

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**Holy Trinity RC School**  
Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique Reference Number: 103538

Headteacher: Mr. T. Temple

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Reporting inspector: Ann James

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> November – 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708495

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 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Oakley Road Small Heath Birmingham B10 0AX
Telephone number:	0121 772 0184
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Canon S. Grady
Date of previous inspection:	January 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

<b>Team members</b>	<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
Miss A James, RgI		Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Special educational needs Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Efficiency Parents and the community Accommodation Curriculum and assessment
Mr. B Eyre, Lay Inspector		
Mr. J Manning	English	
Mr. Brian Forster	Mathematics	
Mrs. P Curtis	Art	Equal opportunities Staffing
Mrs. C Eisen	Modern foreign languages	
Mrs. C Holland	Music	
Mr. J Laver	Physical education	Resources for learning
Mr. M Padmore	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
Mr. M Sewter	Science	
Mrs. F Shuffle-Botham	History	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr. B Smith	Geography	

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils' results in the GCSE examinations show that they make good progress from the time they join the school.
- There is good leadership from the headteacher and the school achieves its aims well.
- Staff make a united effort to improve pupils' skills in reading and writing.
- There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- The school encourages pupils' social and cultural development well.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Relationships in the school are good and there is racial harmony within the school community.
- The school's arrangements for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are managed very well.
- Arrangements for careers education are good.
- GNVQ courses are taught well and make a good contribution to the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- Pupils' results in National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments are well below the national average and in GCSE examinations below the national average.
- Irregular attendance by a significant minority of pupils has an adverse effect upon their attainment and progress.
- Pupils have too little experience of using information and communication technology. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not cover all the work included in the National Curriculum for this subject. Not all pupils are assessed in this subject at the age of 16.
- Not all pupils in Year 10 take a course in design and technology.
- The results of assessment are insufficiently used to plan the work pupils should do and to set them individual targets for improvement.
- Reports to parents do not give them enough information on how well pupils are doing and how they should improve their work.
- Planning needs to cover a longer period, to identify priorities more precisely, and to be based on a more thorough evaluation of the current situation.

**The weaknesses are considerably outweighed by what the school does well. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.**

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

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Areas identified then for improvement with regard to the library, special educational needs, the curriculum, publications to parents and management have received proper attention. Standards of teaching have been maintained and results in GCSE examinations have improved. However, weaknesses remain in assessment and attendance. As a result of the quality of the school's leadership and teaching, it is in a good position to make further improvements.

## Standards in subjects

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

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

The attainment of pupils who took the above tests and examinations was well below average when they joined the school. Many did not read as well as others of their age. A high number of pupils come from homes where English is an additional language. The results pupils obtain at GCSE are closer to the national average than those they achieve in tests they take at the age of 14, showing that they make good progress.

In 1998, test results at the end of Key Stage 3 were better in English than in mathematics and science. In 1999, pupils did best in mathematics in these tests.

In 1998, results in the GCSE examinations were best in art, design and technology, business studies, English literature and history. Results in English language, French and mathematics were worse than in other subjects. In 1999, results were best in English literature, business studies, and history. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C declined in English language and increased in mathematics and French.

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	English, mathematics, science, design and technology.	Music
Years 10-11	Good	History. GNVQ	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in ninety seven per cent of lessons, good in forty seven per cent of lessons, and very good and, occasionally outstanding, in thirteen per cent of lessons. No lessons were judged to be poor and there were only occasional instances of unsatisfactory teaching.

*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**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are courteous and co-operative.
Attendance	Below average. Absence prevents some pupils from making progress.
Ethos*	Relationships are good. The atmosphere in classrooms is orderly and provides a good environment in which pupils can learn.
Leadership and management	The school is well led. It is effective in achieving its aims. Some aspects of planning require improvement. Governors support the school well, but more members of the governing body need to be actively involved in planning and monitoring the work of the school.
Curriculum	Satisfactory overall, with strengths in personal and social education and GNVQ courses. The school does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for design and technology for pupils in Year 10 and information and communication technology for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
Pupils with special educational needs	Very effective management of the arrangements for pupils with special educational needs who often make good progress.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	A strength of the school. Provision for spiritual and moral development is very good and for cultural and social development good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The school has a high number of teachers in relation to the number of its pupils. Most are well qualified for the subjects they teach. Resources are satisfactory and the library is now a useful resource. Accommodation is overall satisfactory; it is well maintained and enhanced by good displays. Outdoor facilities for physical education are poor.
Value for money	Good

*\*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**

- The school. is approachable.
- It encourages good work and progress.
- Arrangements for homework.
- The attitudes encouraged by the school.

**What some parents are not happy about**

cant number of parents.

Seven parents attended the meeting held before the inspection and thirty four completed a questionnaire. Inspectors agree that members of staff, including the headteacher, are readily available to parents. Pupils' progress is, at least, satisfactory and often good. Arrangements for homework are satisfactory. The good standards of behaviour promoted by the school are a strength of its work.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

**To improve attainment and to promote further the progress of pupils the headteacher and governors should:**

Improve pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests, teacher assessments and GCSE examinations by:

- using the results of assessment to set individual targets for each pupil's performance and monitoring carefully their progress in achieving these;
- sharing existing good practice in teaching to ensure that, in all lessons, expectations of what pupils can achieve are sufficiently high. (*See paragraphs 7, 8, 9, 32, 47, 57, 89, 90, 98, 100, 101, 110, 115, 118, 127, 134, 139, 141, 149, 157, 162, 165, 166, 173*).

Improve the rate of attendance by:

- strengthening existing procedures to ensure that parents are contacted as soon as possible after pupils are away from school;
- collecting and analysing data on absence, by years and classes, to identify patterns and plan necessary remedial action. (*See paragraphs 19, 27, 28, 60, 93, 105, 113, 120, 130*).

Improve attainment and progress in information and communication technology, particularly at Key Stage 4, by:

- covering all requirements of the National Curriculum, with particular regard to the elements of measurement and control;
- planning for all subjects to contribute to the development of pupils' skills in information and communication technology;
- undertaking the required assessment of all pupils in information and communication technology at the end of Key Stage 4. (*See paragraphs 16, 20, 36, 41, 46, 73, 81, 113, 120, 140, 147, 151, 152, 153, 162, 171*).

Ensure that all pupils at Key Stage 4 take a course in design and technology. (*See paragraphs 41, 73, 133*).

Improve arrangements for assessment and reporting by:

- devising and implementing a whole school policy on assessment which gives departments a clear framework for action and includes reference to record keeping and the use of assessment for planning the curriculum and setting individual targets for pupils.
- ensuring that reports to parents give a clear indication of pupils' strengths and weaknesses in a subject and what they need to do to improve. (*See paragraphs 46, 47, 57, 63, 69, 98, 123, 139, 162, 172, 179*).

Improve planning procedures by:

- ensuring that the school development plan identifies and lists in order of priority a realistic number of targets for completion in the available time;
- ensuring that departmental plans show how they will contribute to the realisation of whole school plans;
- including costs consistently in school plans;
- evaluating the benefits gained from current expenditure as a basis for planning future expenditure. (*See paragraphs 70, 85, 86*).

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

- Arrangements for the appraisal of staff. (*See paragraphs 73, 76*).
- The need for wider involvement of all members of the governing body in monitoring and planning the work of the school. (*See paragraphs 43, 60, 72*).
- The need to devise strategies by which pupils are encouraged to take more initiative and show more independence in their learning. (*See paragraphs 25, 53, 58, 95, 131, 154, 177*).

The school has already identified improvements in assessment and information communication technology in the school development plan and has set whole school targets for attainment and attendance. Assessment and attendance were key issues in the last inspection.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

1 Holy Trinity Roman Catholic School is an aided school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years. It is a mixed comprehensive school and is larger than when it was last inspected. There are 621 pupils on roll, 334 boys and 287 girls. The school draws its pupils from a large number of primary schools. It also arranges teaching for sixth form students who are not on its roll, but on that of a school within the local Catholic Partnership.

2 Twenty one per cent of pupils come from homes where English is an additional language. There are 309 pupils on the school's special educational needs register, a well above average figure. Thirteen of these pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school draws its pupils from a wide catchment area. However, the area served by the school is primarily one of very high social disadvantage and a high proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school has until this year been well below average. The attainment of those entering the school in September, 1999 is, however, below average and there is a higher proportion of pupils whose work reaches the expected level.

3 The school aims to provide a community where all are regarded as of equal value and where differences are respected. It is committed to the ideals expressed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

4 Current targets in the school development plan relate to spiritual life, assessment, behaviour, the needs of abler pupils, study skills, literacy, numeracy, improvements to the library, post 16 education, information and communication technology, and the monitoring of the school's policy on equality of opportunity.

5 The school has set the targets listed below for the year 2000:

#### **In GCSE examinations:**

29 per cent of pupils to achieve five or more subjects at grades A\* to C

99 per cent of pupils to achieve one or more subjects at grades A\* to G

Average points score at GCSE of 34.

#### **In National Curriculum tests:**

In English an average level of 4.17;

In mathematics an average level of 4.2;

In science an average level of 4.5.

#### **Attendance:**

To reach 92 per cent.

The school has also set as a target the reduction of exclusions by one tenth

**Key indicators**

**Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
For latest reporting year:	1999	64(71)	53(55)	117
	(1998)			(126)

<b>National Curriculum Test</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
<b>Results</b>				
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	11(25)	17(17)	17(22)
	Girls	21(27)	24(20)	18(17)
	Total	32(52)	41(37)	35(39)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	27(41)	35(29)	30(31)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	8(13)	14(14)	9(6)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)
<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	6(17)	16 (21)	16(25)
	Girls	29(30)	17(29)	21(31)
	Total	35(47)	33(50)	37(56)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	29(37)	28(41)	31(44)
	National	64(62)	64(64)	60(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	5(8)	13(13)	13(13)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

.....  
1

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

## Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest Reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	63(46)	41(51)	104
	(1998)			(97)

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	20 (13)	52 (43)	62(45)
	Girls	9(19)	39(45)	41(50)
	Total	29(32)	91(88)	103(95)
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	27.9(33)	87.5(91)	99(98)
	National	46.3(44.6)	90.7(89.8)	95.7(95.2)

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	7.4
	Absence	National comparative data	7.9
	Unauthorised	School	2.6
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	134
	Permanent	0

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	13
	Satisfactory or better	97
	Less than satisfactory	3

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

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

#### **Attainment and progress**

6 In previous years the attainment of pupils entering the school has been well below average. In particular, pupils have been unable to read as well as most others of their age. The reading ability of pupils who joined the school between 1994 and 1998 showed deteriorating standards. Of those who took the GCSE examinations in 1999, only just over one pupil in twenty was able, at the age of 11, to read better than might be expected. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in the current Year 7 are attaining standards which are still below but closer to those expected nationally. The number of pupils in the school for whom English is an additional language is high.

7 In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining level five or above in National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 was well below the national average. Pupils' results at level six or above in tests in the three subjects were also well below average. Similarly in 1998, results at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below the national average. In 1998, results in English, mathematics and science were, however, close to the average for schools with pupils from a similar background. In 1999, they are overall well above average in comparison with the results achieved in similar schools.

8 Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show pupils attaining standards well below average in all other subjects.

9 At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more subjects at grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations was below the national average in 1998 and well below it in 1999. The percentage gaining five or more results at grades A\* to G was close to the national average in 1998. In 1999, it was below average but above average in terms of the proportion gaining one or more subjects at grades A\* to G. During the period 1995 to 1998, girls did better than boys at GCSE, but this pattern was reversed in 1999. In comparison with pupils from similar schools, pupils did very well at GCSE in 1998 and 1999. In 1998, in comparison with their results in other subjects, pupils did well at GCSE in art, design and technology, English literature, history and business studies. Their performance in English language, mathematics and French was weaker than in the other subjects they took. In 1999, results at grades A\* to C were better in English literature, business studies and history than in other subjects. In English language, information studies, physical education, textiles and art, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was lower in 1999 than in 1998. Results at this level improved in mathematics, science, drama, French, music and geography in 1999.

10 In 1999, the results obtained by pupils of Pakistani origin in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were lower than those obtained by other ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils of Pakistani origin gaining five or more subjects at grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations was lower than of other ethnic groups, but higher in terms of the proportion gaining five or more subjects at grades A\* to G.

11 The school achieved its targets in the GCSE examinations and in National Curriculum tests in English. It narrowly missed its targets for National Curriculum tests in mathematics and science.

12 Lesson observation and scrutiny of pupils' work show that overall pupils are attaining standards below those expected at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. There is, however, variation between subjects in standards of attainment.

