homework is inconsistent and that it is not used as well as it could be to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

Standards of attainment within the school are low and need to be improved. In order to do this the headteacher, governors and staff should:-

### **XV. Raise standards of attainment in mathematics, resistant materials, electronics and the youth award at Key Stage 4, and in French and German throughout the school by: - (paragraphs 8,10,38,94-102, 128-138, 177-184, 226-230)**

- ensuring that curriculum planning is pitched at the level required by examination syllabi and the National Curriculum;
- ensuring that a scheme of work is written for the youth award course which reflects the requirements of the course, the needs of the pupils and the strategies to be adopted to ensure that they meet the required standards;
- ensuring that teaching in these subjects is improved by tackling the specific weaknesses identified in the subject sections.

### **● Improve provision for pupils with special educational needs by :- (paragraphs 17, 37, 42, 64)**

- ensuring that individual education plans, which include subject specific targets, are provided for all pupils at stage two and above of the Code of Practice and that these are monitored and reviewed regularly;
- improving arrangements to review the progress of pupils at stages one to three on the register of special educational needs so that both the school and parents have the information necessary to systematically monitor and support pupils' progress;
- providing greater consistency across the curriculum in meeting the needs of pupils whether they are grouped by similar or mixed ability, by ensuring that their individual needs are reflected in the planning, content and teaching styles;
- monitoring the outcomes of spending more effectively to ensure that funding is strategically directed and that it is having a positive impact on the quality of education provided and on standards achieved.

### **● Improve planning for school improvement by:- (paragraphs 61, 62)**

- identifying clearer priorities focussed on raising attainment;
- identifying the detailed steps to be taken to achieve the priorities;
- allocating clear responsibilities for these actions;
- identifying the timescale for actions for both the short and longer term;
- identifying cost implications;
- identifying how success will be measured in terms of standards achieved by pupils;
- ensuring that all staff are fully involved in the above process, and that departmental and other plans show what they will do to contribute to the overall priorities.

### **● Improve the use made of information gained from monitoring by:- (50, 63)**

- analysing the information to clearly identify strengths and weaknesses;
- using the analysis to inform action to be taken to tackle the weaknesses and build on the strengths;
- ensuring that all staff are clear about their own and others' responsibilities and work together to make best use of the information gained;
- regularly reviewing progress and ensuring that the outcomes are acted upon to effect further improvement.

● **Improve the quality of teaching by:-** (paragraphs 26-33)

- ensuring that teachers' planning caters for the needs of all pupils in the group;
- employing a wider range of teaching methods and activities to engage and maintain pupils' interest;
- planning to ensure that a good pace of learning is maintained throughout lessons.

● **Improve attendance and punctuality by:-** (paragraphs 23-25, 52)

- Maintaining vigilance in the monitoring of absence and punctuality and the action being taken to address it.

In addition to the above key issues, there are a number of other less important weaknesses that the governors may wish to consider including in their action plan:

- devote more time to gymnastics in physical education; (paragraphs 35, 202)
- provide a daily act of collective worship for pupils; (paragraph 45)
- use registration and form time more effectively; (paragraph 50)
- ensure that there is sufficient time to deliver an effective careers education programme; (paragraph 40)
- reduce exclusions; (paragraph 21)
- improve pupils' spiritual development. (paragraphs 44, 45)

- **INTRODUCTION**

- **Characteristics of the school**

- 1 Springwell Community School is a mixed, 11-16 comprehensive school situated in Chesterfield in Derbyshire. It has 844 pupils on roll, 459 boys and 385 girls, which is of average in size. There are 4 pupils from minority ethnic groups, which is a low number. There are 26 percent of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, which is above the national average. The percentage with statements is five, which is well above the national average.
- 2 Twenty eight percent of pupils are entitled to free school meals and this is above the national average. Socio-economic data for the areas surrounding the school reveals that disadvantage is considerably higher than that found nationally. Unemployment in the area is high, particularly following the decline of the coal industry and the resulting pit closures. The school's catchment area includes two of the ten poorest wards in the county.
- 3 The tests that are undertaken by pupils at the time of entry to the school reveal that pupils' attainment on entry to the school has been well below average for some years, and standards of literacy are particularly low. However standards of attainment on entry are rising, having improved over the last two years.
- 4 Springwell Community School was established in 1991 following amalgamation with another local school. The roll at Springwell is increasing and the school is now attracting some pupils from out of the catchment area. The large majority of responses of the 25 percent of parents' questionnaires returned are positive.
- 5 The headteacher was not in post at the time of the previous inspection, having been appointed three years ago. The aims of the school cover academic, personal and social areas and reflect a valuing of pupils. Ambitious but appropriate statutory targets have been set for the Year 2000. These are for 34 per cent of pupils to gain five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE, 99 per cent of pupils to gain one or more A\*-G grades, and for the average GCSE points score per pupil to be 34.

5 **Key indicators**

**Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>2</sup>**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	(1998)	(79)	(61)	(140)
	1999	85	80	165

5 <b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	12(25)	36(38)	30(41)
	Girls	26(27)	36(29)	30(27)
	Total	38(52)	72(67)	60(68)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	23(37)	44(48)	36(49)
	National	63 (65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	1(9)	13(22)	7(19)
	National	28 (35)	38(36)	23(27)

5 <b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	24 (41)	36 (33)	50 (53)
	Girls	42(38)	35(31)	43(45)
	Total	66(79)	71(64)	93(98)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	40(56)	43(46)	56(70)
	National	64(62)	64(64)	60(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	18(26)	18(21)	17(24)
	National	31(31)	37(37)	28(31)

.....

2

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

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>3</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	(1998)	(80)	(65)	(145)
	1999	79	63	142

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	17(16)	70(71)	74(78)
	Girls	16(15)	56(59)	59(63)
	Total	33(31)	126(130)	133(141)
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	23(21)	89(90)	94(97)
	National	47.8(44.6)	88.4(89.8)	93.9(95.2)

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

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed			%
through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School	10.5
	Absence	National comparative data	7.8
	Unauthorised	School	0.5
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

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## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:			Number
		Fixed period	109
		Permanent	10

5

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	8
	Satisfactory or better	94
	Less than satisfactory	6

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

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

5 **Attainment and progress**

- 1 The standards attained by pupils in the school are low in comparison to national figures. In 1999 23 percent gained five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE. This is an improvement of 2 percent on the previous year, but is still well below the national figure of 47 percent. It is also well below the results of schools with similar pupils. The proportion gaining five or more A\*-G grades at 89 percent and one or more grades at A\*-G at 94 percent are both below the national figures of 90 percent and 97 percent respectively. Although these results are a slight decrease on the ones the school obtained in 1998 they are in line with the results from schools with similar pupils. The proportion gaining higher grades is lower than at the time of the previous inspection, although that group of pupils was the last group to have entered Springwell prior to the creation of the new school, and thus the two groups are not directly comparable. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades since then has been fairly steady with just slight fluctuations. The average points score obtained by pupils has risen steadily for the last three years and in 1999, whilst well below the national figure, was in line with that obtained by similar schools.
- 2 The GCSE results in almost all subjects in 1999, including English, mathematics and science, were well below the national average, with the results for mathematics being particularly low. The only exceptions were in drama, communication studies and music where the results were above average and in physical education and religious education where they were close to the average. The results in information and communications technology were just below average. The results of the youth award, taken by some pupils with special educational needs, were very low with no pupils gaining the award. Fifty percent of pupils entered for the GNVQ foundation level in business obtained the qualification, and 36 percent of those entered for foundation level health and social care gained the qualification. There are no national figures for comparison for these courses.
- 3 During the inspection the attainment of pupils closest to the end of Key Stage 4 was below average in all subjects, except for communication studies, drama, music, physical education, and religious education where attainment was average. More consistent and better teaching in these departments results in higher standards. Attainment is lowest, and is well below average, in mathematics, French, German and in the technological courses of electronics and resistant materials. In these subjects the curriculum is planned at too low a level, and there is proportionally less good teaching taking place. Standards in the GNVQ courses of health and social care and business education are in line with expectations. Standards attained in the youth award course are well below average, with inappropriate planning and some weaker teaching. Pupils' weak literacy skills adversely affect their attainment in most subjects. Standards overall in the current Year 11, although below average, are higher those indicated by last year's GCSE results. The current year group had higher levels of attainment on entry to the school than the previous group. The school's expectation that they should perform better than last year's cohort is reflected by the fact that, based on analysis of test results, it is predicting a higher proportion will achieve A\*-C grades in GCSE when they take their examinations in the Year 2000.
- 4 In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment was well below average in mathematics and science and very low in English. They were also below the results of schools with similar pupils in science, well below in mathematics and very low in English. The results show a decrease from the previous year. Several factors have contributed to this. The 1999 group of pupils had lower levels of attainment on entry to the school. There was a higher than usual level of absence during the tests due to a health scare. In English an administrative error in the conduct of the tests resulted in some of the required supporting papers not being distributed to pupils. The school has taken steps to ensure that this does not occur in the future. Pupils' low literacy skills also hampered performance in all three subjects.

- 5 During the inspection the attainment of pupils closest to the end of Key Stage 3 is well below average in English, especially in writing, and in mathematics. It is also well below average in modern foreign languages, history and information and communications technology. Attainment is below average in science, art, design and technology, and geography. It is average in drama, music, physical education and religious education. These standards generally reflect the teacher assessment judgements made in 1999 although the judgements in information and communications technology were lenient and were unduly high, and the teacher assessment judgements in music and physical education were not accurate with teachers judging the standards too harshly. Actual standards in these subjects are in fact higher than the results indicate.
- 6 Standards of attainment in literacy are well below average when pupils enter the school. They improve, but continue to be below average in speaking, listening, reading and writing throughout the school and this has the effect of inhibiting attainment in most other subjects. A high priority is being given to raising literacy standards and the school is implementing a programme to promote improvement. This is implemented within English lessons for pupils in Years 7 and 8, and, in addition, all subject departments are required to have a clear focus on improving literacy skills. Rising standards in Years 7 and 8 is evidence of the programme being effective. Speaking and listening skills are strongest in English where there is specific planning for the development of them, but they are generally weak in other subjects. Standards of reading and writing are improving in Years 7 and 8. Despite the improvements, the English department has not put all the strategies in place to fully promote the development of language. Most other departments have responded to the literacy drive by displaying subject-specific words within the classrooms but some are promoting it more prominently than others. The physical education department displays the technical language of the subject, giving easy to read definitions in appropriate language. Some very good practice was seen in a dance lesson where pupils worked in groups to make a list of action words, assembling a good list which they then used as the basis for creative movement. In art new words are clearly explained and written on the board. In science pupils read aloud and emphasis is given to key words. In modern foreign languages good attention is given to sentence structure and links are made between words in English and in other languages. History helps to promote literacy with a glossary of key words. The geography department uses the library resources in project work and promotes extended writing.
- 7 Numerical proficiency across the curriculum ranges from weak to good throughout both key stages, but is generally below average for the majority of pupils. For example, number skills are used in physical education to measure endurance fitness levels, and pupils show that they can tabulate results, accurately carrying out addition and multiplication, but faltering when required to use division to work out their fitness index. Measurement skills make a positive contribution to pupils' learning in history, science and technology. In history, for example, pupils' knowledge of chronology is enhanced by the use of charts that illustrate important dates and periods, and Year 7 pupils apply this knowledge when producing charts to represent events relating to their own lives. Data handling skills are used in a variety of subjects, particularly geography, to further understanding. The quality of graphical work varies, with some pupils producing graphs that are inaccurate because they are drawn without using a ruler. Overall, the impact of numeracy is inhibited by a lack of fluency with tables and hesitant mental arithmetic. At present, approaches to the development of numeracy skills across the curriculum are not sufficiently systematic and coordinated across the school. Action to tackle this is planned for next academic year.
- 8 The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average, with literacy skills being particularly poor. Data collected by the school indicates that standards on entry are improving and are higher for the current Year 7 and 8 pupils than for previous pupils.
- 9 Overall during their time in school the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress. There are exceptions to this, however, and progress could be better.

- 10 During Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory in English, science, geography, history, the technology courses of food and child care, business, health and social care, and in music. Progress is good in drama, physical education and religious education due to consistently strong teaching, in communication studies and in information and communications technology where the targeting of work for individual pupils has become more focussed on their needs. Progress is unsatisfactory in mathematics, French, German, the technological courses of electronics and resistant materials and the youth award where the curriculum planning is pitched too low and there is less good teaching. Progress is unsatisfactory across the key stage in art, but is improving, especially in Year 10, due to recent staff and management changes within the department.
- 11 During Key Stage 3 progress is satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, design technology, information and communications technology, history, music and art. It is good in geography, religious education, physical education and drama, where teaching is consistently strong. It is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages where the curriculum is not planned to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum programme of study.
- 12 The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs in respect of their prior attainment is unsatisfactory. Whilst there is evidence of good progress being made in literacy skills, the absence of individual education plans for non-statemented pupils has a negative impact on the progress they make. The progress of pupils with statements is also unsatisfactory. The failure to ensure that where targets are identified, they are known, understood and acted upon by all staff who teach these pupils, and the failure to monitor progress towards their achievement, impacts adversely upon the standards these pupils achieve. Higher attaining pupils do not make satisfactory progress in all lessons due to teachers not taking sufficient account of their needs in their planning and teaching. The attainment of boys has improved since the previous inspection and, although girls perform better than boys overall at GCSE, as is the case nationally, the gap between the sexes has narrowed considerably. This is due to a broader and more relevant curriculum at Key Stage 4 which is motivating pupils more, including boys, and improved attention to tracking the progress of individual pupils which is resulting in the earlier identification of the problems which they may be experiencing.
- 13 Although examination results are lower than at the previous inspection, pupils' progress currently is satisfactory overall and there are areas, described above, where pupils' progress is good, mainly in those subjects where the quality of teaching is strong. However, there are significant exceptions to this, such as the unsatisfactory progress of pupils' with special educational needs, in languages and in mathematics, resistant materials, electronics and the youth award at Key Stage 4. Attainment in all areas could and should be higher. Raising attainment for all pupils is the most critical issue for the school to address.

#### 18 **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

- 14 As at the time of the previous inspection, most pupils show good attitudes towards work, form good relationships, behave well, and grow in maturity as they move up through the school.
- 15 The great majority of pupils show interest in their work, listen well to teachers and are prepared to answer their questions. They are attentive when teachers give explanations and, as they progress through the school, most pupils begin to take notes during discussions, in order to remind them of what has been said. They are willing to settle to work and to change from listening, to writing, to individual and then to group work without making a fuss. In practical subjects they use tools sensibly and they treat equipment, such as keyboards in music, with respect. In a technology lesson, in which Year 7 pupils were designing and making a heat proof mat, they shared equipment, helped each other thread sewing machines, and generally worked well, rising to the challenge of creating a product independently. Year 10 pupils in a science lesson listened carefully, watched a demonstration of how to set up their apparatus, collaborated efficiently when setting up their experiments and worked conscientiously throughout the period.

Pupils generally enjoy their work but many, after showing initial enthusiasm, have difficulty sustaining their concentration for a full hour and are reluctant to write at any length. They respond positively to teachers' individual attention but often need to be brought back on track in order to gain maximum benefit from a lesson.

- 16 Most pupils behave sensibly both in and out of lessons, and they are particularly friendly and helpful, readily opening doors for adults or asking if they need any assistance. However, all year groups have some pupils, the great majority of whom are boys, who choose to behave in an immature manner, deliberately provoking both adults and other pupils. The incidence of exclusions from the school, both permanent and for a fixed period, is higher than that encountered in other schools of a similar size and type and is rising, despite the efforts made by staff to support those who find it difficult to comply with the expectations of an orderly community. Within the building, pupils generally behave well at break times and at the end of the day, but outside some choose to act in a boisterous, physical and loud manner, dropping litter and writing the occasional graffiti. This may be the reason why only seventy per cent of parents consider that the school achieves high standards of good behaviour.
- 17 Pupils develop good relationships with each other and staff. They generally have the confidence to express their own ideas about a topic, and show respect for others' opinions. In religious education lessons, pupils generally respond in a mature manner when asked to consider moral and social issues that can only be discussed effectively in a group which trusts all its members. There are instances of bullying, some of which have affected pupils' progress, but almost all pupils with whom discussions were held feel safe in school and are happy to attend it. Pupils are perceptive about others' points of view. This was well demonstrated in a Year 9 drama lesson in which they had to present the worries of a parent about drinking and smoking. Their good ability to take responsibility when opportunities to do so are presented is exemplified by the large numbers who volunteer to become peer counsellors or reading buddies. They show concern for, for instance, the well-being of exotic animals brought into the country under cruel conditions, and are generous in their support for those less fortunate than themselves. Overall, the majority of pupils respond positively to the opportunities provided by the school and grow into pleasant young adults during their time at Springwell.

