

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **Our Lady and St John R.C. High School**

Blackburn

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique Reference Number: 119790

Inspection Number: 184977

Headteacher: Mr M T Humphreys

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Reporting inspector: Mr T W M Comer

Dates of inspection: 1 – 5 November, 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708181

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:	Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Our Lady and St John R.C High School North Road Blackburn Lancashire BB1 1PY
Telephone number:	01254 59055
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Canon J J Harrison
Date of previous inspection:	3 April 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr Tom Comer, RgI	English as an additional language	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
Ms Janet Harrison, Lay Inspector	Equal opportunities	Efficiency of the school Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Mr John Paddick	Mathematics	Curriculum and assessment  Staffing, accommodation and learning resources  Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Ms Frances Findlay	English	
Dr David Tracey	Science	
Mr Douglas Howorth	Geography	
Mrs Ann Powell	Modern languages (Spanish)	
Ms Gillian Salter-Smith	Physical education	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr John Ratcliffe	Modern languages (French)	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Sir Lyndon Jones	Music	
Mrs Helen Marsland	Design and technology	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
Mr Robert Carvell	Art	
Mrs Jennifer Radford	Information technology	
	Special educational needs	
Mr Miles Robotham	History	
	Vocational courses	

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The Registrar  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- The leadership is strong and the school is very well managed. The governors fulfil their responsibilities well in every respect. The school provides a high quality of education.
- The ethos is very good and reflects the school's special Catholic character. Discipline is effective and relationships between pupils and teachers very good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, effort and achievement.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are strengths.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve good standards.
- The school provides very good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The school has special strengths in performing arts subjects, physical education, art, technology and business studies.
- The pupils are very well looked after. The pastoral system is excellent and monitors pupils' progress effectively.
- The school provides an excellent programme of extracurricular activities. Pupils and their parents greatly appreciate the work of the teachers to provide these activities. A large proportion of pupils participate regularly in extra-curricular team games and sports.
- Pupils respond well to the high quality of education they receive. Most pupils behave well and their attendance is good. They have good attitudes to their work, teachers and other pupils.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Pupils' overall attainment is well below average on entry to Year 7. Literacy is the most obvious weakness. Although literacy is prominent in the school's plan for development, pupils still need more opportunities to develop their speaking, listening and writing in all subjects.
- II. Some lower attaining pupils also have behavioural difficulties. These pupils tend to be concentrated in the lower sets. At times, this makes some Key Stage 3 classes difficult to manage and adversely affects pupils' progress.

**The school's strengths greatly outweigh its weaknesses. The weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan.**

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

The last inspection found that the school was very good and, since that time, the school has made good overall improvement. Examination results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend. The library and computer facilities have been vastly improved. The school has made good overall progress in addressing each of the points for improvement found at the last inspection. The management of the school and the teachers have the capability, energy and the strategies in place for further sustained improvement.

### Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14 and 16 18 year olds in national tests and GCSE examinations in 1999:

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

Pupils begin Year 7 with well below average attainment. They make good progress in each key stage. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. Overall attainment is still below average at the end of Key Stage 3 though the pupils have made significant gains. By the end of Key Stage 4, overall attainment is above average. The school does well to achieve this.

**Key Stage 3 tests in English mathematics and science:** the English and mathematics results in 1999 were close to the national average for all maintained schools but the science results were below average. The English and mathematics results were better than those of most schools with similar intakes of pupils whilst the science results were much the same as found in similar schools. Taking the three subjects together, the 1999 national test results were below the national average for all schools but above average for similar schools.

**GCSE examinations:** the 1999 results were above average in comparison with the national average and were very high in comparison with those of similar schools. Over the period 1996 – 1999, the GCSE results improved at a faster rate than the national trend. In 1999, English results were below average though much the same as other schools with similar intakes of pupils. Mathematics and science results were broadly average and better than those of similar schools. The strongest subjects at GCSE are art, business studies, music, physical education, drama and design and technology subjects.

**Key skills:** numeracy is well developed throughout the school. Pupils' information technology skills improve from a low starting point to above average by the end of Key Stage 4. Literacy is well below average on entry to the school. Although pupils' literacy skills improve, pupils need more opportunities in lessons to develop speaking and writing.

### Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Art, music, physical education, design and technology	Effective in all other subjects
Years 10-11	Good	Art, music, drama, physical education, design and technology, business studies	Effective in all other subjects
English	Satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching is good overall and accounts for the good progress pupils make throughout the school. It was found to be satisfactory or better in nearly 99 per cent of lessons. It was satisfactory overall in English and good in all

other subjects. Some outstanding teaching was seen in art and design and technology. The strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good command of their subjects, their effective discipline and good relationships with the pupils, and their consistently high expectations of effort and achievement to which pupils generally respond well. The main weakness is that teachers do not develop literacy skills consistently enough in all subjects.

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

### Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good overall because of the teachers' effective discipline, though there is sometimes misbehaviour in some lower sets, particularly in Year 8.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above average and pupils arrive punctually to school. Teachers work hard to achieve this, and the school benefits from a constructive partnership with the Educational Welfare Officer.
Ethos*	The senior managers have established an effective environment for learning in which pupils can thrive. The school has high expectations for effort, achievement and good behaviour. The aims and practice of the school fully reflect its distinctive denominational character in its daily work. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good.
Leadership and management	Strong leadership provides clear direction for the school. The school is very well managed. Senior staff monitor the work of the school very thoroughly and this results in consistently good teaching.
Curriculum	Good in each key stage. Special arrangements for teaching Year 7 pupils mean that these pupils are taught English and humanities subjects by the same teacher, which enables them to settle into the school well. An excellent assessment system provides a wealth of information so that pupils' progress can be monitored effectively and targets set. An excellent range of extracurricular activities broadens the experience of pupils and is a credit to the work of the teachers.
Pupils with special educational needs	The support for these pupils is very good and enables them to make good progress in each key stage.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good.
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	The pastoral system is excellent. Pupils are very well looked after. Their progress, behaviour, attendance and personal development are monitored very thoroughly.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good overall though accommodation for drama is too small.
Value for money	Good. The school adds considerable value.

*\*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**

- III. Parents approve of the school's values and ethos
- IV. They feel that they can play an active part in the life of the school
- V. Their children achieve good standards
- VI. They value the pastoral system
- VII. Pupils' behaviour is good
- VIII. The special arrangements for teaching Year 7 pupils are greatly appreciated
- IX. Parents of pupils with special educational needs greatly value the support their children receive
- X. Parents are very pleased with the wide range of extracurricular activities which the teachers provide
- XI. They find that homework is set on time
- XII. They say that their children like school

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

- XIII. Some parents would welcome an earlier consultation with teachers to discuss their children's annual progress report than at present

Inspectors agree with the parents in their favourable opinions of the work of the school. The school provides two reports to parents each year: an annual summary report and an interim report which gives details of progress in subjects as pupils approach important tests and examinations. This is more than the single annual report legally required. The consultation evening is held at the time of the interim report because the school's management says that this the most effective time to consult with parents so that all efforts can be made in good time to tackle instances of under-achievement. Inspectors find this explanation reasonable.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

***In order to improve further the quality of educational provision and educational standards achieved, the governors, Headteacher and staff should:***

- Implement plans for improving literacy more consistently in all subjects (*paragraphs 5-7, 10, 21, 82, 84, 89-94*);
- Take measures to improve pupils' behaviour in some lower attaining sets in Key Stage 3 (*paragraphs 14, 64*).

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

- Implement the governors' intention to adopt a single, cohesive policy which embraces the various health and safety policies which already exist (*paragraphs 51, 60*).

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1. Our Lady and Saint John School is a Roman Catholic mixed comprehensive school of average size, educating 923 pupils in the 11-16 age range. The numbers of boys and girls are approximately equal. The school has a very good reputation, is very popular with parents and is over-subscribed. In 1999, for example, the school received 286 first-choice applications for the 180 places available. The admission policy is clear and sets out appropriate criteria related to the school's denominational character.

2. The school serves a predominantly working class catchment with pockets of extreme disadvantage though around 20 pupils in each year come from a district with fewer social problems. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is above average. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is relatively high. Standardised tests of the annual intake of pupils indicate that attainment is well below average though improving. It is clear that the school takes fewer higher attaining pupils than would normally be expected. The percentage of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is above average and the proportion having formal statements is well above average. The school is situated in an Education Action Zone, from which the school derives considerable benefit in terms of advice and resources.

3. The school achieves exceptionally highly according to 'value added' analysis. The school aims to provide a Catholic education which emphasises care and the place of the individual within the school community, active learning, a realistic knowledge of the world, and the pursuit of excellence. The priorities for improvement include raising attainment and setting targets, improving basic skills, especially of literacy and numeracy, improving behaviour and expanding vocational education.

## 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
1999	97	79	176

National Curriculum Test		English	Mathematics	Science
<b>Results</b>				
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	45	51	40
	Girls	53	45	36
	Total	98	96	76
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	56 (45)	55 (49)	43 (45)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	22 (20)	32 (31)	10 (15)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	46	58	51
	Girls	51	45	30
	Total	97	103	81
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	55 (47)	59 (57)	46 (74)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	22 (18)	33 (30)	3 (36)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28(31)

### 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
1999	98	77	175

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	38	78	96
	Girls	31	66	75
	Total	69	144	171
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	39 (38)	81 (82)	98 (97)
	National	46 (46)	91 (88)	96 (93)

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

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

**Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	7.3
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	0.3
	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	29
	Permanent	2

..

**Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	17
	Satisfactory or better	99
	Less than satisfactory	1

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

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

#### **Attainment and progress**

##### *Test and examination results*

4. Standards are a little below average at Key Stage 3 and above average at Key Stage 4. In 1999, the overall results of the national tests were below the national average for all maintained schools but above the average for similar schools. In both English and mathematics, the results improved from the previous year and were close to the national average for all maintained schools and above average for similar schools. The science results were below average for all schools and average for similar schools. Girls did better than boys in English but boys outperformed girls in mathematics and science. The overall GCSE results in 1999 were above the national average, in terms of the candidates' average points scores, and these were very high in comparison with similar schools. Over the period 1995 to 1999, the results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend. Boys' GCSE results are below those of girls, reflecting the national picture. The strongest subjects at GCSE are art, sports studies, design and technology, music, drama and business studies. Examination results are broadly average in English, English literature, mathematics, science and history. Results are below average in computer studies and a little below in geography. Results are also below average in French and Spanish though overall standards are improving in modern languages. A number of higher attaining pupils take GCSE statistics as an additional subject and achieve good results.

##### *inspection*

##### *First-hand evidence of the*

5. Pupils begin Year 7 with well below average attainment. In particular, pupils' literacy is a weakness. Pupils make good overall progress over the key stage though their attainment, in relation to that found nationally, is still below average by the end of Year 9, as reflected in the results of the national tests. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Pupils for whom English is a second language are generally fluent in English and make similar progress to that of other pupils.

6. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English from a very low starting point on entry to the school. Their attainment is below average by the end of Year 9, though test results are close to average, and literacy remains a weakness which affects progress to some extent in all other subjects. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress in mathematics and reach close to average standards by the end of the key stage which is a considerable achievement. Their numerical skills improve greatly over the key stage as a result of good teaching and consistent implementation of the school's very effective whole-school approach to numeracy. In science, pupils make good progress though attainment is still below average by the end of Year 9.