13 Attainment in English is below average at the end of each key stage. Pupils enter the school with often low levels of literacy and the school has rightly adopted a whole school approach to securing improvement in this area. At Key Stage 3, except in Year 7, pupils' speaking and listening skills are well below average. Pupils sometimes do not think before they answer questions and this results in brief and ill-considered replies. When answers are thought out, they often consist of short sentences. While lessons in drama, English and geography, for example, offer opportunities for pupils to engage in extended conversation, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to gain such practice across the curriculum. In assemblies some pupils have the opportunity to speak in front of a large audience but their contributions are not always audible. By Key Stage 4, pupils' listening and speaking skills have improved but there are still weaknesses in their ability to engage in extended dialogue or to express other than simple ideas. At the beginning of Key Stage 3, many pupils are hesitant readers and lower attaining pupils need assistance to recognise some words. Pupils' reading ability improves significantly as they progress through the school as a result of determined efforts by staff. By Key Stage 4, most pupils have a sound understanding of what they read although they often do not read aloud with fluency. Pupils' written work at Key Stage 3 often contains errors of spelling and punctuation. As a result of a concerted effort across the school, including the use of writing frames and the teaching of key words, pupils' written work is improving. They write at length in, for example, history, geography and English, and by the end of Key Stage 4, the writing of higher attaining pupils is in line with the expected standards. Pupils at Key Stage 3 know how to use dictionaries and at Key Stage 4 are also able to use a thesaurus to improve their writing. Pupils' handwriting is careful and most written work is neatly presented.

14 Work seen during the inspection shows attainment in mathematics to be below the expected standards at the end of each key stage. On entry to the school, pupils' ability to use and apply number is below average. The school has wisely adopted a policy to develop pupils' numerical skills although this is still in its early stages of implementation. At the beginning of Key Stage 3, some pupils have difficulty in undertaking simple calculations involving division and subtraction and in using a ruler correctly. Effective teaching strategies result in improved skills in mental arithmetic as pupils progress through the school. They know how to use calculators but are not unduly reliant upon them. In each key stage, pupils successfully undertake mathematical investigations and use and interpret graphical information. Higher attaining pupils are able, by the end of Key Stage 4, to solve complex problems. Except for such pupils, attainment in algebra is a weakness. Pupils use number in their work in science, design and technology and geography throughout the school but do so at a low level. In science, they apply a limited range of mathematical techniques and in design and technology do not always measure accurately.

15 Inspection evidence shows work in science to be below average at the end of each key stage. Pupils demonstrate increasing knowledge and understanding of the subject as they move through the school. In Year 7, pupils can use a microscope safely and plan and predict the outcomes of a simple investigation. By Year 9 pupils understand simple chemical reactions and can express these in word equations. Higher attaining pupils can relate what they learn to the industrial processes involved in the extraction of iron. In Year 10, higher attaining pupils understand the effects of hormones on the human body while those of lower attainment can, for example, describe and record the characteristics of dinosaurs. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils understand the principles of energy and acceleration. Pupils' ability to undertake scientific investigations, to make and test hypotheses, and to plan and predict the outcomes of experiments is an area of weakness, particularly at Key Stage 3, where they are given too few opportunities to develop these skills.

16 Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology is well below average at the end of each key stage. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can word process and use software to combine text and graphics. They can also create their own database. However, their keyboarding skills and their ability to recall techniques they have learned are well below average. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils produce spreadsheets and create and interrogate databases. However, a significant weakness in their attainment is that all do not systematically use computers for measurement and control. Weaknesses in attainment in information and communication technology are compounded by too few opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills systematically across the curriculum.

17 Work observed in art is in line with expectations at the end of each key stage, but in design and technology it is well below the expected levels. In history, physical education, modern languages and geography, attainment is below average at the end of each key stage. Attainment in music is below the expected standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and well below these at the end of Key Stage 4.

18 Good teaching results in progress which overall is at least satisfactory and often good in lessons at each key stage. Pupils' results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 show that they are making steady progress in relation to their prior attainment as they move through the school. Results in GCSE reflect the good progress many pupils make at Key Stage 4 as they are closer to the national average than the results obtained at the end of Key Stage 3. In English, progress is at least satisfactory and usually good. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in their writing. On occasion, however, lower attaining pupils would make greater progress in English if expectations of what they could achieve were higher. Those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in all aspects of the subject. Their progress in other subjects is similar to that of their peers. Progress is at least satisfactory and often good in mathematics, science and geography. In history, pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, progress is at least satisfactory, although higher attaining pupils could sometimes be asked to do more challenging work. In French, progress is satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils would benefit in this subject if there were, on occasion, less reliance upon the textbook and more encouragement for them to develop independence in their use of the language. Pupils' progress in Spanish is good. Pupils make good progress in design and technology at each key stage. Their progress in physical education and art is satisfactory. In information and communication technology, while progress is just satisfactory at Key Stage 3 it is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4 because pupils receive too little experience of the subject. Pupils make satisfactory progress in music at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, while pupils' progress in lessons is usually satisfactory, their progress over time is unsatisfactory. The time allocation for music is low and time tabling arrangements mean that pupils do not have a continuous experience of the subject. This inhibits the development of their practical skills.

19 Weaknesses in attendance have an adverse effect on the progress over time of some pupils. While those in school benefit from the good teaching available, absence from school impedes the attainment and progress of other pupils across the full range of subjects.

20 Pupils with special educational needs make progress, which is at least, satisfactory and often good. During Key Stage 3 their progress in English is good and, as a result of well focused help, their reading and literacy improves. In mathematics, skilful teaching of pupils with special educational needs in small groups, results in good progress. Individual education plans are well established as a means of promoting progress and are suitably adapted by subject staff across the curriculum. In addition, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is promoted by the work of learning support staff who are well prepared to undertake their role. In information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 and music at Key Stage 3, similar weaknesses apply to the progress of pupils with special educational needs as to other pupils. In Year 7 the progress of pupils with special educational needs is impeded in history when they are taught in large classes.

21 Since the last inspection results at GCSE have shown a rising trend at a much faster rate than the national average. The last inspection found that pupils made good progress in a variety of subjects and this is still the case. Pupils' reading ability and skills in using number remain below average. The previous inspection judged pupils' attainment to be above average in information and communication technology. It is now well below average.

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

22 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Their response was at least satisfactory in ninety nine per cent of lessons and at least good in nearly sixty per cent. There is no appreciable difference in pupils' response between Key Stages 3 and 4. They are attentive to teachers, willing to answer questions, and usually concentrate well on what they are asked to do. On occasion, in music lessons when pupils were given insufficiently varied work, their attention flagged.

23 Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are courteous and take good care of the school building and its equipment. They move around the school in an orderly manner and behave sensibly at breaks and lunch times. In assembly they are attentive and co-operative. The lack of litter and graffiti on the school site reflects the care which pupils demonstrate for their surroundings. The level of temporary exclusions is higher than when the school was last inspected and has risen steadily over the past three years. However, the number of pupils permanently excluded has fallen. No pupil has been permanently excluded from school during the past three years. Proportionately, most exclusions relate to pupils of Black-Caribbean and Black-Other ethnic groups. Records of exclusions are properly kept and the sanction is primarily applied for aggressive behaviour. The school has appropriately set targets to reduce exclusions and it is intended that the planned learning support provision, to be opened in January 2000, will have as one of its aims the modification of behaviour before exclusion from school becomes necessary.

24 Relationships in the school are good and there is racial harmony within the school community. Pupils respect each other's traditions, beliefs and dress codes and relate well to each other and to teachers throughout the school day. They are courteous and helpful to visitors. The quality of relationships in lessons helps to create a purposeful atmosphere and contributes well to the progress pupils make.

25 Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Where opportunities are offered to undertake responsibilities, these are accepted readily. Pupils enjoy helping in the library and take their responsibilities seriously. Sports equipment is withdrawn from store, taken to training areas, and subsequently returned by pupils who act sensibly and obviously relish the opportunities offered. The student council is a useful forum for some pupils to learn skills of discussion. Pupils read prayers at assemblies and in front of their colleagues in classrooms, but many lack confidence to project their voices clearly and confidently. On occasion, pupils are too dependent upon teachers and show reluctance to show independence and initiative. This is the case, for example, in some lessons in English, design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education.

26 The school has maintained the good standards reported at the previous inspection. At that time, pupils' response in lessons at Key Stage 3 was judged to be less favourable in lessons at Key Stage 4. This is no longer the case.

• **Attendance**

27 Attendance has remained broadly at the same level as when the school was last inspected. It is below the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence was well above average between 1997 and 1998 and fell slightly in the following year. During inspection week there was very low attendance in some classes, particularly at Key Stage 4. The reduction of absence was a key issue in the previous report but this has not been achieved. The school has set a target figure of ninety two per cent overall attendance for the year 2000.

28 Most absence from school is authorised absence and parents offer the school reasons why their sons and daughters are away from school. The absence from school of a significant minority of pupils has an adverse impact upon their attainment and progress across the curriculum.

29 The majority of pupils arrive punctually in the mornings and senior staff are on hand to ensure that they go quickly to registration areas.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

30 The quality of teaching is good. It was at least satisfactory in ninety seven per cent of lessons, good in forty seven per cent and very good, and occasionally outstanding, in thirteen per cent. Teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is equally effective. Throughout the school no lessons were judged poor and there were only isolated instances of unsatisfactory teaching. In English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, information technology lessons, and modern foreign languages, no teaching was less than satisfactory. Teaching in Spanish is, at least, very good and occasionally excellent. In physical education, history, drama and music there was occasional teaching, which was less than satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, there were very high proportions of good teaching in science, history, design and technology and information and communication technology lessons. At Key Stage 4, teaching in history is very good and GNVQ courses are well taught. The overall quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good.

31 Teachers' subject knowledge is, overall, at least satisfactory and often good. Very good Spanish teaching benefits from an excellent use of the foreign language and work in drama benefits from a team teaching arrangement which combines the specific subject expertise of staff. Pupils' progress in geography is promoted by the good knowledge staff have of the local area. Art teaching is enhanced by the subject expertise of staff, particularly in three dimensional work. Staff who work with pupils with special educational needs show very good understanding of suitable teaching techniques. In design and technology, effective arrangements ensure that non-specialist staff receive the necessary guidance and support. However, in history and physical education, a lack of subject expertise occasionally contributes to weaknesses in teaching.

32 While teachers' expectations of pupils are satisfactory overall, the level of these is frequently what distinguishes teaching which is satisfactory from that which is good, very good and, occasionally, outstanding. In a very good history lesson with Year 10 pupils, they were expected to adopt a sophisticated historical approach to their work on nineteenth century American railroads. In a Year 9 French lesson with pupils who had special educational needs, expectations of pupils' oral work were high and, as a result, they learned new vocabulary and sentence structures. A lower attaining mathematics group at Key Stage 3 benefited from receiving clear and high expectations of the work they were to accomplish in the lesson. On other occasions, while lessons are satisfactory in other respects, expectations of pupils are too low. In some English lessons with lower attaining groups, pupils are given too long to complete their work and not encouraged to adopt a faster pace by clearly timed targets. In an unsatisfactory music lesson, pupils spent too long on the same task and did not proceed to more complex and demanding practical work. In some non-specialist teaching in the games aspect of physical education, pupils are insufficiently challenged to improve their skills. Some modern language lessons proceed at too slow a pace and opportunities are missed to extend pupils' ability to use the language.

33 Teachers' planning is good. They prepare thoroughly for lessons and are clear about what pupils should learn. Thorough planning is a strength of teaching in, for example, mathematics, science, geography, history and some modern foreign language lessons.

34 The management of pupils is good and expectations of behaviour are high. The skilful way in which staff manage pupils ensures that the necessary conditions for progress are created in lessons. This quality is found consistently across departments and contributes to an overall ethos of work in classrooms. Music lessons start purposefully with pupils listening to an excerpt of recorded music at the beginning of the lesson.

35 Teaching methods are good. Pupils' literacy benefits from the specific help they receive across the curriculum with writing and spelling. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in English as a result of suitably structured work. In good English teaching, pupils' answers to questions are made effective teaching points for the rest of the class. As a result of carefully structured tasks, pupils, including those of lower attainment, produce good writing in English. Art lessons frequently include well chosen materials to inspire pupils and, in a successful physical education with Year 7 pupils, the teacher effectively linked work in that subject with work in history. GNVQ lessons at Key Stage 4 benefit from the links teachers have established with the wider community so enabling a relevant approach to topics. Pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 3 improve their literacy by the use of a computer program to reinforce basic skills. In design and technology, teachers devise interesting projects as a basis for pupils' work. In a good science lesson with Year 8 pupils on the separation of substances, the use of an imaginative range of mixtures engaged the attention of the class. In mathematics, teaching would sometimes benefit if work were more frequently related to real life situations. In science, at Key Stage 3, teaching methods sometimes give pupils too few opportunities to increase their skills of prediction and investigation. In addition, some teaching in modern foreign languages is too reliant upon the textbook and too much repetition impedes the progress of pupils, particularly those of higher attainment.