## 22 Attendance

- 18 The overall level of pupils' attendance at school is unsatisfactory. In the most recent academic year, 1998/1999, Year 7 was the only year group to have attendance that was close to the national average of ninety one percent, with the overall figures for all other years and the school as a whole dropping below ninety percent. During the year the school suffered from a health scare and from heating problems, but these do not explain the unsatisfactory overall attendance figures. At the end of last year, some pupils did not gain the GCSE results of which they were capable due to the incompleteness of their course work, caused by absence from school.
- 19 Registers for the first half of this autumn term show some improvement, but the attendance of pupils in Years 9 and 11 is already below ninety percent. More than half of all pupils have attended for more than ninety five percent of the possible time, but almost fifteen per cent have had the equivalent of one day's absence for each week of the current term. In Year 9 over twenty percent of pupils have attended for less than eighty percent of the possible time. Some of the absence is caused by pupils taking term time holidays, others by pupils' exclusion from school but many pupils also have extended absence which is attributed to illness. The school has been successful in reducing unauthorised absence to below the national average. After initial progress since the previous inspection in improving overall attendance levels, those of the past two years have again begun to decline.

- 20 Pupils' punctuality is also unsatisfactory. The school is diligent in ensuring that pupils record their late arrival and the reasons for it. Since the beginning of term, over five hundred late slips have been issued, itemising late arrival both in the mornings and at the beginning of the afternoon session. Some unpunctuality is caused by the late arrival of buses, but some of the reasons given demonstrate the lack of importance that some pupils place on punctuality. Most registration periods are interrupted by latecomers, and on most days a small number of pupils arrive after the first morning lesson has started. This casual attitude to punctuality means that the day does not get off to a crisp start.

## 25 **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### 25 **Teaching**

- 21 The quality of teaching within the school is satisfactory overall, and in a large minority of lessons it is good. In 94 percent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better, of which eight percent is very good, 33 percent good and 53 percent satisfactory. Teaching is unsatisfactory in five percent of lessons and poor in one percent.
- 22 The quality of teaching is similar in both key stages. Some good teaching is seen in most subjects. It was good in all lessons seen in drama, and in the majority of lessons seen in physical education across the school, geography at Key Stage 3, and information and communications technology, art, religious education and science at Key Stage 4. The teaching in other subjects is satisfactory overall but is more variable. It is most varied in English where there are relatively high proportions of lessons in which it is very good and unsatisfactory. In languages, design technology and mathematics most of the teaching is just satisfactory, and there is some unsatisfactory teaching in all three subjects. A small amount of teaching in music and in the youth award course is unsatisfactory.
- 23 The large majority of teachers are qualified in the subjects they teach and are able to use their knowledge well in lessons. In most cases where there is non-specialist teaching, teachers compensate well and there is little adverse impact on pupils' learning, although in art this sometimes results in opportunities to promote insights to the subject being missed. In the large majority of lessons, teachers display competent teaching skills. They establish good, supportive relationships with pupils, and manage behaviour and discipline issues well. This was seen in some very good lessons in religious education where the very supportive climate created by the teachers and the clear structure to the lessons resulted in pupils having the confidence to discuss their views on sensitive issues with their peers. Teachers plan activities and use time well. In a very good geography lesson, for example, the teaching on grid references moved at an accelerating pace from teaching the basic skill to its application on maps with most pupils being able to work independently within a short space of time. Teachers check pupils' understanding throughout lessons and give feedback to individual pupils to help them improve. Resources are generally used well. The organisation of practical work in science is usually good, for example, with sufficient material and apparatus made easily accessible to pupils, and, with the assistance of laboratory technicians, good regard being paid to health and safety issues.

- 24 In the best lessons teachers make good efforts to capture the interest of pupils through imaginative introductions, and having done so they maintain pupils' engagement through challenging, stimulating tasks and a brisk pace which ensures that learning is maximised. They provide opportunities for pupils to become actively involved and take some responsibility for their own learning. For example, in a very good information and communications technology lesson when pupils were producing a business directory, the teacher's high quality planning which indicated a rapid pace to learning and flexibility to allow pupils to engage in range of tasks at different points during the lesson resulted in pupils' active engagement throughout and very good progress made in their data handling and design skills. In drama, teachers are successful in enabling pupils to be confident and to improvise speech spontaneously such as in a lesson with Year 9 pupils dealing with conflict between parents and teenagers, where the teacher's input helped pupils to evaluate and improve their delivery of a monologue expressing parental concern. In a very good English lesson the teacher built upon the interests of pupils by using texts that they had brought to the lesson to teach about the different elements of writing.
- 25 There are shortcomings, however, that are common to many lessons. There is insufficient planning for meeting the needs of all groups of pupils equally, such as the higher attainers and those with special education needs. In many lessons the teaching is geared more to the average or below average groups. For example, in many lessons, teachers adopt a very structured approach to teaching where they tightly control the learning, with all pupils undertaking the same tasks at the same time. This is partly as a strategy to minimise behavioural problems, but as a result, those capable of working at a faster pace are not enabled to do so. Teacher directed question and answer sessions often elicit little response, as pupils lack confidence especially when dealing with unfamiliar topics or information. However, when pupils have been well prepared for discussion, as in several of the English lessons, pupils' response is much better and they are able to engage in discussion with confidence and enjoyment. A limited range of teaching methods mean that pupils are able to take little responsibility for their learning in most lessons, although when given the opportunity, such as in the GNVQ courses, many pupils show themselves to be capable of working in this way. Relatively few lessons successfully capture pupils' imagination, often resulting in teaching that is pedestrian in nature. In the less successful mathematics lessons opportunities were not grasped to present the topics in a relevant way and instead, the text book was the focus of the lesson with little direct teaching taking place, such as in a lesson on reading travel timetables. In some lessons at both key stages, after a good start, the pace of learning slows down with too much time allowed for relatively easy tasks. In a small number of subjects, such as mathematics at Key Stage 4, resistant materials, electronics and languages, the curriculum planning upon which the teaching is based is pitched too low thus limiting pupils' progress. Planning for the youth award course is also inappropriate with too narrow a range of tasks covered. Teaching based on unsatisfactory planning accounts for some of the unsatisfactory lessons. In addition there were some lessons where challenging behaviour on the part of a minority of pupils, mainly boys, was not adequately managed, limiting the progress made by the class. This poor behaviour resulted from the work not matching the needs of pupils in some, but not all, cases
- 26 The specialist teaching and support that pupils with special educational needs receive, especially in literacy, is good. It takes into account pupils' needs and ensures progress is made. In subjects, such as English, religious education and geography, there are good examples of lesson planning which also takes into account specific needs. However, in other lessons and in other subjects the content does not ensure that the needs of pupils are met. The teaching is not based on detailed information about the needs or targets of individual pupils, and the teaching of pupils with special educational needs overall is unsatisfactory.
- 27 There is mixed provision for homework and it is unsatisfactory overall. Some good work, which builds on the pupils' learning in class, is set, for example in science. In some cases work is set but the range of tasks is limited, such as in modern foreign languages. In other subjects such as art, homework is not set regularly enough. The marking of homework is inconsistent. Overall, the potential of homework to consolidate and develop pupils' learning is not maximised.

28 The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The percentage of unsatisfactory lessons has reduced from thirteen to six, although the proportion of good teaching remains similar. Some of the shortcomings identified above were evident at the previous inspection.

### 33 **The curriculum and assessment**

29 Since the previous inspection, curriculum improvement has been good. An information technology course is now well established in both key stages and can be taken to GCSE. Similarly, time for religious education is now sufficient and this subject, too, is chosen for GCSE by several pupils. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been extended to include vocational and work related courses, which are more relevant to the needs of some pupils. The introduction of short courses has led to more variety of choice. However, there has been a deterioration in the quality of careers education, which was well developed then and is now unsatisfactory.

30 The current curriculum has satisfactory breadth, balance and relevance at Key Stage 3, providing all National Curriculum subjects, but, although provision for physical education generally is good, it does not meet statutory requirements because insufficient time is given to development of gymnastic skills. Religious education is provided for satisfactorily, and there is a programme of personal and social education which includes sex education and attention to the misuse of drugs. There is the opportunity for pupils to study a second language in Year 8. The school provides well for literacy in Year 7 with a designated daily literacy hour. Most subjects at Key Stage 3 are taught in mixed ability groups except for mathematics, English, languages and design and technology, where ability groups exist, in an attempt to enable work to be more precisely matched to the skills of the pupils. There is a satisfactory course in information and communications technology skills.

31 At Key Stage 4, breadth and balance is good. The school has widened the curriculum it offers to pupils since the previous inspection in a commendable attempt to cater more fully for their needs and there is an imaginative option scheme. There are now three pathways open to pupils, all of which contain GCSE courses. Pupils can choose a traditional curriculum of GCSE courses only, which includes the option of short courses in French, music, information and communications technology, religious education, and design technology offering good flexibility. They can choose a more vocational route which includes GNVQ courses and a third option which includes work placements, aimed at providing National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). There is also a youth award scheme offered as an option, which is aimed at pupils with special educational needs, and a communications course which is taken by a small number of pupils who are concerned with the running of the successful school radio station, Emerald Radio. Pupils taking the vocational options go on work placements as part of their courses, some of which requires them to miss other lessons. Pupils, parents and teachers were consulted about this arrangement and the consensus was that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. The well planned school timetable is devised to minimise the disruption caused to other subjects by work placements.

32 The school provides a broad and relevant curriculum for pupils with special educational needs, and there are appropriate opportunities for the accreditation of their learning at Key Stage 4. However, there are significant weaknesses in provision, which, overall, is unsatisfactory. The school does not make effective arrangements for implementing the provision outlined in pupils' statements. Individual education plans are not in place for all of the pupils who should have them. Arrangements to ensure that teachers are aware of pupils' special needs in order that they can be taken into account in curriculum planning are not fully in place.

- 33 The curriculum is planned effectively in most subjects although there are specific issues that departments need to address, such as planning to incorporate the use of information and communications technology and further attention to planning to meet the needs of different ability groups. Planning for literacy is sound, and beginning to be addressed in subject schemes of work. The use of key words is especially notable in many classrooms. Information technology skills are satisfactorily being developed in Key Stage 3 in preparation for half or full GCSE courses in Key Stage 4, but cross-curricular use is still underdeveloped. There is no current planning for numeracy, but this is due to be introduced in the next academic year. Weaknesses in planning in modern foreign languages across the school, and in mathematics, resistant materials, electronics and the youth award at Key Stage 4 result in pupils failing to make satisfactory progress. In the youth award, there is no scheme of work, and planning does not reflect the requirements of the course, the needs of the pupils or the strategies to be adopted to ensure that they meet the required standards. In addition, a wider variety of more imaginative tasks are necessary to engage the interest of pupils. In the other subjects the planning is pitched at too low a level resulting in pupils not working at levels appropriate to their age and development.
- 34 Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. It is particularly good in physical education and approximately three quarters of the school population participates in the clubs and activities on offer, which include competitive team games, at lunchtime and after school. The school has had considerable success in sports competitions. Provision in music and drama is also good, and includes a large well-supported choir and concert band, and a drama club. The school mounts an annual production involving the music and drama departments, which is popular and successful, as well as several other smaller events. A notable and unusual extra-curricular activity is the very successful Emerald Radio, which broadcasts locally and which has won national acclaim. All pupils are given experience of residential trips to promote team building and personal and social development.
- 35 Careers education is unsatisfactory. Although work experience is successfully undertaken by Key Stage 4 pupils, guidance in career opportunities is insufficient. There is an appropriate scheme of work in place for careers education and guidance but there is not enough time allowed for its effective delivery.
- 36 At the previous inspection, the school had a draft policy for assessment, recording and reporting which it intended to implement to ensure a more consistent approach. Effective systems for assessment are now in place. All departments have subject specific assessment criteria based on their schemes of work and syllabuses, although at the end of Key Stage 3 formal assessments are not always accurate, being too lenient in some departments and too harsh in others. Subject based assessments, such as module tests, are generally well used to establish pupils' progress through the scheme of work or syllabus. There is good use of self-assessment by pupils in vocational courses. The results of standardised tests, reading ages and national test results are collated for all pupils and classes, giving teachers useful information to draw on in their planning and teaching. This helps departments to see their subject test results in context, and for them to set realistic targets for improvement. This is a positive development, but there is not a common policy for using the data to improve standards and not all departments use it effectively. Pupils discuss and agree their targets with their form tutor, but action taken on failure to meet varies between departments. There is now a whole school policy designed to make assessment and recording common to all departments so that parents receive a standard form of report on their children's progress. These give helpful information to parents but do not include enough detail on pupils' actual attainment. This has been recognised and reports are being revised to take account of this.

- 37 Assessment, recording and reporting procedures in respect of pupils with statements of special educational needs do not satisfy statutory requirements. Reviews of these pupils do not always set clear and appropriate targets and progress towards targets is not monitored sufficiently. Records of all pupils with special educational needs do not provide a clear and accurate profile of their needs upon which progress can be monitored. Arrangements for reviewing the progress of pupils at stages one to three are unsatisfactory and do not pay due regard to the Code of Practice. Individual education plans are not in place for pupils at stages two and three. These deficiencies restrict the ability of teachers to assess pupils' progress and to use information to plan to meet their needs effectively.
- 38 While there is some satisfactory use of assessment information gathered so as to plan the next stages of the curriculum within subjects, to form groups of pupils with similar ability, and to go over work which has not been understood properly with individuals, not enough use is made overall. There is not enough analysis of the information to identify general strengths and weaknesses within subjects, or to identify action to take in order to effect improvement. Both within departments and at whole school level there is not enough analysis of the value being added by the school to pupils' learning. A positive start has been made, but there is not yet sufficient clarity to ensure that the considerable time and effort being put into this is being best used.

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

- 39 The school's overall provision to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Moral and social provision is good, cultural provision is satisfactory but the arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual growth are unsatisfactory. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection.
- 40 Religious education lessons provide good opportunities for spiritual growth. From Year 7 onwards pupils are encouraged to explore religious beliefs, to consider questions about the meaning of life and to reflect on good and evil. In other curriculum areas, such as meditative moments are all too rare. Year 11 pupils studying 'Hard Times' are invited to form their own philosophical opinions on the power and effect of the neglect of religion and education as world forces. In geography pupils ponder on the origin of the species, while in a science lesson Year 11 pupils registered amazement and dismay at the thought that carbon dioxide molecules have been recycled over the centuries and could have been part of the bodies of people in the past. However, the school has no programme for the content of assemblies or for the twenty minute registration period at the beginning of the day. The majority of registrations observed included no element of reflection and, although the house assemblies provided food for thought presented in a dynamic manner, they, too, allowed for no period of quiet contemplation. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship, nor does it encourage teachers to 'capture the moment' with pupils, to help them reach beyond the mundane and take delight in life.
- 41 The school's aims place much emphasis on developing a supportive ethos, helping pupils to cope with the real world and involving the whole community. In many curriculum areas pupils are encouraged to think about social and moral issues, and to relate their thoughts to their own lives. In French, Year 7 pupils consider right and wrong through their text book story about stealing. In physical education, much emphasis is placed on practice, dedication, commitment and fair play leading to success. In history, Year 9 pupils studying the employment of children in nineteenth century textile mills, write an essay giving opposing views of the acceptability of their working conditions. In geography, pupils study environmental issues such as the building of dams and deforestation, and think about the morality of rich countries using primary products from poorer countries in order to make themselves even richer. Religious education lessons play a large part in helping pupils to think for themselves, with teachers using well chosen materials and activities, presented in a professional manner that encourages pupils to talk about potentially difficult topics, such as sexuality and the sanctity of life, in a mature manner.

- 42 Pupils' social development is nurtured through the school's pastoral arrangements. The house system, which was introduced in 1997, gives pupils a sense of belonging, which is strengthened by the fact that form tutors and heads of house remain with pupils throughout their school life. Members of the pupil council meet regularly and its decisions have helped to improve the school's provision for pupils, such as suggesting making available a telephone for the use of pupils and the refurbishment of toilets. Members also sit on appointment panels for staff and for the head boy and girl, attend Parent, Friends and Teachers Association (PTFA) meetings and have represented the school at national conferences. The head boy and girl attend governors' meetings. Parents and pupils alike speak positively of the trained pupil peer counsellors who are from all age groups and who offer a friendly ear to those needing support. The prefect system allows pupils to take on responsibility and show initiative. Residential visits to an outdoor education centre help to build on pupils' social skills, while the school's annual productions require all participants to work collaboratively and show much tenacity and tolerance while in rehearsal. Pupils support various charities during the year, most recently Jeans for Genes, and Lepira, and make a big contribution to the life of the local community through Emerald Radio's spring term broadcasts.
- 43 The content of the curriculum ensures that pupils are made aware of the customs, beliefs and traditions of their own and others' cultures. Religious education lessons include clear teaching about the main Christian beliefs and festivals, as well as those of other faiths and religions such as Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism. Pupils are encouraged to compare the similarities and differences between different creeds; they visit the local church and, occasionally, other faith communities. In history lessons they learn about their own heritage and consider the reasons behind, and effects of, for instance, religious conflicts. English texts introduce pupils to a range of literature from around the world, while in art and music lessons they learn about the different styles of work created by people from different cultures. In geography they study countries such as France and India, while one of the highlights of the year is the trip to Aachen's Christmas market that is organised by members of the modern foreign language department.