7. Pupils make good progress in nearly all of their other subjects though progress is satisfactory in information technology. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is above average in art, music, and physical education, and average in design and technology, information technology, geography, history and modern languages. Some pupils find difficulty with the literacy demands of subjects and some immature behaviour of a very small minority of lower attaining boys in Year 8 adversely affects progress, for example, in information technology,

8. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4. In relation to national standards, pupils' overall attainment is average by the end of the key stage. Pupils with special needs also make good progress in their GCSE and other examination coursework. Pupils make good progress in English. By the end of Year 11, overall standards in English are close to average which again is a considerable achievement in relation to pupils' attainment at the start of the key stage. Pupils make satisfactory overall progress in mathematics, and standards are a little below average by the end of the Year 11 as the examination results also show. Though most higher attaining pupils make good progress in mathematics, one higher set is not making satisfactory progress because

the teaching is not leading to full understanding of the higher tier GCSE syllabus. On the other hand, the above average proportion passing the GCSE examination indicates that lower attainers make good progress. Pupils make satisfactory progress over the key stage in science, though good progress is often seen in their lessons. By the end of Year 11, attainment is close to average in science though a little below.

9. Progress is very good in art, design and technology and music, good in history, information technology and physical education, satisfactory in geography and modern languages. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average in art and music, above average in business studies, design and technology, information technology and physical education, and average in geography and history. Though standards are below average in modern languages, they are improving and are much better than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress in the GNVQ courses.

.. ***Key skills of literacy***

10. The development of pupils' speaking and reading skills was a key issue for action in the previous inspection report. Though there have been improvements, more needs to be done. Most pupils begin Year 7 with well below average reading and writing so that the school faces a difficult challenge to improve literacy at a fast enough rate for pupils to reach average standards in all subjects and to develop their capacity to work independently. Speaking remains a weakness and some pupils do not listen carefully enough. In some subjects pupils join in discussions and develop their speaking but this is inconsistent amongst teachers and between subjects. The weakest readers are supported by a range of methods to improve their reading skills. These pupils make good progress from a comparatively low starting point. Most other pupils read their textbooks and worksheets well enough but some teachers read for average and lower attainers rather than expecting them to read for themselves. The library's resources are used to develop pupils' research skills in history, geography, English, and design and technology, and to support GNVQ courses, but this is inconsistent across the full range of subjects. Average and lower attainers in Key Stage 3 tend to write short answers rather than continuous prose. This improves in Key Stage 4, when pupils of average and above attainment produce well written GCSE assignments in the full range of subjects as well as reports of their investigative work in science, mathematics and geography. Many pupils in both key stages make elementary errors of spelling and punctuation. The school has made some progress since the previous inspection in developing pupils' literacy skills but all subjects still need to put more emphasis on teaching literacy to help all pupils, especially the average and lower attainers. The improvement of language skills is prominent in the school's development plan, and a policy to improve literacy in all subjects is in place. A literacy co-ordinator has recently been appointed.

.. ***Key skills of numeracy***

11. Numeracy skills are good, particularly mental arithmetic. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge well to their work in other subjects. The school's strategy for numeracy is very effective and ensures that pupils build on previous skills and knowledge.

.. ***Key skills of information technology***

12. Pupils' information technology skills are average in Key Stage 3 and above average in Key Stage 4. These skills are applied successfully in the subjects of the curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 4, all pupils use a range of software to enhance their work, which is especially effective in design and technology, business studies and the GNVQ Leisure and Tourism course.

.. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

13. Pupils respond well to the quality of education which they receive. Their attitudes to learning are good; they show interest and enjoyment in their lessons, sustain concentration, and take pride in their work. Most pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes towards their work, and make substantial gains in self confidence and organising skills as they move through the school. They benefit from the high standard of care provided by the staff who support them.

14. Pupils are fully aware of the school's rules and generally abide by them. They are welcoming and courteous to visitors, and show respect for property and the equipment they use. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school because teachers expect high standards of behaviour and work hard to achieve them. However, in a few lessons, the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of immature pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties hinders the progress of the class. The number of permanent exclusions is low, though pupils are excluded for short periods in cases of serious misbehaviour.

15. Relationships are very good. There is mutual respect between pupils and staff, and between pupils themselves. In discussions, pupils listen attentively to others and wait for their turn to speak. Pupils collaborate very well in pairs and groups, for example, in ensemble playing in music, in gymnastic sequences in physical education, and when doing experiments in science. They are sensitive towards the feelings, opinions and values of other pupils, notably in drama and history lessons.

16. Pupils respond very well to the wealth of opportunities provided for their personal development. They use the school's attractive library and information technology resources well to carry out research outside of lesson time. Pupils of all ages are keen to take part in assemblies, school productions, concerts and extra-curricular sport. They enjoy visits to the theatre, residential courses, and trips abroad. Senior pupils are good ambassadors for the school, and some of them help younger pupils, for example, to improve their reading. Representatives from each year serve on the school council and consider ways to improve aspects of school life that are important to them, for example, school uniform. Pupils respond well to the school's encouragement of them to consider those less fortunate than themselves and Year 7 pupils raise impressive sums for charity.

#### .. **Attendance**

17. As found at the previous inspection, pupils have good attitudes towards attendance. Last year, the recorded attendance rate at the school was slightly above average in comparison with other schools nationally. Unauthorised absence is low. Pupils are generally punctual.

..

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

#### .. **Teaching**

18. Teaching is good overall and good in each key stage and has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The teaching is a strength of the school and is the most significant factor in the pupils' good progress and their achievements. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of the 187 lessons inspected. When the figures are considered in detail, satisfactory teaching was recorded in 32 per cent of lessons, good teaching in 50 per cent, very good teaching in a further 15 per cent, and excellent teaching in nearly two per cent of all lessons. Unsatisfactory teaching, where weaknesses outweighed strengths, was found in only one per cent of lessons and there were no poor lessons.

19. Pupils with special educational needs are taught for the most part in mainstream classes. Their needs are met through individual support in the classroom; additionally, some pupils are withdrawn for specialised teaching. Liaison between the learning support department and the subject departments is very good. The pupils' individual education plans are reflected in the teachers' plans and organisation of their lessons.

20. The teaching is satisfactory in English in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. It is good overall in mathematics though the quality varies considerably. Teaching is consistently good in science. Teaching is generally good in art and music and very good in both of these subjects in Key Stage 4. Teaching is good in all other subjects. Very good teaching was seen in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, and

some outstanding teaching was seen in art and design and technology. Overall, the most effective teaching is in physical education, art and music. There are no weak or ineffective subjects.

21. The teaching of numeracy is good and builds well on the good start the pupils have in primary school. The school's teaching of this important aspect of pupils' learning is well co-ordinated and is very effective, both in mathematics and in other subjects. Additionally, mathematics teachers organise extra activities which benefit pupils and improve the subject's image; for example, the extra classes for GCSE pupils, the summer numeracy school for new Year 7 pupils who have not reached the standard expected for their age, and a 'mathematics challenge' which involves parents, Year 7 and primary school pupils. The teaching of literacy is not yet as well developed as numeracy and weak literacy skills hinder pupils' progress in most subjects. However, improving literacy features prominently amongst the school's priorities for development. Teaching of information technology has greatly improved since the previous inspection. Teachers of all subjects incorporate work with computers into their lessons to the great benefit of the pupils. This practice is most advanced in design and technology and business studies.

22. Teachers have good command of their subjects and this is a major strength of the teaching. The art teachers use examples of their own work very effectively to demonstrate techniques. Music is staffed by expert musicians complemented by a committed team of visiting instrumental teachers; their imaginative approach leads to high standards of performance. Modern language teachers all teach both French and Spanish, and have worked hard on their second language to develop their fluency which enables them to conduct lessons entirely in the foreign language, which makes a positive impact on pupils' progress. There is some non-specialist teaching in Year 7, when pupils have the same teacher for English and humanities, but social and other benefits substantially outweigh disadvantages. The senior staff see this feature of the school's work as a strength and the arrangements have the warm approval of parents. Teachers are generally up to date with the latest requirements of the National Curriculum, vocational and GCSE examination courses and regulations, though some up-dating is needed for the new GCSE course in food technology. Teachers' effectiveness in the use of information technology in their teaching has greatly improved since the previous inspection.

23. Lessons are generally well planned to interest and motivate pupils and to match tasks to differing levels of attainment. The quality of planning is a strength of the teaching of English. It is satisfactory in mathematics though one set of higher attaining pupils is not making sufficient progress towards full understanding of the higher tier GCSE paper. In science, lessons are well planned but schemes of work do not always focus sufficiently on learning objectives and outcomes.

24. Teachers generally have high expectations for attainment. In music, tasks challenge all pupils appropriately and teachers create a purposeful and productive atmosphere, in which pupils enjoy listening, playing and performing. In physical education, teachers have high expectations of pupils which motivate pupils and encourage them to fulfil their potential.

25. Discipline is very effective and is a main strength of the teaching. Firm discipline results in good behaviour and enables pupils to make progress in the vast majority of lessons. This factor is notable in modern languages, and more generally it is linked to high expectations; for example, pupils are expected to come to physical education lessons well prepared and properly equipped and to display appropriate attitudes towards one another. However, in some lessons for lower attaining pupils, maintenance of good discipline is sometimes difficult when there is a concentration of immature pupils with both low ability and behaviour difficulties in the same class.

26. Lessons are generally interesting and varied in most subjects and these factors help to sustain pupils' motivation. On occasions, however, lessons are over-directed by the teacher, for example, in English, geography and science. Effective use of questions is a strength of the mathematics teaching and mathematics teachers present the subject in a greater variety of ways than at the time of the previous inspection; on some occasions, however, explanations are too long, and this gives pupils insufficient time to undertake written work. Teachers give clear demonstrations and explanations of skills and techniques in physical education; they check what has been learnt to improve pupils' understanding.

27. Resources are generally used effectively in most subjects. The impact of the school's improved information technology facilities and the teachers' use of them are making a significant contribution to pupils' progress. In English, teachers use overhead projectors and an interactive whiteboard very effectively. The library is much better used than it was but has yet to make its full impact on pupils' learning. Teachers generally make the best use of the time available, though physical education lessons sometimes start late.

28. In English, Pupils' work is marked conscientiously and the best marking, especially in Key Stage 4, offers clear guidance for improvement. In mathematics, marking gives pupils a clear understanding of their progress; for example, pupils are given a very clear idea of what they need to do to improve GCSE coursework. In science, the marking of written work would be of greater value to pupils if teachers highlighted strengths and weaknesses more clearly to show pupils how to improve. In design and technology, statutory assessments underestimate attainment.

29. Teachers set homework regularly and homework makes a significant contribution to pupils' good progress, and consolidates and extends work done in class.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

30. The curriculum is good in both key stages. It is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of all pupils and provides equally for girls and boys and pupils of differing abilities. The curriculum fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The time given to teaching is above the minimum recommended for each key stage; however, it is slightly below the national average.

31. A personal and social education programme (PSE) is in place for each key stage. The PSE programme is well-planned, taught by all form teachers and includes important aspects of health and drugs education. Sex education is taught in a number of subjects. The school holds the Quality Standards for Careers Education and Guidance award. In Year 11, all pupils take part in work experience for ten school days.

32. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The curriculum fully implements the recommendations of the national Code of Practice for special educational needs. All pupils follow the full range of National Curriculum subjects in Key Stage 3. They are generally taught in smaller classes and benefit from additional support. In Key Stage 4, some of these pupils take an approved course of work-related education.