36 Effective management of pupils ensures that time is not wasted in lessons as a result of misbehaviour, although, on occasions, pupils could be expected to accomplish more in the available time. The use of resources is overall satisfactory. In mathematics teachers use ingenious resources to reinforce pupils' skills in number. In English pupils gain confidence in writing by their use of the word processor. The farm managed by the school provides a useful resource for science teaching. On occasion, work in geography would benefit from the use of a greater range of audio and visual resources and that in history from more use of the local area when pupils are studying industrial developments. Across the curriculum too little use is made of information and communication technology and this impedes the progress of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4. In specific information technology lessons, teachers use resources well by ensuring that pupils spend the maximum time working on the machines.

37 Arrangements for the day to day assessment of pupils' work are satisfactory. The marking of written work in English and mathematics is perceptive and helpful. In mathematics, however, teachers could sometimes make greater use of pupils' oral answers to questions to assess their understanding. In design and technology, pupils benefit from the long and short term targets set for them after their work has been assessed. However, in history, at Key Stage 3, marking needs consistently to give pupils an indication of how they can improve their work. In modern foreign languages, the best marking shows pupils how to improve their work and sets them targets to do so, but this quality is not maintained consistently.

38 Arrangements for homework are satisfactory. Parents who attended the meeting and completed the questionnaire expressed satisfaction with this aspect of school life and inspection findings confirm their views. In mathematics, homework usefully consolidates work undertaken in lessons and, in geography, it appropriately promotes pupils' progress. In art, failure by some pupils to complete their homework impedes their progress.

39 The previous inspection judged the vast majority of teaching to be at least satisfactory and standards have been maintained. Arrangements for teaching pupils of lower attainment and those with special educational needs have improved.

· **The curriculum and assessment**

40 The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is satisfactorily broad and offers pupils the opportunity to study all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Statutory requirements are met. There is good provision for literacy and numeracy, which are rightly identified as important areas for the pupils to develop in the school. Pupils are taught drama and there is the opportunity to study either Spanish or French. Personal and social education is a good programme covering a range of topics such as coping with bullying and helping pupils to make decisions about their future subject choices. The balance is less satisfactory because the lack of time for science in Years 7 and 8 and physical education, history and geography in Year 9 reduces the depth of coverage of the National Curriculum. Arrangements for teaching music mean that pupils do not have a continuous experience of the subject and this impedes the development of their practical skills.

41 In Key Stage 4 the breadth remains satisfactory but the balance is unsatisfactory because not all pupils in Year 10 study design and technology. The National Curriculum programme in information and communication technology is not fully taught, as there are gaps in the provision of measurement and control. The school is failing to meet statutory requirements in these two subjects. Health education, including raising awareness of the dangers of drugs, is satisfactorily covered. The sex education programme is well planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum. Pupils have an extension course, which allows them to study elements of information and communication technology, personal and social education and study skills. This course has been incorporated into the timetable since the last inspection and is an improvement in provision.

42 The GNVQ programme includes courses in engineering and health and social care. There are successful links with the local Further Education College and developing contacts with a major automobile company in the city. This is a popular and well taught course attracting pupils from all attainment levels. GNVQ makes a relevant contribution to the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Provision for careers education and guidance is good and is well thought of by parents. There is evidence that their opinions are justified. Careers education is supported by two weeks of work experience in Year 10. Pupils are encouraged to find their own employer and most of them do so. A few pupils on the GNVQ course try to find a placement that is related to engineering or health and social care. The support from the careers service is effective and appreciated by the school. Pupils receive clear and independent guidance to explore what opportunities exist for them when they leave school.

43 The school has a clear policy for planning and managing the curriculum. Governors receive reports on developments but are not often active in monitoring provision. The timetable is designed to allow departments to group pupils according to their needs. Most pupils are placed in sets based on their attainment. The blocking of subjects for the most part means that there is the facility to move pupils between sets when their work and attitude indicate that this would be beneficial. Overall, the system works well except in physical education where it causes staffing problems and in science where laboratory space is not always available. There are also some difficulties where subjects are taught on a rota system or when the time allocation to subjects varies from year to year as indicated above. Overall, however, the curriculum provided is satisfactory and is effectively managed. It provides equality of access for all pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language are supported so that they can make enough progress to take a full part in the curriculum in the school.

44 The management and provision of the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs are strengths of the school. They are particularly effective in Key Stage 3. Individual education plans are in place for all pupils who should have them. They are useful documents which identify relevant and specific targets to meet the needs of pupils. These are used across the curriculum in planning provision and modifying work. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. The school meets any specific requirements of pupils with statements of special educational needs in its curriculum provision.

45 There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. The school competes in a soccer league. In addition, several other sports are offered including netball, rounders, cricket for boys and girls, skiing and a fitness club. Approximately one fifth of the pupils, mainly from Key Stage 3, take part in extra curricular sporting activities. There are also musical gatherings such as the choir and instrumental group and an art club. Some pupils go on residential visits abroad, for example to France where the school has its own property. In geography there are field trips and in English and drama theatre visits. These add to pupils' social and cultural experiences.

46 Overall the procedures for the assessment of pupils' work are satisfactory at both key stages but there are weaknesses. In science, mathematics, English, design and technology and geography systems are sound. Marking is usually supportive in these subjects and comments help pupils to see how to improve their work. Some of the assessments lack accuracy and rigour in music, physical education and history. There is inconsistent understanding in modern foreign languages of ways in which assessment can be used to help pupils improve their work. Not all pupils are assessed in information and communication technology at the end of Key Stage 4, which is in breach of statutory requirements. Inconsistency in the quality of assessment practices reflects the weaknesses in the school's policy, which does not provide departments with a suitably specific framework for action.

47 The use of assessment to inform future planning is unsatisfactory and there are weaknesses in record keeping, for example, in music and physical education. There are regular opportunities to consult with parents about pupils' progress but the information provided in reports is cursory and does not show clearly enough pupils' strengths or areas where they need to improve. Pupils' reports are not kept and so a valuable source of information for monitoring progress is lost. The school has collected some useful data on pupils' attainment but does not use this to set individual targets as a means of promoting pupils' progress. Too little of this information is used to check or modify course material where necessary for the individual needs of pupils. There are weaknesses in the use of assessment, for example, in English, science, art, geography and modern foreign languages. Departments also make insufficient use of the data the school has recently gathered on the attainment and progress of pupils of different ethnic groups.

48 The assessment of pupils with statements of special educational needs is properly conducted and reviews of progress are held for these and other pupils on the register of special educational needs. Teaching staff are rightly involved in identifying pupils for inclusion on the school's register of special educational needs but rigorous monitoring and careful advice to staff are necessary to ensure that all placed at stage one of the register have a need that merits such a placement. Comprehensive records of pupils with special educational needs are maintained by the co-ordinator. The identification and assessment of pupils for whom English is an additional language are carried out correctly.

49 The need for the school to evaluate assessment, recording and reporting was a key issue at the last inspection. There has been some progress, but it remains an area that has weaknesses.

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

50 The school makes very good provision overall for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. The school has a very clear mission statement which expresses high spiritual, social and moral standards. The ease with which the diverse cultures of the school's population co-exist is testimony to its success. The Christian Gospel underpins the life of the school and is proclaimed openly and visually in every area. Tolerance and respect towards other forms of belief are demonstrated, as in the understanding given to Muslim worshippers at the time of Ramadan and the links made between this time of preparation and Advent.

51 Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is very good. The school places great emphasis on the spiritual life of the school and staff meet regularly to investigate opportunities to develop this aspect of school life. The chapel provides a centre for spiritual refreshment and is well used for both formal and informal contemplation. Assemblies provide opportunities for reflection and are used to provide moral and spiritual support. Many departments make a clear contribution to the spiritual development of their pupils. Prayer is used in lessons to enable pupils to prepare and to focus on their studies, and discussion, for example in English where pupils considered the effects of unexpected death upon a family, enables them to reflect upon sensitive issues. In music pupils are given the opportunity to compose music suitable for presentation in the mass and, in history, they consider religious issues in their study of the Reformation. The visit to Lourdes this year was a great opportunity for spiritual growth and is to be an annual event. The school complies with arrangements for collective worship.

52 The school provides very good support for the moral development of its pupils. There is a clear code of conduct that is supported by the use of merits and credits to encourage positive action and the use of daily reports to discourage poor response. The teachers support the aims of the school and are good role models, with high expectations of good behaviour in the classroom. Opportunities for moral development are taken when conservation and exploitation are studied in geography and the effect of white immigration on the American Indian in history. A study of warfare and the Holocaust encourages further discussion of moral issues. Good moral education is provided through the personal, social and moral education course. Topics covered include the dangers of drug abuse, citizenship and relationships and this work is reinforced in assemblies. The school continues to promote charity fund raising and each year group adopts the charity of its choice.

53 The school provides good opportunities for pupils' social development. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The use of class representatives at the pupil management meetings and the system of school leaders enable pupils to work with those from different year groups within the school. Good use is made of the school's property abroad to enable pupils and staff to experience overseas travel and communal living. Activities week offers opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 3 to take part in a variety of new activities, such as youth hostelling in Derbyshire, in the company of members of their school with whom they may have had little previous contact. The school encourages the social development of pupils by arranging events for the community such as the annual party for local senior citizens. In some subjects, pupils have the opportunity to work in groups, for example in geography, history, art and design and technology. Pupils are often very dependent upon their teachers. Their social development would be further promoted by the provision of additional and planned opportunities for them to use their initiative and develop independence.

54 The school provides good opportunities for the cultural development of its pupils. Theatre visits are arranged by the English department and pupils are given the opportunity to perform in an annual school production. There is a Year 7 choir, a samba band, and a Year 10 music group who have attended the Symphony Hall. The school provides a good model of a harmonious multi-cultural community and encourages an understanding of the diversity of society in various aspects of its work. In geography, studies of different cultures are enhanced by the contributions of pupils who are able to give first hand descriptions of other parts of the world. An Asian theatre group is working with pupils in English at Key Stage 4, exploring multi-cultural issues and pupils are preparing to perform the resulting production at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre at Christmas. Islamic culture is celebrated in work in history in Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, in history, pupils investigate the customs and beliefs of American Indians; they also discuss the issues that have led to the situation in Ireland today. An understanding of French culture is promoted by the visits pupils make to the country. Pupils' work in art also encourages an understanding of other cultures and beliefs.

55 Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils was judged to be a strength at the time of the last inspection and this remains the case.

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

56 The school continues to provide a safe and caring environment for pupils, as at the time of the last inspection. Arrangements for careers education and personal and social education have improved.

57 There is some good practice in setting pupils targets for improvement, as a means of monitoring their progress in, for example, design and technology, but there are also weaknesses in this aspect of the school's work. Heads of department are responsible for monitoring the progress of pupils in their subject but the overview of each pupil's progress is not an assigned responsibility. In addition, the quality of departmental record keeping is inconsistent, which inhibits effective monitoring of progress. Copies of reports to parents are not retained and consequently an important source of evidence is lost.

58 Arrangements to promote and monitor pupils' personal development are satisfactory. Pupils receive good careers guidance. Arrangements with primary schools ensure that pastoral information is shared. Good liaison between the special educational needs co-ordinator and contributory schools means that the special educational needs of pupils are known before they join the school. A range of external agencies makes a valuable contribution to the guidance of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' personal development is promoted by a good course in personal, social and moral education. This offers them guidance on such topics as bullying, drug abuse and the need for rules in society. In discussion, pupils expressed confidence that any instances of bullying would be dealt with by staff. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop independence and personal initiative in their learning.

59 The school has established good procedures for monitoring pupils' behaviour and these were appreciated by parents at their meeting. School rules are clearly explained and well understood by staff and pupils. The school uses external support services to good effect in promoting high standards of behaviour. Temporary exclusions remain at a high level and plans for the new learning support centre at the school reflect awareness of the need to modify the behaviour of some pupils before punishment becomes necessary.