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

- 44 The school offers its pupils a satisfactory level of support and guidance. Pupils and parents are satisfied that staff know them as individuals and that there would always be someone to turn to in time of need. Most staff act in a consistent manner when dealing with matters of discipline and there are very good procedures to ensure health and safety, and child protection. A stable and secure environment is created for pupils.
- 45 Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has devoted much work to gathering information about pupils' academic attainment and progress. Starting with primary school records, staff regularly document the standards that pupils reach but, although efforts are being made to promote the use of this information in teaching and planning, insufficient use is made of it in the classroom. Pupils' performance is graded in terms of their effort and behaviour, and teachers record attainment, but, until they reach Key Stage 4, pupils themselves are not given a clear indication of the standards they are achieving, nor is it obvious what support they are given if they do not reach the targets they set themselves. Although there is helpful guidance for teachers on how to exploit the registration, and personal and social education lessons, form tutors vary in the use that they make of these sessions in order to help pupils make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. The academic support provided for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory overall since teachers do not have the information necessary to meet the individual needs of these pupils and reviews of their progress are not effective.

- 46 Heads of house and form tutors stay with their pupils throughout their time in school and thus grow to know them, and their family circumstances, well. The school contacts parents, as necessary, if pupils are causing concern, and keeps a record of, for instance, the occasions when pupils are removed from the classroom for misbehaviour. The head teacher has a good overall view of which pupils are misbehaving and has a major input to promoting good discipline among pupils. The school works in good partnership with outside agencies, particularly the authority's behaviour support team, to help pupils who are encountering difficulties, and has successfully introduced pre-exclusion meetings with governors to help avert the use of this ultimate sanction. Pupils, and the majority of parents, are content that the school's clearly defined anti-bullying strategies are effective in practice. All those involved with the school praise the work of the peer counsellors who support their colleagues in a professional but friendly manner. The success of all these strategies is seen in most pupils' good behaviour in lessons and around school.
- 47 Following the previous inspection, the school made great efforts to improve the levels of pupils' attendance. The strategies employed were very effective and helped to raise the levels to above those achieved nationally. However, in the past two years staff vigilance has decreased and so have the attendance figures. The school has already taken steps, including contacting individuals' homes on the first day of absence, which are designed to improve pupils' attendance again, but it is too soon to tell whether or not these will be effective in the long run.
- 48 Effective procedures are in place to ensure child protection. Staff are very aware of the difficult lives led by some of the school's pupils and are sensitive to their needs. The policy gives clear guidance for staff to follow, and there is evidence of very good liaison with the area Children's Services department. Appropriate time is allocated to this topic in the personal and social education programme. The school also offers pupils good guidance on how to make informed decisions regarding drugs and other issues related to healthy living. The induction programme for Year 7 pupils helps them to settle swiftly at school, and those spoken with said that both staff and other pupils had been helpful to them during their first weeks in the school. At the moment the careers education programme does not have a sufficiently strong place in the curriculum to allow pupils to gain maximum benefit from it. The newly devised programme has all of the elements necessary to help pupils make informed decisions about their post sixteen activities planned for, but will require more curriculum time than it has at present to ensure its effective delivery.
- 49 The school has very good arrangements to secure the health and safety of all those who make up its community. Four members of staff have been trained to carry out risk assessments and they do so, thoroughly and effectively. Everyday practice, particularly in hazardous areas such as science and physical education, is good, with any problems dealt with efficiently. Inspectors alerted staff to two concerns while in the school. First aid procedures are also good. Midday assistants have received training and work well with pupils, but during the lunch break pupils remain unsupervised in too many areas of the site.

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

- 50 Since it was established in 1991, the school has forged a good partnership with parents and the community which enhances the quality of education provided and offers pupils some unusual opportunities to grow in their experience and understanding of the world beyond the school. The previous inspection team exhorted the school to sustain its effective links with the community, and this it has succeeded in doing.

- 51 Once they have managed to make contact with the member of staff with whom they need to speak via the office staff, the great majority of parents find them approachable and receptive to individuals' concerns. Parents consider that they are kept well informed about their children's progress, and they welcome being contacted if, for instance, their child does not arrive at school. The bi-monthly newsletter keeps them well informed about school events and activities while the governors' annual report provides a good overview of the previous year's work. The prospectus is a useful and easily read document, as is the options booklet which explains the choices open to pupils about to move into Key Stage 4. The school does not provide parents with information about what their children will be learning in the coming term. It does issue termly short assessments, which outline pupils' effort, behaviour and homework in each subject, and, whilst these are popular with parents, they do not indicate the levels at which pupils are working. It is intended that this will be made clear in the newly designed pupils' annual progress reports. Arrangements to keep the parents of pupils with special educational needs fully informed of the progress they are making are not satisfactory, particularly for those without statements.
- 52 Parents' involvement in the work of the school and of their children is satisfactory. They generally respond positively when invited into school to discuss particular incidents relating to their child, but only around sixty per cent of parents attend the annual evenings to discuss their children's work. The PFTA is an enthusiastic group who raise funds to support school activities and also provide hands on help with, for instance, decorating the ex-caretaker's house in order to make it useable by the school. The PFTA is also effective in keeping the local community informed about school events, and in attracting local business support for, for example, the summer fair.
- 53 Many staff invite members of the community into school to enhance the educational provision for pupils. For example, an royal society for the prevention of cruelty to animals officer has recently helped Year 7 pupils with the task of classification of species in science, make up artists have demonstrated their skills to Year 11 pupils studying drama, and a midwife has talked with Year 10 child care students. Pupils also visit local sites such as an open cast mine, a foundry or the local church in order to bring their learning in the classroom to life. The school is working in good partnership with the chamber of commerce, a local training agency and the local college of further education to provide an alternative, work related curriculum for some pupils in Key Stage 4. The local business community also accepts pupils on work experience placements in a wide variety of settings from farms to car workshops. Pupils who have just returned from their two weeks in the world of work speak positively about their experiences. Pupils have recently created a wall hanging to celebrate four hundred years of Chesterfield's Royal Charter, and they regularly take part in local competitions. The school has a good partnership with its feeder primary schools which helps to make the transition from one phase of education to the next as smooth as possible for pupils.
- 54 A highly unusual feature of the school's partnership with the community is its radio station. Emerald Radio, which has recently won a national award for its work, broadcasts for a month each year within a three mile radius of the school. It is supported by various national businesses and is particularly concerned with environmental issues. Through their involvement with the radio, pupils gain experience in interviewing techniques, working to deadlines, technical operations and delivering work to a sufficiently high standard that it attracts an outside audience. All of these are valuable skills for pupils to be acquiring.

59 **Leadership and management**

- 1 The headteacher, staff and governors show a strong commitment to the pupils of the school and there is a shared concern to do the best for them. The school has appropriate aims, which cover academic, personal and social aspects that indicate a valuing of pupils and these are reflected in the work of the school. There is a positive ethos, and a supportive environment created for pupils.
- 2 The headteacher, who was appointed after the previous inspection, has a clear understanding of the need to improve standards of attainment, and this has been successfully communicated to staff. A range of actions have been taken to create a climate within which learning can more successfully occur. This has included a restructuring of management roles of teaching and non-teaching staff, which has clarified responsibilities for dealing with behavioural problems and for monitoring pupils' progress. It has also included the broadening of the curriculum at Key Stage 4. These developments are having a positive impact. Other initiatives aimed at improving attainment have been introduced, such as increased assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress, and the monitoring of teaching. These are positive developments, although they are in the relatively early stages of implementation and the potential benefits have yet to be fully realised. The management by the senior management team and of departments and other areas is generally satisfactory, and in several departments management is good. Overall, management and leadership within the school overall are satisfactory. The commitment that exists to improving the standards obtained by pupils, however, is not reinforced by a strong enough sense of urgency or clarity, mainly because of deficiencies in planning for development within the school.
- 3 Development planning has improved since the last inspection and there is now a whole school plan, which identifies a number of priorities, and departmental plans which indicate the contribution that departments will make. Staff and governors are involved in the process. Significant shortcomings remain, however, and development planning is not yet satisfactory. The plans do not identify in sufficient detail and with sufficient clarity precisely what action will be taken to achieve agreed priorities, by whom, over what timescale, and how success will be monitored. They do not mention costings. They only cover a one year period with no indication of future priorities. These weaknesses reduce the effectiveness of development planning as a tool for driving the work of the school forward, and are slowing down the rate of improvement.
- 4 A considerable amount of monitoring is taking place within the school. Heads of department monitor the quality of teaching within their departments and there is much measuring of pupils' performance and progress. These are positive developments. However, the outcomes of these exercises are not evaluated thoroughly enough and there is a lack of clarity about how the information gained will be acted upon to maximise improvement. Monitoring and evaluation are not comprehensive, and accountability through the line management system throughout the school is not strong enough. Because of these, the potential benefits of the good work being undertaken are not fully realised.

- 5 The special educational needs co-ordinator has worked hard since her appointment after the previous inspection to raise awareness of special educational needs issues and improve the quality of provision. The school has regard for the Code of Practice and relevant legislation but its practice is not sufficiently developed and arrangements to monitor the quality of provision are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of clarity about the role that all staff have to play in meeting pupils' special needs, and as a result provision is not efficient or effective enough. Arrangements to ensure that the whole school nature of provision for special educational needs is identified, understood and acted upon is not effective. Statutory requirements are not fully met in respect of those pupils with a statement of special educational need. Arrangements to confirm that all who teach those pupils are aware of their individual needs and of the targets in their individual education plans, and to ensure that these are taken into account in their teaching, are not sufficiently in place. Individual education plans are not in place for all pupils at stages 2 and 3 on the register of special educational needs.
- 6 All other statutory requirements are met, with the exception of the provision of a daily act of collective worship, sufficient time for the teaching of gymnastics, and the reporting of the success of the special educational needs in the governors' annual report to parents.
- 7 The governors are extremely committed to the school and its pupils, and the headteacher keeps them well informed. They make an active and effective contribution to school life. They have an appropriate sub-committee structure which enables them to carry out their responsibilities well. They are very supportive of the school while acting upon their responsibility to hold it to account by asking questions and acting as a 'critical friend'. This latter aspect is an area of their work which is not rigorous enough.
- 8 A lot of hard work has been undertaken since the previous inspection, resulting in good improvements in some areas, such as the broadening of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. In other areas, such as special educational needs and development planning, progress is not yet satisfactory. However, overall, the picture is one of adequate progress having been made. The school has the capacity for further improvement.

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

### 67 Teaching and non-teaching staff

- 9 The school benefits from the work of well-qualified teaching and support staff. Specialist teaching is usually undertaken by teachers qualified in the specialism. In a small number of subjects some teaching is done by non-specialists, but these are qualified and experienced teachers and there is little adverse an impact on the standards attained by pupils in these lessons. Teachers have the knowledge and expertise to teach the National Curriculum, religious education and the other subjects of the curriculum. There has been a comprehensive restructuring of staff deployment since the last inspection which has addressed the issues raised in the last report. Responsibilities are clearly indicated at each level of management. Revised job descriptions now clearly state the accountabilities attaching to the post. Support staff are effectively deployed and administrative support has been significantly improved since the last inspection.

- 10 The school has made significant improvements in the procedures for staff development since the last inspection. The quality of this provision has been recognised by an Investors in People Award from North Derbyshire Training and Enterprise Council. A development funding action plan sets out training targets which relate to whole-school developments. Most of these targets have clear criteria for evaluating success, except those for special educational needs where there is no indication about how the school intends to monitor and evaluate its success in achieving its stated staff development aims. Induction arrangements for new staff are good, and a well-planned programme has been devised for the induction of the three newly qualified teachers on the staff. These teachers speak highly of the support they are receiving and have a very positive attitude towards the school. Staff development and training in relation to whole-school needs has improved since the last inspection, though there is still a need in some areas for more subject specific training for staff. A school wide programme of lesson observation and monitoring of teaching has been put into place as part of the staff development programme. Implementation of this is not consistent across all departments.
- 11 The school governors play an active role in matters related to staffing. The school benefits from the work of administrative and clerical staff, caretakers and mid-day supervisors, all of whom have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

70 Accommodation

- 12 Classroom accommodation is adequate to teach the curriculum, though some of it is in need of re-decoration. Teaching in some subjects such as English and mathematics is spread across several rooms on the site, which adds to the difficulties teachers have in using learning aids effectively and displaying pupils' work. Where it has been possible to suite rooms this has improved professional communication between staff and had a positive effect on pupils' attitude to the subject. There is good accommodation for physical education, enhanced by the use of the neighbouring leisure centre, though GCSE theory lessons have to be taught in the gymnasium. Use is also made of the Youth Centre Theatre for drama, though lessons taught in the hall have to be rescheduled when examinations are held. Accommodation for music is cramped, especially for group work. Many classrooms have good displays of pupils' work, contributing positively to the learning environment, though this is not consistent in all subjects.
- 13 The school has made significant improvements in some areas since the previous inspection. Facilities in the art department have improved and a major refurbishment has been made to some of the toilet facilities for pupils. Staff and parents have made commendable self-help efforts in improving the state of decoration in the accommodation for pupils with special educational needs and pupils and staff have created an environmental garden in the inner quadrangle. However there are problems with the accommodation, most of which result from factors beyond its control. Rainwater leakage through the flat-roof of some parts of the building has resulted in the shutting of a music room, due to water damage to the electric power supply, and there has also been rainwater damage to floor tiles. Other parts of the school are heavily used, especially the social areas, and paintwork and floor covering in these areas reflect this. The state of external decoration of the older parts of the building is poor. Litter in some of the open spaces surrounding the buildings detracts from the overall appearance of the school. The governing body plays an active role in keeping accommodation issues under review. Caretaking staff work hard to maintain the building and facilities.

- 14 Resources are adequate to meet the requirements of the curriculum and to support the learning of pupils. Most departments produce adapted learning materials to supplement texts used in class, and recent purchases of textbooks in some departments have been well planned to meet the needs of the full ability range. Facilities for making and editing videos are good. Although there are sufficient resources to deliver the taught information and communications courses currently offered, the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum is restricted by a lack of resources. The school has made good use of the resources it has, but it is not well placed in respect of resources to meet the raised requirements from September 2000, and careful and imaginative planning will be necessary to ensure that it will be able to meet its responsibilities in this area.
- 15 The use of the library by pupils has improved since the last inspection, though borrowing rates show a considerable fall off in borrowing by pupils beyond Year 8. Most departments use the library well for class work with pupils, but there is little evidence that pupils are encouraged to read more widely in the subjects they are studying. Additional funding to support the school's literacy policy has been used to provide a wider range of books for reluctant readers.
- 16 Since the previous inspection, there has been improvement in the range of off-site visits made by pupils to extend class-based learning, but the use of information and communications technology to support learning across the curriculum remains underdeveloped.

#### 75 **The efficiency of the school**

- 17 Management of the resources available to the school is good and budget setting is within the overall budget that is allocated. Senior managers and governors are giving careful consideration to future funding arrangements and are exploring the range of options now open to them. Financial planning is sound, recognising the school's educational objectives, but the costs expected to arise from longer term planning and priorities related to resources are not clearly stated. Funds available for departmental resources have been restricted by the tight overall budget and are allocated to departments by means of an agreed formula. Criteria for expenditure are linked to the school's development planning, although cost implications are not included in the plan. The monitoring of the outcomes of spending in terms of its impact on pupils' learning takes place through a general consideration of improvements, and is not specific or detailed enough, with criteria for judging success not identified.
- 18 Teaching and non-teaching staff are well deployed throughout the school. Expenditure on teaching staff is close to the national average and the relatively high amount of time teachers spend teaching enables class size to be maintained at acceptable levels. Expenditure on administrative staff is high compared to national averages. Funds for the support of pupils with special educational needs are included in the school's budget for the first time this year. Expenditure under this heading is well monitored and controlled, although the outcomes of decisions about spending in terms of benefits to the pupils is not evaluated. Despite its deficiencies, accommodation is effectively used, but there is high usage of teaching areas, with no spare capacity in some periods. Resources are used efficiently and spending is efficiently monitored at school and departmental levels.
- 19 The school has effective financial controls and the administration of finance in the school is good. The senior administrator and office staff ensure that staff with responsibility for budgetary headings are well supported and there are safeguards in place to check on areas of over- and under-spending. Day-to-day routines for processing and monitoring financial transactions are good. There is a weekly check of spending totals with the Local Education Authority (LEA). Regular updates of the budgetary balances are provided for governors. The governors' finance and premises committee meets regularly and prepares an annual budget for submission to the governing body. The school has taken appropriate action on the recommendations of the latest

LEA auditors' report. Non-budget accounts are audited annually.

