

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS MORE HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Westcliff-on-Sea

LEA area: Southend

Unique reference number: 115363

Headteacher: Mr. Frank Keenan

Reporting inspector: Martin Beale
19385

Date of inspection: 3rd – 6th April 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary School
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	Kenilworth Gardens Westcliff-on-Sea Southend Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Carol Gradwell
Date of previous inspection:	February 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas More High School is a smaller than average sized voluntary aided Roman Catholic school for boys aged from 11 to 18. The school is heavily oversubscribed. There are 807 pupils on the roll, including 144 in the Sixth Form, which is only in its fourth year of operation. The school admits a small number of girls to the Sixth Form each year. There is selection by ability into Year 7 for 30 places each year. The attainment on entry of pupils is improving and is above average for the current Year 7. About 5% of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, some with English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is below average. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is close to the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Thomas More High School provides a good education overall and is an effective school. The strong leadership provided by the headteacher, well supported by senior staff and the Governing Body, focuses on raising standards. This has borne fruit in very good GCSE results that have improved greatly over the last four years. The school has prepared pupils for A Levels in the past two years. Results at this level have been well below average. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by senior managers and the Governing Body gives clear direction and has been instrumental in the school's success.
- Focused teaching has been very successful in raising standards at GCSE.
- The pupils respond very well to all of the opportunities provided, by working hard, behaving very well and developing a mature sense of responsibility.
- The very wide range of extra-curricular activities and learning opportunities enriches the pupils' experiences and supports their personal development.
- The rapid development of the new Sixth Form has proved to be a considerable success for many pupils.

What could be improved

- Examination results in the Sixth Form need to be improved.
- Some teaching methods are too narrow to develop fully all aspects of pupils' learning.
- There are shortcomings in the curriculum provided: the teaching week is shorter than that recommended nationally and National Curriculum requirements are not being fully met.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in February 1995. Results at GCSE have improved considerably and at a faster rate than nationally; there have been improvements in the quality of teaching and the Sixth Form has been started. The majority of the key issues for development at the last inspection have been dealt with; however, some remain to be tackled. There is a more systematic approach to monitoring the work of the school and to evaluating how policies and curriculum provision affect standards. The curriculum provision and time allocated at Key Stage 3 for art, music and physical education have improved. The afternoon registration of pupils now meets national requirements. Satisfactory progress has been made in the use of diagnostic testing to identify pupils with special educational needs. The use of information technology (IT) to support learning across the curriculum remains under-developed, although some progress has been made since the last inspection. Personal, social and health education (PSHE), which is taught across the curriculum, is not developed sufficiently. Only limited progress has been made in the provision for multi-cultural education. Teaching and learning styles have developed in some lessons, but they remain narrow in others.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18-year-olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A Levels/AS Levels	n/a	E	E	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The school has achieved a sustained improvement in GCSE results in recent years. The upward trend in these results has been faster than that seen nationally. Two-thirds of the boys achieved at least five grades A*-C at GCSE in 1999, some 20% above the national average. When compared with boys' results nationally the gap is even larger. The school achieved its targets for 1999, and on the basis of standards in the current Year 11 will meet its targets for 2000. The boys make very good progress at Key Stage 4. Those taking GCSE in 1999 advanced more rapidly from their results in Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1997 than was seen on average nationally. This was particularly the case for boys of average ability who were more successful than nationally in achieving grade C and above.

SAT results at the end of Key Stage 3 have not been as impressive, although they have kept pace with improvements nationally. Overall results in 1999 were above average and in line with those achieved in similar schools. English results were weaker than those in mathematics and science largely because higher attainers did not do as well. The standard of work seen at Key Stage 3 reflects these results, although the work seen in English was better, with many boys' work being above national expectations.

A Level results showed an improvement from 1998 to 1999 but were still well below average. Results in art and geography have been particularly good. Observations during the inspection indicate that this improvement in standards is continuing but that several pupils are unlikely to achieve success, as they are not suited to the courses that they are studying.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are very good. Pupils work hard and show enthusiasm for and commitment to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in and out of classrooms is very good. The rate of fixed period exclusions is very high but the school rarely has permanent exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are good. Pupils are very polite and courteous and show respect for each other and for adults.
Attendance	The rate of attendance is in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is below average.

