

INSPECTION REPORT

BISHOP CHALLONER CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103560

Headteacher: Mrs M Symons

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver
20224

Dates of inspection: 2nd–5th October 2000

Inspection number: 223722

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Institute Road
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Appropriate authority: Birmingham

Name of chair of governors: Mr G Kegan

Date of previous inspection: 2nd – 6th October 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bishop Challoner Catholic School is a voluntary aided, Roman Catholic school and sixth-form centre within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Half the pupils are from families which follow the Roman Catholic faith. It is comprehensive and of average size and provides education for 1037 boys and girls aged 11 to 18. It is popular and has increased substantially in size since its previous inspection. In 1996, the school gained a sixth form which now consists of 107 students. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, including some from areas of deprivation. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. Thirty per cent of pupils come from a diverse range of ethnic minority backgrounds, and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is high compared with the situation nationally, but few require additional help in English. The proportion of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs, including those with statements of special need, is average when compared nationally. Until three years ago, pupils' attainment on entry to the school was below average. It is now close to the national average. Although the school recruits from the full ability range at age eleven, the proportion of higher attaining pupils is reduced by competition from local selective schools. The school was designated a Sports College from September 2000. It is participating in the national Excellence in Cities and University of the First Age programmes and other local and national initiatives in order to extend educational opportunities for all pupils and raise standards further.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. Enthusiastic, vibrant and very effective leadership, and vigorous, skilful and successful teaching, enable pupils of wide-ranging abilities to achieve high standards of learning and behaviour. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management plan very efficiently to ensure that very high standards of teaching and learning are achieved. National initiatives are very well managed and are helping to raise standards further.
- Teaching is of very good quality and enables pupils and students of all levels of attainment to learn successfully and reach high standards of achievement and behaviour.
- The school provides pupils with a powerful sense of the importance of fundamental spiritual and consequent moral, social and cultural values.
- Relationships are exceptionally good, creating a community in which pupils' excellent attitudes strongly support their commitment to learning.
- Analysis and use of performance data are excellent, and used very successfully to ensure that pupils and students are helped to achieve their best.

What could be improved

- Pupils' competence in information and communication technology in all subjects.
- Realising plans as rapidly as possible to improve accommodation to support learning.
- A substantial increase in books in the resource-based learning centre to assist independent learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved considerably since its previous inspection in October 1995. It has worked effectively to overcome financial difficulties, which arose under the previous leadership and management of the school, and increased in popularity and size, successfully extending provision to include that for a sixth form. Teaching has further improved and is now very good. Standards of attainment have risen considerably and the school has more than maintained the good standards of achievement required by the previous inspection. Results are well above those of schools of similar type in national tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE. Other issues from the previous inspection have been largely resolved. Standards in music have greatly improved, curricular time for it to Year 9 is now adequate, and lessons are lively and enjoyable. Provision of books and use of computers are much better, but increasing numbers of pupils require yet more provision and all pupils do not receive their full entitlement to information and communication technology. Attendance has regularly improved each year, and is now average, with unauthorised absence below average. However, the school is not satisfied with this situation and has set itself challenging targets to improve attendance further. Decision-making and planning now take funding fully into account, and are of very good quality. Governors have put right their deficiencies identified in the previous inspection, and are well informed about the school. Fire drills and monitoring of health and safety requirements are well managed. The school is achieving very well and has very good capacity to improve even further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar+ schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	A	very high A* well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E very low E*
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	E		

+Reference to similar schools is to those schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils who claim eligibility for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with pupils of similar backgrounds. Reference to all schools indicates all secondary schools across the country. No comparison is made with similar schools at A-level; no grade is given for 2000 because comparable national data is not yet available.

Pupils make very good progress from entry to the school in Year 7 to the end of Year 9. Although they entered the school at age eleven attaining, overall, barely nationally expected standards, they attained above average standards in comparison with all schools nationally in the end of Year 9 national tests in 1999 and 2000. In 2000, English and science results were in line with results in all schools, and mathematics was ahead of these. During the last five years, the upward trend in standards attained in the tests has risen more sharply than that attained nationally. In comparison with similar schools, standards in 1999 were within the highest five per cent of schools nationally, and only slightly below this level in 2000.

During Years 10 and 11, pupils sustain their very good rate of progress. At GCSE, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more grades A* to C has been close to the average of all schools in recent years. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more grades A* to G has been above average. The upward trend in results over the last five years has been in line with the improving national trend. In comparison with similar schools, GCSE results in 1999 were well above average overall, and very high in the attainment of five or more grades A* to C. In 2000, results continued in line with the improving trend of recent years. The school decides its examination targets for different year groups with great skill and care, and usually attains the challenging standard set. Overall, pupils make the most of their abilities and achieve very well.

Students have taken examinations in the school's own sixth form since 1998. At A-level and Advanced GNVQ, attainment has been below the national average. In 2000, students attained a considerably higher average A-level point score than in 1999. In general, students achieve standards in line with their prior attainment at GCSE.

In lessons seen for all age groups, pupils attain standards in line with those which they gain in national tests and examinations. They achieve well above what might be expected for their levels of ability. For example, in English, they achieve good standards of speaking and listening and write well for different readers. They have good standards of numeracy and use it well to solve problems. They achieve high levels of scientific understanding, developing good practical skills.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils and students have very positive attitudes to school and want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well, in and out of class. Fixed period exclusions were above average last year, but are reducing as a result of new initiatives.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils support each other very well in learning. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good and result in strong commitment to learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Average levels of attendance are achieved. Unauthorised absence is below average.