- 20 Taking into account the social circumstances of pupils, the low level of attainment on entry, the satisfactory progress of pupils in the school and the generally sound quality of education for pupils, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

79 **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

79 **English**

- 1 In English Language and English Literature examinations at GCSE in 1999 attainment is well below the national average overall. The proportion of A\* to C grades gained is well below average, although the proportion gaining A\* to G grades is above average. Results have fluctuated over the past three years. For the past two years 33 percent attained A\* to C grades in English language and there was an improvement English literature in 1999 when 35 percent gained an A\*-C grade. All pupils achieved a pass grade in English Language.
- 2 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 currently is a little better than these grades indicate, with the majority attaining below average standards. Several pupils achieve very highly and a significant proportion attain standards that are well below average. Standards in writing are lowest. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are average overall with some examples of confident speaking. These skills are well promoted across the key stage as pupils are taught how to analyse the set books. In their response to 'Hard Times' higher attaining pupils are able to speak with confidence on aspects such as character, viewpoint, structure, power and the social and moral issues inherent in the novel. However, although the majority have average levels there is a significant number whose attainment is below average. Pupils read at a level appropriate to their age. Good attention is given on how to analyse works of literature with regard to understanding character, plot, atmosphere and setting. Written work is below average and results are similar to those reflected in the GCSE examinations. Pupils are used to drafting and re-drafting their work and make significant improvements to specific pieces of work both in language and structure, but spelling, punctuation and use of vocabulary is poor. They use information technology well to present their work. Some excellently presented work is produced for coursework. The current Year 11 pupils had higher levels of attainment on entry to the school than the previous year group. This accounts for the slightly higher standards being attained when compared to the 1999 results.
- 3 In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' standards have been well below the national average for the past two years with a significant drop in 1999 when they were very low. That year group had lower levels of attainment on entry to the school which partly accounts for the drop in results, but an administrative failure in the conduct of the tests when pupils were not given the supporting Shakespearean text also contributed. When compared with similar schools results are very low in English.
- 4 Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is well below average overall, especially in writing. Attainment in speaking and listening is better than in reading and writing. Pupils speak with a reasonable degree of confidence when giving a description or presenting their own research. Attainment in reading is below average in Year 9. There is confident reading approaching the national average in Years 7 and 8, helped by the concentration on reading in the literacy project. Pupils can recall and explain what they have read. There are some higher attaining pupils who read at a good standard. For these higher attaining pupils writing is also good with regard to the use of vocabulary, punctuation and paragraphing. Some average and higher attaining pupils are reading books that are too easy and do not extend their vocabulary or understanding of literature. Although a small number of pupils write well, overall, for the majority of pupils, writing is poor. They express their ideas in a way that can be understood, but briefly. They do not write in a sustained way and are inaccurate in their use of spelling, punctuation and paragraphing and have poorly developed vocabularies. Overall attainment is below average at the end of the key stage, but standards are improving in Years 7 and 8. This is because the standards of pupils on entry to the school are rising and also because the school's literacy project is having a positive impact.

- 5 Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment in English. They make satisfactory progress in English overall through their time in school. In some classes and with some teachers across both key stages, however, pupils make good progress. This relates more to the quality of teaching than to the attainment levels of the pupils. Where progress is good in speaking and listening in both key stages lessons are planned so that the topic is interesting and sometimes provocative. It is often best when it has a focus on literature. In Year 9 and in Key Stage 4 pupils are helped to understand the combinations of theme, structure and character in literature. This is a strong feature of most lessons. This kind of analysis of English texts, particularly novels, is good as in 'The Machine Gunners' in Year 9 and 'Of Mice and Men' in Key Stage 4. However, there is not enough attention given to the promotion of language skills with regard to the use of vocabulary and the technicalities of spelling, punctuation and grammar in both key stages. Pupils have many opportunities of identifying figures of speech such as similes and metaphors but there is little focus on how these contribute to good writing. In lessons where the literacy project is followed according to the defined strategy progress is good. In many cases this is not so; pupils read for ten or fifteen minutes at the beginning of the lessons and the remainder of the lessons are structured in a wide range of ways. Overall, too little time is spent on the language element.
- 6 There is evidence of pupils with special educational needs making some good progress in literacy, especially in Years 7 and 8. More generally, however, they do not have their specific needs identified clearly enough. They get individual attention and help with their difficulties but it is not targeted closely enough to ensure that they make as much progress as possible.
- 7 Pupils' interest is either good or very good in the majority of lessons, although there are times when it is poor. Interest in work relates to the varying quality of teaching and the clarity of planning. When teaching is good pupils respond well and develop a capacity for personal study. There are opportunities for personal response in most lessons. Pupils are generally keen to learn and they show respect for their teachers.
- 8 The quality of teaching in English ranges from very good to poor and is satisfactory overall. In almost half of the lessons it is good or very good. In around 20 percent of lessons it is unsatisfactory. Teachers generally have good knowledge of the subject. They have high expectations of their pupils for the most part although there are occasions when they give pupils tasks that are too easy. In the best lessons teachers work hard to interest and engage the pupils. In a very good lesson seen the teacher built upon the interests of pupils by using texts that they had brought to the lesson to teach about the different elements of writing. The vast majority of teachers have good class management skills and discipline. Planning is detailed and some elements are good as in planning for GCSE and for the literacy project. In another very good lesson on advertising and reporting with a group of lower attaining pupils the teacher broke the work into small steps which ensured that pupils progressively gained the knowledge necessary to successfully complete the task and this resulted in very good progress in their understanding. Some refinements are needed in day to day planning. There is good pace in the vast majority of lessons for the first half-hour. However planning for the second half of the lessons needs more careful attention; they often ebb away and pupils' interest lapses. There is a need to insert more language teaching into plans. Where teaching is unsatisfactory lessons are not planned in enough depth or detail and there is not enough substance to enable pupils to make satisfactory progress in learning either in language or literature. Some of the unsatisfactory teaching is by trainee teachers. Day to day assessment is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. The analysis and use of assessment data to fully promote pupils' progress and to inform departmental plans for improvement is not comprehensive enough.

- 9 The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Almost all pupils have the opportunity to do both English Language and English Literature to GCSE level. The literacy programme in Years 7 and 8 is a positive development but the delivery of it is not equally effective for all classes. The Year 9 planning is not as good. The planning for the systematic acquisition of language skills by pupils is also not strong enough. Planning does not fully reflect the requirements of pupils with special educational needs. The communications course makes a significant contribution to the promotion of the spoken word and to an understanding of modern communications. This is a successful course at GCSE although the numbers are small at present. There is potential for development and greater success. The extra-curricular Emerald Radio initiative is very successful and has won many awards, some at national level. It provides very good opportunities for pupils to study language as a vehicle for communication and for them to extend their knowledge and understanding of environmental issues.
- 10 Overall, the management of the subject is satisfactory, but there are some weaknesses. The head of department monitors teaching but the information gained is not being used to fully tackle some of the shortcomings that exist, particularly with regard to planning. Trainee teachers do not get enough guidance on planning the content and structure of their lessons, although they get good support within the classroom with regard to class-management and discipline. Planning for improvement, drawing fully on information gained from monitoring and assessment data is not strong enough.
- 11 Accommodation is adequate but rooms are spread throughout the school. This militates against a unified presentation of work and links with regard to resources. The display of pupils' work is not a strong feature and is not helped by the location and spread of rooms. The library is run as a learning resource centre and has a qualified librarian. Resources are inadequate particularly with regard to computers. There is one computer, linked to the Internet. The library is open to all pupils at break and lunchtimes and for approximately twenty-five minutes after school each day. There is access to the wider resources of the Schools Library Service and these are well used to help pupils with project work in many subjects. There is a lack of high quality novels in the library which could ensure that high attaining pupils are given incentives and guidance to read at an advanced level.
- 12 Attainment is lower than at the previous inspection, although the groups of pupils concerned are not directly comparable. Suggestions made at the previous inspection have been addressed. The department has reviewed the organisation of teaching groups; there is now a better gender balance. Marking is generally good and includes diagnostic comments and guidance on how to improve the quality of work. There are still a few classes taught by two teachers but there is no evidence that this has an adverse effect on standards.

## 91 **Literacy**

- 13 Standards of attainment in literacy are well below average when pupils enter the school. They improve, but continue to be below average in speaking, listening, reading and writing throughout the school and this has the effect of inhibiting attainment in most other subjects. A high priority is being given to raising literacy standards and the school is implementing a programme to promote improvement. This is implemented within English lessons for pupils in Years 7 and 8, and, in addition, all subject departments are required to have a clear focus on improving literacy skills. Rising standards in Years 7 and 8 are evidence that the programme is being effective. Speaking and listening skills are strongest in English, where there is specific planning for their development, but they are generally weak in other subjects. Standards of reading and writing are improving in Years 7 and 8. Despite the improvements the English department has not put all the strategies in place to fully promote the development of language. Most other departments have responded to the literacy drive by displaying subject-specific words prominently within the classrooms, but some are promoting it more prominently than others. The physical education department displays the technical language of the subject giving easy to read definitions in appropriate language. Some very good practice was seen in a dance lesson where pupils worked in groups to make a list of action words, assembling a good list which they then used as the basis for creative movement. In art there are clear displays of work with key words, which are clearly explained and written on the board. In science pupils read aloud and emphasis is given to key words. In modern foreign languages good attention is given to sentence structure and links are made between words in English and in other languages. History helps to promote literacy with a glossary of key words. The geography department uses the library resources in project work and promotes extended writing.
- 14 A communication studies course is offered as an optional short course in Key Stage 4, leading to a full GCSE qualification. The number of pupils opting for the course is small and they are mainly those who are involved in the running of the emerald radio station. It is a successful course with GCSE results and the proportion of A and B grades above average. The course makes a significant contribution to the promotion of the spoken word. Pupils develop good questioning techniques and a good understanding of modern communications. The good degree of background knowledge promoted by pupils' involvement in the extra-curricular radio station is reflected in the high standards of work and successful results.

## 93 **Mathematics**

- 15 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is well below the national average. The number of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the 1999 GCSE is well below the national average and the number gaining grades A\*-G is below the national average. Over the past three years the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C has indicated a small downward trend whilst the proportion gaining within the A\*-G grade range has significantly improved, increasing by over twenty percent. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls and pupils do less well in their GCSE mathematics examinations than in their other subjects and less well than at the time of the last inspection. Achievement in lessons by many higher and lower attainers is better, and this is partly because of improvements in the arrangement of pupils according to their ability in mathematics and partly because the work is more closely matched to their needs. For example, higher attainers show that they have an increasing understanding of the investigative process when they examine a given sequence of numbers, identify a pattern and a rule, and then express the rule in algebraic form. The standards attained by the majority of pupils are well below average, however. The work in lessons of average attaining Springwell pupils is not appropriately matched to their needs and consequently many pupils are under-achieving. For example, average attaining Year 10 pupils show that they can competently handle statistical data and calculate the mean and the range, but their skills are not immediately extended to include continuous or grouped data.

- 16 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below the national average. Test results at the end of the key stage in 1999 are well below the national average and those of pupils from similar schools. The results since 1996 show an underlying trend of improvement, with an increasing proportion of pupils achieving the average and higher National Curriculum levels. Girls and boys produce similar results and their attainment in lessons is broadly in line with their abilities. As in Key Stage 4, improved facilities for arranging pupils into more homogeneous teaching groups is having a positive impact on performance, as exemplified by the improving performance with an increase in the number of pupils gaining test levels which are above those expected for pupils of that age. By the end of the Key Stage most pupils competently tabulate data and interpret information presented to them in graphical and tabular form. They are familiar with the common geometrical shapes and their properties and the majority of pupils have a satisfactory repertoire of mathematical vocabulary. All pupils are exposed to the various aspects of mathematics and there is a particular emphasis placed on number work. Pupils can handle the structures involved in carrying out calculations, but a lack of fluency with multiplication tables often inhibits attainment, even though they understand the new work being undertaken.
- 17 In lessons, Key Stage 3 pupils make satisfactory progress. Lessons generally have a content that builds on previous learning and there is an appropriate balance between consolidation and new work. Appropriate texts and exercises are used to meet individual pupil need so that progress is made within each of the different levels of prior attainment. For example, a group of above average attaining pupils, through the provision of carefully graduated questions, developed their algebraic skills as they solved linear equations of increasing complexity. Lowest attainers rehearsed and enhanced their number skills by using a process of elimination that required them to use multiplication tables to derive a list of prime numbers. In both examples, the progress of many pupils is impeded by a lack of proficiency in mental arithmetic.
- 18 Overall, pupils make unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. Except in lessons for higher attaining pupils, the content of most lessons is substantially limited to practice and consolidation of previous work. Insufficient account is taken of previous learning and pupils' experience much repetition without adequate acquisition of new knowledge and skills. For example, a group of Year 10 pupils, many of whom had achieved the national average level of attainment in their end of Key Stage 3 tests, added nothing to their knowledge and skills when they calculated the means and ranges of very simple sets of data. The experience of these pupils illustrates why inadequate progress is sometimes made in preparation for GCSE examinations and particularly in view of the improving trend in Key Stage 3 results. For example, in 1999, nine pupils who had achieved above national average levels in their Key Stage 3 tests, failed to obtain a GCSE grade within the A\*-C range.
- 19 Many pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in individual lessons. The combination of arranging pupils in groups according to their mathematical needs, appropriate texts, sensitive teacher interactions and some limited classroom assistance supports their learning. For example, a group of lowest attaining Year 8 pupils made satisfactory progress as they used printed multiplication tables to respond to questions and enhanced their understanding of multiples and factors. However, the lack of individually tailored plans for pupils with special educational needs and the lack of detailed information about their particular needs or targets means that overall progress is unsatisfactory.
- 20 The majority of pupils are well motivated and show an interest and concern for their work and progress. In lessons they are generally well behaved and relationships with teachers and fellow pupils are typically characterised by cooperation and harmony. Concentration levels are normally satisfactory except for the final stages of many lessons when, because of a lack of variety and challenge in the work, attention dwindles.

- 21 Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall and has improved since the last inspection. It is satisfactory in over eighty percent of lessons, unsatisfactory in less than ten percent of lessons and good in less than ten percent of lessons. It is less effective in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. This is because the amount of replication of work without extending knowledge and skills, particularly for the middle range of pupils, significantly militates against enhancing pupil progress. In all lessons teachers demonstrate that they have a satisfactory command of the subject but lesson planning does not always take sufficient account of what has gone before. The loss of impetus in the final stages of some lessons is largely because of a lack of variety in teaching strategies and styles and partly because of the demotivating effect on many pupils of repeatedly meeting similar work. The lack of range in teaching strategies was an issue at the time of the last inspection and remains so. In particular, the lack of use of information technology as a means of enriching and supporting learning in mathematics lessons represents a significant weakness in provision. All the teachers of mathematics are hard working and competent but some do not radiate enthusiasm that inspires interest and excitement in the subject. In the best lessons the teacher fully involves the pupils in the exposition, engenders a brisk pace, sets challenging and realistic tasks and regularly assesses the understanding of the pupils. For example, an above average Key Stage 4 group of pupils was actively involved with the teacher in discussing carefully constructed examples that illustrated a range of geometrical transformations. The teacher punctuated the lesson by ensuring that a wide range of pupils was involved at different stages, checked the progress of individuals, sustained a challenging pace and made sure that those experiencing difficulties were not left behind. In less successful lessons the teacher relies on the text book to determine all aspects of the lesson, does not involve the pupils in the process of exposition and fails to vary activities and tasks in order to sustain the lesson's momentum. For example, a group of lower attaining Key Stage 4 pupils, working on reading travel timetables, were indifferent as they were referred by the teacher to relevant sections of the text book for the lesson's work. The teacher then relied upon repeated individual tuition for explanations and exposition. Most teachers mark and assess pupils' work in accordance with the department's policies and procedures, but this is not done so consistently and there are variations in the degree to which pupils understand and share in the assessment process.
- 22 The curriculum covers the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE examination syllabus and it is appropriately planned at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, however, there is not adequate planning for ensuring that pupils make systematic progress in their learning across all areas of the curriculum. In particular, there is too much repetition of basic skills, and not enough planning for the acquisition of new knowledge or application of knowledge to promote understanding and good development of mathematical skills. This is the main factor responsible for the unsatisfactory progress at key Stage 4.
- 23 The resources of the department are very well organised, particularly in view of the large number of teachers who contribute to the provision, and teachers feel very well supported by the efficiency of the head of department. A great deal of work has already been done in generating pupil assessment data and a satisfactory start has been made in using the data to monitor pupil progress and set targets for improving attainment. The fruits of these labours have yet to be fully realised, particularly in relation to making informed judgements and appropriate changes to schemes of work and teaching methods. The monitoring role of the head of department is not of a sufficiently high profile to ensure that procedures and policies are consistently applied. In order to address the areas for improvement indicated in this report, the aspects of monitoring and evaluation require a much sharper focus.

## 102 Numeracy across the curriculum

- 24 Numerical proficiency across the curriculum ranges from weak to good throughout both key stages. For example, number skills are used in physical education to measure endurance fitness levels, and pupils show that they can tabulate results, accurately carrying out addition and multiplication, but faltering when required to use division to work out their fitness index. Measurement skills make a positive contribution to pupils' learning in history, science and technology. In history, for example, pupils' knowledge of chronology is enhanced by the use of charts that illustrate important dates and periods, and Year 7 pupils apply this knowledge to producing charts to represent events relating to their own lives. Data handling skills are used in a variety of subjects to further understanding and particularly in geography. The quality of graphical work varies, with some pupils producing graphs that are inaccurate because they are drawn without using a ruler. Overall, the impact of numeracy is inhibited by a lack of fluency with tables and hesitant mental arithmetic. At present, approaches to the development of numeracy skills across the curriculum are not sufficiently systematic and coordinated across the school, although action to tackle this is planned for the next academic year.