33. In Year 7, pupils are taught by the same teacher for English, history, geography and religious education. This arrangement provides a very effective transition from primary school and ensures that pupils benefit from continuity of teaching in Year 7. In Years 8 and 9, all pupils have a lesson of performing arts consisting of music and drama which are taught separately. Higher attaining Year 8 pupils take Spanish as well as French.

34. On entry to the school, pupils are placed in general ability sets in one of two equal populations. These sets are adjusted twice each year as pupils progress through the school. A disadvantage of the setting is that it tends to concentrate pupils with behavioural difficulties in lower sets.

35. In Key Stage 4, most pupils take ten GCSE subjects and some take more. The majority of pupils take English literature, double award science, religious education, design technology and either French or Spanish. There are two option choices, one which includes history or geography and the other mainly comprises expressive arts subjects. General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in Business and Leisure and Tourism are also options, and other work-related courses provide a relevant education for some pupils. The quality of the work-related courses is closely monitored by the school and changes are made each year to improve the provision.

36. Curriculum planning is good in the various subjects and ensures continuity and progression from year to year

and between key stages. The curriculum builds systematically on previous knowledge, understanding and skills.

37. The provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent. All subject departments make a substantial contribution and the school records the participation of each pupil. The provision of extra-curricular sport is very good and a high 30 per cent of pupils participate in team games. This provision is much appreciated by pupils and their parents. Many pupils also take part in trips abroad, residential weekends, musical and dramatic productions. In Key Stage 4, large numbers of pupils are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The work of the teachers does much to broaden pupils' experience across a wide range of activities.

38. The school's system of assessment is excellent and provides data which enable pupils' progress to be monitored very effectively and for targets to be set for improvement. Procedures are consistent in most but not all subjects. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are generally accurate and reliable, especially in English, mathematics and science, though they tend to under-estimate attainment in the technology subjects. Procedures for assessment of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Well established systems identify pupils in need of extra help and monitor their progress towards the targets set for them. Individual education plans are in place for those who need them and the information they contain is comprehensive and clearly presented. Short-term targets are kept sharply in focus, with precise indications of ways in which they will be achieved. The school has improved its assessment procedures since the previous inspection and pupils are now involved in identifying subjects in which they need to improve.

39. Subject departments use assessment data to assist in the placement of pupils in sets and to identify weaknesses in curriculum planning and teaching. The senior managers use assessment data to measure the school's effectiveness in terms of the GCSE results and to set appropriate targets for future performance.

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

40. A main finding of the previous inspection was that pupils clearly benefited from the many opportunities offered to them to develop in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their lives. This continues to be the case.

41. The provision for spiritual development is very good. The school gives high priority to opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and insights into Catholic values and beliefs and for the development of spiritual awareness and self-knowledge. All pupils participate in daily prayers at morning and afternoon group registration, and play an active role in the weekly year group assemblies and whole-school mass, together with liturgical services throughout the Church year; all of which provide rich opportunities for the development of their personal values. In one Year 9 assembly, prayers were well written and effectively read aloud by a representative group of four pupils. All pupils were encouraged to prepare prayer cards for departed relatives for inclusion in the whole-school mass to celebrate All Saints the following day. Interviews with three year 9 pupils revealed that one pupil had included a prayer for a relative. Pupils also regularly contribute well-rehearsed vocal and instrumental items to these occasions, practised in their own time. In history, the Key Stage 3 curriculum includes the treatment of religious issues such as the medieval church and the conflict of the Tudor period, handled sensitively and without bias by the teachers concerned.

42. Provision for moral development is very good. Pupils respond well to this and appreciate the positive support and guidance which their teachers give them. Effective strategies enable teachers to reward pupils for good behaviour and encourage high moral standards. Pupils appreciate the consistency and fairness of discipline and say that teachers always give pupils a second chance. Great emphasis is placed on trusting pupils to behave well and to show respect for others. Parents appreciate that effective strategies are in place to combat bullying. Moral issues are tackled as a matter of course in lessons; for example, information technology lessons in Key Stage 4 stress the use and abuse of credit cards, and cover the moral implications of current legislation regarding with data protection and freedom of information. In a Key Stage 4 history lesson on the rise to power of Hitler in Germany, discussion of the persecution of the Jews drew a mature response from the pupils who considered a

range of moral factors in a broad religious context. A drama class explored the theme of homelessness, with a sensitive interpretation of the moral aspects of the theme.

43. Social education is very good. Pupils have many opportunities to exercise responsibility, for example, as school or year council representatives. Older pupils may serve as prefects. The arrangements for the induction of Year 7 pupils bring substantial social benefits which help the pupils to adjust happily to secondary school. With the strong encouragement of the staff, Year 7 pupils have established the tradition of raising large sums of money for children's charities, and around £12,000 was raised over the last year. Each year group spends a residential week away from school, following a programme of activities designed to develop confidence, teambuilding and aspects of citizenship. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' social development. Social development is also very evident during lesson routine; for example, pupils collaborate very effectively and make sure that they have the necessary materials to hand. Pupils are taught to respect the work of others and work safely and responsibly.

44. Cultural development is very good. Opportunities are regularly created by the school for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and to understand other cultures and religions. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities supported by all subject departments. Theatre trips, book fairs, school radio, trips abroad and the annual Festival Day are all established features. Around 100 pupils are learning musical instruments, with a generous scheme for subsidising the cost. The annual musical production is now firmly established in the cultural calendar, in addition to the annual carol service, Easter concert and musical items for Speech Day. High standards of vocal and instrumental performance have become the norm. Many girls and boys continue to be involved in a wide range of physical education activities, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is attracting an increasing number of youngsters. Consequently, priority is being given by the school to the in-service training of staff willing to become qualified in leading outdoor pursuits.

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

45. The school's pastoral system is excellent and is greatly valued by parents. Year 7 pupils are quickly settled quickly into school routines and are very well looked after. Pupils are confident in their pastoral teachers and feel that they can always turn to them for help when they are worried or in trouble.

46. Pupils' progress is monitored very effectively by both subject and pastoral staff. This has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers use assessment data effectively to tackle under-achievement and set targets for improvement. Pastoral teachers use assessment data effectively in collaboration with subject teachers, for example, to identify Key Stage 4 pupils at the GCSE grades C and D borderline, who could do better. Specialist teachers of pupils with special educational needs use assessment data effectively to assist in the modification of the pupils' learning programmes.

47. Pupils' behaviour is monitored well and discipline is good. Younger pupils value the merit award system which they perceive as consistent and fair. Pupils and parents express confidence in the school's swift and effective handling of bullying.

48. Procedures to ensure good attendance are very effective and parents are contacted on the first day of absence. The governors make great efforts to resolve cases of poor attendance with the parents concerned. The school's partnership with the Educational Welfare Officer is very effective.

49. Record keeping is exemplary. Records are transferred from primary schools, regularly updated with copies of reports and other assessment information data, and again transferred forward once a pupil has been admitted to another school or college. Since the previous inspection, a systematic approach has been developed for the tracking of pupils' participation in extracurricular activities and other aspects of pupils' personal development.

50. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons and taught effectively when given special individual help out of lessons. Subject teachers know pupils' difficulties and individual plans are used effectively to monitor the pupils' progress. These pupils benefit from special initiatives, such as the summer literacy school, the homework club, and special computer-based learning programmes. The liaison between the school and the local support services is very effective. The provision helps the pupils to gain confidence and to make good progress.

51. The measures for child protection are satisfactory. Only one minor safety matter, concerning storage of physical education equipment, arose during the inspection and an efficient fire drill was observed. The school has a number of separate policies for different aspects of health and safety which cover all legal requirements.

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

52. The previous inspection found that the school had good links with parents, the parish and the community. The links with primary schools and a thorough programme of induction of Year 7 were found to be good features. Since that time, the school has maintained its good links with the wider community and its constructive partnership with parents.

53. Parents support the school and are involved in their children's education. In general, pupils come to school properly equipped. Most parents support the school by attending progress consultation evenings with teachers, though some do not. Most parents supervise their children's homework. The Parents and Teachers Association supports the school well; in particular, they have been very generous in their financial support for the library's improvement over a period of four years. Several parents also give valuable help in the school library. The schools' partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs is constructive. Parents regularly attend reviews of their children's progress, they read with their children at home, and they are pleased with the way in which their children are supported and integrated within the life of the school.

54. The written information sent to parents, for example, the prospectus, is of good quality. Parents are generally pleased with the information provided. The school's newsletter is particularly good, giving a valuable insight into school life. The written progress reports are appreciated by parents. The school contacts parents quickly to alert them to concerns or to give praise when due.

55. In their responses to the questionnaire, and in the meeting held before the inspection, parents expressed very positive views about the school. Inspectors agree with the parents' positive opinions of the school. However, some parents said at the meeting that they would welcome an earlier consultation with teachers to discuss their children's annual progress report than at present. This point was investigated. The school provides two reports to parents each year, an annual summary report and an interim report which gives details of progress in subjects as pupils approach important tests and examinations. This is more than the single annual report legally required. The consultation evening is held at the time of the interim report because the school finds this the most effective time to consult with parents so that all efforts can be made in good time to maximise pupils' achievements. Inspectors find this reasonable.

56. Well established links with the local 'Catholic family primary schools' ensure a regular exchange of information so that pupils are helped to make a smooth transition to secondary school.

57. The school has developed its links with the local community and industry, which have a positive effect on pupils' attainment. Pupils benefit considerably from productive links with major industry, for example, in the *Euro Collaborator* project. Local businesses support the school by providing work placements for Year 11 pupils,

helping with mock interviews and supporting the school's annual *Industry Day*. Pupils participating in the school's *Young Enterprise* project benefit from links with industry and commerce. Many Key Stage 4 pupils successfully work towards the *Trident Gold Award*, which requires 15 hours of community or voluntary service. The school's partnerships with the careers service and local colleges are effective and help to ensure that pupils follow courses which match their interests and aptitudes.

## .. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

### .. Leadership and management

58. At the time of the previous inspection, the leadership was found to be good at all levels, the work of the Governing Body was effective, the school succeeded with its aims, and the senior managers worked well as a team. Planning was effective at senior management level though there were some weaknesses in subject planning. The administration of the school was very good. The key issues for action identified in the previous report were to provide a wider range of teaching approaches, improve speaking, improve the match of work to pupils' different attainment levels, enrich the curriculum for ablest pupils.

59. Since the previous inspection, the school has tackled the key issues for action. Pupils' oral skills are better than they were though pupils still need more opportunities to develop them; for example, in class discussion and individual and group presentation of work to the class. The teaching now includes a broader variety of activities and approaches. Work set for pupils in nearly all subjects matches pupils' differing attainment levels more effectively than at the time of the previous inspection. The curriculum for the ablest pupils now gives more opportunities for them to extend their learning; for example, through early entry for GCSE Statistics and for advanced work in music, art and design and technology. Higher attaining pupils now take two modern languages in Year 8. The health and safety matters raised during the last inspection were dealt with immediately but another minor safety matter, related to storage of physical education equipment, was reported to the Headteacher. Overall, the school has made good progress with the issues for action. GCSE examination results are improving at a faster rate than the national trend. The curriculum continues to develop, with special strengths emerging in performing arts subjects, business studies and technology.