60 The school has allocated additional staff resources in an endeavour to improve attendance levels. Certificates are also awarded to pupils for good attendance. However, systems in place have not yet resulted in any significant improvements in attendance and are unsatisfactory in their effect. All parents are not immediately contacted when pupils are absent. In addition, the school does not have ready access to the data necessary to analyse patterns of attendance and so take remedial action. Attendance figures are not reported by the school to the governing body at its termly meetings. Latecomers are checked in at the school office and there are good arrangements in place to record the whereabouts of pupils throughout the school day.

61 Procedures for child protection are satisfactory and there is a clearly written policy. All adults know that they must express any worries they may have to the child protection co-ordinator. Training has been undertaken by teachers, but not by non-teaching staff. There is full collaboration with supporting agencies.

62 Arrangements to promote the health and safety of pupils are good. These include programmes to educate pupils in the importance of healthy living and lifestyles. The school has good arrangements in place to ensure that a safe working environment is maintained. First Aid arrangements are satisfactory, fire drills are held at intervals and the alarm system is checked regularly. Some matters requiring attention in the science department have been notified to the school.

· **Partnership with parents and the community**

63 There are weaknesses in the written information which parents receive on the progress made by their sons and daughters. Reports contain insufficiently specific information on progress and the areas which require improvement. Parents expressed satisfaction with opportunities to come to school to meet staff to discuss progress. These opportunities need to be strengthened by the provision of more precise written information, in particular to assist those who are not able to visit the school. The school provides an attractive introductory guide for parents and a useful guide to homework in addition to the school brochure. This and the brochure make clear to parents the values promoted by the school. The brochure and the governors' annual report to parents contain the required information and this is an improvement since the last inspection.

64 The involvement of parents in the education of their sons and daughters is good. Well presented homework diaries are used to inform them about the work that has been set and provide a means of communication between home and school. There are regular opportunities for parents to consult teachers formally in all year groups. At their meeting, parents expressed appreciation of the availability of senior staff and confirmed that they could be quickly contacted when any problem occurred. Those who completed the questionnaire expressed the view that the school was easily approachable. The arrangements for involving parents of pupils who have special educational needs are very effective. The co-ordinator maintains regular liaison with these parents, who are properly involved in reviews of progress.

1As at the time of the last inspection, links with the community are good. These include the good work the school does to secure work experience placements and careers advice. Pupils following the GNVQ engineering course benefit from the support they receive from local manufacturers and the access they have to engineering workshops. Those following the GNVQ course in health and social care are able to extend their knowledge by interviewing members of the community with different needs for health care. Links with the community, shown for example by arrangements for carol singing and a party for senior citizens, contribute well to the social development of pupils. Good use is made of the local area to promote pupils' progress in geography, while the English and music departments use local opportunities to extend pupils' experiences. The history department makes too little use of resources available in the area when pupils are studying the industrial revolution.

## THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

### 65 Leadership and management

66 The headteacher provides good leadership for the school. He expresses clearly its aims and values, which reflect the school's religious foundations and Christian values. These are demonstrated well in the practice of the school. Relationships are good and pupils show respect for cultures and beliefs different from their own. The school promotes high moral standards and provides a disciplined environment in which pupils can learn.

67 Senior staff work well together as a team, are conscientious, and have complementary strengths. They too uphold the school's values in their work. The headteacher is effectively supported in the management of the school by two deputy heads. They have been successfully involved in monitoring the work of departments, collecting and analysing data on the attainment and progress of pupils, and obtaining additional funding to promote developments at the school.

68 The school places a suitable focus on raising the attainment of pupils. Recent initiatives to improve the attainment of boys are reflected in improved results at GCSE in 1999. There are coherent strategies to enhance pupils' language skills, and a numeracy policy has been recently implemented. The school undertakes detailed analysis of pupils' results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations and measures the progress made by year groups. It sets realistic whole-school targets on the basis of pupils' prior attainment and reviews whether these have been met.

69 The senior management of the school undertakes some monitoring of the work of departments. Although overall arrangements are satisfactory, there are weaknesses. Annual reviews of each department's work are conducted, and these make a sound contribution to processes of monitoring. However, these do not yet focus on attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 or on departmental planning and this is a weakness. Formal monitoring of the work of some departments has occurred and this has resulted in improved practice in, for example, design and technology and mathematics. The school intends to continue this process although it has been temporarily suspended. Heads of department are enabled by the provision of cover to monitor teaching in their department. This does not, however, consistently occur so opportunities to share the considerable good practice existing in the school are missed. In addition there are no formal procedures for monitoring the implementation of school policies. Some policies, for example those relating to homework, spiritual life, and language across the curriculum, are of good quality and suitably specific to permit monitoring of their effectiveness. The policy on equality of opportunity incorporates appropriate monitoring strategies. However, there are weaknesses in, for example, the assessment policy. This policy does not provide departments with a clear and practicable framework for action or management with clear criteria against which to monitor its effectiveness. The policy on staff development lacks sufficient detail to provide a sound basis for identifying need, planning provision and evaluating success.

70 The school development plan is appropriately based on a review of previous achievements. It assigns responsibilities, is translated into action plans and includes some costs. While targets in the plan reflect the school's identified needs, they are too numerous to form a practicable basis for action. Prioritisation of targets and a more limited focus for planning in any one year would ensure that not too much is attempted at once. Departmental plans do not consistently reflect the targets identified for action in the school development plan. This weakens the effectiveness of the school's planning procedures.

71 The management of the school's special educational needs provision is a strength of the school. The co-ordinator is efficient and well informed and ensures good provision, based on the requirements of the Code of Practice, for pupils with special educational needs. She also provides good advice to staff on catering for pupils for whom English is an additional language. There is also very good management of GNVQ courses. These are well taught and provide a good enhancement to the curriculum at Key Stage 4. Efficient management of the English, mathematics and science departments contributes to the progress of pupils in these subjects. Heads of Year successfully promote the welfare of pupils and good standards of behaviour. At a pastoral board meeting they demonstrated very good knowledge of the pupils for whom they are responsible.

72 Governors understand and support the values on which the school is based. Some are involved in setting the budget and approving the school development plan. However, a wider involvement of members of the governing body in planning and monitoring the work of the school is desirable.

73 The school is in breach of statutory requirements with respect to the provision of design and technology for all pupils at Key Stage 4. In addition, pupils at Key Stage 4 do not follow the requirements of the National Curriculum in information and communication technology, nor is the required assessment completed for all pupils at the end of the key stage. The school does not comply with formal procedures for appraisal.

74 The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. GCSE results have shown an improving trend. Good standards of teaching reported at the last inspection have been maintained. The school has made satisfactory progress with the key issues identified then. Improvements have occurred in the library, the extension programme is now available to all pupils, and arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are based on a whole school approach. Some progress has been made with arrangements for assessment but weaknesses remain in this area. Attendance is still below average. In view of the strengths in the management and leadership of the school, the positive ethos, which prevails, and the good teaching which occurs, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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

75 The school is generously staffed and there is a good match between the qualifications of teachers and the subjects they teach, except in physical education at Key Stage 4 and some history lessons at Key Stage 3. Staffing difficulties in physical education result from timetabling arrangements but in history are the consequence of long term illness. In both situations there is an adverse impact upon pupils' progress. However, the non-specialist teaching in several subjects identified during the last inspection has now been eliminated.

76 The school has a satisfactory induction programme for newly qualified teachers. Overall, arrangements for staff development are satisfactory. Training needs are identified in action plans deriving from the school development plan and staff regularly participate in opportunities provided by the local partnership of Catholic schools. Appropriate school priorities, such as raising the achievement of boys and improved literacy, have been the focus of training for the whole staff. Staff development undertaken by one of the deputy headteachers has contributed well to the school's programme of monitoring. The written staff development policy is, however, insufficiently detailed as a basis for identifying training needs and the best providers of any such training, or for facilitating its subsequent evaluation. It is, in addition, restrictive that in-service training is supported from March to September but not encouraged between October and February. The school does not operate formal appraisal procedures although there is a system of school review and departmental self-review. Greater consistency in the application of this process at departmental level is necessary.

77 Non-teaching staff make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is enhanced by the work of learning support assistants. These have received training and specific guidance on their role. They maintain careful records of the work they undertake with pupils. Work in design and technology benefits from the efficient support of a technician. In art, however, the lack of technical assistance places additional duties upon teaching staff and restricts pupils' experience in ceramics. The recently appointed librarian ensures that the library provides a suitably welcoming environment for pupils and office staff make a conscientious contribution to the smooth running of the school.

78 School accommodation is satisfactory. The buildings and outside areas provide a pleasant learning environment, which is clean, free from graffiti and well maintained. Most of the specialist accommodation is suitable for its purpose, although art classrooms are not in one area, which causes difficulty with sharing equipment. The location of one classroom for modern foreign language does not provide pupils with a quiet environment in which to develop their oral and listening skills. As reported in the last inspection, the quality of display in the school is uniformly high. This helps to create a civilised ethos within the school and favourable conditions for learning.

79 Indoor physical education facilities are satisfactory. The school has made plans for improvements to changing facilities. Funding and planning are in hand for major improvements to the external sports facilities. This project has been promoted by GNVQ students who have researched the needs for this as a project, raised large sums of money, and successfully obtained sponsorship to enable design work to be done. The existing football pitch is in poor condition. It has an uneven, badly drained surface and inhibits the quality of football pupils can play. This deficiency was reported in the last inspection.

80 Spending on resources in the current year is high by national standards. The overall level of resources in the school is satisfactory, and existing resources are deployed effectively. There are, however, variations between departments. In some departments there are at least adequate supplies of textbooks and other resources such as audio-visual aids, for example in geography, modern foreign languages, English and mathematics. In science, however, some of the equipment is dated and in music, despite the acquisition of two computers, there is insufficient application of technology to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum satisfactorily. Some departments make use of external resources: for example, there are history visits to Ludlow and Kenilworth castles, there are some theatre trips in English, and the science department makes use of outside speakers in its work. GNVQ courses benefit from the use of a range of resources available in the local area.

81 Pupils have adequate access to computers in information and communication technology lessons. However, some of the hardware is dated, and although there are regular bookings to use computer facilities, for example by the physical education department at Key Stage 4, many departments find access to the information and communication technology resources restricted. This makes the integration of information and communication technology into the curriculum as a whole difficult to achieve on a regular basis.

82 The library is a very valuable resource for pupil learning. It is extensively used to teach to Year 7 pupils a programme of study skills and also by some English classes for reading. Pupils use the library for research. A full-time librarian is implementing an effective plan for upgrading the library, for example updating the cataloguing and extending the use of resources such as CD-ROMs. There is an extensive collection of books, many of good quality, although the supply of non-fiction is not extensive.

83 The development of the library was a key issue in the last inspection, and this has been successfully resolved. At the time of the last inspection, information technology was well used across the curriculum, but this is no longer the case.

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

84 Financial administration was judged to be efficient in the last inspection and this remains the case. Records of planned and actual expenditure are readily available and financial procedures correctly followed. The recent auditor's report found that funds were properly managed. The school has already taken action to rectify the recommendations contained in this audit. Funds for pupils with special educational needs and other grants received by the school are correctly used and recorded. Monitoring of expenditure on pupils with special educational needs is efficiently undertaken by the co-ordinator who, with departments, identifies needs and oversees expenditure.

85 Detailed curriculum plans, which go beyond a one year period, provide a sound basis for some financial planning. However, in other respects there are weaknesses in the way the school plans the use of the available money. While some detailed costs are included in the school development plan, this is not consistently the case. Consequently, the relationship between planning and budgetary decisions is not always explicit. Departmental plans do not contain costs and, since departments do not have the facility to carry forward funding from one year to the next, this also inhibits financial planning. In the previous inspection, no weaknesses in planning were identified.

86 There is also too little formal evaluation by the school of the impact of current expenditure as a basis for making future budgetary decisions. For example, the provision of learning support assistants for pupils with special educational needs is low and no formal evaluation has been undertaken to assess whether the needs of all who are on the special needs register are being met by current provision. There has been no formal evaluation of the impact of the generous provision of teaching staff in some classes or of the effectiveness of staff training and development. The school receives funding from a neighbouring school to cater for its sixth form students who are taught by the staff of Holy Trinity School. The actual cost to the school of these arrangements has not been formally identified as a means of assessing any impact of these arrangements upon provision for pupils in the school.

87 Overall the school makes at least satisfactory use of available resources. Staff are suitably deployed and most teaching is by subject specialists. Good use is made of the accommodation, which is efficiently maintained. Available resources are used well to promote the progress of pupils. Pupils are effectively managed in lessons to ensure that time is not wasted, although, on occasion, a faster pace and higher expectations of what pupils could achieve would result in greater efficiency.