## 103 Science

- 25 Analysis of the GCSE results in dual award science for 1999 shows that the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C is below the national average, but about average when compared with similar schools. The percentage gaining A\*- G grades is about average, both nationally and when compared with schools of similar intake. This has remained steady over the last three years. There have been fluctuations between the attainment of boys and girls, but no significantly different trends.
- 26 Attainment at the end of Key stage 4 during the inspection is below average. Pupils in Year 11 have satisfactory knowledge of scientific facts and principles in all three branches of science, life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. Many find it hard to apply their knowledge in examination questions, however. Pupils who are average and lower attainers, for example, know that pressure increases with depth in a liquid, and can do simple calculations involving pressure, given the formula to use by their teacher. Most use the correct unit for pressure, and some higher attaining pupils can describe the workings of hydraulic brakes, after seeing a simple demonstration. When helped by skilful teacher questioning, these pupils can show the relationship between different biological processes such as photosynthesis and respiration, and deduce the way carbon is recycled in nature. Practical skills are sound.
- 27 Analysis of the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests results shows attainment well below average for the number of pupils gaining the expected level five or above. This is a fall from the 1998 levels of attainment. The 1999 year group had poor literacy skills, as shown by their low reading age scores. Prior to this, there had been a steady rise in attainment, particularly with boys.
- 28 Inspection evidence shows attainment to be below average for those pupils currently approaching the end of Key stage 3. Pupils learn scientific facts and with help develop some understanding of the concepts and principles being taught, but this is usually at a relatively low level. For example, pupils recall the name of atoms, protons, nucleus and electrons when prompted by the teacher, and high attaining pupils show greater understanding by realising the more electrons, the further away from the nucleus they have to go. In a lesson seen on balanced diets, average pupils could identify carbohydrate, fats and protein, and could name several sources of these in the diet, but many, especially boys, muddled the functions of proteins and vitamins. The higher attaining pupils recognise the effect of occupation on the amount of energy needed from foods, and are able to interpret bar charts relating to the needs of babies, children, and adults with different occupations, but to the standards expected of average pupils of this age.

- 29 Progress is satisfactory overall at both key stages, as seen in their work and during lessons. Much work is copied and many pupils have the same pieces, making it difficult to see progress for individuals from their folders. In Key Stage 4, there was evidence of some good progress, especially in Year 11 where classes are divided into sets, resulting in different ability levels being catered for effectively. In Year 10, progress was seen to be good in a mixed ability class where pupils were investigating how copper can be purified by electrolysis. Pupils set up the apparatus correctly, following instructions if unsure. They weighed the copper plates accurately, and above average pupils traced the movement of ions through the solution from one electrode to another, and with prompting, assigned a colour to the copper ion present.
- 30 Progress depends very much on pupils' literacy skills and to a certain extent on the teachers' ability to cater for wholly mixed ability groups in Key Stage 3. The many pupils with special educational needs in each class do not always have work provided which matches their ability. Consequently, their frustration sometimes makes them very disruptive of time and attention and they do not make satisfactory progress in their learning. In some lessons, a few disruptive, lower attaining boys sometimes commandeer the teacher's attention, leaving other, quicker pupils, mostly girls, who complete the work, to coast for the rest of the lesson.
- 31 On entry to the school, whilst some pupils' knowledge and understanding of science is about average, attainment in the subject overall is well below average. This is due to pupils' poor literacy skills, which makes it difficult for them to read or comprehend science. Some pupils in Year 7, for example, were able to use their satisfactory knowledge of conductors and insulators learned in their primary schools to make predictions about materials they had not met before. However, their poor literacy skills meant that they could not articulate clearly or express their scientific ideas well on paper. Their ability to understand written text is well below average. Pupils in Year 8 satisfactorily learn from text books to distinguish between a star, galaxy and solar system when studying the Earth and space, though some lower attaining pupils are unsure of whether the Earth travels round the sun or vice versa. Higher attaining pupils do not always make enough progress in mixed ability groups. In some classes, appropriate extension work is produced, but not in all.
- 32 Pupils are generally keen and conscientious in their attitude to science. They carry out their experiments with care and work efficiently, writing up experiments as they work, where they are able to. However, pupils with special needs quickly lose interest when they are not well supported in developing their understanding and pupils do not make sufficient progress when some of their peers are being disruptive.
- 33 At the time of the last inspection, teaching was judged to be mostly satisfactory. Since then, an improvement has taken place and almost half the teaching observed in Key Stage 4 was good or better; all lessons in both key stages were at least satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is good, particularly in their own branch of science. They share their expertise to enable all to teach outside their own specialisms in Key Stage 3, and some also in Key Stage 4. Expectations are generally satisfactory. When pupils are grouped by similar ability, they are usually appropriate, but teachers find it more difficult with mixed ability classes to challenge all pupils appropriately. Mixed ability teaching works best when teachers are adequately supported by educational care officers who assist pupils with special needs.
- 34 Teachers' planning is good, using lesson plans from the schemes of work, and most produce extra work for pupils who finish early. However, these are not always sufficient to move learning on, sometimes being a time-filling exercise, for example a word search on living things, as seen in Year 7, which was not directly related to the topic in hand. Teachers' methods and organisation are generally good with a variety of practical work and written tasks. Organisation of practical work is generally good, with sufficient material and apparatus, easily accessible to the pupils.
- 35 Pupils are managed well by most teachers, with appropriate groupings for demonstrations and paired practical activities. Discipline is satisfactory, but some teachers are better than others in

coping with pupils exhibiting poor conduct. Resources are usually used well and are appropriate. There is an increase in the number of modern textbooks since the last inspection.

- 36 Teachers mark work promptly and return it with helpful comments for improvement. They use information gained from marking and assessment by tests to plan the next stages of the curriculum, for example satisfactorily repeating work that has not been fully understood. Teachers use homework well to extend the curriculum, and mark it promptly.
- 37 Laboratory technicians support teachers well. They prepare practical materials ordered ahead of the lesson, and ensure that it is presented correctly, with due attention to health and safety. Risk assessments have been carried out effectively, and technicians are helped by having full access to the schemes of work and lesson plans. Education care officers support special needs pupils well; although attached to one pupil, they will help the rest. However, they are insufficient in number to attend all lessons.
- 38 The schemes of work are good, structured to break down into lesson plans with resources and safety aspects identified, opportunities for assessment of both knowledge and practical skills, and including many worksheets to suit the needs of different groups of pupils. However, material planned for pupils with special educational needs is insufficient; the department does not have specific information through individual education plans on the large proportion of such pupils. The department provides well for the school's literacy initiative, displaying and emphasising key words in all laboratories, and most teachers expect pupils to read aloud to the whole class, where appropriate, during lessons. They use simple worksheets to help pupils learn the meaning of the key scientific words. The department's provision for information and communications technology is satisfactory in its use for scientific applications such as monitoring the temperature of model houses with different insulation, but computers are old and not sufficiently versatile to be used as a general tool for learning, using modern software. Pupils' numeracy skills are used well in science, with frequent calculations and measurements.
- 39 Assessment is satisfactory by the use of module tests and standardised tests, though there has been a mismatch between teacher assessments and national test results in the past. The department has taken steps to address this by modifying tests. Assessment is used well to plan the next stage of the curriculum; objectives are now satisfactorily shared with the pupils, and lessons are often altered to take account of shortfall in knowledge gained previously. In the longer term, assessment and target setting have just begun in the school, and advice and action communicated to pupils falling short of their targets does not follow a distinct department policy.
- 40 The head of department is a strong leader who has built an effective and close-knit team. He has successfully monitored teaching in the department and given specific advice to teachers to improve their teaching. This information is discussed with each member of staff annually in the context of professional development, which is an improvement since the last inspection. He sees his main priority to raise standards, and has recognised the essential value of the school's literacy initiative. Standards are slowly being raised, particularly of boys, but planning cannot be more precise because there is no effective school assessment of pupils with special needs. Other improvements since the last inspection include more modern text books to enhance the already good practical resources in the department.

119 **Art**

- 41 Attainment in art at the end of Key Stage 4 is well below average. Only 27 percent of the pupils in 1999 gained an A\* to C grade at GCSE compared with the national figure of 63 percent. These results do not reflect the work currently being done in the department where recent changes in the management and teaching staff are bringing about improvements in pupils' performance, but they do demonstrate a significant improvement since 1997, when no one was successful. At the end of the key stage pupils have adequate drawing and painting skills but they are unable to apply them adventurously and there is an over reliance on these techniques with insufficient skills developed in other areas such as graphics, printmaking and three-dimensional work. Standards are improving, however, with better work being produced, especially by in the current Year 10 where there are some talented pupils.
- 42 Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate that 73 percent of pupils are either meeting or exceeding national expectations. The work seen during the inspection indicates that the assessments are generous and that the attainment of pupils in Year 9 is still below expectations, whilst, as a result of the improvements made within the department, standards are better relatively in Years 7 and 8 where a majority of pupils are meeting expectations. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are developing good drawing and painting skills through studies of, for example, Cézanne, cubism, Japanese and Chinese art. In Year 9, however, pupils still lack understanding of the basic elements of the subject.
- 43 Pupils at Key Stage 3 make satisfactory progress. Pupils at Key Stage 4 are making unsatisfactory progress across the key stage, but it is improving, especially in Year 10, due to recent staff and management changes within the department. Pupils in Year 7 are introduced to colour theory and drawing skills. This is resulting in particularly good quality of drawings produced by pupils as preparation for both three-dimensional work and batik, as in a Year 7 class seen developing work based on the still-life compositions of Paul Cézanne. Pupils in the current Year 10 have made particularly good progress in drawing skills during the course of this term. Some have the ability to gain A\* grades and they could benefit from more challenging work and greater demands on their time. The progress and attainment of the girls is better than that of the boys at both key stages. Less able pupils make good progress relative to their ability but the talent of the more able pupils is not always exploited. Those pupils who have special educational needs are not always known to staff and their needs are not specifically planned for. However, in the practical aspects of the subject these pupils make similar progress to that of their peers.
- 44 Attitudes to learning at both key stages are satisfactory with the exception of small groups of pupils, mainly Year 11 boys, who actively resist the best efforts of their teachers. Their progress is hampered by a reluctance to work and a lack of ambition while others are slow to experiment with materials, scale and the design process, The great number of pupils are increasingly able to sustain concentration, and are developing the capacity for personal study. Most are happy working independently or in small groups and are pleased to discuss each others work sensibly and constructively. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is a strength of the department and the pupils obviously recognise their teachers' enjoyment of the subject. Increasingly, pupils are taking the initiative, showing pride in their work, and accepting responsibility for improvement.

- 45 The quality of teaching in the department is satisfactory overall with a positive impact on learning, and it is good in the majority of lessons at Key Stage 4. Teachers' good use of questions at the beginning of lessons, while recapping previous activity, both challenges the pupils and promotes an appropriate pace of learning. A particularly good lesson, on colour mixing and still-life painting, part of a series inspired by the work of Cézanne, led to much new learning in year 7. Another teacher delivered an effective lesson on the physical properties of clay, and she skilfully generated interest, allowing an insight into the creative potential of clay. The staff have high expectations and communicate their ambition clearly to their pupils. Specialist teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. While making many valuable contributions to their pupils' education, the non-specialist teachers sometimes miss opportunities to promote insights into the subject and they require a degree of retraining if they are to develop the necessary personal view of critical studies. The new management structure has been in place for only two years and the improvements in the department, although considerable, have not yet had full impact especially at the ends of the key stages. The failure to regularly set homework represents a missed opportunity to raise the status of the subject and consolidate the improvements.
- 46 The curriculum, criticised in the previous inspection, is now broad and balanced, particularly since the introduction of textiles, a rich source of improvement, and the increased emphasis on three-dimensional studies. An almost complete lack of information and communication technology in the department is a serious concern. The time allowed for Key Stage 3 art is slightly below that recommended. There are effective systems for assessing pupils' attainment, curriculum planning and continuity from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4, while informal, everyday assessment helps pupils improve their work and their teachers to plan and modify lessons.
- 47 The department makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development. The study of a wide range of European and non-European art and artists is breeding a healthy tolerance of different cultures. The teachers' clear lead in showing right from wrong is another strength of the department as is their encouragement of pupils to relate positively to each other and to respect the fabric of the department and its resources. The staff also provide effective advice and support for their pupils in the ways they monitor academic progress and behaviour.
- 48 There is a positive ethos in the department. The head of department provides clear direction for the subject, and while recognising that much is still to be done, she ensures the department is improving daily. Observational drawing has been placed at the centre of the department's work and is being used to raise achievement. The accommodation, criticised in the previous inspection, is still in need of decoration while improved lighting will brighten some of the dark corners. Learning resources are adequate if unadventurous but fail to inspire experimentation. Planning for development, a weakness in the previous inspection, still needs to consider the implication of timing and resources necessary to drive the plans forward. The department is making significant improvements and is a good place for pupils to be.

## 127 **Design and technology**

- 49 GCSE results in design and technology over the past three years have been below the national average for all maintained secondary schools and for schools with similar pupils. The overall results for 1999 did not show an improvement on 1998 with regard to A\*-C grades, but were almost at the national average for A\*-G grades. The results varied across the different technology courses. The GCSE Child Development course produced 37.5 per cent A\*-C grades, and while just below the national average, this is encouraging for a newly introduced course. Graphics and food results showed 31 percent and 24 percent gaining A\*-C grades respectively, but the results in resistant materials and electronics were particularly low at eight and ten percent respectively gaining A\*-C grades. Girls are generally performing better than boys and achieving more of the C and D grades. In 1999 a relatively high proportion of pupils, mainly boys, were ungraded in the examination. The 1999 results were close to those predicted by teachers. Pupils' performance in relation to their other subjects in the school generally reflects the picture outlined above.

- 50 At the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of the majority of pupils in class is below the national expectation. This is different from the previous inspection when it was reported that a significant minority underachieved at the age of sixteen. The standards achieved by higher and middle attaining pupils is lower than it might be because their particular needs have been insufficiently addressed earlier in their school life. Pupils' knowledge of and skills in designing is underdeveloped and this accounts for the disappointing GCSE results in resistant materials and electronics. Pupils of higher and middle abilities present work in a reasonably tidy manner; lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs require the help of their teacher to achieve this. Work is not of a sufficiently high standard overall, however. Information and communications technology is not used to any great extent to enhance the presentation of work; for example, pie and bar charts are drawn by hand. An inadequate quantity of work is produced in most material areas. Research skills are not developed well. There are some good features. In Year 10 all pupils can produce a design of their own choice and braze safely to join metals together in the project producing nutcrackers. In Year 11 pupils use their developing designing and practical skills to tackle longer and more complex assignments of their own choice, such as alarms, location devices and counters for fishing trips. A few higher attaining pupils' work combines detailed research with critical analysis of data in reasonably presented coursework, using information technology. Average attaining pupils recognise the input-output process of electronic circuits and can apply this knowledge to new work. Files and lesson observations of the pupils undertaking the GCSE child development course show higher standards than in other areas, and in this subject attainment is average, with relevant knowledge being undertaken and understood.
- 51 The 1999 teacher assessment judgements show the standards attained by pupils are well below average. Inspection evidence confirms that standards attained by those pupils currently approaching the end of Key Stage 3 are low. Pupils' attainment in designing in particular is poor. However, there are examples of higher attaining pupils who produce good work in graphs, food, resistant materials and textiles. Pupils understand what a design brief is and that designing and making are linked. In textiles, pupils do simple designing following the requirements of the design brief given to them by the teacher and confidently use the sewing machines and other tools to make heat proof mats. They are equally competent in food work when planning and making pizza mixtures. Pupils producing drawings of four perspective blocks demonstrate an understanding of graphics. The higher and middle attaining pupils produce clean, clear work with black outlining and sensitive use of colour on the blocks. Lower attaining pupils produce work of a satisfactory standard in graphics due to good teacher guidance. Basic research skills are promoted although pupils generally are weak at this. Pupils use a variety of tools and equipment to mark out, measure, cut and file. The previous inspection report commented that "some pupils demonstrate weak making skills when using resistant materials". Making skills in this area have improved over Key Stage 3. While design skills are of a low order, pupils in the Year 9 resistant materials course produce some good finished candleholders using forging and jointing techniques. Pupils' recall of appropriate nutritional knowledge and application of it to a new task was satisfactory in a Year 9 lesson on healthy eating. Pupils have knowledge of the health and safety issues involved in workshop activity.
- 52 Pupils' poor literacy skills, particularly in writing, adversely affect their attainment in design and technology. In lessons at both key stages, those pupils who volunteer to answer the teacher's questions usually do so competently. Higher attaining pupils are able to organise their ideas to speak fluently but other pupils are less forthcoming. Only a minority of pupils are able to use appropriate technical language in their responses. Many pupils in the lower year groups have difficulty writing answers to questions with some writing only a few words.