60. The leadership is strong and committed to improving teaching and raising standards. All pupils have an equal opportunity to take advantage of the high quality of the education provided by the school. The governors fulfil their responsibilities well through their committee work; and are very supportive of the work of the school and the senior staff. All statutory requirements are fully met. The school has produced a revised, composite policy which covers all relevant health and safety matters though this policy has yet to be formally adopted by the governors.

61. The senior managers continue to work well as a team with strengths which complement each other. Their work is very effective and has established the school's caring and distinctive Catholic character and shows commitment to raising standards and improving teaching. The school's very good and purposeful leadership is the principal factor in taking the school forward.

62. The school's values are appreciated by parents and pupils alike. Discipline is very good and the school has clear expectations of pupils regarding effort, behaviour and achievement to which most pupils rise. Pupils can thrive in this school. Relationships are very good. The pastoral system is exceptionally well led and is excellent, resulting in the very effective monitoring of pupils' academic and personal achievements, their behaviour and attendance.

63. The management of all subjects is effective. Schemes of work are in place which give clear guidance for teaching. School policies are implemented consistently and subject heads monitor the work of their staff efficiently. The good management of the subjects is a significant factor in ensuring that pupils make progress.

64. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed. The work of the special needs support staff is skilfully co-ordinated. The literacy and numeracy support programmes for these pupils are very well organised, day to day routines run smoothly, and working relationships within the learning support department are very good. The school's register of pupils with special educational needs is up to date. The recommendations of the national Code of Practice are implemented. In Key Stage 3, pupils with both learning and behavioural difficulties tend to be concentrated in the same class, which can make these classes difficult to manage and this factor affects the pupils' progress.

65. Planning is very good, both at whole school level and subject level, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Planning shows clear objectives and appropriate priorities and has deadlines, success criteria and sets out accountability. Carefully drawn subject plans form the basis of the whole plan which includes targets set for attainment. The school development plan systematically analyses where and how improvements are to be made. It concentrates separately on pupils, the curriculum, staff and the community. The plan spans a three-year time-scale and identifies longer and shorter term priorities and targets. Current priorities include: raising attainment and increased focus on monitoring of individual pupils; improving basic skills, for example, literacy; evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's strategy for numeracy; setting targets for attainment at each key stage; improving behaviour; further developing vocational education.

66. Strategies for improving numeracy skills have been very effective. The school's excellent system of assessment provides a wealth of data to assist teachers in the monitoring of pupils' achievements and set targets for achievement. Though literacy is prominent in the school's planning for improvement, the strategy to improve it is not yet as well advanced as that for numeracy. A co-ordinator for literacy has been appointed but has not received external training though other key teachers have.

67. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are monitored very effectively. Subject heads monitor lessons systematically. The governors receive annual reports from each head of subject. The senior managers monitor standards through checks on exercise books and homework. Each teacher is observed teaching, by a senior member of staff annually. The criteria for judging the quality of teaching are clear. Subsequent feedback sets targets for improvement and helps to identify where training is needed.

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

68. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school overall has a good match of number, qualification and experience of teachers to the needs of the curriculum and the ages and abilities of the pupils. The previous inspection identified a need for more support staff. There are now sufficient support staff to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs, to give technical support and to administer the school well. Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a librarian and this has helped to develop the library as a useful resource for learning.

69. Learning support staff are well qualified and experienced and form a strong team. They collaborate effectively with subject teachers to match tasks well to the needs of individual pupils.

70. The arrangements for teachers' professional development have a positive effect on the quality of the provision. Training is linked clearly to school and subject priorities. An effective programme of induction enables new teachers to settle into the school well. Teachers have job descriptions which match their duties.

71. The accommodation is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. Some corridors have been widened and some teaching rooms have been enlarged. Year 7 accommodation is particularly welcoming and pleasant. The accommodation for music continues to be excellent and helps to promote high standards. Since the last inspection, the computer facilities have been greatly improved and are now very good. The accommodation for drama is too small. The lack of storage space in physical education results in equipment being stored around the edge of the sports hall: this is a safety concern.

72. Resources are good. Many subjects make good use of interactive white-boards, television and video are used effectively. The provision of textbooks has improved since the previous inspection.

73. The library has vastly improved since the previous inspection. It is now attractive and pleasant and enhanced by impressive displays of pupils' artwork. It presents a strong image of the pleasure and power of reading. The book stock has been greatly increased and improved in quality. The range of resources has also been enhanced and includes computers, access to the Internet, a collection of CD-ROM, newspapers and audiotapes. There is a very good careers section. Much, but not all of the non-fiction stock is now relevant to the curriculum though there is still room for improvement in fostering pupils' leisure interests, and the reference section could also be improved. The Parents and Teachers Association has very generously provided about half of the funding for improvement for the last four years. The library is supervised by an assistant librarian throughout the day and it is managed effectively by a teacher-librarian; its use is regularly evaluated. Pupil-librarians and parents also give generously of their time to help with administration. The library is relatively well used by both boys and girls at lunchtime and to some extent after school, although current borrowing figures are quite low. Although some subject departments have integrated the use of the library into their planning, this picture is still uneven. The school's management is now in a good position to develop the library further: to increase borrowing of books and to help all subject departments to realise its potential to enhance research skills and to foster pupils' interest in reading.

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

74. Financial planning is very good. The income per pupil is average in comparison with other schools nationally and this money is spent very efficiently so that pupils derive the maximum possible benefit. The budget is planned carefully and effectively, and the school has reserves for the funding of future development. The spending on teaching staff is relatively high reflecting decisions to keep a very favourable pupil-to-teacher ratio, and maintain a commitment to support for pupils with special educational needs, and to have small classes where pupils can benefit most. The spending on resources for learning is also high in comparison with other schools and this also reflects decisions to provide pupils with the best possible learning environment that funding allows. There are no significant shortages of resources and pupils greatly benefit from the school's investment in computer facilities and in the library.

75. Resources and accommodation are generally used efficiently to promote the progress of pupils and the school makes the best use of available time.

76. The funds provided by the Local Education Authority in support of designated pupils with special educational needs are spent appropriately. The school's funding for special educational needs is also used wisely to promote pupils' progress in the provision of specialised teacher support, smaller classes, classroom support, learning resources, and staff training.

77. Development planning is very efficient. It involves all subject departments and is clearly linked to the budget. Funds provided specifically for staff development and training are spent appropriately in pursuit of the school's objectives as identified in the development plan.

78. Governors are fully involved in the annual budget preparation and monitor spending regularly in meetings of the finance committee and the full Governing Body. Financial control and school administration are effective; the latest audit report found the school's procedures efficient and reliable. Some minor recommendations have since been implemented. Administrative staff perform their duties efficiently and are well-managed, keeping required information flowing smoothly. The school is very clean and well maintained.

79. The deployment of the school's teaching and support staff is very effective. The school's decision for Year 7 classes to be taught by the same teacher for a number of subjects clearly involves some non-specialist teaching; however, this enables pupils to settle into secondary school well and provides continuity of teaching. On balance, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. In other years, the vast majority of lessons are taught by subject specialists. Subject heads and other managers have generous non-contact time in order that they may effectively carry out their responsibilities.

80. Unit costs are average. Taking into consideration the following factors, inspectors find that the school gives good value for money.

- Pupils' socio-economic backgrounds are less favourable than average.
- The attainment of the annual Year 7 intake is well below average.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school.
- Pupils achieve close to average overall standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 11. GCSE results are broadly average and improving at a faster rate than the national trend. When compared with similar schools, the results are well above average so that there is considerable added value. The school has special strengths in performing arts, physical education and technology.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good.
- The teaching is good.
- The school has made good progress with the points for improvement found in the previous inspection.

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

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

81. Results of the national Key Stage 3 tests, which assess some specific elements of the National Curriculum, were well below average in 1998 compared with those for all maintained schools, but above average in comparison with schools with similar intakes. The proportion of pupils who attained expected standards improved considerably in 1999, so that the results were much closer to the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining GCSE A\*-C grades in English was average in 1998 though it declined in 1999. GCSE results were above average for similar schools in 1998 though they were average in 1999. The proportion of pupils attaining A-C grades in English literature was a little above average in 1998 though it also declined a little in 1999. However, although the entry in English literature was above average in 1999, the entry for English was below and there is a significant minority of pupils who are not entered for GCSE English but take the Certificate of Achievement in English and GCSE in English literature. Virtually all pupils who are entered for either or both GCSE examinations achieve A-G grades. 1999 results in GCSE drama were above average for the proportion attaining A-C grades and just over a third achieved grade A.

82. The majority of pupils enter the school with standards of reading and writing which are well below the national average. There are very few higher attaining pupils and a larger proportion than nationally of pupils with special educational needs, most of which are related to difficulties with literacy. During their five years in school, pupils make considerable progress in improving their language skills, especially in Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3, overall attainment is below average. Inspection findings, based on a broader range of evidence than tests and examinations, indicate that, as at the time of the previous inspection, higher attainers and those with special educational needs make good progress in Key Stage 3, whilst the average attainers make satisfactory progress. However, the progress of the majority of Key Stage 4 pupils is good in response to effective curriculum planning and some rigorous teaching: average attainers improve the length and coherence of their writing especially. As a result, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly average and this is confirmed by the GCSE results.

83. The majority of pupils in both key stages contribute willingly to class discussions and try hard to answer teachers' questions. Higher attainers, especially when they are involved in extended oral activities which involve pair and group work, use informal talk to discuss points and cite reasons and evidence to support their views. However, the majority of middle and lower attainers in both key stages largely offer short answers and find it much more difficult to back up their points, to be precise or to adapt their speech for different situations. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils studying Ted Hughes' poem, *The Horses*, were able to highlight specific examples of the poet's use of language and comment on its effectiveness; their points were well developed and pertinent. This was followed by work in mixed groups during which pupils successfully applied their knowledge and understanding of Hughes' themes and use of language to a new and unseen poem by the same poet.

84. A large proportion of pupils begin Year 7 with reading ages below their chronological ages. The weakest readers are helped in a variety of ways to accelerate the development of their reading skills, often from a low base. The English department has very recently introduced a wider reading scheme for pupils in Key Stage 3; as yet, it is too early to judge its effectiveness to promote and sustain pupils' interest in reading for pleasure. Pupils study a reasonable range of literary texts in both key stages, although there is less emphasis on non-literary texts and researching for information in Key Stage 3. GCSE assignments of middle and higher attainers show a good grasp of the plot, characterisation and themes of the plays and novels which they study in depth. Higher attaining pupils' essays on *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Jane Eyre* show that they respond positively to their reading of these more demanding texts and can successfully marshal evidence to present a point of view. A lower attaining class of Year 11 pupils worked hard to understand the themes and language of one of Wilfred Owen's war poems before sequencing lines from a range of other Owen poems individually and then working in pairs on Sassoon's *The Dugout*. The range of activities helped these pupils to develop and refine a

good range of reading skills in grappling with the meaning and language of these poems.

85. As with reading, a large proportion of pupils begin Year 7 facing difficulties in developing their ideas in writing, and their spelling and punctuation are weak. The quality of their writing improves satisfactorily overall in Key Stage 3. Whilst the writing in a range of forms is often lively, average and lower attainers still have difficulty in structuring and developing ideas and writing accurately. However, average attainers, especially, improve both the length and coherence of their written assignments during the GCSE course and learn to write clear introductions and conclusions. The coursework of higher attainers is well organised and detailed, and pupils are increasingly able to compare texts and to write fluently.