The school is a very orderly community. There is a strong Christian ethos based on Catholic values, which are clearly expressed in the school's aims. The majority of pupils take full advantage of the opportunities offered to participate in extra-curricular activities and sensibly undertake responsibilities around the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

The clear focus on examination requirements and techniques at Key Stage 4 is enabling many pupils to achieve well at GCSE. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 95% of lessons seen. It was very good in 10% but unsatisfactory in 5%. Clear lesson objectives and a variety of well-organised activities, which involved the pupils actively in their learning, were features of the better lessons. In these lessons the pupils learned new ideas and skills quickly and worked productively. Most teachers have high expectations of both the work and the behaviour of their classes. The skills and knowledge associated with each subject are taught well; however, there is less concentration on deepening pupils' understanding and the application of their skills and knowledge. In some lessons teachers do not take sufficient account of the range of pupils in the class and do not always use the targets for pupils with special educational needs in their planning. Literacy teaching is satisfactory, with support for the development of language skills from several subjects other than English. Support for the development of number skills other than in mathematics is inadequate.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum does not comply with National Curriculum requirements, and the amount of teaching time per week is well below that recommended. Learning opportunities are extended by a rich programme of activities outside lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Their needs are generally met well when support is present and when teachers use individual education plans to plan the methods and resources to be used; however, more use of the information on individuals is needed in some lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides its pupils with a good grounding in spiritual and moral values and a developed sense of their responsibility towards others. Pupils have many opportunities to extend their appreciation of western culture but their exposure to other cultures is insufficient.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is a safe and caring organisation where staff know individual pupils well and provide effective support to raise their attainment. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for child protection and ensuring the pupils' welfare.

The length of the teaching week is well below that recommended nationally and places the school in the lowest 3% of schools. Insufficient time is given to information technology throughout the school. The school does not comply with current statutory requirements for design and technology, information technology and modern languages at Key Stage 4. The school needs to review its Key Stage 4 curriculum to ensure that it fulfils the new National Curriculum requirements for September 2000. Some pupils are taking A Levels with little prospect of success.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides the school with strong, effective leadership. Senior managers support him effectively in the drive to raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The Governing Body brings considerable expertise to the support of the school. It fulfils its responsibilities well, but has not ensured compliance with National Curriculum statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	A systematic process for monitoring the work of the school and the standards achieved has been developed. This has enabled management to identify strengths and to take action to eliminate any weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Careful financial planning has supported the expansion of the school and the development of the new Sixth Form.

The line management of departments and the regular observation of teaching by senior management are helping to ensure that the aims and policies of the school are consistently applied. This has brought about significant improvements in standards at GCSE. The Governing Body committee structure and regular visits by governors enable them to scrutinise carefully the work of the school. Building developments to support the expansion of the school have been carefully planned and completed. Financial planning is thorough and the principles of best value are applied when allocating resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are happy at school, are expected to work hard and are making good progress. • Parents are pleased by the good behaviour. • They judge that the teaching is good. • They find staff approachable and are satisfied with the information they are provided with about school events and their children's progress. • Parents feel that the school is well led. • They believe that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. • Parents are very pleased with the wide range of extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One in six of the parents who returned the questionnaire is unhappy with the homework provided.

Parents are pleased with the school and the education it provides for their children. The inspection team supports these views. The inspection team judges that the homework set supports learning well.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by senior managers and the Governing Body gives clear direction and has been instrumental in the school's success