- 53 Pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment and most make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stage 3, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Progress is best when in the lessons where teachers have high expectations. For example, lower attaining pupils in Year 7 rose well to the challenge of designing and making heat proof mats, using knowledge and skills gained during previous lessons. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 8 made satisfactory progress in small groups using resource kits to understand structures, and individually when consolidating knowledge of perspective drawing, but they do not always receive the support they need to make satisfactory progress. In Year 9 there is satisfactory progress in making skills with higher attaining pupils producing good work in resistant materials and food. Throughout Key Stage 3 practical making skills are acquired more quickly than knowledge and understanding. Pupils make satisfactory progress in working with a variety of tools and techniques across a range of material areas.
- 54 Pupils' progress is unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 4. It varies across the different courses. For example, in the child development course, pupils progress satisfactorily and are able to consolidate knowledge and apply it to new tasks. However, whilst competent teaching enables some pupils to make satisfactory progress in individual lessons, they do not make sufficient progress throughout the key stage due to deficiencies in curriculum planning which does not promote adequate development of their knowledge and skills. Research skills are not developed adequately. When pupils are presenting their ideas they do not produce enough detail on materials and components to be used. This is particularly the case in resistant materials and electronics.
- 55 At both key stages pupils' response is good. They are interested and keen to do well. The take-up in design and technology in Key Stage 4 is affected by girls, in particular, preferring vocational studies. The child development course is well supported. Pupils usually concentrate well and behaviour is good. There are constructive relationships between pupils, for example in textiles, where boys and girls, many of them with special educational needs, showed each other how to use the sewing machine and in resistant materials where pupils worked safely alongside each other at the forge. On the whole, pupils are enthusiastic and they enjoy design and technology lessons.
- 56 The quality of teaching of design and technology is satisfactory overall. Almost a third of teaching at Key Stage 3 was good, and there was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching is better in child care, food and graphics than in resistant materials and electronics and this is reflected in the standards obtained by pupils. Staff have good subject knowledge in their specialisms. Most teachers have high expectations. They provide some interesting topics and challenging designing and making tasks to pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3. In the better lessons, teachers effectively direct pupils' learning, through a combination of explanation, demonstration and pupil activity. Good oral feedback is given in these lessons. In a Year 8 graphics lesson, for example, the teacher gave a very clear technical explanation of perspective, using examples which helped the pupils to understand the important points and which enabled them to produce work of a good standard. Time is well used in the majority of lessons, with valuable help from technical staff to ensure smooth running. Child development lessons are well planned and delivered. In general, teachers plan soundly but lessons at Key Stage 4 are not planned in enough depth to enable pupils to achieve sufficient knowledge and understanding. In these lessons there is insufficient written guidance given to pupils to supplement oral explanations by the teacher and this is reflected in the lower standards achieved by pupils. Objectives for lessons are not always shared with pupils. Special educational needs pupils do not receive the support they need to ensure that they make adequate progress in every lesson.

- 57 There is an appropriate curriculum in place for design and technology. Planning is sound at Key Stage 3 and in most of the subjects offered at Key Stage 4. Planning in child development, food and textiles is of a higher standard than that in resistant materials and electronics. In these latter subjects there is less detail and the planning does not adequately ensure that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are developed fast enough. This results in lower standards being achieved by pupils. A satisfactory system of assessment is in use, although the information gained is not used fully enough to promote progress in pupils' learning. Marking of pupils' work is varied, with limited comments written to inform and guide pupils.
- 58 While there is a vision of the educational direction for the department there is not enough clarity, consistency and focus. Plans for raising attainment are embryonic. Not all of the documentation is up to date and the quality of it varies across the different material area, being weakest in the areas of resistant and materials and electronics. These weaknesses slow the rate of progress within the department as a whole. Inadequate information and communication technology facilities mean that pupils' coursework at Key Stage 4 is not completed to a high standard.
- 59 Since the previous inspection examination results have not shown a marked improvement. Pupils' making skills in resistant materials have improved although they are still not satisfactory at Key Stage 4. A consistent approach to marking is still required. Access to information and communication technology equipment is needed by the department to enable the pupils to acquire the standards needed for presentation of their GCSE coursework and to allow control work to be carried out. There are still areas of the accommodation that need attention.

### 138 **Drama**

- 60 Drama is taught as a separate subject in Key Stage 3 and as a GCSE option course in Key Stage 4. GCSE results have been rising steadily over the past three years and were above the national average in 1999.
- 61 At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment in drama is above the national average for the majority of pupils. Pupils' work shows a mature and confident approach. Folders of coursework show a good understanding of all aspects of the subject including strategies and techniques to use in specific situations. Pupils have a good understanding of the contribution of costume and make-up to the overall presentation of a range of characters in a given script.
- 62 At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with expectations for the majority of pupils. Pupils can improvise and produce short scenes based on the theme of relationships. They can present their work to the class with due consideration for the use of tone, content and visual presentation. They know how to use voice and gestures to present scenes of conflict and strife. They work collaboratively sharing ideas and supporting each other to create scenes which convey meaning and a moral.
- 63 Progress is good in both key stages. In Key Stage 3 pupils learn all the basic skills of improvisation, mime, basic theatre skills and the conventions of building up character drama. They can use these in creating monologues and in improvising scenes to present conflict. They can give good presentations of group work on themes exploring relationships.
- 64 In Key Stage 4 pupils who choose this course give time and dedication to the subject and make good progress. They build on the skills acquired in Key Stage 3 and refine them further. During the inspection they were studying character make-up following a professional demonstration. They have a good understanding of the effects of stage lighting and how costume and make-up have to be designed with this in mind. They know the techniques needed to achieve character effects such as ageing, evil, beauty and innocence. Priority is given to improving provision for pupils who have special educational needs. Teachers give these pupils appropriate attention and they make good progress.

- 65 Pupils enjoy this subject and show interest in their work in both key stages. Drama is a popular subject with a greater than average percentage of pupils choosing this course. Pupils sustain concentration well; this is helped by well-structured lessons where pupils are given tasks to develop in a set period of time. They are aware of the specific discipline needed for drama and understand that even boisterous presentations have to be done with immense control and planning to achieve the desired effect. They are expected to show initiative at all stages and respond well to the demands of the subject.
- 66 Teaching is good in both key stages. Both teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They have good class-management skills and discipline. They use time well, pacing the exercises briskly, reviewing pupils' progress at each stage and helping them to acquire the necessary skills. Teaching was good in a lesson seen with Year 9 pupils dealing with conflict between parents and teenagers, where the teachers' input helped pupils to evaluate and improve their delivery of a monologue expressing parental concern. The teachers' input in another Year 9 lesson and the pace of learning generated resulted in pupils making good progress in effectively employing dramatic devices in impromptu performances on the subject of trust in relationships with friends. Assessment is ongoing in all lessons. Pupils are involved in self-evaluation at stages throughout all lessons. They help to evaluate the work of their peers. Teachers are successful in enabling pupils to be confident and to improvise speech spontaneously. They have high expectations of their pupils.
- 67 The curriculum is well planned. It is well sequenced and in very good detail, with very good illustrations of specific aspects such as fight techniques. There is a good range of extra-curricular provision with a major production each year and several smaller dramatic presentations throughout the year by GCSE pupils. Presentations are also done in the local community.
- 68 There is strong leadership in the department and a commitment to the subject and to the pupils. There is an effective learning environment despite a shortage of accommodation. At some periods the department uses the theatre in the nearby Leisure Centre which provides a professional type setting, enhancing performance. The head of department gives a very significant amount of time to extra-curricular provision. The large-scale productions give valuable opportunities to pupils to gain additional expertise and confidence.
- 69 The subject explores issues such as friendship, trust, truth, guilt and responsibility and makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- 70 All the strong features reported in the previous inspection are maintained.

## 149 **Geography**

- 71 Attainment by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. Results in the GCSE examinations have fluctuated since the previous inspection. There is, however, a rising trend in the proportion of pupils achieving A\* to C grades. In 1999 this proportion was still below the national average but has improved from being very low in comparison with the 1998 results. In 1999 all pupils entered for the examination passed - a considerable achievement. The grades achieved by pupils in geography were, on average, slightly higher than those they obtained in their other subjects. The attainment of boys is higher than that of the girls, which is contrary to both the national and school trend. Pupils have a knowledge and understanding of a range of places. They describe and are beginning to explain the links between physical and human geography when, for example, identifying features on aerial photographs of the river Trent and Derwent valleys. Pupils are not able to explain how the physical features of a river channel are formed by the processes of erosion and deposition.

- 72 The assessment judgements made by teachers in 1999 show pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 to be below average, and the attainment by pupils currently approaching the end of Key Stage 3 is also below average. Pupils have a sense of place, which extends from a local to an international scale. In Year 7 they use maps to locate settlements of different sizes and begin to understand the concept of hierarchy. Pupils use atlases and texts reasonably competently for reference and research in structured projects on France and India. Although they have a basic understanding of contour lines and height they are not able to recognise different types of slopes nor draw cross sections.
- 73 In Key Stage 3 pupils of all abilities make good progress. Attainment in geography on entry to the school is well below average and by the end of the key stage it is below average. Good progress is ensured by good teaching making effective use of resources which are carefully matched to pupils' abilities. Key words are identified to improve literacy and pupils gradually develop their geographical vocabulary. By the end of Key Stage 3 lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs complete partially drawn climate graphs and describe them in general terms. Higher attaining pupils draw their own graphs accurately and in work on Nigeria relate patterns of climate to different types of farming.
- 74 In Key Stage 4 pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress. They begin the GCSE course with a wide range of ability and their results generally reflect this. In Year 10 pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of employment structures in the British Isles. They extend this by comparing these structures with those of both developed and developing countries. In fieldwork pupils collect some data on shopping to study patterns of the size and location of different types of shops. Some word process their work and use spreadsheets to collate data and produce graphs to illustrate their results. Higher attaining pupils explain the limitations of their findings. The use of different graphs, scales and grid references in geography makes a useful contribution to the development of numeracy skills.
- 75 Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are generally good. This has a positive impact on progress and attainment. A very small number of older boys are unable to sustain interest and concentration throughout the lessons but their negative attitude was confined and did not influence other pupils. The majority of pupils like learning about people and places and issues arising from people's interaction with the environment. They work well in groups, for example, when considering different methods of industrial production. Pupils are aware of the social, economic and moral issues of the contrast between rich and poor in third world countries. They are conscious of the environmental issue of deforestation and its effect on global warming.
- 76 Teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. It was never less than satisfactory and was good in 60 per cent and very good in 10 per cent of lessons. This generally good teaching is ensured by detailed prescriptive planning and a rigorous application of an enquiry method. Whilst at the same time as providing a secure framework for teaching its consistent use restricts other approaches. This lack of variety is placing a limit on progress and a ceiling on attainment. The best teaching on grid references moved at an accelerating pace from teaching the basic skill to its application on maps. Pupils were gradually allowed to work independently at their own pace. Higher attaining pupils were challenged and were successful. Lower attaining pupils were supported in a small group and made equally very good progress in relation to their ability. Less successful lessons had too much teacher input, too little pupil involvement and took all pupils along at the same steady pace with little challenge for the higher attaining pupils. The use of different materials for lower attaining pupils ensures that they make good progress in relation to their ability. Day-to-day marking uses comments to inform pupils how to improve their work. Homework is set regularly to both reinforce and extend classwork.
- 77 The curriculum in Key Stage 3 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and together with the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 provides a coherent and progressive programme of study. There is insufficient fieldwork at Key Stage 3 and the use of information technology is severely limited due to the lack of equipment.

- 78 The management of the department is satisfactory. The dispersion of the teaching rooms for geography makes support and sharing resources difficult. Monitoring both the curriculum and the quality of teaching is not fully developed and the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments are not checked for accuracy.
- 79 Sufficient progress has been made since the previous inspection. Attainment and teaching have improved. There is no copying of notes and pupils have opportunities for extended writing. The staff are committed to sustaining these improvements and implementing others in order to raise attainment. They have the capacity to do this but current plans lack detail on how to achieve this aim.

## 158 History

- 80 In 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE grades A\*-C was well below the national average. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well below national expectations. In a group of pupils closest to the end of Key Stage 4, studying health in Nineteenth Century London, a few show historical skills in the interpretation of primary sources and offer valid reasons for the spread of cholera. The rest are attentive but do not join in the discussion. Coursework, which has been conscientiously produced, shows evidence of effort but all but a few pupils have difficulty in writing an analytical paragraph.
- 81 Teachers' assessments indicated that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 was well below national expectations. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils' currently approaching the end of Key Stage 3 is also well below national expectations. Pupils closest to the end of Key Stage 3, with guidance, record evidence about the working conditions of children in Nineteenth Century textile mills on worksheets carefully designed to help them keep the various kinds of evidence separate. They understand the importance of using primary evidence to support the statements they are considering and sustain concentration during the exercise but few ask the questions which would move the lesson along. For many pupils in both key stages the attainment of higher standards is hampered by inadequate literacy skills.
- 82 Most pupils make satisfactory progress across Key Stage 4. As a result of careful direction, historical skills, particularly the handling of source material, are improving. For example, a Year 10 class distinguished prejudice and pointed out the unreliability of Eighteenth Century political cartoons as primary evidence. They are able to make connections with previous work. They are able to explain why, for example, over a period of five years Arthur Young could make apparently contradictory comments about the benefits of agricultural enclosures.
- 83 In Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress overall and in some classes, as a result of good teaching, progress is good. A Year 7 class studying the origins of Rome and the story of Romulus and Remus learn how to distinguish between historical fact and legend and how to provide the examples of evidence to support their opinions. Lower attaining pupils make progress by being allowed to express their knowledge in the way which suits them best, for example, some produce illustrations instead of writing descriptive paragraphs. Higher attaining pupils are given extension work. Sometimes these pupils are able to think for themselves and make perceptive comments which could stimulate class discussion. The teacher gives them credit for the point they are making but the discussion, from which the whole class would benefit, does not develop.
- 84 Some special educational needs pupils make similar progress to other pupils but by no means, all, and progress for most is unsatisfactory. The department is conscious of its responsibility toward both lower and higher attaining pupils and methods of improving progress at either end of the spectrum are being considered.

- 85 Across both key stages the attitudes of almost all pupils are positive and behaviour good. The majority of pupils are pleasant, polite and sociable. They settle quickly to written exercises and, for the most part, sustain concentration. The take-up rate at Key Stage 4 is, however, low. The current Year 11 group has 12 pupils and Year 10 twenty pupils. Both classes have a predominance of boys. Girls appear to find other option subjects more attractive.
- 86 Across both key stages, teaching is always at least satisfactory and in around a third of lessons it is good. Classes are well managed and well organised. Pupils are handled firmly but with good humour. Lessons are well timed and well planned. Most are divided into short periods with varied activities precisely timed. In a significant number of lessons teaching is too directive and this limits the progress of pupils, particular high attainers. Teachers ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn during the lesson and check the progress in learning at the end of the lesson. Homework is regularly set and linked clearly to the lesson. Marking is consistent and encouraging. There is considerable emphasis on literacy. Every lesson has an element of written work. Teachers provide good training in the use of source material. They stress the absolute need to provide solid evidence to back every statement made. All history groups are of mixed ability and care is taken to differentiate the exercises set by means of different worksheets or textbooks. Too often, however, the teacher concentrates on the middle and lower attaining pupils while higher attaining pupils, although kept busy with extension work, are not given the attention they need. There is a lack of academic controversy necessary to stretch them and interest the rest of the class, for example, not how but why did Henry VIII dissolve the monasteries? Was King John a bad king or misunderstood? Did Charles I deserve to be executed? There is not enough emphasis, particularly for pupils in Key Stage 3, on larger-than-life individuals who can be discussed as heroes/heroines or villains, for example, Richard the Lionheart, Mary Queen of Scots, Oliver Cromwell.
- 87 The curriculum is well planned and meets statutory requirements. Different topics have been selected for the GCSE examination in 2000 in order to give a small Key Stage 4 what is perceived to be a better chance at GCSE. The reduction in the time allocation for Year 7 has caused some difficulties in finishing the syllabus for that year. The value of information and communications technology is recognised and pupils are encouraged to word process projects and to find information on the Internet. Some history topics, for example, The Eyam Plague, are taught in information and communications technology lessons by a member of the department who a specialist in both subjects. Assessment data is carefully recorded and used constructively. For example, the discovery that 10 out of 25 pupils in a Year 7 class had a reading age two years below their chronological age led to the introduction of writing frames and glossaries of key words for each topic studied, such as for Year 7 pupils studying Roman Britain who are given lists containing Caesar, aqueduct and centurion. Standardisation of work through co-operation within the department has been effectively introduced and portfolios of work built up to aid future assessments, for example, a Year 7 file on life as a Roman soldier has samples of work at different levels. The head of department expects to use assessment data to inform curriculum planning after the system has been in place longer and has proved its usefulness.
- 88 The management of the department is good. The head of department, appointed last year, has established her position and has good relationships with other members of the department. She has a secure knowledge of the department through monitoring of lessons and exercise books. Departmental documentation is clear. Schemes of work are detailed. The departmental development plan is not ambitious, but it is very practical and makes clear the commitment to improving the performance of all pupils. The department has made progress since the previous inspection particularly in the use of documentary evidence. The department is forward looking and prepared to adopt new methods of attracting pupils to the subject.