86. The majority of pupils are settled and attentive learners who try hard, accept the direction of their teachers and concentrate well. When given the chance to work in pairs and groups, they organise themselves sensibly and make good use of their time. However, there are also some pupils in all years whose concentration and commitment is considerably more limited and who have to be constantly encouraged by their teachers in order to make progress. Pupils have one period for drama and music in Years 8 and 9 but the links between the subjects are not strong. Pupils are taught in ability groups for these lessons which puts the weakest pupils and those with behaviour difficulties together which, in turn, makes it difficult for the teachers to manage.

87. The teaching is never less than satisfactory; it is good in four lessons out of every ten and is occasionally very good. This picture is similar to that reported at the time of the previous inspection. The strengths comprise careful planning of sequences of lessons, interesting materials, and a variety of teaching methods, including the use of the overhead projector, an interactive whiteboard and written prompts, all of which help to motivate pupils and encourage them to work at a good pace. For example, higher attainers in Year 11, who had just started a study of Priestley's play, *An Inspector Calls*, worked well in mixed groups to devise stage directions for different short extracts from the first act, and then performed them to the class. The teaching in their previous lessons had given pupils clear guidance and models for this approach to the text; as a result, pupils were able to discuss purposefully and to work with a considerable degree of independence. In the lessons which were satisfactory but not better, teachers used a narrower range of activities and gave pupils fewer chances to work in different ways and in a range of groupings; as a result, the pace of the lessons was slower and pupils were much more dependent on their teachers so that less was achieved in the lessons. Pupils' work is marked conscientiously and the best marking, especially in Key Stage 4, offers clear guidance for improvement.

88. The English department is well managed and administered; as a result, the team of teachers is effectively supported and its work is well monitored. The department has lost some experienced staff since the previous inspection and there has been some absence of teachers. The staff have coped well with this situation so that pupils have continued to be well taught. The subject documentation for the department and the planning for Key Stage 4 have improved. Priorities for the future include an increase in the proportion of pupils taking GCSE English; the use of a greater range of oral activities and dissemination of effective teaching strategies, a continuation of the detailed planning of units of work in Key Stage 3, especially non-fiction, and consideration of the implications of the National Literacy Strategy for curriculum planning and teaching in Key Stage 3.

#### ***Key skills – literacy***

89. The development of pupils' oral and reading skills was identified as a key issue for action in the previous inspection report. The school has devised a policy for language development across a full range of subjects which includes guidance on the use of talk as well as reading, writing, spelling and presentation of work. A literacy coordinator has recently been appointed and an outline list of priorities for developing literacy in the current academic year has been drawn up. The school library has greatly improved since the last inspection and is beginning to be used to enhance reading and research skills in some subjects.

90. Most pupils begin Year 7 with standards of reading and writing which are well below average for their age. The school has a hard task helping them to improve their literacy skills at a fast enough rate for them to have full access to the curriculum so that they can learn with some independence. Almost all pupils with statements of special educational need and those on the special educational needs register have difficulties with some aspects of literacy, and some are also linked to behavioural difficulties. The school has accepted its responsibility to

improve pupils' language skills and this area is a high priority in the development plan.

91. Many pupils in each key stage speak confidently when answering teachers' questions; however, many average and lower attainers also find it difficult either to extend their answers or to use language precisely and fluently. Most are considerate listeners to their peers and teachers, but a significant minority are quiet and do not listen carefully enough, whilst some are restless. In all subjects, some teachers use a range of activities which encourage pupils to use talk in their learning, but there are marked differences amongst individual teachers and subject departments in the degree to which a full range of oral work is used.

92. Whilst most pupils can read the printed sheets and materials which they use in lessons with support from their teachers, some teachers, with the best of intentions, read material for average and lower attainers rather than setting activities to help pupils to read texts for themselves. The library's resources are used to some extent to develop pupils' research skills in history, geography, English, and design and technology, and to support GNVQ courses, but this is inconsistent across the full range of subjects and teachers. The weakest readers in key stage 3 are supported by a range of methods to improve their reading skills and make good progress from their low starting point.

93. Pupils are taught 'key words' and technical vocabulary effectively in geography and design technology lessons. Higher attainers and some average attainers produce well organised, coherent GCSE assignments in a full range of subjects, as well as reports of their investigative work in science, mathematics and geography. Although the standards of continuous writing in Key Stage 4 are in line with GCSE criteria in most subjects, average and lower attainers in Key Stage 3 often write only short answers or paragraphs rather than continuous prose. A considerable proportion of pupils in both key stages make errors of spelling and punctuation.

94. The school has made some progress since the previous inspection in developing pupils' literacy. Improved coordination, promotion and extension of the teaching of literacy skills in all subjects is needed to help all of the pupils, but especially the average and lower attainers, to improve these key skills.

## .. **Mathematics**

95. The previous inspection reported that attainment was broadly average and GCSE results varied from well below average to average. Pupils made good progress to reach these standards because their attainment on entry was relatively low. Teaching was satisfactory overall. The predominantly 'chalk and talk' teaching style was not always appropriate and work was not always well enough matched to the pupils' attainment levels. Since the previous inspection, standards and teaching have improved.

96. The end of Key Stage 3 test results show a rising trend of improvement over the period 1997 to 1999. In 1999, the results were average in comparison with all schools but above average in comparison with those of schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys and girls generally achieve similar results. GCSE results were broadly average in 1999 and better than average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-G shows a rising trend to above the national average. This is a good achievement in relation to the attainment levels of the pupils on entry to Year 7. Pupils in higher sets in Key Stage 4 have the opportunity to take GCSE statistics at the end of Year 10, in normal mathematics curriculum time. More than half achieve results in the range A\*-C, and hence have a valuable extra qualification, which also often helps them with later studies at sixth form level.

97. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teaching assistants and make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Many of these pupils with learning difficulties succeed at GCSE. The progress in Key Stage 3 is good overall but is usually better in the higher sets than in lower ones. In some groups of lower attaining pupils, restlessness and inattention slow the progress of the whole class. Higher attainers work quickly, and can visualise faces, edges and vertices of solid

shapes. They are quick to appreciate the patterns of numbers related to these features and deduce the general formulae linking them. The weakest pupils just manage to produce tallies from charts of data, and draw bar graphs to represent them. The use of mental arithmetic is more developed than usual; this factor enables pupils to move quickly through their work without the need for the constant reassurance of a calculator, which is often so evident in other schools. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' overall attainment is broadly average for their age.

98. Pupils make satisfactory overall progress in Key Stage 4. Many groups make very good progress as a result of the very good teaching they receive; however, one higher attaining group is making insufficient progress over time because the teaching it receives is not leading to full understanding of the work necessary for the higher tier paper at GCSE. Homework plays an important part in the progress which pupils make at both key stages, hence there is plenty of opportunity to consolidate understanding and improve proficiency. Higher attaining pupils are learning how to manipulate algebraic fractions, and have had some success with the solution of quadratic equations by factorisation and formula. Many of these pupils, however, are not fully competent in the necessary techniques involved. The pupils in average and lower attaining sets are moving successfully towards GCSE. The pupils in the lowest set are producing GCSE coursework of a standard commensurate with a grade G or F. They need a considerable amount of help and reassurance from their teachers but the standards which they have reached are good in relation to their low starting points on entry to the school. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is close to average for their age though a little below.

99. The programme of study provides pupils with full access to the four National Curriculum attainment targets. Their work in using and applying mathematics, number and algebra, and data handling is normally stronger than in shape and space. Mental arithmetic skills are above average throughout the school, and competence with number and algebra is impressive in some top sets, particularly in Year 10. However, in the drawing of angles, geometrical figures and nets, there is often insufficient attention to detail and accuracy.

100. Listening skills are normally good. Interactive whiteboard sessions reveal that pupils often have a higher competence in the use of information technology in mathematics than is usual. Information technology skills in mathematics are generally above average, and pupils use spreadsheets for calculations and generate graphs using software packages regularly in their GCSE coursework. Written work is usually presented well, and it is often enhanced by the use of information technology. Pupils' speaking skills are average; pupils are confident enough to come to the front of the class and explain calculations on the board in front of their peers. The explanations they give are reasoned and often fairly precise. Extended writing is, however, generally below average; pupils often have difficulty in expressing their hypotheses, results, investigations, and conclusions with sufficient accuracy and precision.

101. Pupils' attitudes are normally good and support learning. The vast majority of pupils behave well; they are co-operative and attentive, and use all of the lesson time productively. In some rooms the learning atmosphere is very good, and linked to the high expectations of the teacher. In these lessons the pupils are capable of concentrating for long periods without interruption. Pupils' are usually conscientious with homework. In a small number of classes in Key Stage 3, there is, however, a considerable amount of restlessness, and occasionally far too much calling out and wasting of time.

102. Teaching is good overall in both key stages; however, lessons vary considerably in quality. In Key Stage 3, a quarter of all lessons seen were very good, half were good, and the rest were satisfactory except for one lesson. In Key Stage 4, half of all teaching is good or very good, and the rest is satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding, expectations, and management of pupils are all good. Teachers present the subject to pupils in a greater variety of ways than at the time of the previous inspection. Interactive work involving pupils through questioning is now a particular strength. Teachers' planning and use of time in lessons are satisfactory overall. In each key stage, however, a small number of lessons were only just satisfactory, and not of a sufficiently high standard to ensure that pupils make the progress they could. This generally applies to some lower attaining classes in Key Stage 3 and to one higher tier GCSE class in Key Stage 4. Explanations in class are normally very clear, and teachers check that pupils understand before proceeding. Where lessons are not planned sufficiently well and where explanations are far too long, pupils have insufficient time to complete written work. Mathematics is extremely well-

organised, and pupils benefit from this considerably. The use of homework is very good. Marking gives pupils a clear understanding of their progress. GCSE coursework is assessed very well and the marking gives pupils a very clear idea of what they need to do to improve. Staff organise a whole range of extra activities, which both support pupils' progress and give the subject a high profile in the school. Examples are the extra classes for GCSE pupils, the summer numeracy school for new Year 7 pupils who have not reached the standard expected for their age, and a 'mathematics trail' which involves parents, Year 7 and primary school pupils.

### ***Key skills - numeracy***

103. Numeracy skills are good, particularly mental arithmetic. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge well to their work in history, geography, science, design and technology, and modern languages. Pupils are used to applying their knowledge in solving a wide variety of problems in mathematics and so the extension of their skills to other subjects poses few problems for them, and consolidates and develops their learning. Numeracy is developed across the entire curriculum through a very good cohesive plan for all subjects which ensures that concepts are always presented to pupils in a familiar fashion, so that they can build on previous skills and knowledge.

### **Science**

104. The previous inspection report found that pupils achieved appropriate standards for their ability at both key stages. The quality of teaching was sound or better in about four fifths of lessons observed. Marking of pupils' work was sound but greater guidance was needed to help pupils to improve.

105. Results of the national Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 were similar to those of the previous year. They were below the national average for all maintained schools though above average in comparison with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. In these tests girls perform less well than boys. The 1999 GCSE examinations were broadly in line with the national average for all maintained schools and were better than average for similar schools.

106. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in all aspects of science including experimental and investigative science. For example, lower attaining pupils can use their knowledge and understanding of consumers and producers to construct food chains and webs. Pupils of average ability explain the role of enzymes in breaking down food in the digestive system. Higher attaining pupils work well independently to retrieve information held on computer about eco-systems and global warming. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is below average though pupils have made significant gains.

107. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is close to average though a little below. With good teaching, pupils often make good progress in individual lessons but their progress over time is satisfactory. Lower attaining pupils determine which factors influence the speed of decay of organic materials by means of suitable experiments. An average attaining class made good progress in experimental science when they investigated which factors affect the speed of descent of a parachute. Higher attaining pupils made very good progress in physical science acquiring a very good understanding, for example, of refraction of light and its relationship to total internal reflection and the critical angle. Throughout both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make steady progress towards the targets set for them as a result of effective support but poor literacy skills hinder these pupils' progress.

108. Pupils show positive attitudes towards their work in science. They are interested in their work. They form very good relationships with their teachers and develop their confidence in their own abilities. The quality of work in science displayed in the department is very good.

109. Teaching is predominantly good. It is good and better in about three-quarters of the observed lessons. Teachers have a good command of the subjects they teach. They explain processes and theories at a level

appropriate to the needs of their pupils. They have good expectations of pupils both in terms of behaviour and capabilities. Discipline is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers use time and resources effectively. However, in a small proportion of lessons not all pupils were fully engaged in the learning process and teachers did not give pupils sufficient time to respond fully to questions. Pupils' work is assessed regularly as they complete each unit of work. The procedures for this assessment have improved and now accurately measure the attainment of the pupils. Day to day assessment through the marking of pupils' books is sound but would be more effective if teachers highlighted pupils' strengths and weaknesses and showed them how to improve. Pupils in Key Stage 3 do not have their own textbooks to take home and this hinders their ability to learn independently.

110. Management of the department is good. Teaching and learning are well monitored and the critical evaluation which ensues has a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

111. Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained in each of the key stages and teaching has improved. Assessment of pupils' attainment in both key stages is more accurate. The use of information technology has improved. Subject planning is now more appropriate to the needs of the pupils.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Art**

112. The previous inspection outlined some weaknesses in pupils' attainment; for example, pupils undertook little experimentation or investigation. Teaching was satisfactory overall and the subject was effectively managed though assessment was a weakness. Standards of achievement have improved since that time and an accurate system of assessment is now in place. All recommendations raised at the time of the previous inspection have been implemented.

113. The GCSE examination results are generally above the national average. They have shown a steady trend of improvement over the three-year period 1997-99. In each year, all candidates achieved a grade A\*-G. There was no significant difference between boys' and girls' performance. In terms of the proportion of candidates achieving grades A\*-C, the results were above average in 1997, average in 1998, and improved greatly in 1999 when 90 per cent of the candidates achieved these grades. This shows a great improvement since the previous report, when the GCSE results were below the national average. Pupils' GCSE examination results are generally better in art than in most of their other subjects.

114. Pupils' overall progress is good through Key Stage 3 in both two and three-dimensional work. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 because they receive very effective support in lessons. Their knowledge and understanding of the work of known artists, and of the art of other cultures, is embedded in pupils' own artwork, and this is a special strength. Pupils' sketchbooks show that, throughout the key stage, pupils build effectively on what they already know and can do. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above average.

115. Pupils choosing to study art in Key Stage 4 make very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the mixed ability GCSE classes, because the work is accurately tailored to their needs. In each of the two years of the course, pupils produce work of a high standard. As in the previous key stage, pupils relate their knowledge of the work of artists, different times and cultures to their own work and this helps to develop their analytical skills which they apply in their own art making. By the end of the GCSE course, attainment is well above average and pupils' high standards are reflected in the GCSE results.

116. The work in this subject makes a significant contribution to literacy. In each key stage, pupils write about their work and occasionally speak about what they are doing to the rest of the class. The teachers have begun

to develop pupils' information technology skills since the recent acquisition of a multi-media computer and some Key Stage 4 pupils use information technology independently in their GCSE coursework assignments.

117. Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory although in a minority of Key Stage 3 lessons, behaviour of some pupils is poor. Most tasks are completed and homework makes a positive contribution to the overall quality of pupils' work. Pupils are willing to experiment, and this adds much to the quality and creativity of their work. Most pupils develop their study skills well. Pupils' work in other subject areas is sometimes used to good effect in art; for example, the study of insects in science provides a good starting point for art lessons on aliens. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils present their work well and often use desktop publishing for their written work to support their visual work. They take pride in their work.

118. The quality of teaching is good overall and is the principal factor in pupils' good achievement. It is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, most lessons were good and some outstanding teaching was seen. Teaching was less effective in one Key Stage 3 lesson when pupils with behaviour problems were difficult to handle. In this respect, the grouping by ability does not help the teaching in this subject because it tends to concentrate pupils with poor attitudes to learning within the same class. The teachers have secure subject knowledge and are skilled artists; examples of their own work, used as a demonstration of technique, successfully encourage pupils to achieve. The level of difficulty of projects is generally appropriate to the age and abilities of the pupils. Homework is used effectively as preparation for, or consolidation of classwork.

119. The art department provides a wide range of enrichment experiences and extra curricular activities which many pupils enjoy. The subject has productive links with industry and with the local community on art projects; for example, one pupil recently designed and made a mural for one of the local primary schools as part of a GCSE examination project. The school has been chosen to design and make a stone sculpture for the local environment to commemorate the millennium. Regular visits to galleries and the work of artists in residence enrich pupils' experience.

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## .. **Design and technology**

120. The previous inspection found that pupils made good progress and their attainment was broadly average. Since that time, GCSE results have improved. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was well above average in 1998. In 1999, GCSE results in Electronic Products were very good. GCSE Food Technology results for the two full years the examination course has been running at the school were lower but close to the national average in 1998, with girls out-performing boys, in line with the national trend. GCSE Child Development results were below average but were generally in line with those achieved by the pupils in their other subjects.

121. Overall, pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective support and make good progress. Pupils experience a good balance of designing and making and their progress is good in both of these. Year 7 pupils begin to use computer-assisted design software confidently and competently. Evaluation skills are also more developed than on average. In food technology, nutritional knowledge is weak amongst the lower attainers. Pupils' numeracy skills are good; they weigh, measure and estimate with growing confidence and use information technology to undertake nutritional analysis and research.

It is likely that the teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of the key stage tend to underestimate pupils' achievements. In 1999, these assessments indicated that only 35 per cent of pupils achieved nationally expected standards against the national average of more than 60 per cent. Despite the teachers' assessments, the full range of inspection evidence shows that, by the end of the key stage, overall attainment is broadly average and attainment is above average in design of electronic circuits.

122. Pupils make very good progress in Key Stage 4. They develop excellent information technology skills in computer-aided design. The involvement of industry in the work of the department is also an important factor in

the pupils' success. High attaining pupils make very good progress and work independently. Lower attaining pupils make good progress because they are well supported by the teacher and because tasks are well matched to their needs. Pupils often use computers to present their projects and illustrate the results of research in graphical form. Pupils make effective use of spreadsheets to calculate the cost of their products, and use databases for nutritional analysis in food technology. Pupils use the technical language of the subject confidently.

A particular strength in food technology lies in pupils' understanding of the production line, often a weakness in schools. By the end of the key stage, their overall attainment is above average. It is well above average in electronic products and average in food technology. Pupils have good skills and understanding, for example, in designing circuitry. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is above average.

123. Pupils have good attitudes and generally enjoy their lessons. Most pupils behave well, follow instructions and work safely. Though pupils generally concentrate on their work the double lessons are sometimes too long to hold the attention of low attaining pupils despite careful lesson planning. Pupils collaborate in pairs and groups; they listen to each other and respect each others' views. Relationships are very good.

124. The teaching is good. It was never less than satisfactory and was good in each key stage in the majority of lessons inspected. In a third of Key Stage 4 lessons the teaching was very good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject. Strengths lie in a good command of the subject and consistently high expectations for achievement. Pupils' good progress is attributable to good teaching which involves careful planning and meets the needs of individual pupils. Clear targets are agreed with the mathematics department for developing pupils' numeracy skills, for example, the use of formulae for calculations in electronic products. However, in many lessons, pupils have insufficient opportunity to talk at length and they rarely read aloud. Homework consolidates and extends learning. Teachers monitor pupils' progress thoroughly but statutory assessments underestimate their attainment. The previous report highlighted the need for training to equip teachers better for the changes in the National Curriculum. This has generally been effectively undertaken. The GCSE course in home economics (food and nutrition) has been replaced by design and technology (food technology) with some training undertaken though staff still need some up-dating in this aspect.

## **Geography**

125. At the time of the previous inspection GCSE results were well below the national average although pupils made good progress. Since that time, standards have improved, as the GCSE results show. The proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C grades in 1998 was below the national average. Similar results were achieved in 1999. Over a period of time, results show an improving trend. Although some pupils achieve higher grades than expected, overall the pupils' results in geography tend to be slightly lower than in their other subjects. There is no significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys.

126. Overall attainment by pupils at the end of both key stages is average. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have a good sense of place which extends from a local to an international scale. They use atlases and texts for reference and research.

127. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. Higher and lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs all make good progress because teachers match tasks accurately to differing levels of attainment. Each unit of work identifies key words to improve vocabulary and spelling and pupils gradually develop their geographical vocabulary; however, in both key stages, pupils have few opportunities to write at length. In Year 7, pupils develop basic map reading skills; in Year 8, they learn about the difference between the processes of weathering, erosion and transportation. Towards the end of the key stage, pupils are beginning to understand some of the more complex relationships between climate and vegetation in the context of an ecosystem. Higher attaining pupils draw accurate climate graphs and interpret these in relation to climatic regions. Lower attaining pupils draw climate graphs and describe them.

128. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 but they would make better progress with more emphasis on extended writing. They begin the GCSE course with a wide range of attainment and their results generally

reflect this. In Year 10, pupils describe and explain the processes of erosion and deposition in the formation of meanders. They apply this knowledge and understanding to fieldwork on rivers when they test hypotheses on width, depth and discharge. They use spreadsheets to collate and analyse data collected in the field. Higher attaining pupils explain the limitations of their findings. The use of different graphs and scales in geography make a useful contribution to the development and use of numeracy skills. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of a range of places and explain the links between physical and human processes.

129. Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are usually good and sometimes very good. This has a positive impact on progress and attainment. Pupils enjoy learning about people and places and other cultures, for example, of Kenya, Japan and Italy, and issues arising from different people's interaction with the environment. They show respect for their teachers, textbooks and materials. Pupils are aware of the social, economic and moral issues of the contrast between rich and poor in third world countries. They understand the problems of industrial development and its conflicting impact on the landscape and employment opportunities through their study of a cement factory.

130. Teaching is good overall in both key stages. It was never less than satisfactory. In Key Stage 3 it is good in 60 per cent and very good in 20 per cent of lessons. In Key Stage 4 it is good in 60 per cent of lessons. Teachers, including the non-specialist teachers in Year 7, have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. They control and organise pupils well. The teaching about waterfalls and glaciation had clear objectives, was carefully planned and paced, and teachers used a variety of techniques. On occasions, however, lessons were over-directed by the teacher and pupils were insufficiently involved. In general, more teachers should provide more opportunities for extended writing. Marking of pupils' written work includes comments which help pupils to improve. Homework is set regularly to reinforce and extend learning. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is very ambitious and covers many topics and countries. Pupils could benefit if some breadth was sacrificed in the interest of depth which would allow more time for pupils to undertake more research.