1. A major reason for the considerable success of the school in recent years is the strong leadership provided by the headteacher. He has succeeded in raising expectations, and with them examination results at GCSE, while increasing the school's popularity so that it is now heavily oversubscribed. He provides a clear educational direction for the school based on a commitment to high standards both in terms of academic achievement and pupil behaviour. A success in recent years has been the introduction of the Sixth Form and its rapid expansion. A Christian ethos based on strong Catholic values is evident throughout the school and underpins much that it does. The headteacher is ably supported by effective senior managers and a staff team who share these values and commitment.
2. The Governing Body provides further strong support for the headteacher and senior management. Along with the bursar they bring considerable experience and expertise to the school. Governors are recruited for the expertise that they can offer and have wide experience of financial management and planning for building developments. An understanding of education is gained through the committee structure and governors' close contact with departments; however, an appreciation of wider educational issues including the National Curriculum statutory requirements would be gained from more externally organised training. Governors are committed to the expansion of the school, the development of the Sixth Form and the drive for high standards. Many express this commitment through the considerable time that they devote to the school and the hard work that they put in for its success.
3. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have a good picture of the strengths of the school and areas for development. A systematic process for monitoring the quality of the education provided and the standards achieved has been introduced in response to a key issue at the last inspection. Departments are held accountable through a structured process, which includes an analysis of their examination results, a scrutiny of their documentation, including schemes of work, and observations of teaching. Governors are also involved in this process, carefully undertaking their role in scrutinising the work of the school. Governor visits to departments take place each term to review policies and to evaluate how well these are being put into operation. They also observe lessons and provide useful feedback to senior staff at the end of the visit.
4. Financial management is expertly undertaken and is a strength of the school. Good use is made of the funds available to it. Change and developments have been managed effectively in recent years with funding allocated to meet the school's educational priorities. The governors' finance committee is fully involved in all aspects of financial planning, and the recently appointed bursar is starting to bring considerable expertise and experience to the process. The school made good use of its Grant Maintained status and is managing effectively the reversion to voluntary aided at a time of considerable expansion. The recent high spending on building improvements has supported the expansion of the school and the development of the Sixth Form. Further

plans have recently been approved for more building work to enable the school to take in five forms of entry annually.

Focused teaching has been very successful in raising standards at GCSE

5. Teaching staff have responded well to the headteacher's drive to raise standards, and in particular to improve results at GCSE. Consequently the school has achieved continued and sustained improvements in GCSE results over several years. The rising trend in the school's GCSE results over the last 6 years has been faster than that seen nationally. The improvement since 1996 (an unusually low set of results for the school) has been amongst the best in the country. Two-thirds of the boys achieved at least five grades A*-C in 1999, this being 20% better than the national average. When the fact that boys achieve lower results than girls nationally is taken into account, the standards achieved at St Thomas More are even better. The overall results in 1999 were not only well above the national average but also well above average when compared with similar schools. The quality of the work seen during the inspection at Key Stage 4 reflects these above-average GCSE results.
6. The results achieved in Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at the end of Key Stage 3 are not as impressive as those at GCSE, partly because they have not received the same emphasis. Results at Key Stage 3 have fluctuated and have not shown the consistent improvement seen at GCSE, although they have kept pace with improvements nationally. The overall results in 1999 were above the national average and in line with those achieved in similar schools. Science results were particularly good, being well above the national average and well above average when compared with similar schools. Results in mathematics were above average nationally and when compared with similar schools. English results were comparatively weaker, being below average and well below average when compared with similar schools; however, they were close to the national average when compared with boys' results because nationally boys achieve lower results than girls in English. Higher-attaining pupils generally did not do as well in English as they did in mathematics and science. The standard of the work seen at Key Stage 3 in mathematics and science reflects these results; however, more pupils were observed working at above-average levels in English than recent SATs indicate.
7. The boys make very good progress at Key Stage 4. When comparing the results of the boys at GCSE in 1999 with their SAT results in 1997 much greater progress was made than seen nationally. The school adds considerable value to the boys' achievements at Key Stage 4. Boys of average and below-average attainment at Key Stage 3 achieve particularly well at GCSE, gaining much better results than might be expected. The main reasons for this success are that teachers have a very good understanding of the requirements of GCSE, and have become very skilled at focusing their teaching at Key Stage 4 towards these requirements. This, coupled with carefully planned revision programmes and the conscientious approach of the boys, enables these good results to be achieved.
8. Much of the work seen in Year 11 lessons during the inspection was examination revision. In most subjects a carefully planned programme is provided, supported by further lessons at the end of the school day. In mathematics, for example, all Year 11 boys have been provided with a revision timetable which indicates exactly which topic is to be covered in each lesson. This enables the boys to be better prepared for each revision session. In revising how to calculate the perimeter of shapes with a bottom set, pace and interest was generated by the teacher's use of practical examples. The boys

measured various objects in the room and calculated their perimeters. This activity was also used to help them to revise the various metric measures of length. Most of the boys showed that they had consolidated what they knew about perimeter and some could apply their understanding of the metric system of length to a problem.