88 Pupils join the school with well below average attainment and often with a high level of disadvantage. The majority of teaching is good and results in progress that is, at least, satisfactory and frequently good. Pupils learn to behave well at school. The school receives an above average income. However, in the light of what it achieves with the intake it receives, it gives good value for money.

65 **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**65 **English**

89 The proportion of pupils gaining the expected level 5 in English in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 was well below the national average and also well below the results of similar schools. The proportion gaining the higher levels was below the national figure but in line with similar schools. These results were lower than in the previous year. In 1999, pupils did worse in English tests at the end of Key Stage 3 than in mathematics and science. The school had predicted this drop based on the attainment on entry of the year group. The majority of the pupils taking the tests had raised their levels since Key Stage 2. Until 1999, there had been a trend of slow improvement in results at the end of Key Stage 3 and no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

90 English results in the GCSE examination were well below national averages. The proportion gaining grades A\* to C in GCSE was well below the national average in 1999. It was below average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to G was above the national average. The target for the proportion reaching grades A\* to C set by the school for 1999, based on the entry levels of pupils, was met. Only six per cent of the year group had reading ages above their chronological age when they arrived in the school. Results over the last five years vary, but the underlying trend is one of gradual improvement. In English literature, in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was just below the national average. However, the school only entered half of the year, mostly pupils from the higher attaining sets. Results in English literature were higher in 1998 and have been at or above the national average over recent years. There was a small entry for drama in 1999 when results were well below the national average. Unusually, boys performed better than girls in both English literature and drama.

91 Overall, attainment in lessons and work observed is below the expected standards at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are low, except in Year 7. This is largely because many have short concentration spans and do not always think before they answer questions. Reading is generally satisfactory by the end of the key stage. Pupils use their knowledge of word sounds to work out new vocabulary and most read accurately. Few are fluent or read with expression but a minority show that they understand the needs of audiences by dramatic interpretations of poems and plays. There are examples of effective writing in Year 7, including some excellent imagery in pupils' stories about winter such as: *'the snow had the colour of a spotless Dalmatian, pure white.'* Imaginative and largely accurate responses to the Dracula story occurred in a lower attaining class in Year 8, and higher attaining pupils in Year 9 had produced very evocative letters from the perspective of a homeless person. The main weaknesses in pupils' written work are the lack of accuracy in most classes in spelling and punctuation. The development of more complex sentences and paragraph structure is also slower than expected.

92 Inspection findings show that overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. In Key Stage 4 there are still shortcomings in pupils' ability to speak in extended dialogue. They listen more carefully than in Key Stage 3 but lack the confidence and basic knowledge to develop ideas in structured argument. The drama group in Year 11 is, however, an exception. Pupils here responded excellently to challenging demands made by teachers to produce an agreed tableau depicting scenes from the poem "Street Gang". The discussion leading to the performance included apt references to 'Hamlet' by girls who remembered the scenes of conflict from that play and tried to adapt the ideas for themselves. Reading is below the expected levels but most pupils have a sound understanding of what they read. Again they lack fluency in their reading aloud. Most classes are attaining levels just below national expectations in writing, except for the higher attaining classes which are generally in line. Pupils attain better when writing about familiar scenes than when they are asked to interpret aspects of 'Macbeth'. They can pick out the key parts of the play but fail to describe clearly why they are important. In history and geography, for example, pupils write at length by the end of the key stage, with higher attaining pupils able to support their arguments in history essays with appropriate evidence.

93 Progress in both key stages is at least satisfactory and in most cases it is good, considering the very low levels of literacy most pupils exhibit on entering the school. The main factor impeding better progress over time in the subject is the erratic attendance rate of a significant number of pupils in many classes. When they are in school, most of them improve because teaching is structured and interesting. The best progress is in comprehending what they read. An increased use of the library for research and reading for pleasure is contributing to this improvement. Although drama lessons help many pupils to develop their skills in speaking, listening and reading aloud, these are still the weakest aspects in many classes in both key stages. There is satisfactory progress in writing, and in higher attaining classes, progress is often good. Pupils' handwriting is well presented and many take pride in their work, showing an increasing sense of audience as they write for different purposes. There is good evidence that use of the word processor is helping many to gain confidence in their written work.

94 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Key Stage 3 where the use of information technology helps many to make significant gains in literacy. The good strategies to improve reading are also starting to have a positive effect. In Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory. They have less personal support and the progress of several is adversely affected by absence. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in all aspects of the subject, as a result of effective teacher support and the aid of writing frames and other suitably structured work.

95 Pupils have good attitudes to learning in most classes in both key stages. Even poorly motivated pupils are encouraged to learn in well-taught lessons. Occasionally, in Key Stage 4, some are less prepared to work and they are not always sufficiently challenged to do so. Some immature boys in Year 8 and 9 exhibit attention-seeking behaviour but, for the most part, pupils conform and enjoy English. Relationships at all levels are friendly and purposeful and this is an important factor in helping many pupils to make progress. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They use the library with increasing facility and enjoyment. They are keen to try out new ideas on the word processors. The main weakness is that too many are still over-reliant on their teachers to initiate ideas.

96 The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and in just over half of lessons it is at least good. There is no difference between the key stages. In occasional lessons, there are examples of excellent teaching. A strength is the good questioning that often occurs where pupils' answers are turned into teaching points for the rest of the class, helping them to think of other perspectives. In Key Stage 3, teachers are building on the progress pupils have made through the literacy strategy at primary schools, using clear, well organised tasks. These lead to some very good pieces of writing, including work produced by lower attaining pupils. The video scripts prepared and performed by a lower attaining class in Key Stage 3 were a result of high teacher expectations. Some good examples of team teaching were observed in drama, where the different subject expertise of both teachers was carefully co-ordinated to get the best out of the class. It resulted in an excellent response from the Year 11 group. Marking is nearly always helpful and perceptive. There are good displays, which stimulate pupils to present their own work in an attractive manner.

97 Some weaknesses occur in a minority of lessons. Teachers do not make enough demands of lower attaining pupils. Not enough clear, timed targets are set in lessons to encourage these pupils to work hard on short, varied and relevant tasks. The ending of a small minority of lessons is not well planned and, consequently, the impact of what went on earlier is lost.

98 The department is quietly and efficiently led. Teachers work well as a team and support each other in very practical ways such as in paired-teaching and working alongside pupils with short concentration spans in group work. This has ensured that most pupils make good progress. Teaching is insufficiently monitored as a means of sharing the existing good practice and eliminating from lessons the small minority of shortcomings. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but more use should be made of the information that is gathered on pupils' attainment to set relevant work to help them meet their targets.

99 Since the last inspection the department has made good progress on the identified key issues. There are now better tasks set for pupils with different levels of attainment. The library is used well and is beginning to have a substantial effect on pupils' motivation in reading. Drama is linked to English very well in Key Stage 4, but requires development at Key Stage 3 to help pupils gain confidence in speaking and listening.

## Mathematics

100 In National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving level five or above and level six or above was well below the national average. Results at level five or above showed a slight improvement on those of 1998. The results pupils achieved are above average when compared with those of pupils in similar schools. In 1999, pupils did better in tests in mathematics than they did in English and science.

101 In GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was well below the national average. Again, at this level, results show a small improvement from those gained in 1998 and previous years. In comparison with those in similar schools, pupils did well in the GCSE examination. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was comparable with that in English, but lower than in science.

102 Evidence from lessons and a scrutiny of work shows overall attainment to be below average at the end of each key stage. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in the subject. Staffing difficulties that previously faced the department have now been resolved and this is having a favourable impact upon the attainment of pupils. In addition, the department is implementing a numeracy policy to tackle the problems encountered by many pupils in using and applying number. Year 7 pupils are able, using the computer, to project geometrical figures on to a screen. They understand their properties and the concept of tessellation. Pupils in a higher attaining Year 7 group are able to create accurate three-dimensional shapes, while those in a lower attaining class can calculate the area of basic shapes. Higher attaining pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 can calculate ratios, the area of triangles and algebraic equations. Lower attaining pupils continue throughout the key stage to encounter difficulties in undertaking basic arithmetical calculations. This presents problems in their ability, for example, to understand and use fractions and percentages. By Year 9, pupils of lower attainment use the term 'co-ordinate' accurately and are able to analyse simple data. Pupils are able to interpret information presented graphically, but some do so at only a very simple level.

103 A small group of higher attaining pupils takes the intermediate GCSE examination in Year 10 and their work is in line with expectations by the end of the key stage. These pupils have a secure grasp of number and can, for example, construct accurate curves from given functions. They understand the rudiments of trigonometry, can use statistics, and solve quadratic equations. Pupils of average attainment understand Pythagoras' theorem and can calculate the size of the angles and sides of a triangle. Lower attaining pupils can, for example, calculate the areas of triangles, but their ability to use numbers confidently and accurately remains below, and sometimes well below, average for their age. The ability to use algebra is a weakness for all but higher attaining pupils.

104 At each key stage, pupils use and apply mathematics at a basic level in, for example, science, design and technology and in geography. In science, they present information graphically and they collect and tabulate data in geography and design and technology. Lower attaining pupils do not always measure accurately in their work in design and technology.

105 Pupils' attainment in mathematics is overall well below average when they join the school. Throughout each key stage pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, make progress which is at least satisfactory and often good. As a result of good teaching, which sets high expectations, lower attaining pupils increase their competence in using number, while those of higher attainment gain experience of more complex mathematical processes. Throughout the school, pupils benefit from undertaking well planned investigative work. They learn to use calculators but do not place undue reliance upon these. Pupils' work over time shows good variety and output and coverage of all the required areas of the National Curriculum. However, the progress of some pupils is adversely affected by absence from school. Pupils with special educational needs frequently make good progress. Such pupils in a Year 9 group made good progress in their understanding of co-ordinates. They benefited from being taught in a small group with additional support and from teaching which recognised and was planned to meet their individual needs.

106 Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject at each key stage. When teaching is good, they display enthusiasm for the subject. They behave well in lessons and are courteous to teachers, visitors and each other. They are keen to answer questions and most, including those of lower attainment, present their work carefully.

107 The overall quality of teaching in mathematics is good. No teaching was less than satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, it was at least good in just over three fifths of lessons and very good in nearly two fifths. At Key Stage 4, two thirds of the teaching was good. Teachers plan lessons well with suitably varied activities. In particular, pupils benefit from number games and the use of a 'number stick' to increase their facility in mental arithmetic. Teachers have good expectations of what pupils will achieve. Pupils are managed effectively so that correct conditions are created for work. Homework is used well to extend and consolidate classwork and marking is thorough, with appropriate comments to show pupils how to improve their work. On occasion, teachers make insufficient use of questioning to assess pupils' understanding of the subject and miss opportunities to relate mathematical problems and tasks to the situation pupils will encounter outside school. Displays of work in mathematics classrooms are of high quality and provide a stimulating atmosphere for learning the subject.

108 The department is efficiently led. Assessment procedures are effective and subject documentation of a good standard.

109 As at the time of the last inspection, attainment in mathematics remains below average. However, teaching has improved and new strategies to increase pupils' ability and confidence to use and apply number are taking effect.

## 65 Science

110 In National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining levels 5 and 6 or above was well below the national average, and this has been so for the previous four years. However, performance at levels 5 and 6 or above was well above average in comparison with pupils from similar schools. In line with national trends, the proportion of girls attaining level 6 and above is greater than that of boys, although at level 5 and above the proportion is about the same. During Key Stage 4, most pupils study double science, and the remainder follow the 'science plus' certificate course. There has been slow and steady improvement in the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\* to C from a very low base in 1996. However, in spite of this recent improvement, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, in double award science, was well below the national average at GCSE in 1999. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, results in science were better than those in English but worse than those in mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 4, a higher proportion of pupils obtained grades A\* to C in their GCSE science examination than in English and mathematics.

111 Lesson observation and a scrutiny of pupils' work show overall attainment to be below average at the end of each key stage. Pupils in Year 7 can use a microscope with safety and display an understanding of energy. Pupils in a higher attaining group in Year 8 can choose and apply appropriate methods to separate substances and explain their choice of method. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils can understand and use scientific terms such as 'oxidisation' and 'reduction' and appreciate the application of these processes to industry. They can use word equations to describe chemical changes. Those of lower attainment have a basic knowledge of the workings of the human eye and understand what is meant by reflex actions. Pupils have an understanding by the end of the key stage of the principles involved in a fair test. However, at Key Stage 3, in particular, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop and demonstrate skills of investigation, making and testing hypotheses, and planning and predicting the outcomes of experiments.