## **History**

131. The previous inspection report found that GCSE results were in line with the national average and that teaching was good. Since that time, the GCSE results have been lower in relation to national averages but have improved steadily over a period of three years. The results were well below average in 1997; they improved in 1998 and improved further in 1999, when they were close to average. A good proportion of pupils achieve high A\* and A grades. Boys' and girls' achievements are broadly similar.

132. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3, learning history skills at a good rate. In Year 7, they get off to a good start and make good progress in their understanding of basic chronology. They make good progress in their study of the main features of Roman civilisation using pictures, diagrams and texts to recreate the past. They speak well and writing skills, though not good, are improving. Tasks set for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well matched to their attainment levels so that these pupils make good progress. Lessons enable pupils to understand and relate to the past; for example, Year 9 pupils were led to understand life in an eighteenth century village by the use of diagrams and text with music to set the scene. Pupils choosing to study history to GCSE make good progress. Higher attaining pupils make rapid progress in the development of research skills. By the end of Key Stage 4, overall attainment is broadly average.

133. Pupils have good attitudes and behave well. They are punctual and well prepared for lessons. They concentrate on their work, enjoy taking an active part in lessons and show interest in the subject. Pupils work well in pairs and enjoy working on collaborative projects. Each pupil has a textbook to take home and this contributes to their good progress. Pupils benefit from visits to historical sites.

134. Teaching is good overall. In the lessons inspected it was never less than satisfactory, it was mostly good and often very good. The good quality of the teaching in both key stages is a significant factor contributing to the good progress made by pupils. Teachers use a variety of methods which involve pupils so that all make good progress; for example, a higher attaining Year 8 class was fully stretched in a game in which they worked in

pairs to evaluate true or false statements about Elizabeth 1; lower attaining pupils studied portraits of Elizabeth and considered whether statements made about her were accurate. Lessons interest pupils; for example, a lower attaining Year 9 class looked at pictures and photographs depicting factory life in the past and questioned why it was so cruel to children. Teachers mark written work effectively. In Year 7, both specialist history teachers and non-specialists assist the development of both basic literacy and historical skills. Since the previous inspection, considerable improvement has been made in the use of the library, where the stock is now good, with a good CD-ROM collection for research.

135. Literacy skills develop well in both key stages, leading to some extended and imaginative writing in Key Stage 4. The use of numeracy is satisfactory in pupils' handling of chronology and tables of figures. Though computers are used effectively by some Key Stage 4 pupils in their GCSE project work, information technology could be used more to enhance pupils' learning overall. The teaching is monitored effectively and strategies to raise attainment further are in place, including examination practice and concentration of effort on average and lower attaining pupils.

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### **Information technology**

136. At the time of the previous inspection, pupils made good progress and their attainment was average or above at Key Stage 3 and GCSE examination results were in line with the national average. Teaching was satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Though many subject departments planned to use information technology in their work, some subjects had not implemented their plans successfully, mainly because teachers lacked the confidence to use computers. There was no technician in post. Since the previous inspection, information technology is used routinely in most subjects. A full-time technician has been appointed and the computer facilities have been greatly improved.

137. GCSE results in information technology subjects are not as good as at the time of the last inspection but are beginning to show some improvement. In 1998, twenty one pupils were entered for GCSE in Computer Studies. The proportion of these pupils achieving grades A\*-C (29 per cent) was well below the national average but all pupils achieved a grade A\*-G. In 1999, two GCSE courses were offered: Information Studies and Information Systems. All candidates entered for Information Studies achieved grades A\*-C grades, though only a quarter of the twenty three candidates entered for Information Systems did so. However, if both subjects are taken together, 40 per cent of all candidates achieved grades A\*-C, which was an improvement on the previous year.

138. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 3. Higher attaining pupils are well motivated and make very good progress. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress when they receive effective support; for example, when using the programme *Success Maker*. However, when there is no support, these pupils' progress is sometimes unsatisfactory when they misbehave and the teacher finds difficulty in managing them. Again, some lower attaining pupils' underdeveloped reading skills affect their progress; for example, they cannot always read on-screen messages. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' overall attainment is broadly average.

139. Pupils generally make good progress in Key Stage 4. Since the previous inspection, the application of information technology has greatly improved in other subjects and is a factor in raising overall attainment. Pupils make connections between different applications and apply their knowledge and understanding to their practical work; for example, the application of spreadsheets to problems in GCSE coursework. By the end of Key Stage 4, overall attainment is above average. Standards are especially high in computer-aided design in design and technology, in business studies and in GNVQ courses. Pupils currently taking courses leading to GCSE in Information Systems are also achieving good standards.

140. Overall, pupils' attitudes are satisfactory. Most pupils are interested in computers and are well motivated to learn. This is particularly the case in design and technology computer-aided design lessons which are very interesting and well taught. However, the behaviour of a minority of pupils in both key stages disrupts lessons and affects the progress of others. Personal study skills vary widely. Higher attaining pupils can work

independently but some others need firmer discipline before their attention can be focused on the subject.

141. Overall the teaching is good although one unsatisfactory lesson was observed with a difficult class. Teaching was good or very good in three-fifths of all lessons seen. Teaching is good in the Key Stage 3 modular skills course and in the GCSE option course. In other subjects, the teaching of information technology is satisfactory where teachers are just beginning to use computers in lessons, and very good in some other subjects such as design and technology and business studies. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work in Key Stage 3 is thorough and constructive. In Key Stage 4, attainment is assessed as part of the coursework in other subjects of the curriculum.

#### *Key skills across the curriculum – information technology*

142. Pupils' good and improving technology skills are being applied successfully in some subjects. By the end of key Stage 4, all pupils use wordprocessing effectively to present their work attractively in a number of subjects. Pupils are also familiar with spreadsheets, databases and desktop publishing software. In design and technology, Year 11 pupils use computer-aided design software to design electronics circuits, and Year 9 pupils draw, model and manipulate three-dimensional images spatially. In the GNVQ Leisure and Tourism course, when designing booklets, pupils successfully combine several computer applications in desktop publishing to a very high standard.

### **Modern languages**

143. At the time of the previous inspection, GCSE results were well below the national average, attainment in lessons was frequently below average and there was some underachievement in French in Key Stage 4, though there was also some high attainment. Since that time, there has been improvement and more pupils now take the examination. In 1998, the GCSE results in French were below average and those in Spanish were well below average. At that time, pupils with special educational needs took Spanish to GCSE rather than French, because of the way in which pupils were allocated to classes. In 1999, the French results declined a little whilst those in Spanish improved. All pupils taking languages passed the GCSE examination in 1998, though the proportions in 1999 achieving a grade A\*-G fell in French to 94 per cent and in Spanish to 91 per cent. In both languages, some pupils achieved A and A\* grades in 1999. Girls significantly out-perform boys at GCSE, but the gap has narrowed considerably.

144. At the beginning of Year 7, basic literacy skills are low; however, in relation to this unpromising beginning, the pupils generally make good progress through Key Stage 3 in French. Tasks are well matched to pupils' differing attainment levels. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Year 7 but their progress in Years 8 and 9 is slower because pupils in lower attaining sets have less time for languages than other pupils. Overall, the best progress is made with listening and speaking skills. Progress in Years 7 and 8 is noticeably better than in Year 9, though higher attaining pupils make good progress in all years, and good progress in their second language, Spanish. These pupils were given a flying start this year through summer school classes in Spanish. Listening and speaking are relative strengths; all pupils undertake some reading and writing is average overall. By the end of the key stage, attainment is now broadly average, as reflected in the teachers' statutory assessments. This represents a considerable achievement.

145. Pupils' overall progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 4 though standards are below average at the end of the key stage. However, approximately one third of the pupils achieve high standards. In Year 11, pupils generally make good progress in lessons, including those with special educational needs, and boys in particular make good progress. However, progress is less good in Year 10. Pupils produce written assignments using information technology.

146. Attitudes to foreign language learning are generally positive, largely in response to good discipline, clear expectations of effort and conduct, and good resources. Behaviour is good, and pupils collaborate effectively in

pairs or small groups. Older pupils show maturity in their relationships with their teachers. Those pupils who are beginning Spanish as a second language in Year 8 are enthusiastic about language learning, and both boys and girls are eager to participate in the lessons.

147. All teaching observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory. Two thirds of all lessons were good or very good. All teachers teach both languages, and some have worked hard on their second language to develop their fluency. The result is that lessons are conducted in the foreign language and, because pupils are well trained, they all respond to instructions in the language they are learning. Expectations are clear and generally well matched to pupils' attainment. Resources are sufficient and used well. Information technology is beginning to be used routinely in the lessons to present written work. Course materials are well chosen. Organisation of pupils into sets contributes effectively to learning and discipline is effective. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress leads to target setting. Homework is effective.

148. Good subject management has brought about improvement in teaching through effective team-work which involves all teachers. There have also been some important curricular changes, notably the introduction of a second language in Key Stage 3. These improvements have had a positive impact on standards in Key Stage 3 though less so in Key Stage 4. The introduction of a language element in GNVQ courses, which broadens the pupils' experience, is also an improvement.

## .. Music

149. Standards have risen since the previous inspection. GCSE results are good though only a few pupils take music in Key Stage 4. Most pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 lessons; however, in a minority of lower attaining classes in Years 8 and 9, progress is affected adversely by the conduct of some pupils with behaviour difficulties. Most pupils respond well to the range and variety of musical experiences provided for them, and are equally at home with classical, jazz, popular and folk settings. Over time, pupils make very good progress in performing and composing. Younger pupils sing well, and use graphic symbols confidently when performing and communicating musical ideas, through a wide range of pitched and unpitched classroom and keyboard instruments. Attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 3, and has been enhanced since the previous inspection by the development of skills in performing and composing throughout the key stage.

150. The relatively small number of pupils choosing to study music to GCSE are taught in small groups and make very good progress in relation to their earlier achievements, in all aspects of music. In particular, performing and composing in Year 10 are developing rapidly. Older pupils are becoming increasingly secure in rhythmic response, and control instruments well. By the end of the key stage, overall attainment is well above average.

151. Pupils learning to play orchestral instruments contribute significantly to the high quality of classroom music making. Those with special educational needs are well integrated into group workshops, and almost all are reaching appropriate levels. Pupils listen well to each other's performances and are developing appropriate technical vocabulary to evaluate and improve their work. Higher attaining pupils compose well-structured and imaginative pieces using a variety of conventions and resources. Some outstanding pieces have been produced exploiting the new information technology resources. However, there is less emphasis than there could be on vocal and choral techniques. A growing number of pupils are studying for Associated Board practical examinations, and the standard is gradually rising, both in terms of the proportion of merits and distinctions being gained, and also in the higher grades for which pupils are being entered.

152. Pupils' enjoyment of group music making is evident throughout both key stages. Most pupils stay on task for the optimum amount of time, and are eager to give impromptu performances of their work. They respond positively to the department's well established ethos of trust, readily take responsibility for their own group learning, collaborate well, treat equipment with respect, and are generally considerate of each other. The

behaviour of most pupils is impeccable. Whilst the number of pupils opting for GCSE music is small, they show high personal commitment and motivation to succeed.