9. Teachers emphasise the techniques that the boys will need when preparing them for examinations. This often includes the use of past examination questions to teach particular techniques. The teacher gave good attention to examination technique in a geography revision lesson on climate. The class was shown how to pick out the important points of a question. Pace was maintained and questioning used well. The teacher had a good command of the subject and was able to respond quickly to the boys' questions. The boys were able to demonstrate that they had consolidated what they knew about climate through their completion of an examination question. Examination questions given as homework exercises in information technology were used to give good feedback on the requirements of the examination. The key aspects for the completion of coursework were also discussed. The use of good examples of the previous year's projects enabled the boys to understand how they could improve their own coursework. The activities in a French lesson were planned as clear preparation for the forthcoming oral examination. The boys were made aware of the criteria against which they would be assessed. A role-play activity was then marked according to these criteria. The boys listened well to the teacher's explanations and most had good oral skills, using the language accurately.
10. This sharp focus on the requirements of the examination is also evident in many Year 10 lessons. The teacher's very good subject knowledge, clear objectives for the lesson and good explanations of the work contributed to the pupils' learning about storyboarding techniques in a media studies lesson. The teacher had high expectations of the boys to which they responded well. The lesson was well organised with good support provided by the resource materials used. The boys worked hard to create their own storyboards and were able to use technical language confidently. Good preparation and the good use of resources was also a feature of a Year 10 English lesson focusing on twentieth century poetry as part of the literature syllabus. The boys worked effectively in small groups discussing aspects of different poems, and were well supported by the teacher who circulated from group to group. Thorough teaching emphasising approaches to answering questions helped the class to develop their examination technique in a Year 10 business studies lesson. The boys were made aware of the need to back up statements made with examples and evidence, and showed that they understood and could interpret key points. The teacher regularly stopped the class so that good answers could be shared.
11. There are many examples of good teaching leading to the rapid development of knowledge and skills at Key Stage 3. Clear lesson objectives and a variety of well-organised activities, involving the boys in their learning, are features of many of the better lessons. A very well-sequenced variety of activities in a Year 9 German lesson generated pace and kept the boys interested and involved. Very good progress was made in the acquisition of new language, with the lesson carried out entirely in German. The teacher had high expectations of the boys. High expectations were also evident in a Year 9 geography lesson looking at the contrasts between the north and the south of Italy. Pace was generated through the use of a variety of resources, and the most able were challenged by extension exercises.
12. The lively and enthusiastic approach of some teachers generates interest and an enjoyment of learning. An information technology lesson benefited considerably from

the teacher's enjoyment of the subject, which was successfully transmitted to the boys. A good balance was struck between teacher instruction and demonstration and the boys' involvement and application of what they had learnt. A lively and energetic approach and the high expectations of the teacher had a beneficial impact on learning in a Year 8 science lesson. The initial introduction revisited the previous lesson in detail, ensuring that all of the class were ready to move on to new areas of learning. The teacher's thorough subject knowledge, careful lesson planning and enthusiasm in a Year 7 music lesson raised the standard of the boys' musical awareness. They were challenged to think carefully and to explain why they liked different pieces of music. Resources were used well and good support was provided for some who found the work difficult.

The pupils respond very well to all of the opportunities provided, by working hard, behaving very well and developing a mature sense of responsibility

13. The vast majority of the pupils have a very positive attitude to the school and to their learning. They work hard and show enthusiasm and commitment to all that they undertake. They have a very serious approach to their studies throughout the school, and are keen to do well and be successful. They listen carefully to their teachers, work effectively together when given the opportunity and contribute thoughtfully to discussions. They take full advantage of the opportunities offered to participate in extra-curricular activities and other opportunities provided by the school, such as extra lessons and revision classes. Many play an active part in the religious life of the school. They undertake responsibilities around the school sensibly and seriously, such as acting as prefects and library assistants or organising charity work.
14. The school is successful in the provision that it makes for the personal development of all pupils. It attaches great importance to the development of each individual, based on Catholic spiritual and moral values. Relationships throughout the school are very good, based upon the school's ethos of mutual respect. Pupils are very polite and courteous to each other and to adults. Behaviour both in and out of classrooms is very good, particularly when pupils are moving around the corridors and on the cramped stairways. The firm approach that the school takes towards reducing some forms of unacceptable behaviour is reflected in the high incidence of fixed-period exclusions. This results in the need for few permanent exclusions.