112 By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils understand, for example, the effects of hormones on the human body and can name the position and function of various glands. They understand the principles of force, mass and acceleration and demonstrate understanding of Newton's second law by expressing this in their own words. Lower attaining pupils in Year 11 appreciate that energy can exist in different forms and can be changed. They are able to relate what they learn to various foods. Lower attaining pupils in Year 10 are able to explain the characteristics of dinosaurs and how they adapted to their environment.

113 During Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress. The progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language is similar to that of their peers. Over time, pupils gain an increased knowledge and understanding of science. However, at Key Stage 3, progress is reduced because pupils gain too little experience of investigative work and solving problems. For some pupils, progress is impeded by absence. In lessons at each key stage they consolidate their knowledge by explaining what they have done, and record information in written and diagrammatic form. They profit from opportunities to relate what they have learned to authentic situations in industry and practise skills of numeracy. On occasion, the use of information and communication technology promotes pupils' progress in science but this resource is insufficiently used. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. For example, such pupils in a Year 10 class were following an appropriate course of study and using material which was well adapted to meet their needs. In addition to gaining scientific knowledge, they improved their literacy by recording key words and extending their vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs also benefit from the additional support they receive in some lessons.

114 Pupils are well behaved and relationships in lessons are at least satisfactory. Most pupils take a pride in their work and written work is generally well presented. Many older pupils, in particular, approach their work with enthusiasm and a sense of enjoyment. In most lessons pupils are attentive, respond readily to questions, and complete the required work.

115 Teaching is good. At Key Stage 3, teaching was good in six out of seven lessons and at Key Stage 4 in half of them. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. Expectations of behaviour in lessons are uniformly high. Explanations and demonstrations are clear and questioning is used effectively. Teachers prepare lessons conscientiously and this is a major strength of the department's work. Techniques are used to capture the interest of pupils by, for example, the use of an imaginative range of mixtures in a Year 8 lesson on the separation of substances. Pupils' language development also benefits from the practice of teaching them key words. In the best lessons, they are challenged to produce the maximum amount of work but, on other occasions, expectations of the amount they should achieve could be higher. Homework is satisfactory and, at best, extends the work pupils undertake in the lesson. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the encouraging individual support they receive from teachers and learning support assistants. Pupils' books and other work are regularly marked. The school's farm is well used as a resource in science teaching. Assessment of pupils' work is properly undertaken but its results are insufficiently used for planning.

116 The department is well organised. Subject documentation is clear and provides a sound basis for teaching. However, the time allocated to science in Years 7 and 8 is low and this adversely affects the range of work pupils can undertake in science lessons. In addition, the department receives too little technical assistance and some of the equipment in use is dated.

117 There have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in double award science at GCSE has increased. Additional textbooks have been bought for use in both key stages and assessment is increasingly matched to National Curriculum levels.

## 65 OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### 65 Art

118 The 1999 teacher assessments for art show that the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 did not reach national expectations. There was insufficient evidence against which to judge the accuracy of these assessments and work seen during the inspection shows that, overall, pupils are attaining the expected standards by the end of each key stage. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils produce some good quality art work, having mastered a range of skills and techniques using drawing, painting and modelling. Year 7 pupils have produced some striking pictures, incorporating good tonal effects. Pupils in Year 9 have created some carefully designed pictures using the idea of continuous lines and contours. Most pupils can name some contemporary or past famous artists. Although pupils know the names of materials and tools they are using, only a few can use art related vocabulary to describe their work. Pupils at Key Stage 3 have not yet undertaken work in ceramics. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls during lessons.

119 At the time of the last inspection, GCSE examination results were above national averages. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 has fluctuated over recent years. The number of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in GCSE was just below the national average in 1997, above in 1998 and fell below in 1999. The number of pupils achieving grades A\* to G has been above the national average for the last three years. Attainment in lessons and much of the work seen in portfolios reflect standards above the 1999 examination results and in line with those expected. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can say why they prefer certain styles of art and they are willing to experiment with a range of techniques, including wire sculpture, drawing, painting and textiles. Some silk painting shows a high level of skill and sensitive use of colour. Pupils' inability to use descriptive language when talking about their work is a weakness. They show sound understanding of the commercial uses of art when they produce promotional material which incorporates the use of accurate and effective lettering.

120 Pupils' experience of art before Year 7 is very variable. Most pupils at Key Stage 3, including those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress in lessons and over time. Teachers' planning incorporates basic skills, which are later practised by making interesting art objects. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their knowledge of famous artists by associating their styles with their own work. Year 7 pupils develop techniques of colour mixing. By Year 9, pupils are able to produce patterns in the style of Charles R Mackintosh's work. In this project, they laminated paper and crafted attractive three-dimensional gift bags. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4. Their knowledge of artists increases steadily because they are engaged in interesting research projects. Pupils' portfolios and sketch books show satisfactory progress in observational drawing, more imaginative paintings and a wider range of experiments before deciding on a final outcome. Good progress is made in textile work, which incorporates drawing, painting, printing and manipulative skills. Pupils who make least progress are those who have difficulties in working independently. Absence and failure to complete sufficient homework also limit progress for some pupils. There is little evidence of any information and communication technology being used apart from Year 11 pupils using the computer facilities at the University of Central England with teacher-training students. There is only one computer in the department and access to computers in the school is not easy to arrange. Pupils do not have adequate opportunities to use computers for research or to use the many art and graphics programs that are considered part of art education; this inhibits their progress.

121 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Support staff are well briefed on their role and the department uses pupils' individual education plans to modify the curriculum if necessary.

122 Pupils' response to art is very positive. They work with evident enjoyment, take a pride in their work and respect the work of fellow pupils. An art club out of school hours is popular with pupils.

123 Teaching throughout the key stages is always at least satisfactory and is good in almost half the lessons seen. Teachers have good subject expertise and pupils respond well to the interesting projects planned. The skills of investigating and making are well integrated with methods to increase knowledge and understanding of art. Most lessons include well-chosen inspirational, illustrative material. Demonstrations are clear and well explained. With the exception of information and communication technology, teachers use a suitably wide range of resources. Assessment of work in lessons is satisfactory but overall assessment should be linked more closely to National Curriculum levels to enable the pupils to have a clearer idea of their performance. In addition, the results of assessment are insufficiently used for planning future work. Good use is made of relevant homework for those who complete it.

124 The art department makes a major contribution to the attractive displays in the school, not only by displaying its own work, but by giving expert support to other subjects. The department makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Moral issues, for example, are discussed when pupils are involved in themes relating to the environment.

125 Ceramic work is limited through lack of technician help. Whilst accommodation is adequate, the three art rooms are in separate buildings, making management of the department, monitoring teaching and sharing equipment difficult.

126 All issues raised at the last inspection have been resolved except for the use of information and communication technology.

**Design and technology**<sup>127</sup> The 1999 teacher assessments of the performance of Year 9 pupils in National Curriculum design and technology indicated standards that were well below national averages. In the 1999 GCSE examinations around one third of pupils taking design and technology related courses gained A\*- C grades. This was well below the national average. Pupils' attainment in design and technology examinations compares favourably with their attainment in other subjects in the school.<sup>128</sup> Standards of attainment observed during the inspection reflected these results in both key stages: attainment is well below average at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4. Although overall standards at Key Stage 3 are well below national expectations in both designing and making, there is a range of ability among pupils and those of higher attainment demonstrate satisfactory sketching and drawing skills by the end of the key stage when they communicate their design ideas. They showed sound investigative and practical skills in their work on a project about crisps in Year 9. These pupils successfully used a range of equipment and techniques and measured out ingredients with sufficient accuracy. However, for most pupils, knowledge and understanding are well below average. Pupils have only limited knowledge, for example, of nutrition or of the language and meaning of product labelling. Their practical work reaches standards comparable with national expectations but there are weaknesses in their research skills and in the written and oral evaluation of their work. Lower attaining pupils demonstrated appropriate practical skills when designing and making storage trays out of plastic using a vacuum forming process. They produce a variety of design ideas but their design and communication skills are well below average.

<sup>129</sup> The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below national expectations. Pupils working with resistant materials generate a useful range of ideas for their projects, such as a writing board for toddlers or a variety of educational toys. However, their research is usually superficial and their analytical skills are well below average. Pupils taking the graphic products course make use of the Internet for research but lack discrimination in using the material they gain. Their drawing and presentational skills are often average. Pupils taking the food technology option present the results of their investigations well, but their analytical work lacks depth. They make full and useful records of the work they have covered. Attainment is at a similar level to that recorded in the last inspection.<sup>130</sup> The progress pupils make, including those for whom English is an additional language, is overall good in both key stages. Although some elements of the Key Stage 3 schemes of work lack sufficient challenge, pupils make good progress from a low base in acquiring a satisfactory range of practical skills, using a variety of materials. This is evident in a Year 9 project where pupils design and make a storage tray using plastic and wood. Despite problems caused by low levels of literacy and some examples of poor attendance, pupils in both key stages make good progress, for example, in developing practical and evaluative skills. This is notably so in Key Stage 3 when pupils made comparisons between their own and commercially produced crisps and, in Key Stage 4, when they undertook a project about the Millennium Dome. With the close support of classroom assistants, pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

<sup>131</sup> The attitudes pupils show towards their learning are good. They are interested in what they do and maintain their concentration well in lessons. They listen most attentively during expert demonstrations. Teachers encourage pupils to undertake research in most projects in Key Stage 3 and, throughout Key Stage 4, but pupils' capacity for private study is not well developed and this has an adverse impact on their attainment. Pupils are courteous to visitors, opening doors and readily engaging in conversation. They treat their surroundings with respect and clear away after practical sessions. When they work in a group, they do so collaboratively and sensibly. There is little evidence, however, of pupils exercising their initiative or pushing for increased responsibility.

132 Teaching is overall good in both key stages and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge. Where there are deficiencies, for example when temporary staff take classes, the department is most resourceful in devising ways to support pupils and to maintain standards. They are aided in their work by a very competent technician. Planning for lessons is generally good, although the Key Stage 3 schemes of work require some revision to provide more opportunities for pupils to acquire deeper skills, particularly in graphics, research and evaluation. At Key Stage 4, they ensure that pupils develop interesting and challenging ideas for their projects. Teachers manage pupils well. Misbehaviour is rare and is, in any case, dealt with swiftly and effectively. Relationships are based on respect, and teachers use humour, fairness and their knowledge of pupils to maintain good relationships and to keep pupils on task. There is good use of time and most lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers use regular assessments well to track the progress of pupils. This is especially so at Key Stage 4, where teachers set short and long term targets for individuals.

133 The school is in breach of the statutory regulations that require all Key Stage 4 pupils to undertake a course in design and technology. Currently a high percentage of pupils in Year 10 do not take such a course.

## 65 Geography

134 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show that pupils were attaining standards well below national expectations. In the GCSE examinations, results at grades A\*- C have improved steadily over the last four years, but are still well below the national average. Results at grades A\*- G have been in line with the national average, except in 1998 when they were below this level. From 1996 to 1998 girls did better than boys in the GCSE examination but this trend was reversed in 1999.

135 In work seen during the inspection, pupils are attaining standards below the national average at the end of each key stage. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils show skills in mapping, can use co-ordinates, and measure angles when using a compass. Pupils have a satisfactory spatial awareness, improved by the quality of local investigations they undertake. They also show understanding of the multi-cultural nature of the world. Higher attaining pupils write about geographical topics at length, but the written work of lower attaining pupils is often brief and contains errors of spelling and punctuation. Lower attaining pupils sometimes have difficulties in recalling work they have previously learned but those of higher attainment show knowledge and understanding of such topics as pollution, the local area, and the advantages and disadvantages of tourism to Kenya. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have a good grasp of the skills involved in enquiry work, evident in their studies of canal side redevelopment in Birmingham. Most pupils understand changes in the use of urban land, while higher attaining pupils can also grasp more complex ideas, such as urban modelling and service hierarchies. These pupils also use geographical terminology correctly and can analyse, for example, the advantages and disadvantages of quarrying in Derbyshire. Pupils write at length and the written work of some is combined with evidence from newspapers, photographs and information presented statistically. Lower attaining pupils show a basic understanding of air masses and their relationship with the weather. At each key stage, pupils have insufficient opportunity to demonstrate and develop skills in the use of information and communication technology. Written work at each key stage is generally well presented.

136 Progress at each key stage is, at least, satisfactory and often good. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to their peers. The good quality of teaching enables pupils to make consistent gains in geographical knowledge and understanding during lessons. Through each key stage, higher attaining pupils develop their written skills and produce interesting letters and essays on geographical topics. Lower attaining pupils improve their skills in writing by the use of writing frames to assist them with their work. Their progress also benefits from work matched to meet their needs. Class presentations, following group work, help to improve pupils' confidence and oral skills. This approach helped pupils in Year 11 to increase their understanding of the causes of rainfall and those in Year 8 to develop greater awareness of the issues involved in tourism in Kenya. In Year 9, a lower time allocation for the subject has an adverse effect upon the amount of work pupils are able to undertake.