- 89 Attainment in information and communications technology (ICT) at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. In 1999 grades A\* to C were achieved by 50 per cent of pupils entered for the GCSE full course and 20 per cent of pupils entered for the GCSE short course. Grades A\* to G were gained by all pupils entered. In the Certificate of Achievement in Information Technology half of the pupils entered gained a distinction. This was the first year in which pupils were entered for GCSE and Certificate courses. In lessons pupils extend their skills and are able to apply their knowledge of databases to store and sort information. Pupils of all levels of attainment improve their understanding of ICT applications by using more advanced features of word-processing and presentational software in designing, for example, an introductory sheet for business publicity. Pupils apply a range of skills in coursework activities and standards achieved are in line with the results as a whole.
- 90 Results at the end of Key Stage 3 have shown steady improvement over the last three years. The standards of work assessed by the school at the end of the Key Stage in 1999 were lenient and results are well below average. In lessons the attainment is also very low, building on low levels of achievement when pupils enter the school. Pupils develop basic skills in loading and using the computers and in printing and saving work, and during the key stage they experience all strands of the ICT syllabus. Pupils improve steadily and by the end of the key stage are able investigate, using simple computer models and control, and apply their knowledge, using datahandling and presentational packages.
- 91 ICT in the school has been reorganised since the previous inspection and now all pupils in Key Stage 4 are prepared for entry to the GCSE short course or, if they choose to take the option, the full course. Progress in lessons in Key Stage 4 is good and all strands of ICT are covered. There is effective targeting of the work which contributes to the raising of pupils' performance. Pupils use computer programs for drawing and design to produce advertisement material for businesses such as an estate agency. Pupils going on to take the full GCSE course extend their skills to design systems for the assembly and analysis of a database of information about local businesses.
- 92 In Key Stage 3 the ICT courses have been restructured and all pupils now take a core course which covers the range of activities required for National Curriculum coverage. The progress that pupils make in these lessons is satisfactory. In Key Stage 3 pupils develop word processing and data processing skills and gain confidence in using computers in a range of activities. Pupils are able to use a desktop publishing application in lessons to produce a report of information obtained in a research activity based on the Plague at Eyam Village. Work of good quality is produced by pupils who are able to develop a datafile of the plague register and produce a well-presented report which includes graphics.
- 93 Pupils with special educational needs are satisfactorily provided for through the materials included in the schemes of work. All pupils are able to gain from the lessons and opportunities are given to pupils to use the computers individually when this is necessary to help them to develop their individual computing skills.
- 94 Pupils are interested when using the facilities in information and communications technology and they work satisfactorily on the tasks they are set. Pupils are able to take responsibility for some aspects of their own work, for example in designing a logo and letter head for a business and when required to make choices they do this sensibly. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and when using the computers is good.

- 95 Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of ICT for the range of courses that are taught. Planning is good, following the guidance of the scheme of work and lessons are well prepared. The expectations of pupils are high and the relationships in lessons have a good impact on the pupils' learning. Where the teaching is good the lessons are well organised, as in a Key Stage 3 lesson on an archeological dig in which pupils use a data handling package to assemble and interpret information, and there is an effective mixture of class and individual learning. There is also good teaching in the GCSE course where the topics build effectively on previous knowledge and pupils are able to evaluate and comment on their work. In a lesson on publicity materials there was an effective review of presentation skills which extended, for some pupils, to the production of materials using the Internet as a source of information. In a very good lesson when pupils were producing a business directory, the teacher's high quality planning which indicated a rapid pace to learning and flexibility to allow pupils to engage in range of tasks at different points during the lesson resulted in pupils' active engagement throughout and very good progress made in their data handling and design skills. A shortcoming in some of the lessons is that the slow pace of the work limits the degree of interest shown by pupils.
- 96 A decision has been made, since the previous inspection, to provide a core ICT course for all pupils concentrating the limited resources into three teaching rooms. The leadership and effectiveness of the department in this development is good. These changes have now been carried out and a renewed scheme of work has been written which provides good guidance on the pace of the work, course work activities and National Curriculum levels. No systematic ICT teaching takes place in other subjects. The departmental development plan follows the school's plan, but there is little detail and a lack of specifically ICT priorities. The issues of the updating of resources and the lack of space are not addressed in the plan. There has been little upgrading of computer resources since the previous inspection, other than in the provision of five networked computer links with the Internet, funded by the National Grid for Learning initiative. Computer resources consist substantially of three sets of Acorn computers, many of which are over 8 years old. These computers are still of use and enable sound basic courses of ICT to be provided. They are, however, not networked, and there is little access to up-to-date software which would give an indication of the range of opportunities in design, control and use of colour which are now available. Research opportunities using the Internet are severely limited and the potential for use across the curriculum is still to be explored. There is little use of CD-ROMs, a situation which was found at the previous inspection. Plans for combining the taught ICT with contributions from other subjects are still to be developed and are at present restricted by the lack of accommodation as well as resources.
- 97 Much is to be done if the department is to be forward-looking and benefit from the raised expectations of ICT which are required from September in the revision of the National Curriculum, and in the opportunities presented by the National Grid for Learning. Further development in ICT is dependent on careful and imaginative planning to improve resources and accommodation.

## 176 **Modern foreign languages**

- 98 Pupils' attainment in modern foreign languages is well below average. The 1999 examination results in French were well below national standards, although they have improved over the past three years. In German, results were also well below national standards. Results declined in 1999 after an improvement in 1998. This can be explained by a return to mixed ability teaching in Year 10 after this group was taught in sets in Year 9. The attainment of pupils approaching the end of Key Stage 4 during inspection was below average overall. Pupils can identify the main points of and extract details from language spoke at near normal speed with repetition. Pupils can develop short conversations and deal with shorter texts. Their use of a range of tenses is limited, which is a key element in the gaining of a grade C at GCSE. They lack confidence in using the target language for their own purposes. They can undertake translations, and write about a variety of topics.

- 99 The assessments made by teachers at the end of the Key Stage 3 indicate a low number of pupils gaining the expected minimum National Curriculum Level 4, and no pupils attain the higher levels. The attainment of pupils currently approaching the end of Key Stage 3 is well below average. Pupils can understand shorter passages of familiar language with some repetition and participate in short conversations when supported by visual clues. They can write two or three sentences on familiar topics with support.
- 100 Pupils' progress in languages is unsatisfactory overall at both key stages. The scheme of work is pitched too low resulting in pupils moving too slowly through the curriculum. This means that pupils are not being given the opportunities to work at levels appropriate to their development, resulting in unsatisfactory progress being made. In individual lessons, however, pupils' make satisfactory progress at both key stages. They acquire increasing amounts of vocabulary, extend their knowledge of grammar, develop fluency in speaking and tackle progressively more difficult texts. On the few occasions where progress is unsatisfactory in lessons, this is due to a mismatch of activity to the needs of learners, and insufficiently detailed planning on the part of the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in some individual lessons, but personal targets are not set for them, and progress overall is unsatisfactory. There is no evidence of individual education plans being adapted by the department and joint planning between subject and support staff is insufficiently documented.
- 101 Pupils' attitudes to the subject in lessons are satisfactory overall. They behave well and can be orderly and attentive. They respond well when the work is challenging, for example when producing an extended conversation from a set of symbols or instructions with little support. They become disruptive on the rare occasions when the organisation and content of the lesson is inappropriate to the needs of the learners. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are limited.
- 102 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In three quarters of lessons it is satisfactory, and in one lesson in twelve it is good. A small amount of teaching is unsatisfactory. There are common features to the satisfactory teaching across both key stages: teachers structure lessons well and organise a logical sequence of planned activities which promote learning in all four skills; appropriate resources such as books and worksheets are accessible to all pupils; expectations of pupils are appropriate and there is a judicious balance between challenge and support. Teachers have good subject knowledge and command of language. This enables them to provide pupils with good linguistic models to follow. They generally manage pupils well in an atmosphere of constructive relationships which foster good work habits. Good teaching in the department also shows some clear features in addition to those listed above: insistence on extensive use of the target language by staff which enables pupils to use it spontaneously for their own purposes; a variety of approach including some active learning techniques which involve all pupils, as seen in a Year 7 French lesson involving vocabulary games which kept pupils engaged and firm lesson objectives shared with pupils. When teaching is unsatisfactory there are features of a contrasting kind. Pupils are not aware of the lesson objectives; the teacher does not always check ill-behaved pupils; the content of the lesson is too difficult for the needs of the learners; the lesson is not organised in a way that keeps all pupils actively occupied; tasks are not always broken down into small enough steps which allow pupils to make progress; the variety of teaching approach is insufficiently considered; the pace of lessons is often slow and expectations of the pupils are low. Teachers do not always link their planning to assessment criteria. These criteria are not always shared with pupils in a way which is helpful to them. Teachers set homework regularly, but the range of tasks is limited. The quality of teaching is better with higher attaining and more motivated groups. This has not changed since the previous inspection.

- 103 The scheme of work meets statutory requirements with the exception of planned opportunities for the use of information and communications technology to support pupils' work. There is equality of access to all pupils to a first foreign language. The department has made appropriate arrangements in Key Stage 4 to allow a relatively large number of pupils to choose courses believed to be more appropriate for them rather than a modern foreign language course. There is some variation in the scheme of work to ensure that pupils of differing attainment can progress at their own levels. However curriculum planning suffers from the significant weakness of being planned at too low a level to ensure appropriate progress by pupils. The school visit to Aachen gives pupils a good opportunity to experience another culture first hand.
- 104 Assessment policies remain under-developed. Pupils are not involved in assessing their own performance and expressing opinions about their progress as a matter of routine. There are no procedures for checking the accuracy of teacher assessments in existence. Teachers do not appear to use the results of assessment for target setting or adjusting the work which follows. Marking follows the department's policy with some variation. Teachers do use marking to show pupils how to improve the next piece of work. Teachers write short comments in the target language. Occasionally errors are allowed to pass unchallenged.
- 105 The department is satisfactorily led by a good classroom practitioner, but there are clear areas for development. Critically, the scheme of work does not allow pupils to reach expected levels of performance at the right point in their development limiting attainment and progress. There are weaknesses in the current development plan. It does not identify the need for training on teaching methods and it lacks a firm timescale, reference to success criteria and procedures for monitoring and evaluation. Staff monitor teaching by observing each other work in class, but this activity lacks a sharp focus on how the results of observation might have a positive effect on the raising of standards. There is insufficient analysis and use of pupil data on entry with a view to setting realistic targets and for measurement of pupils' progress to identify potential areas of underachievement. The department's policy on information and communications technology is not well enough developed. The department is housed in a partial suite of rooms, and this recent regrouping of the rooms has had a positive impact on the way in which staff in the department communicate and support each other. Nearly all pupils have access to a copy of a textbook, although there is not a copy for each pupil individually. The range and variety of stand-alone reading materials are limited, which constrains pupils' opportunities to develop a wide range of reading skills. Priority has been given to the introduction of an attractive new course in French throughout the school but teachers are not yet fully familiar with it. Results in languages, which are well below average, do not demonstrate an efficient and effective use of resources available and indicate unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

#### 184 **Music**

- 106 The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C and A\*-G grades in the 1999 GCSE music examination was above the national average. Music results were the most successful across the school. The few pupils taking and currently approaching the end of the Key Stage 4 GCSE music course demonstrate levels of attainment which match expectations. The majority of pupils can devise effective compositions. These demonstrate confident use of simple formal procedures, often in two or more individual parts. Their ideas are mainly restricted to simple diatonic formulae, but a few pupils could explore more adventurous improvisations on the guitar. Most pupils can perform their own compositions, but a minority display limited performing skills. Most pupils can write up their ideas in neat and accurate staff notation. Listening skills are well developed.

- 107 The proportion of pupils achieving expectations in Key Stage 3 music according to the 1999 teacher assessments were below the national average. In the lessons inspected standards of attainment were in line with national expectations and indicated that teacher assessments were too severe. By the end of key Stage 3 pupils can maintain an individual part in an ensemble using a variety of instruments, including keyboard in a project on Reggae. They can create compositions and produce simple songs with the aid of information and communications technology in a project on Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons'. The majority of pupils can listen with concentration and recognise harmonic changes. Pupils have a basic understanding of staff notation and terminology related to their projects and some are beginning to make critical judgements about their playing and composing. Only a minority of pupils find it difficult to play in time.
- 108 At both key stages there is no significant difference in attainment in music between pupils of different gender and academic attainment levels.
- 109 At Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in music. In their compositions pupils make good progress in developing their ideas from a piano accompaniment to adding additional parts for a range of instruments. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their understanding and use of staff notation. Progress is limited in the acquisition of performing skills.
- 110 At Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in performing, composing, listening and appraising. Pupils make good progress in developing their listening skills in the topic on Vivaldi. Performing skills in ensemble work on Blues and Reggae demonstrate satisfactory and often good progress. When questioned pupils demonstrate more variable progress in their confident understanding of theory and notation. The majority of pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress across the curriculum. The most able pupils make limited progress.
- 111 Pupils have a good attitude to music. At both key stages they work with enthusiasm and high levels of concentration. They demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and a friendly relationship with both each other and teachers.
- 112 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In over 40 percent of lessons the teaching was good, and there was just a small amount of teaching that was not satisfactory in Key Stage 3. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject reflected in an imaginatively conceived curriculum, which skilfully integrates attainment targets in a practical manner to fully stimulate pupils' interest in music. At Key Stage 4 teachers often make good use of their musical skills on voice and piano to effectively demonstrate theoretical points, as in aural training. The teachers' schemes of work at Key Stage 3 make significant demands on pupils but the excellent material provided for pupils of different abilities is not always used for either the lower or higher attaining pupils. In some Key Stage 3 teaching individual lessons lack coherent planning and pupils become inattentive when required to spend too long on specific performing tasks in a project on Blues. In the most effective lessons teachers use a range of methods to maintain pupils' interest. In a Year 8 lesson on Vivaldi the teacher skilfully integrated video, discussion, performance and composition, making clear links between them and stimulating pupils to produce high quality work. In the majority of lessons teachers know their pupils well and provide a highly supportive and disciplined working environment. In a few lessons discipline is over strict and pupils are unable to release their creativity. Teachers use a good range of resources in most lessons and pupils benefit from the wide availability of classroom instruments. In a few lessons the noise levels from overuse of electronic keyboards without earphones inhibits pupils' aural discrimination. Teachers' approach to assessment at Key Stage 3 lacks clarity and pupils are not clear as to their levels of achievement. At Key Stage 4 assessment is too informal. There is no meaningful analysis of pupils' assessment data. An appropriate range of homework is provided but at Key Stage 4 there is little evidence of written comment to show pupils how to improve.

113 The quality of pupils' musical education benefits from a department which is well led by a committed and talented musician. This is reflected in the quality and range of extra-curricular provision offered, including large choir, concert band, annual musical production and a range of visiting instrumental staff. However the size and limited availability of some of the accommodation restricts the opportunities for small group work in many classes.

114 The department needs to review the use of its own curriculum booklets to avoid too mechanistic delivery in some lessons, ensure the materials for pupils of different abilities are fully utilised, extend the use of information and communications technology and world music across all year groups and tackle the weaknesses in assessment.

115 The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in developing opportunities for the use of information and communications technology, and has slightly increased pupils' levels of attainment.

#### 194 **Physical education**

116 The proportion of pupils who gained grades A\*-C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was below the national average, but all pupils gained at least a grade G, raising the overall performance close to the national average. The 1998 results were in line with the national average, and these results show an improving trend. Boys outperform girls in this subject, but there is little difference in the performance of pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils' results in physical education are, on average, better than they are in most other subjects that they studied.

117 In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment towards the end of Key Stage 4 in the core physical education programme match expectations. Most pupils can swim with an efficient technique, which enables them to maintain a distance swim effectively, and demonstrate personal survival skills in deep water for an extended period. In badminton and football, standards are satisfactory or better. Pupils are competent in a range of skills, which they apply, together with their knowledge and understanding of rules and tactics, successfully, in both games.

All pupils in the core programme have the opportunity of working towards an externally accredited practical Certificate of Achievement and in 1999 eleven pupils passed. In GCSE classes, pupils' attainment is satisfactory. As part of their study of aerobic capacity, pupils effectively conduct and perform the Harvard Step Test to measure their endurance fitness levels.

Written coursework reflects a range of attainment but, overall, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of theoretical aspects.

118 Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate that the number of pupils gaining the attainment target is below average, but this may be attributed to over rigorous assessment. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the national expectation, particularly in individual activities such as dance and swimming. However, there is some under achievement in team games. Many pupils perform skills satisfactorily in practice, but they do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the principles of invasion games to perform effectively as a team against opposition. In hockey, for example, a significant number of pupils, particularly girls, lacked an understanding of the game and strategic play. In two lessons, the pupils lacked the opportunity to show what they could do in the game, because the timing of the lesson left too little time for an effective game, or the game was omitted from the lesson. Standards in swimming are sound. Almost all pupils can swim confidently and show a satisfactory or better understanding of stroke technique. This was well illustrated in a lesson on the breast stroke, as pupils refined their skills in co-ordinating breathing with the arm action. Pupils evaluate each others' work competently in this activity. Attainment in the early stages of the dance course is satisfactory, as pupils identify action words in response to a stimulus and translate the words into dance movements, showing a good sense of rhythm and versatility.