The very wide range of extra-curricular activities and learning opportunities enriches the pupils' experiences and supports their personal development

15. Parents are very pleased with the impressive range of activities provided beyond the normal school day. They see this as an important feature of the school and recognise its value in the development of their children. They also recognise the hard work and commitment of the staff in enabling these activities to take place. A particular feature is the time given by staff to running extra revision classes and coursework clinics as GCSE and A Level examinations approach. These sessions are offered in almost all subjects and are readily taken up by the pupils.
16. The religious life of the school and the spiritual development of the pupils are supported by a wide programme of activities. Boys in Years 7 and 9 and in the Sixth Form have the opportunity to participate in a retreat. A regular, weekly mass is held before school every Wednesday morning, and full school masses are held to mark other special occasions. Charitable appeals are very well supported by all pupils with those at Lent and Advent a major focus of their energy and enterprise.

17. The school has a strong sporting tradition and over 500 matches were played against other schools during the last year. The programme of sporting events also includes inter-house competitions which encourage the participation of a considerable proportion of the pupils. Other sports clubs take place during lunchtimes and after school. Music and drama productions also play a significant part in the life of the school. An orchestra, a choir and several musical ensembles practise at various times during the week. Many pupils participate in the performances including at the annual carol service. Parents speak highly of these and the opportunities provided for their children to develop their musical talents. Pupils in Year 9 also have the opportunity to take part in a public speaking competition, and a school play is put on each year.
18. Trips abroad are a regular feature of the life of the school. These include skiing holidays and French and German exchange visits. The school has a close links, forged over many years, with schools in France and Germany. Good use is also made of trips and visits locally and within the United Kingdom, including an activities week for boys at Key Stage 3 during the summer term. Regular theatre trips, field studies in geography and mountain walking for Sixth Formers enrich the curriculum offered and help to broaden the pupils' experiences.

The rapid development of the new Sixth Form has proved to be a considerable success for many pupils

19. A considerable achievement in recent years has been the planned expansion of the school and the introduction and development of the Sixth Form. The number of boys staying on to Sixth Form education at St Thomas More High School, along with the admission of girls, has enabled the school to reach viable Sixth Form numbers quickly. This has been achieved from a smaller cohort of pupils than will be available when the current Year 9 reaches this stage. This has also resulted in teachers having to expand their expertise, and new staff being appointed with A Level experience.
20. Much of the teaching in the Sixth Form is good, the vast majority being at least satisfactory. As at Key Stage 4, a good focus on the requirements of the examination is enabling many pupils to make good progress. This was seen in a Year 13 English lesson, where good hints were given to the pupils for writing examination essays and a useful revision pack provided. Good revision in preparation for the completion of an examination question was also seen in a Year 12 history lesson. The seminar style adopted and high level questioning to move discussions forward enabled the pupils to appreciate what was required of them and how to structure their answers. Critical yet constructive criticism is used to good effect in some Sixth Form lessons, enabling the pupils to see how their work can be improved. This was seen to good effect in a Year 12 design and technology lesson looking at initial thoughts for design projects and in a Year 13 art lesson as the pupils prepared their work for final assessment.
21. Careful monitoring of the effort and progress being made by pupils is carried out regularly in the Sixth Form. This is used to track the development of individual pupils, to help staff to identify those who are underachieving and to enable support to be provided where necessary. Parental support is sought where a lack of effort is resulting in slow progress. In some cases it has been found necessary to remove pupils from A Level courses if they are clearly not able to fulfil the school's requirements.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Examination results in the Sixth Form need to be improved