137 Pupils with special educational needs are clearly identified in lesson plans, and the use of appropriate strategies and materials ensures that they make at least satisfactory and often good progress. These efforts are strengthened by the good work of the support assistants.

138 Pupils behave well in geography lessons. Pupils of all levels of attainment are attentive enthusiastic and good humoured. They participate well in group work and form good relationships with each other and teachers.

139 Teaching is never less than satisfactory. At Key Stage 3 it is good in two out of three lessons and at Key Stage 4 in half of lessons. Subject specialists have good geographical knowledge, enhanced by their understanding of the local area. There is some non specialist teaching, but such staff have knowledge appropriate to the classes they teach. Lessons are carefully planned, well timed and use a variety of techniques appropriate to pupils' levels of attainment. On occasion, lessons would benefit from a wider use of audio-visual resources to stimulate and maintain pupils' interest. In addition, greater use of information and communication technology and a more concerted effort to teach key geographical words and terms are required. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and so provide an environment in which all pupils can make progress. The required homework appropriately promotes the progress of pupils. Arrangements for assessing pupils' progress over time are satisfactory, but its results are insufficiently used to identify and track pupils working at the borderline of grades.

140 The geography department is effectively managed and, since the last inspection, teaching and results in the GCSE examination have improved. Weaknesses identified then in the use of information and communication technology remain.

## 65 History

141 Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 showed attainment to be well below the national average. There has been recent improvement in the results at grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations although these remain below average. There is no consistent variation between the performance of boys and girls, and pupils' results at GCSE in history compare favourably with those in other subjects in the school.

142 Work seen during the inspection showed attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 to be below average, although a significant minority of pupils achieve levels in line with national expectations. By the end of the key stage, most pupils demonstrate a factual knowledge of the period they are studying and, with teacher support, can select and arrange information in response to written questions. They are competent in handling evidence, with higher attaining pupils able to assess its reliability. Pupils are beginning to understand the concepts of cause and effect, as seen in their study of the Industrial Revolution, and those of higher attainment recognise that history may be viewed from a variety of standpoints.

143 By the end of Key Stage 4 the attainment of pupils is below average. They have a satisfactory overview of the topics they study and recognise that there may be conflicting evidence and opinion about events in history. They can identify underlying causes that give rise to developments, for example, the conditions that gave rise to the development of medicine in ancient Greece. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to evaluate the effects of these causes. Pupils show understanding of the views and attitudes of people from a different era and culture, for example the American Indians. Through their study of Islamic civilisations they also appreciate the diversity of non – European cultures. Pupils of higher attainment take greater responsibility for their learning and their written work demonstrates increased understanding of historical topics and improved skills of investigation.

144 Progress is at least satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Progress at Key Stage 4 is good. Pupils with English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils. During Key Stage 3, pupils develop the skill of writing in appropriate styles as in their newspaper report on the destruction of Pompeii, in Year 7. They make satisfactory progress in their ability to select and organise facts in response to questions, with higher attaining pupils developing the ability to write at length and to reflect opposing views on historical topics. In Year 9, a reduction in the time available for history reduces the opportunity to develop these skills. On occasion, at Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils would make greater progress if work were more demanding. Progress is good in Key Stage 4 where expectations of what pupils will achieve are higher and where pupils are increasingly asked to evaluate information and to provide reasons for their conclusions. Pupils take greater responsibility for their own learning and become more independent. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in the development of extended writing techniques and in their use of evidence to substantiate their statements. The written work of lower attaining pupils improves as a result of the precise guidance they receive. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and it is good where individual support is available. Good use is made of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. The use of tasks and textbooks matched to their needs also supports their progress. The progress of these pupils is impeded when they are placed in large classes in Year 7.

145 Pupils' attitudes are good. They behave well and have good relationships with their teachers. They are quick to respond to questions and most concentrate well. They are willing to participate actively in the work of the class and, when given the opportunity, work well in pairs and groups, as was seen in a Year 11 group preparing for a presentation. Pupils are generally courteous and staff provide good role models in this respect.

146 The quality of teaching is good overall and, at Key Stage 4, it is often very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good and this enables them to add colour and detail to the lessons. Lessons are well planned with a variety of activities including 'hot seating', card sorting and, on occasion, the use of computers to present a newspaper article. Most lessons are effectively structured to meet the needs of pupils of differing attainment and, at Key Stage 4, they are appropriately challenging. Expectations of written work at Key Stage 3 are, however, sometimes too low and involve pupils in the unnecessary repetition of information. Classes are well managed and expectations of behaviour are high. Work is marked in line with departmental policy and effective use is made of encouragement and praise. However, there is, on occasion, insufficient follow up of incomplete work, which leads to a lack of progression for some pupils. There is a good use of comments to show pupils how to improve their work on extended writing tasks at Key Stage 4, but at Key Stage 3 many comments tend to be insufficiently constructive. There has been some improvement in the extent of visits since the last report but the local area is still used too little as a resource for investigating the Industrial Revolution. On the one occasion when teaching was less than satisfactory at Key Stage 3, the pace of the lesson was too slow and pupils were not given a coherent view of the past.

147 The head of department provides good leadership. She has made a good start in reviewing the schemes of work for Key Stage 3 and clear assessment opportunities are identified, reflecting National Curriculum requirements. There are too few opportunities for the use of information and communication technology and, as at the time of the last inspection, there are still insufficient artefacts and sources of evidence available. The department makes a valuable contribution to the development of literacy in the school and pupils are encouraged to write at length, read aloud and to select information from text.

148 Since the last inspection there has been an overall increase in the time allocated to the subject, although this is not evenly distributed across the three years of Key Stage 3 and the allocation in Year 9 is low.

**Information and communication technology**<sup>149</sup> In the 1999 teacher assessments the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level was well below average. Results at grades A\* to C in the GCSE examination deteriorated in 1999 from those of 1998. Results at this level are below average but compare favourably with other subjects in the school. In the classroom, pupils attain standards well below national expectations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.

150 At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can use a word processor to write stories and letters, but their keyboard skills are well below average. Most can use desktop publishing software to combine text and graphics, for example when they create letterheads and promotional material for an imaginary hotel. Most pupils have some experience of creating their own databases, although their understanding and recall of the processes they use is well below average. In some subjects, pupils interrogate CD-ROMs for the information contained in them but do not do so frequently. Pupils have knowledge of a simple programming language and, following examples given by their teacher, can control the movement of a cursor on the computer screen. Their recall of the commands used to control the cursor is well below average. They have little experience or understanding of the use of computers to sense or to measure change in the world about them. Most have some experience of modelling information, for example when they follow instructions to set up a spreadsheet and alter the information to see the effects, but this experience does not extend to other modelling techniques.

151 The range of basic skills pupils acquire in information technology lessons is appropriate and the progress most pupils make in these lessons is often good. However, they are given too few opportunities to apply and develop their skills systematically in other subjects. This, combined with the difficulties caused for many by below average standards of literacy and keyboard skills, make overall progress in acquiring and developing information technology skills just satisfactory at Key Stage 3. The progress made by those for whom English is an additional language and who have special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils.

152 Overall, at the end of Key Stage 4, pupils attain standards that are well below national expectations. In their GCSE business studies and information technology joint examination course, pupils attain standards which are below average. They have basic word processing and desk top publishing skills and use these successfully. They produce spreadsheets and successfully draw graphs from them. They know how to create and interrogate databases. They make comparisons between different software packages and the hardware they use, but these often lack depth of analysis. During the GNVQ course pupils use and apply aspects of information and communication technology. For those who do not take the GCSE or GNVQ course, in particular, attainment is adversely affected by too few opportunities to use information and communication technology across the curriculum. In addition, there is no systematic teaching of the control and measurement element of the National Curriculum to all pupils, in breach of statutory requirements. Because of a lack of sufficient computers of good quality, teachers, other than those of information technology, have difficulty in accessing the computer rooms which are largely used for information technology lessons. In addition, there is no school wide scheme of work to guide teachers' planning for information and communication technology across all subjects. Not all pupils are assessed in the subject at the end of Key Stage 4 as required.

153 Because they do not receive a systematic course in information and communication technology or a consistent and planned experience of the subject, the progress made by the vast majority of pupils in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. This is compounded by the poor attendance of some pupils. All pupils including those with special educational needs make similar progress.

154 Pupils have good attitudes to learning in information and communication technology lessons. They sustain concentration well and enjoy using computers. The subject is popular at GCSE where it is taken with business studies. Behaviour is good. Pupils treat the equipment in classrooms with respect. Their relationships with teachers are productive and they respond well to support and advice. During the inspection, there was little evidence of them demonstrating initiative during lessons.

155 Specialist teaching in information and communication technology is consistently good. The quality of the schemes of work, feedback to pupils in lessons and the way in which their work is marked provide evidence of good subject knowledge. Planning is good and, at Key Stage 3, gives pupils a good experience of the subject. Teachers give short and informative introductions to lessons and make sure that pupils spend the maximum time working on machines. Tasks are appropriately challenging and feature realistic contexts such as an imaginary hotel. The management of pupils is good and teachers communicate their own enthusiasm for the subject well. Discipline is good and the atmosphere in lessons purposeful. At Key Stage 4, target setting is a useful process which gives pupils a good idea of their progress in meeting the objectives of the course and pointing out what they have to do to improve.

156 The last inspection judged the number of computers to be sufficient. Current provision does not give subject departments easy access to computers of appropriate quality.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

157 Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show pupils' attainment to be well below the expected standards. GCSE results at grades A\*- C in French improved in 1999, but remain well below the national average. Work seen during the inspection reflects overall below average attainment at the end of each key stage. However, at Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils achieve standards closer to the national average in French. Spanish has been recently introduced at Key Stage 3 and the attainment of pupils in Year 8 is on track to reach expectations by the end of the key stage. At Key Stage 4, Spanish is currently offered as a fresh opportunity for pupils who have already learned French.

158 Pupils of all levels of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 speak French, and those in Year 8 Spanish, with a good accent. They display confidence in structured situations and benefit from the supportive atmosphere in many lessons. When they feel less secure, there is a tendency for them to cling to learned phrases. Lower attaining pupils can give simple responses to questions put to them in French, for example about illness. Higher attaining pupils at this key stage are able to ask as well as to answer questions. Good use of the target languages encourages the development of sound listening skills by all pupils in French and Spanish. Pupils' written work is well presented. Lower attaining pupils can complete exercises and lists of vocabulary. Pupils of higher attainment can write at greater length, but need more opportunity to practise descriptive and original writing, particularly in French. Some pupils word process their written work. By the end of the key stage, higher attaining pupils read fluently and with accuracy and expression, while those of lower attainment are more hesitant.

159 At Key Stage 4 pupils continue to develop listening skills. Their speaking in French and Spanish is confident in structured situations, but they are often hesitant in unfamiliar situations. Except for higher attaining pupils, there are weaknesses in their ability to use tenses correctly and to adapt their knowledge of the language for their own use. Most pupils read aloud with a good accent. With guidance, pupils write accurately, but they have too little opportunity to demonstrate the ability to write spontaneously in French.

160 Progress is satisfactory overall in French in both key stages. Over time, pupils develop skills of writing, reading, speaking and listening as a result of a balanced approach by staff to all elements of language learning. In Spanish lessons, progress is good. In these lessons pupils acquire good experience of the language from tasks planned to meet their needs and appropriate explanations. In other classes in French, over reliance on the text book and repetitive activities impede progress, particularly that of higher attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make at least satisfactory progress as a result of well planned activities.

161 The behaviour, attitude and response of pupils are positive in all classes and support their learning. Pupils work co-operatively, willingly and harmoniously. At best, the majority of pupils are keen to volunteer and take an active role, remaining consistently on task. This is particularly evident in French in Key Stage 3 and in Spanish in both key stages.