- 119 Good standards are attained in extra-curricular sport and dance, with school teams and individual pupils gaining representative honours at district and county level. The school currently has thirteen pupils representing Derbyshire in netball, hockey and football. In 1999, the under-14 and under-16 girls' hockey teams won the Chesterfield Schools' Championships, and the Year 7 boys' cross-country running team was also the Chesterfield Champion.
- 120 Pupils' progress in relation to their prior attainment is good in both key stages. This is because pupils have positive attitudes to learning and good teaching promotes a consistently demanding pace both in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Effective gains in knowledge, skills and understanding are made in the majority of lessons, principally because teachers share the intended learning outcomes with the pupils, and check that pupils understand the tasks and know what they have to do to improve their work. Where there is a specific learning outcome, they give individual coaching, where appropriate, so that pupils can work at their own pace. Pupils of all levels of attainment consolidate their skills through practice. This was well illustrated in netball, where low attaining pupils improved their footwork skills in practice, and in badminton, where high attaining pupils improved their basic skills in the context of a strategic challenge. Lower attainers often make good progress when teaching is planned to allow a careful development of skills at an appropriate pace, as seen in a basketball lesson. Pupils' progress in their knowledge and understanding of rules and tactics in major games is less satisfactory in Key Stage 3. Although opportunities for pupils to evaluate each others' work occur in the majority of lessons, there is little evidence of pupils' progress in the skills of observation and analysis across the key stages. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme, and make progress at the same rate as their peers, for example, as in the effective use of modified basketball. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils of all ages and abilities to participate in extra-curricular sport. These are well supported, and many pupils make good progress in their chosen activities.
- 121 Pupils have good attitudes to learning in both key stages. They are well motivated, and take their work seriously. These positive attitudes are reflected in very good behaviour and a high level of active participation in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Pupils respond well to the good humoured encouragement of the teachers, maintaining the brisk pace of work and high standards which are expected of them. They concentrate well, on the whole, and remain on task, using opportunities to practice effectively. Independent learning skills develop well in some lessons, particularly when pupils contribute ideas, evaluate each others' work and take responsibility, such as leading their peers in the warm-up.
- 122 The quality of teaching is good, overall, in both key stages; it is never less than satisfactory, and on a few occasions, it is very good. Teachers have a good command of their subject, reflected in well planned lessons and clear objectives shared with pupils. Most teachers show a sound awareness of the requirements for pupils to be involved in planning and evaluating their own and others' work, as well as performance. The greatest strength in the teaching is the excellent standards of discipline, which is maintained in all lessons. Teachers expect pupils will behave well, and they respond accordingly. Relationships between the teachers and pupils are very good, and pupils' confidence is built up by the teachers' use of praise and encouragement. This supportive environment contributes significantly to the good standards of dress, participation and orderly behaviour in the department. Other teaching strengths include skilful questioning, which challenges pupils intellectually as well as physically, perceptive observation, assessment and feedback, which helps individuals to improve their work, and lively, enthusiastic teaching which motivates pupils and stimulates learning. For example, in a dance lesson, a cross-curricular focus on literacy enabled pupils to work in small groups and build up their own vocabulary of action words stimulated by the throwing of a dice, which, in turn, provided the stimulus for creative movement. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of teaching strategies to enable pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning, for example, in swimming, where pupils were challenged by a group activity which required them to make decisions, and solve a problem, as well as practise the skills they had been learning. Although all teaching was satisfactory, there are areas for development in team games teaching at Key Stage 3. Opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in small sided games, and gain knowledge and

understanding of the rules and tactics of the recognised version of the game by the end of Key Stage 3, require to be planned, and given adequate time within the lesson.

123 The subject is well managed, and benefits from strong leadership, ably supported by a committed team. There is a very good ethos in the department. Sound progress has been made since the last inspection. The SPORTSMARK award, TOP SPORT with its enhanced primary school links, and Challenge Funding for partnership with the community initiatives are all good examples of the forward looking approach by the department. The Key Stage 3 curriculum does not meet statutory requirements, however, because not enough of the time allocated to gymnastics is given to the gymnastics Programme of Study, which is not being covered to the required depth. The accommodation for the subject is very good, and the school's use of the local leisure centre greatly enhances the pupils' learning experiences. However, there is currently a problem in providing an appropriate classroom for GCSE theory lessons as the gymnasium is an unsatisfactory alternative. An extensive programme of the extra-curricular activities is a strength of the department, and staff give generously of their own time to provide opportunities open to all pupils.

124 Standards of attainment are similar to those observed in the previous inspection at Key Stage 3, and they have improved slightly at Key Stage 4. The good teaching, evident at the time of the last inspection, has been maintained.

### 203 **Religious education**

125 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is average. The written work of pupils in the GCSE group is stronger than their oral ability. They have a detailed knowledge of the religions they are studying and can explain the practices and moral principles held by followers of these religions. They are less confident in expressing their ideas orally and insecure in their use of appropriate religious terminology. Pupils in the social and moral issues course have a basic understanding of religious teaching related to the questions discussed and many pupils can express a personal viewpoint with confidence.

126 Results in the short course GCSE in the most recent examination were above the national average for both A\*-C and A\*-G grades. The average points score per pupil was also above the national average. Results in the full GCSE course in the most recent examination were below the national average for A\*-C grades, but showed significant improvement over previous years. The average points score per pupil at GCSE was above the average of other subjects in the school. Girls performed better than boys in both examinations.

127 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is average. The majority of pupils can recall previous learning and are able to describe some key features of the religions studied. They can use basic religious terms to explain their understanding of religion and can describe similarities and differences in the worship and practice of these religions, relating what they learn from the religions they are studying to their own experiences. The attainment of more-able pupils in this key stage is restricted by insufficient challenge in the tasks set and limited opportunities to work at a pace more suited to their abilities.

128 The progress of pupils in Key Stage 3 is good. The attainment of many pupils on entry is below average and their knowledge of religions poor. Pupils are making good progress from this low base in extending their knowledge of a range of religious traditions, developing the capacity to relate religious beliefs to their own experiences and acquiring a vocabulary of basic religious terms to explain their understanding of religious beliefs and practices. The progress of more-able pupils is held back by the nature of whole-group activities which do not always match their ability and capacity for progress. Many pupils with learning difficulties are making good progress with the aid of learning materials adapted to their needs.

- 129 The progress of pupils in Key Stage 4 is good, especially in developing an understanding of the moral dimension to religious belief and practice. They are making good progress in their capacity to make judgements based on reflection and discussion and are learning how to look at moral issues from the point of view of others. This progress was particularly evident in Year 11 classes in which pupils were discussing issues of sexuality. In these lessons they were developing good listening skills, the capacity to evaluate the views of others in the group and to express a personal viewpoint in a mature and confident manner.
- 130 The great majority of pupils have a positive attitude to the subject. The response of pupils in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good. Written work and display work by pupils in Key Stage 3 shows imaginative and thoughtful responses by pupils of all abilities to themes such as “Questions I would ask God” and “Reasons for Belief”. At Key Stage 4 many pupils respond positively to the opportunity to consider questions of social and personal morality and have a mature attitude in class discussions of these issues. The large number of pupils who opted to take the short course GCSE last year is a further indication of their positive attitude towards the subject.
- 131 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach with confidence, lessons are purposeful, well planned and expectations of pupils clearly stated. Very good teaching was observed in a year seven lesson on the creation story. A prompt start to the lesson, good questions to reinforce previous learning and the teacher’s confident and affirmative manner created a stimulating context for learning. Learning materials and activities planned to meet the full ability range of pupils in the mixed-ability classes taught in this key-stage give good support to pupils with learning difficulties but are insufficiently challenging for more able pupils.
- 132 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is good. Teachers have very good command of their subject, lessons are carefully planned and group activities engage the interest and involvement of pupils. In some lessons the pace is slow and teachers do not always challenge pupils to give extended oral answers to the questions they ask. Very good teaching was observed in a year 11 lesson considering religious and non-religious moral codes. Good questioning, clear explanations and good group management created a supportive context in which pupils were encouraged to express their views and listen carefully to the views of others. Good relationships with pupils and sensitivity to their views and opinions enables teachers to maintain effective discipline and exercise good class-room management in both key stages. Pupils’ learning is enhanced by a range of visits to religious communities and occasional visits from representatives of local religious groups. This provision has improved since the last inspection.
- 133 The curriculum is based on the local agreed syllabus and meets statutory requirements. The time allocated to the subject in Key Stage 4 has been increased since the last inspection. Pupils’ work is regularly assessed and helpful comments made on written work, but the use of assessment to set clear targets for pupils’ future learning is undeveloped. The department benefits from the leadership of an experienced and committed teacher. A clear sense of purpose and enthusiasm creates a positive ethos for learning. A detailed scheme of work implements the requirements of the local agreed syllabus, but this lacks clarity in setting targets for the learning of more-able pupils. The school has made improvements in staffing since the last inspection with the appointment of an additional specialist teacher. Pupils benefit from consistently good teaching from well-qualified staff. A strength of the department is the opportunity it gives to pupils to reflect on, and respond to, spiritual and moral issues.
- 134 Accommodation is good. Displays of pupils’ work in classrooms and adjacent corridors enables them to express personal responses to their learning and creates a good focus for the subject. Resources are adequate. A range of textbooks is used in class, but is insufficient to support homework. There is a good range of videos and staff produce adapted material for pupils with learning difficulties. The department is poorly resourced in large-format artwork which would enrich the learning of pupils, especially those who have difficulty with reading. There is a good collection of artefacts for teaching the world faiths syllabus.

- 135 Improvements since the last inspection have been made in the time allocation at Key Stage 4; examination results; staffing, and in visits to religious communities. There are weaknesses in the range of activity and level of challenge for more-able pupils in Key Stage 3, in planning for these in the scheme of work and in using assessment to give pupils clear targets for their future learning.
- 136 This is a good department, making a significant contribution to the personal development of pupils and the ethos of the school.

### **Vocational courses**

- 137 The school has broadened the curriculum it offers to pupils at Key Stage 4 in a good attempt to cater more fully for their needs. There are now three pathways open to pupils, all of which contain GCSE courses. Pupils can choose a traditional curriculum of GCSE courses only, a more vocational route which includes general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses and a third option which includes work placements, aimed at providing national vocational qualifications (NVQ). There is also a youth award scheme offered as an option, which is aimed at pupils with special educational needs.

#### **216 General National Vocational Qualifications**

- 138 The school offers a variety of general national vocational courses, including part one and intermediate levels in business, foundation and intermediate levels in health and social care. These courses have been running for several years. The business courses are replacing the GCSE in business, which is no longer offered as an option. A unit in art and design and information and communications technology is being offered for the first time this term.
- 139 In 1999 50 percent of pupils registered for intermediate level in business gained the qualification and a further 30 percent of pupils achieved it in part. All of the eleven pupils registered for foundation level in health and social care passed the end of unit test and four pupils gained the foundation level qualification. The reason that some pupils passed the end of unit test but did not achieve the qualification was due to them not meeting coursework deadlines. There are no national figures for comparison. However, whilst the standards attained in the tests are satisfactory in business and good in health and social care, the standards overall are below expectations due to the lack of completion of the coursework.
- 140 Standards being attained by pupils currently approaching the end of Key stage 4 are in line with expectations. Pupils on the established GNVQ courses are able to produce action plans. Higher attaining pupils produce plans in sufficient detail with dates for completion of work on them. Lower attaining pupils' plans, for example in GNVQ business, contain insufficient detail, have writing and spelling errors and are difficult to follow.
- 141 Good information seeking and handling skills are to be seen in the pupils' work, for example, in the unit on relationships and risk to health in the health and social care course. Following an action plan pupils work on a television drama of their own choice to analyse the relationships portrayed in it. Pupils can communicate fluently in discussion. This was illustrated by business pupils undertaking a unit on the location of businesses, with group discussions, lively interaction and role play on where to locate a business and why, when the various issues involved were clearly drawn out by the pupils. Although some pupils on both the business and health and social care courses are able to write clearly, the standard is not always high. Information is often presented in graphs drawn by hand. The use of information technology is not widespread in pupils' work. Many pupils make sound evaluations of their work although this is at an early stage of development with a number of pupils in the business courses.

- 142 There is satisfactory progress as pupils work confidently through the course content. Pupils in the business course, for example, make sound progress on identifying criteria for employment in different types of work, by analysing newspaper advertisements and case study sheets. Health and social care pupils develop sound practical and investigation skills such as interviewing and recording. For example, one group had interviewed a young or elderly relative about their diet, had analysed the information gained and used their analysis to make recommendations to their interviewee about improvements they could make.
- 143 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. With just one or two exceptions they have a strong interest in the subject matter, see relevance to their future vocational hopes and enjoy the independence that GNVQ courses offer. Most pupils participate well in lessons, ask questions about topical issues and draw information and views from newspapers and other media sources. Behaviour is good and pupils support one another, both in individual and group work.
- 144 Teaching is satisfactory. Business tasks are set in realistic business contexts. Health and social care tasks use local community contexts and pupils' own experiences to develop their involvement and understanding. Lessons are satisfactorily planned with objectives made clear to pupils. The nature of the courses demands that teachers enable pupils to take some responsibility for their own work and learning and most pupils respond well to this challenge. Teachers are now tracking pupils' progress more carefully to ensure coursework is completed. Assessment and recording systems are efficient and meet the requirements of the different courses.
- 145 Staff are appropriately qualified to deliver GNVQ courses. There is a satisfactory range of resources to support the different courses offered, although facilities for information and communications technology are not always easily available to health and social care pupils. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in establishing GNVQ courses.

#### 224 **Work Placement courses**

- 146 The school is offering work placement courses for the first time this term. These involve a small number of pupils spending time each week in three different institutions; a local training agency where they study engineering, the local college of further education where they study construction and the local chamber of commerce where they study a course designed to develop skills and confidence in a working environment. Pupils are withdrawn from other subjects for these placements, but good efforts have been made to minimise the impact on the other subjects that they study. Pupils, parents and other staff were consulted about the arrangements and the consensus was that the advantages to the pupils outweighed the disadvantages. One of the aims of the placements is to help to motivate disaffected pupils, and to give added relevance to the studies of some lower attaining pupils for whom traditional courses present difficulties. In this aim, the courses are already demonstrating some success. Pupils spoken to talked of their enjoyment of the placements, and some commented that they feel more motivated about attending school for other lessons. It is too early to judge the outcomes of the placements and the impact they are having on pupils' attainment. This should be carefully evaluated by the school, and the project as a whole is being evaluated by a local university department. It was not possible to judge the quality of teaching on the courses as it takes place in institutions other than the school. However, when an inspector made a visit to the local training agency, pupils were clearly enjoying the task of wiring up electrical circuits and were doing so successfully, taking pleasure from their bulbs lighting up.

#### 225 **Youth Award Scheme**

- 147 A youth award scheme is in its third year of being offered as an option, aimed at pupils with special educational needs. The course is designed to develop pupils' self esteem, confidence and ability to show initiative and take responsibility, through the planning and carrying out of a range of practical tasks, and to accredit their learning in these areas. It is a popular course, with 70 applications for the 30 places available in the current Year 10.

- 148 Standards attained by pupils who finished the course in 1999 were very low. No pupils gained the award.
- 149 The content of the course is not appropriately planned. Pupils undertake projects on litter, gardening and decoration within the school, and there are some good efforts to actively involve and excite pupils. However a wider variety of more imaginative tasks is necessary to engage the interest of pupils. Some of the activities are not appropriate for pupils of this age, such as the 'lego' building task designed to develop pupils' co-operative skills. Work experience was popular with pupils, but resulted in repetition of work when they were asked to write about their views of work experience several times. There is not a scheme of work which reflects the requirements of the course, the needs of the pupils or the strategies to be adopted to ensure that they the required standards.
- 150 The course is well staffed but best use is not always made of available personnel. Not all staff are actively enough involved throughout the lessons. Too much time is spent on behaviour management. Some very challenging pupils taking the course are demanding of teachers' time attention. The inappropriateness of some of the course content, however, is responsible for some of the misbehaviour of pupils.
- 151 The management of the course is unsatisfactory. The reasons for the poor results in 1999 have not been thoroughly evaluated and there has been no action taken to identify or tackle weaknesses. This potentially valuable course is not successful in meeting its aims.

230 **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

230 **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 1 There were 15 inspectors on the team who were in the school for a total of 47 inspector days, over a five day period. They observed 164 lessons or parts of lessons, registrations, assemblies and extra-curricular activities. The school provided documentation prior to the inspection, which was examined by the team, and other documents were looked at during the inspection.
- 2 All teachers were seen teaching, the majority several times. In addition to a large number of planned meetings with senior managers, heads of departments and other staff with responsibilities, there was informal discussion with teaching and non-teaching staff. During the inspection several governors were interviewed.
- 3 All of the available work of a representative sample of three pupils from each year group was examined and these pupils discussed their work and their views of the school with inspectors. Inspectors also spoke informally with a large number of pupils and examined their work in lessons.
- 4 Eighteen parents gave their views of the school at a meeting held prior to the inspection, and the responses of the 214 questionnaires returned by parents were analysed.
- 5 An examination of the building and external site was carried out by several inspectors.

235 **DATA AND INDICATORS**

235 **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y11	844	42	221	236

235 **Teachers and classes**

235 **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	48.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17

235 **Education support staff (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of education support staff:	28
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	545

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	81
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	22
	KS4	20

Financial year:	1998/9
	£
Total Income	1,794,659
Total Expenditure	1,800,314
Expenditure per pupil	2236
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	-5655

Number of questionnaires sent out: 844  
 Number of questionnaires returned: 214

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Dis-agree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	15	68	11	4	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	34	55	5	3	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	17	51	18	7	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	16	64	10	7	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30	60	6	1	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	24	64	8	1	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	30	58	8	2	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	24	61	5	4	4
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	19	59	14	5	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	13	57	17	8	3
My child(ren) like(s) school	33	51	7	5	2

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

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