22. The success that the school has achieved in the introduction of the Sixth Form has not been matched by the results at A Level, which although showing signs of improvement are considerably below the national average. A higher than average proportion of those who started the course or who are entered for the examination, fail to achieve a pass grade; however, many achieve considerable success and have gone on to higher education. The school's own entry requirements for pupils to follow A Level courses have been lowered. As a result several pupils following A Level courses are not suited to A Level study. There have also been particular individual successes such as some pupils with low GCSE results who have achieved A Level success. Although standards are currently higher in both Years 12 and 13, several pupils are struggling and are unlikely to achieve pass grades. In some respects the school is a victim of its own success at GCSE, where several boys achieve better grades than might be expected, reach the entry requirements for A Level but would be better suited to other courses. GNVQ is offered and taught at intermediate level in the Sixth Form but not at advanced level. This would be a more suitable course for many who are struggling at A Level, and offers a pathway to higher education. Advanced GNVQ has been offered in the past but insufficient numbers opted for the course. It is time for the school to reconsider this option and to guide pupils onto courses where they have greater potential for success.

Some teaching methods are too narrow to develop fully all aspects of pupils' learning

23. A key issue for the school at the last inspection was to encourage the development of a wider range of teaching and learning styles. While the school has focused on improving results at GCSE, some aspects of this key issue have not been tackled with sufficient vigour. The broadening of teaching styles has been achieved to some extent but not sufficiently so in some subjects, where the pupils are still faced with a narrow range of teaching methods. Although these prepare some of the average ability boys well for GCSE, at which they do better than might be expected, the higher-attaining are not always sufficiently extended and fewer A* and A grades are achieved than nationally. While the methods used are tried and trusted, and individual lessons are often well taught, taken as a whole they do not provide a sufficiently wide range to develop all aspects of the boys' learning at Key Stages 3 and 4.

24. The methods used do not always prepare the boys well for the rigours of A Level. Subject knowledge and skills are taught well, but the understanding and application of these to more complex, extended problems is given insufficient emphasis. Consequently the boys do not develop the independence of thought and working practices to make the transition from GCSE to A Level easily, and they make slower progress.

25. Lesson planning does not always take into account the range of different pupils in the class, particularly those with special educational needs. Marking does not give a clear picture of an individual's strengths and weaknesses, and rarely offers written comments which give an indication of how improvements might be made. Its use to plan the next stages of learning is limited. The style of many lessons is one of direct teacher explanation during which the boys listen and copy down notes and examples. Questioning is limited and does not challenge them to think deeply or to give detailed, extended responses. Little discussion takes place and the opportunities for group work

are limited. The boys do not undertake sufficient extended work such as research or investigations. In mathematics in particular, insufficient attention is given to the use and application of skills and knowledge to the solution of complex problems or when investigating. The previous inspection reported that there were few opportunities for the pupils to use information technology to reinforce or extend their learning; this remains the case.

There are shortcomings in the curriculum provided: the teaching week is shorter than recommended nationally and National Curriculum requirements are not being fully met

26. The school operates a 23-hour teaching week, with a further two hours for assemblies and tutor time. This was the position at the last inspection when the length of the week was not identified as a matter for attention. This puts the school in the bottom 3% of schools nationally for the length of the teaching week. Because two lessons of religious education are taught each week, the time devoted to teaching National Curriculum subjects is low. Although this has not had an impact on the results achieved at GCSE, it has reduced the breadth and balance of the curriculum and has resulted in the school's failure to comply with some National Curriculum requirements.
27. The pattern of courses provided for the boys at Key Stage 4 does not fulfil the requirements for the teaching of design and technology, information technology or a modern foreign language to all. The school recognises this but feels that its arrangements will fulfil the changes to the National Curriculum due to take place from September 2000; however, this is not the case. The plans that the school has proposed do not fulfil the new requirements, and unless they are adapted, the school will continue to fail to comply with the National Curriculum.
28. The restrictions of the low teaching time at Key Stage 3 and the introduction of a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9 result in some imbalance in the programmes followed by some pupils. The time allocated to English, mathematics and science varies between two and three hours each week across Key Stage 3. This may not be having a direct impact on the results achieved in the Key Stage 3 SATs but there are aspects of the programmes of study in each subject for the use of information technology which are not being taught. Furthermore, a coherent programme of using and applying mathematics, an integral part of a balanced mathematical experience, is not being provided. There is also no policy or plan for the development of either literacy or numeracy across the curriculum. In order to follow a second modern foreign language some boys have an extra period of language. This results in the boys only having a single period of physical education each week, which is too short to provide a broad and balanced physical education programme.
29. The provision that the school makes for the teaching of information technology and its use as a vehicle to support learning is unsatisfactory. Discrete information technology sessions take place at Key Stage 3 by withdrawal from particular lessons but in isolation from the learning within those subjects. Courses to GCSE are offered at Key Stage 4 but are not followed by all pupils. It is a requirement of the National Curriculum programmes of study for several subjects that pupils should use information technology as a tool to support learning in those subjects. At a time when the school is considering a considerable investment in new computers it should ensure that curriculum plans are in place to make best use of the technology for the benefit of the pupils and the fulfilment of National Curriculum requirements.