162 The overall quality of teaching in modern foreign languages is at least satisfactory in all lessons and at least good in half of them. Teaching in Spanish is very good and, occasionally, outstanding. In each subject, staff make good use in lessons of the language they are teaching to pupils. Classes are invariably well managed. Staff often use a range of resources, some of them authentic to the country whose language pupils are studying. There is, however, insufficient use of information and communication technology. Language classrooms contain good displays of work which provide a stimulating environment for learning. Teaching is best in those lessons where staff have planned in detail what pupils should learn on the basis of their prior attainment. Pupils are engaged in a range of challenging activities, which increase their ability to read, write and speak the language. Praise and encouragement are well used to develop their confidence. In a very good French lesson at Key Stage 3, pupils with special educational needs improved their skills of listening and speaking, as a result of high expectations by the teacher, and they learned new vocabulary. In a very good Spanish lesson with a Year 11 class, the teacher used a range of resources and a variety of activities, and ensured that during the lesson pupils gained experience of reading writing, listening and speaking. In some French lessons, which are overall satisfactory, teachers have high expectations of behaviour but insufficiently ambitious expectations of what pupils should learn. They do not encourage pupils to become independent in their use of the language and, for example, fail to provide dictionaries so that pupils can look up new vocabulary for themselves. The written and oral tasks pupils are required to do reinforce knowledge of the language but do not encourage a creative response. The required marking policy is inconsistently applied. At its best, marking shows pupils how to improve, and sets targets for them to do so, but this is not always the case. In addition, insufficient use is made of the results of assessment in planning the work pupils should undertake.

163 The modern languages department is now fully staffed with specialist teachers. Schemes of work, have been reviewed since the last inspection, but do not yet include National Curriculum levels, resources, opportunities for assessment and the provision of tasks matched to pupils' needs.

164 The department has responded successfully to the findings of the previous inspection by developing resources, providing an alternative to GCSE accreditation for lower attaining pupils and by giving balanced coverage

to all areas of language learning in its work.

**Music**165 By the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment of pupils is below national expectations. Most pupils are also below the expected standard on their entry to the school and have had a variable musical experience. In performance, most pupils of all levels of attainment are working toward the expected level as they play either the melody or chords or bass line of pieces on their keyboards. Their performances are not always accurate or complete. A few who play with both hands have difficulty in maintaining a steady beat. In vocal work, pupils singing a vocal line in their blues compositions and others singing in concert performances achieve the expected standards, but their part-singing is less secure. Standards of attainment in composition do not meet expectations by the end of the key stage. Pupils demonstrate some understanding of melody and rhythm and can compose chord sequences. However, their compositions are very short and there are weaknesses in their understanding of harmony and structure and in their ability to develop ideas. In listening and appraising, standards are low, although pupils can describe tempo, pitch and instrumentation correctly and recognise some world music styles and periods of musical development. Some understand musical terminology but it is not always used correctly.

166 Results in the GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below the national average but, in the last three years, standards have risen. Of the three elements that are examined, the results in performing are the most encouraging and the department works hard to support pupils who have experience only of classroom tuition. However, for most, attainment is below, or well below, the national standard. Keyboard players choose pieces of an intermediate standard of difficulty but they do not always shape phrases well. Pitch and rhythm are not entirely accurate and pupils rarely vary the controls during performance. Pianists show insufficient control of tone, and lower attaining pupils playing easy pieces do not always play in time. The ensemble skills of most of those who play in the samba band match average standards. In composing, the work of only a very few is in line with national standards. Most demonstrate some lack of understanding when combining musical elements, and melody and harmony are often not well integrated. Most pupils choose to repeat ideas rather than to develop them and structures are not always well balanced. In listening and appraising, standards are well below average and there are weaknesses in pupils' ability to describe a variety of musical styles using correct terminology.

167 Standards in the instrumental and vocal lessons are broadly satisfactory.

168 Progress in lessons is mostly satisfactory. During Key Stage 3, pupils make progress as they learn to play progressively difficult pieces on keyboards and develop some understanding of musical elements and styles as they work on their compositions. They learn to recognise world music styles and they consolidate listening skills and knowledge when appraising both their own work and that of well-known composers. Progress slows when pupils spend too long on the same task in lessons. Over time, at Key Stage 3, progress is unsatisfactory as curriculum time for music is low and there is a lack of continuity in the time-tabling of music lessons which impedes the development of the necessary practical skills. At Key Stage 4, pupils make satisfactory progress as they work on their individual performances and compositions in lessons. Pupils in Year 10 made good progress in a samba band lesson as they practised maintaining and changing their syncopated patterns in a neat ensemble. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils.

169 Pupils' response is satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 3 behaviour is usually good and most pupils listen quietly to explanations and to the work of their peer group. There is occasional background chatter. They enjoy the practical tasks but lose some concentration when the tasks are not varied. They respond quite well to questions orally but are less keen to make a written response. In Key Stage 4, group sizes are larger than often found and reflect pupils' growing interest in music. Pupils work enthusiastically in the samba band and patiently at their individual tasks. Interest in instrumental lessons is increasing and these are supported financially by the school. The progress of some pupils in music is enhanced by their participation in the choir, instrumental groups and school productions.

170 Teaching was, at least, satisfactory in nearly nine out of ten lessons. It was at least good in a quarter of lessons. Good subject knowledge is evident in the clear explanations pupils receive and in the varied choice of music that is played at the start of lessons. This appraisal task ensures a prompt start to lessons and focuses the pupils' attention. Appropriate worksheets are prepared and backing tracks are designed and pre-programmed for pupil use. Classroom management is satisfactory and a calm and patient approach helps to ensure co-operation. Pupils are supported in both group and individual work and strategies for improvement are suggested. The music for a Year 11 pupil was divided into short phrases to make learning easier and ways of improving the performance were offered. Most lessons have a variety of tasks but there are weaknesses when pupils spend too long on the same task in a lesson and expectations of what they will achieve are too low. This was the case in an unsatisfactory lesson with Year 8 pupils who spent most of the time playing either a melody line or a bass line to a backing track. In a woodwind lesson with Year 7 pupils, explanations were too long and there was some uncertainty about the prior attainment of the pupil. Where teaching is good, there is a lively approach and a good pace. In a lesson with Year 10 pupils on samba band skills, difficult sections were rehearsed and several musical details added to the performance as ensemble skills were consolidated. In a very good vocal lesson for individual pupils, several strategies were offered in a very lively manner to help pupils solve a variety of tasks of progressive difficulty.

171 The previous inspection recommended improvements in resources in percussion and technology. Percussion instruments have been improved with the purchase of the samba band instruments but there has been only a slight improvement in the provision for music technology. The department now has two computers instead of one but this is still inadequate provision at Key Stage 3. Sequencing functions on the keyboards are limited and do not allow for the work to be stored and retrieved beyond the end of a lesson. Improvements in provision for music technology are overdue and are needed to support the development of composition skills in particular.

172 Music curriculum time is below that recommended and timetabling arrangements mean that pupils do not have a continuous experience of the subject. This has an adverse affect on the progress of the pupils over time, particularly in their development of practical skills. The assessment and record keeping procedures of the department require improvement. Current procedures do not assess attainment in relation to national standards and these standards are not reported to parents.

## 65 Physical Education

173 Lessons in physical education were observed in games, gymnastics, dance and GCSE theory. Standards of attainment for pupils at the age of 14 at the end of Key Stage 3 are below those of pupils of a similar age nationally in the areas of practical skills, knowledge and understanding. Standards of attainment of pupils at the age of 16 are also below expectations for pupils of a similar age, both in core Key Stage 4 physical education and at GCSE level. This judgement is in line with examination results for 1999: these were well below the national average for A\* to C grades in physical education, as has been the case in the school in recent years. The results were close to the national average for A\* to G grades.

174 Pupils join the school at Key Stage 3 with levels of attainment in physical education below expectations. For example, many have limited ball skills. They make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 in acquiring practical skills, knowledge and understanding and in extending their skills in dance, by learning to use motifs and to create dramatic sequences. In football, pupils practise the skills of dribbling and passing the ball with increasing accuracy, and transfer those skills to a game situation with variable rates of success. In hockey, they increase their ability to dribble the ball, perform a push shot and receive a pass in increasingly challenging situations. In gymnastics, pupils learn to create linked sequences of controlled movement on small apparatus, with developing confidence.

175 Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 in core physical education, particularly in games. For example, in netball, pupils learn to pass and receive the ball under pressure. It was not possible to observe any GCSE practical lessons. In GCSE theory lessons, pupils make progress in their ability to create a practical project, make a hypothesis, analyse issues, evaluate and refine the study, and finally word process it. Studies are undertaken on subjects such as increasing the accuracy of bowling in cricket and shooting and defending in netball. However, the progress of many pupils across time in GCSE theory is restricted by frequent absence, and by technical deficiencies in their extended writing.

176 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in extending their practical skills in both Key Stages 3 and 4. The progress of those for whom English is an additional language is similar to that of their peers.

177 Pupils' attitudes towards learning in physical education are always at least satisfactory and are often good. Most pupils enjoy the lessons, practising collaboratively in pairs or small groups in a variety of sports as well as enjoying competition in games. They make sensible use of opportunities to co-operate and use their imagination in devising sequences, as seen in dance and gymnastics lessons at Key Stage 3. Pupils also take the lead in devising some warm-up procedures and practices, for example in netball. A small minority of pupils has poor listening skills: these pupils do not pay sufficient attention to instructions. There is also a minority of pupils who lack confidence and remain dependent on the teacher for ideas, particularly in dance and gymnastics.

178 The quality of teaching in physical education is always at least satisfactory in Key Stage 3 lessons, and is good in half of them. Teaching is at least satisfactory or good in more than four lessons out of five at Key Stage 4, and is unsatisfactory in a very small minority of lessons. Where teaching is good it is characterised by several features. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan appropriately for lessons. They use imaginative strategies, for example linking dance with history when devising dramatic dance on the theme of 'revolution'. Teachers encourage pupils to show initiative, as for example in leading warm-up and practice sessions in netball. Lessons are planned with progression so that, for example, in football and hockey lessons, pupils move from pairs practices, involving progressively more challenge, to small games situations. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and standards. There is effective questioning and monitoring of progress to ensure that pupils understand what they are doing. In the rare case of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 4, there is insufficient pace and activity, and pupils are not taught the skills necessary to make appropriate progress.

179 The physical education department has produced extensive schemes of work and policies to assist staff. However, there are too few opportunities for professional development, particularly for non-specialist teachers who lack confidence in some areas. The department has increased the opportunities for extra curricular activities: clubs are run in several sports, and there are now more opportunities for inter-school sport, for example in football, where a member of staff has set up a local league. School teams compete successfully in this league. Around one fifth of pupils, mainly from Key Stage 3, take part in extra curricular sporting activities. The department is developing a policy to promote literacy, and the use of information and communication technology has been built into the GCSE curriculum. There are serious deficiencies in the accommodation for physical education: there is limited space for indoor activity, and the quality of outdoor facilities is poor, particularly the hard court area and the poorly drained grass pitch. These deficiencies have a detrimental effect upon standards. Curriculum time for physical education is unevenly distributed across the three years of Key Stage 3. The low allocation of time in Year 9 means that breadth is achieved at the expense of depth. In addition, assessment at the end of the key stage is related to the department's own scheme of work rather than to National Curriculum requirements.

180 The last inspection report judged standards of attainment in physical education to be in line with national expectations in some lessons, although overall standards at Key Stage 4 were below national expectations. The teaching was judged to be sound. This is still the case. There is now a greater variety of activities for girls in physical education, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. However, facilities for physical education remain poor.

**PART C: INSPECTION DATA****65 SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

181 The inspection team consisted of twelve inspectors including a lay inspector. During the week, 134 lessons were observed across Years 7 to 11. All teachers in school during the week of the inspection were observed at least once. Planned discussions were held with the headteacher, teachers, other members of the school staff, governors, pupils and representatives of outside agencies. Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils, including a sample representing the attainment range in each year group. A large amount of documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. The registered inspector, accompanied by a colleague, held a meeting attended by seven parents and analysed the responses to questionnaires.

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182 Inspectors spent a total of 44 days in school. A total of 140 hours was spent in observing lessons, talking with pupils and looking at their work.

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182 **DATA AND INDICATORS**182 **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	621	13	309	384

182 **Teachers and classes**182 **Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y11)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	45
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	14

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

Total number of education support staff:	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	266

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	66
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	24.5
	KS4	20.7

182 **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/1999
	£
Total Income	£1,552,853
Total Expenditure	£1,577,853
Expenditure per pupil	£2630
Balance brought forward from previous year	-
Balance carried forward to next year	-£25000

**PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 621

Number of questionnaires returned: 34

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	29	65	0	6	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	62	35	0	0	3
The school handles complaints from parents well	29	53	15	0	3
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	26	68	3	3	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	38	53	3	6	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	41	56	3	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	44	47	9	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	47	53	0	0	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	47	44	6	3	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	41	38	15	0	6
My child(ren) like(s) school	50	47	0	0	3

**182 Other issues raised by parents**

Parents who attended the meeting were positive in their comments on all aspects of school life.