153. Music is very well staffed, and the experienced and well-qualified teachers are complemented by a committed team of visiting instrumental teachers. The teaching of all class music lessons, in both key stages, is good. In lessons observed it was never less than satisfactory, it was good in nearly seven out of ten lessons and some very good teaching was seen. Teaching is the major factor in promoting high standards. High expectations of all pupils, combined with work that challenges everyone appropriately, has resulted in a universally purposeful and productive atmosphere, so that pupils enjoy listening, playing and performing. The teachers are experienced and expert across the full range of the subject requirements. Their imaginative approach to repertoire reaps high rewards in terms of pupil performance.

154. There is an effective approach to accessibility without compromising quality. However, older boys would benefit from exploring songs and choral works which would develop their experience further. In some of the lower banded groups in Years 8 and 9, the teachers spend too much time and effort in managing the behaviour of a small minority of difficult pupils and this situation needs careful analysis and an effective remedy. A team of effective and committed peripatetic instrumental and vocal instructors visit the school for 20 hours per week, teaching over 100 pupils. This has a beneficial effect on the quality of music making.

155. Considerable care has been exercised in developing effective strategies for meeting the individual needs of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for, and supplementary opportunities have been provided each lunchtime for gifted and talented pupils to be stretched to their full potential, in addition to the differentiated work provided within the classroom framework of study. Particular care is taken to integrate pupils with special educational needs into the full range of musical activities, and detailed strategies are also in place to stretch gifted and talented pupils. Information technology is used effectively to track the progress and attainment of all pupils, and also to support a drive for improved standards of composition at Key Stages 3 and 4, which was found to be a weakness at the previous inspection. This aspect of the curriculum is now effectively managed within the department, supported by the necessary in-service training.

156. The accommodation is good and the school has a wide range of high-quality pitched and unpitched classroom instruments, an extensive repertoire of sheet music and CDs, a growing collection of orchestral instruments, electronic keyboards, hi-fi and video equipment, and an excellent computerised midi recording suite - all of which have a very positive impact on pupil motivation and progress. By contrast, there is only a small collection of books on music in the library.

157. Music makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. They regularly contribute well-rehearsed vocal and instrumental items to the weekly mass, year group assemblies, speech days and religious festivals, practised in their own time. Hymn singing is a particular strength. Pupils' social and cultural development are effectively promoted. The promotion of pupils' social and cultural development is also very good. There is an extensive weekly programme of lunchtime and after school bands, choirs and ensembles, and a major annual musical production. The music department is a strength of the school.

## **Physical education**

158. At the time of the previous inspection standards were average or better in Key Stage 3 and average in Key Stage 4. The best work was seen in dance. Pupils had positive attitudes and teaching was effective overall. A good extra-curricular programme was provided but aspects of the curriculum planning were inappropriate. Since that time, teaching has improved and standards have risen.

159. In 1998, GCSE examination results were well above the national average and all pupils achieved at least an

E grade. Over the past four years, girls have achieved higher results than the boys. In 1998, all girls achieved either A\* or A grades. Since the previous inspection, the GCSE results have improved steadily and have been above average for the past 3 years although the most recent GCSE results in 1999 are not as high as those of the previous year. Pupils consistently achieve higher grades in physical education than in their other subjects.

160. Pupils make good overall progress in Key Stage 3, especially in dance lessons. Pupils also make good progress in most games lessons. They learn how to warm up correctly and why they need to do so. In many lessons, higher attaining pupils respond well to more demanding tasks and make good progress and those special educational needs make good progress in both key stages because teachers know what their needs are and adjust activities accordingly. In lessons when progress is only satisfactory pupils do not always evaluate their performance or take responsibility for activities. On occasions, too much time is spent rehearsing what pupils have already done. Progress is hindered in some netball lessons because the outdoor courts are unsafe to use. On occasions, lessons start late so that pupils make less progress than they could. Non-participating pupils make little progress when they do not carry out suitable learning tasks, such as evaluation of pupils' work. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' performance in the major games is above average. Girls' attainment in dance is above average. All pupils know how to warm up correctly and they do so independently of the teacher. They select a good range of suitable activities and organise themselves very well. When given the opportunity, pupils can evaluate each other's performance and suggest improvements. However their use of the technical language of the activities is not well developed. Based on observation in lessons and extra-curricular activities the overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. This matches the statutory assessments made by teachers in each of the past two years.

161. In Key Stage 4, pupils on the GCSE course make good progress in improving their practical performance and learning the theory. Many GCSE pupils are among the 30 per cent of pupils who take part in the very good extra-curricular programme. They benefit from the extra experience and coaching and make good progress. Pupils make satisfactory progress in National Curriculum lessons. A full judgement on the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 in National Curriculum physical education cannot be made because Year 11 lessons were not timetabled to take place during the inspection. However, the overall attainment of pupils taking the GCSE course is above average. Standards of performance in the netball and football school teams are high and above average for their age. Pupils' GCSE written class-work and homework reveal a good knowledge and understanding of the body systems and the factors that affect performance. Pupils know about many issues relating to sport in society. However, they have difficulty in structuring a well reasoned argument, for example, to discuss the role of women in sport. Pupils perform well in GCSE games lessons but the restrictions of the indoor sports hall limit pupils' ability to use more advanced tactics and strategies in rounders.

162. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good in both key stages and most of them enjoy physical education lessons. The level of participation in lessons is good in Key Stage 3 though less whole-hearted in Key Stage 4 National Curriculum lessons. Nevertheless, pupils listen carefully to instructions, concentrate well and try hard to improve. They answer teachers' questions but they are less confident when speaking at length. GCSE pupils are conscientious, complete homework tasks and present their written work carefully. In general, pupils behave well in lessons and are polite and courteous to visitors. they collaborate effectively to plan dances and gymnastics sequences. Working relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils take responsibility for their own learning and many act as team captains or make contributions for the school sports' bulletin.

163. The teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is good overall and in around one third of lessons in Key Stage 3, it is very good. The teaching of GCSE physical education is also good. Teachers all have specialist knowledge that helps them to give suitable guidance to pupils. In most lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils. In many lessons in Key Stage 3, teachers expect pupils to maintain good levels of physical activity, take responsibility for warm-up and other parts of the lesson and to evaluate and improve their performance. Teachers' planning is good overall; they make the lesson objectives clear and ensure that pupils understand them. Teachers use a good range of teaching approaches; they give clear demonstrations and explanations of skills and techniques; they check what has been learnt to improve pupils' understanding. GCSE theory lessons usually include a good balance of discussion and written tasks. Teachers have very high standards of discipline, they expect pupils to come to lessons properly prepared, good sporting attitudes, good behaviour and respect for

one another. In GCSE theory lessons, teachers ensure that pupils can use a range of reference materials, such as CD-ROM to extend their knowledge. In the GCSE course, teachers set pupils challenging homework assignments; they mark homework regularly and give useful guidance in their comments.

164. Despite most of the teaching being good or better there are features of teaching that can be improved. Teachers do not always take into account pupils' prior achievement; consequently tasks are repeated and sometimes unchallenging. On occasions, non-participants do not have suitable tasks so that they learn little. Chances to help pupils to learn the technical language of the subject are missed. Pupils are not given enough opportunity to talk to each other about their performance and teachers tend to pose questions which require short answers rather than extending pupils' speaking. Lessons do not always start promptly. In some lessons, teachers miss opportunities to develop pupils' capacity to accept responsibility.

165. Since the previous inspection standards have improved overall and issues relating to the curriculum planning and teaching have improved. The subject is well managed and staff are committed to improving and providing good quality learning experiences for pupils. Equipment is stored around the edge of the sports hall and this poses a safety hazard.

### **Vocational and work-related courses**

166. These courses are an important part of the school's development plan to provide work-related education leading to GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications). Additional resources have been provided through the Educational Action Zone in partnership with two other schools.

167. Pupils are making very good progress in the new Part One Intermediate GNVQs in both Leisure & Tourism and in Business Studies. The two programmes have been well planned and pupils benefit from the linking of their coursework to information technology. Attainment at this early stage is above average.

168. Pupils enjoy the independent project work which is a feature of their courses, and research their projects in the local community, using new technology to produce reports. The Leisure & Tourism class have made an impressive local tourist booklet using new technology very effectively. As part of a Young Enterprise programme, and with the help of local industrialists, the Business Studies group is producing a calendar to a professional standard of printing. Each group has an extended school day once a week which helps them to make more progress in their work.

169. The quality of the teaching is consistently good. Teachers have updated their experience by extensive training for the new schemes, using the resources provided by the Education Action Zone, making many visits to other schools and colleges, resulting in the production of very good course materials. Teachers are also undergoing special training in GNVQ assessment methods, which is reflected in their highly competent assessment of the pupils' portfolios of work.

170. Pupils respond very well to the new scheme and enjoy it. The development of the key skills of numeracy, communication and information technology can be seen in their work and they particularly enjoy using the full range of equipment, such as the internet, digital cameras, scanners and colour printers which encourage pupils to take pride in their portfolio work.

171. GNVQ courses have high status within the school. Resources and accommodation are very good. Industrial links are very good, with valuable contributions to the proposed School Bank and Young Enterprise. Year 11 pupils continue to take Business Studies at GCSE, in which the school has had results well above average in the past. Progress in the current year is good and attainment is above average.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

172. The inspection was conducted by a team of 14 inspectors. The inspection covered all subjects of the National Curriculum and in Key Stages 3 and 4, and optional subjects and vocational subjects in Key Stage 4. The inspection also investigated the quality of personal, health and social education, careers education, sex education, registration procedures, assemblies, extracurricular activities and matters raised by parents. Religious education and the quality of collective worship were inspected separately but concurrently under arrangements between the Governing Body and the Diocese.

173. More than 52 inspector-days were spent in school, 187 lessons were inspected, and 160 hours were spent in lessons. More than 20 hours were spent in discussion with pupils and examining samples of written and other work.

174. Meetings were held with the governing body before and after the inspection. Interviews were held with the Headteacher and other senior staff, with all heads of department, and with other staff with posts of special responsibility. Four evening meetings of the inspection team were held during the week of the inspection and the conclusions of the report represent the corporate views of the team of inspectors.

175. Before the inspection, 250 parents completed and returned questionnaires sent to them by the school and the Registered Inspector held a meeting attended by 41 parents. Views expressed by parents in the questionnaires in writing, and raised at the meeting, were noted and fully taken into account by the inspectors.

## DATA AND INDICATORS

### 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	923	45	269	285

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	58.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	15.86

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

Total number of education support staff:	18
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	416

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: 68.2

Average teaching group size:

KS3	25
KS4	21

### Financial data

Financial year:	1998
	£
Total Income	2088658
Total Expenditure	2079112
Expenditure per pupil	2257.45
Balance brought forward from previous year	172684
Balance carried forward to next year	182230

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 923  
 Number of questionnaires returned: 250

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	32	62	6	-	-
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	30	59	7	4	-
The school handles complaints from parents well	30	57	9	3	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	27	61	9	3	-
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	32	57	9	2	-
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	35	60	5	-	-
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	37	55	5	3	-
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	30	62	3	5	-
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	33	60	6	1	-
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	31	59	8	2	-
My child(ren) like(s) school	33	59	3	6	-

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents good opinions of the work of the school emerged both from the questionnaires and from the meeting held with them by the Registered Inspector. Several parents at the meeting gave particular praise for the work of the learning support department. The pastoral system also received high praise. Parents thought that the special teaching arrangements for Year 7 were helpful in settling the children into the school. A small number of parents said that the consultation evening in February was not close enough to the annual report.