30. One key issue from the last inspection was the need for the school to seek consistency in developing cross-curricular themes and in particular the development of multi-cultural awareness. This has not been tackled with sufficient vigour. Although aspects of personal, social and health education are taught, this does not add up to a broad and coherent programme that fully reflects national guidelines. The provision for the pupils to gain an insight and understanding of western European culture through art, music and literature is well developed; however, there are insufficient planned opportunities for the pupils to experience non-western cultures or to appreciate the nature of our multi-cultural society.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school is well placed to build upon the considerable improvements made in recent years. It should now:

- 1) improve examination success in the Sixth Form by developing the curriculum with clear routes of progression for those pupils not suited or able to achieve success at A Level, and ensure that they are followed;
- 2) provide a framework for teaching and learning that broadens the range of methods used, prepares pupils for the rigours of A Level, and includes in particular:
 - the use of questioning and discussion that challenges the pupils' thinking and deepens their understanding
 - lesson planning that indicates clear objectives for the learning of all pupils including the more able and those with special educational needs
 - regular opportunities for the pupils to apply their skills and knowledge to investigations, the solution of problems and independent research
 - planned opportunities for the pupils to use information technology to support their learning across the curriculum
 - careful monitoring of the quality of marking;
- 3) eliminate weaknesses in the curriculum, which may require the increase of teaching time to that recommended nationally and being taught in the majority of schools, and:
 - fulfil all requirements at Key Stage 4 of the National Curriculum that comes into effect in September 2000 for the teaching of design and technology, information technology and a modern foreign language
 - ensure that information technology is used as a vehicle to support learning as required by the National Curriculum programmes of study for individual subjects
 - provide planned and coherent opportunities within mathematics for all pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills in investigations and to the solution of problems
 - allocate sufficient time at Key Stage 3 in each year group for the teaching of all aspects of the programmes of study for English, mathematics, science and physical education
 - teach all pupils a broad and coherent programme of personal, social and health education that reflects fully national guidelines
 - provide pupils with more opportunities to understand their role in our multi-cultural society
 - introduce and implement policies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	10	48	38	5	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	663	144
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	73	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	64	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	29

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	123	0	123

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	74	91	91
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	74	91	91
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	60 (74)	74 (63)	74 (56)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	20 (43)	45 (27)	30 (16)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	65	83	94
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	65	83	94
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	53 (62)	67 (71)	76 (71)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	24 (31)	33 (37)	30 (22)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	116	0	116

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	77	115	115
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	77	115	115
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66.4 (57.3)	99.1 (92.3)	99.1 (98)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.3 (42.5)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	13	53.8
	National		n/a

Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A Level or AS Level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	45	1	46

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	11.3	8.0	11.2 (8.5)	2.0	n/a	2.0
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	10	20
	National		72.9

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	13
Black – other	2
Indian	4
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	8
White	762
Any other minority ethnic group	10

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	2	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	68	
Other minority ethnic groups		

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	47.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	209

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.8
Key Stage 4	20.3

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2206539
Total expenditure	2116200
Expenditure per pupil	2707
Balance brought forward from previous year	27653
Balance carried forward to next year	117992

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	807
Number of questionnaires returned	411

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	48	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	50	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	47	4	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	53	14	3	0
The teaching is good.	48	47	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	38	6	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	35	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	25	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	46	42	9	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	63	32	1	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	40	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	41	11	1	3