Very positive relationships are especially important in encouraging pupils to want to learn, to gain maturity and to behave well.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons. It was very good or better in 60 per cent, with many lessons of excellent quality. Insufficient challenge and organisation

to advance learning resulted in one per cent of unsatisfactory teaching. English, mathematics and science are very well taught to all age groups. The teaching of literacy is effective in extending all pupils' vocabulary and their capacity to write coherently and analytically. Numeracy is effectively taught, enabling pupils to use number well in solving problems. Teachers have excellent management and control of pupils and plan the use of time in lessons very effectively to maintain pupils' interest. They are rigorous in demanding that pupils of all abilities work hard and concentrate on what they are to learn. Pupils respond very well, work at a good pace and make very good progress in learning. Pupils work very well with their teachers, but their skills in working independently are weak. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work and progress is excellent. This enables pupils to know their standard in order to improve it. Overall, the needs of all pupils are very well met.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory in fully providing information and communication technology to some pupils in Year 11. Otherwise a very good range of learning opportunities. Very good range of sixth-form courses. Extra-curricular opportunities very good, and some excellent provision in sport and music. Personal and social education is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Assessment of pupils' individual needs and response to these are effectively managed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Provision is well managed to enable all pupils to follow the curriculum successfully and make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Powerful commitment to fundamental spiritual, and consequent moral, social and cultural values supports the strong sense of community alive in the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Staff know pupils well and respond to their needs. Excellent support is provided for individual pupils with personal difficulties adversely affecting their opportunities to learn. Excellent systems of assessment enable staff to guide pupils in learning very well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. Enthusiastic, vibrant leadership and competent management constantly encourage staff and pupils to achieve highly. New national initiatives are extremely well integrated into school planning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governing body is well informed and very supportive of the school.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. Analysis of data enables the school to plan effectively and make informed decisions. Monitoring of teaching and standards of work is managed very well.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Use of funding is well linked to priorities in planning, despite temporary overspending on new courses for the sixth form. The school has bid successfully to participate in several national educational projects, which brings considerable additional funding to benefit pupils' learning and provide wider opportunities for their development.

The school applies the *principles of best value* very well. Although a substantial budgetary deficit remains, the school has made very good progress with the recovery plan it was set to manage the deficit which occurred under previous leadership and management. Since 1996, funding has been very competently managed and additional sources of income gained.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are expected to work hard and do their best. • Teaching is good. • They are happy to approach the school with problems or questions. • The school is well led and managed. • Pupils behave well. • Their children enjoy attending school. • The range of extra-curricular activities is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information on progress. • The school working more closely with them. • More consistency in quality of marking of work, including homework.

Inspectors agree with parents in their positive views of the school. In response to the concerns of some parents, the inspection revealed that they receive sufficient written information on progress, but not all are aware of the opportunities to consult regularly with teachers. Although there is some inconsistency in marking, the overall quality is very good and usually helpful to pupils in providing advice on how to improve their work. Homework is set regularly and generally extends learning. The school consults parents more than most, by individual questionnaire, for example, and takes their views into account.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Leadership and management plan very efficiently to ensure that the highest standards of teaching and learning are achieved. National initiatives are very well managed and are helping to raise standards further.

1. Leadership by the headteacher and senior staff is excellent, enthusiastic and vibrant. They make a very effective team. They lead and manage the school thoughtfully, intelligently, effectively and with great commitment and vigour. With the support and endorsement of interested and well-informed governors, and the tireless efforts of teachers and other staff, they enable all to share the fundamental spiritual ideal, which is the essence of the school's mission statement, and make it a day-to-day reality. Consequently, expectations are high and rigorous in ensuring that all individuals make the most of their talents and use them in the service of others. These expectations are achieved remarkably well. For example, pupils make very good progress in learning from entry to the school at age eleven onwards, and often achieve standards above what might reasonably be expected of them.
2. The school development plan summarises the leadership's drive for improvement. It is comprehensive, rigorous and identifies many important specific targets to improve standards. The plan indicates clearly how the achievement of targets will be measured. Resources and sources of funding are properly identified and linked to priorities. Excellent leadership has enabled the school to make very good progress with its recovery plan to overcome financial difficulties brought about under previous leadership and management, enlarge its intake of pupils and establish a sixth form. Despite difficulties, the school's leadership has retained the quality of teaching and learning as an imperative and this has borne fruit in the high standards of work achieved by teachers and pupils. Monitoring is effective in achieving a very good quality of teaching, and professional induction and support for newly qualified teachers are excellent. The headteacher's leadership harnesses the collective effort of staff and pupils to aim for excellent standards of teaching and learning. It says much for the mutual respect alive in the school that the headteacher is impressed and humbled by the high level of commitment of teachers and other staff, given so unstintingly to pupils. The school's leadership itself sets the standard and is wholly committed to meeting needs in the partnership shared by all to make standards of achievement and behaviour the highest possible.
3. The school's leaders have challenged the school to exploit the educational opportunities available locally and nationally. They have energetically led the way in successful applications to participate in national educational initiatives to benefit pupils, engaging the school in continuing dynamic change. With others within the local authority, the school is a partner in the Excellence in Cities national initiative. This has enabled new and effective methods to ensure that pupils with very different needs benefit fully from the educational provision available. For example, pupils who are likely to encounter difficulties resulting in unacceptable behaviour are identified early on and given individual help by supportive learning mentors, enabling them to continue their learning and avoid sanctions or exclusion from school. Pupils are very well supported through difficulties, and special arrangements are being made to ensure that there are fewer exclusions from school. New provision this term has further prevented disruption to others' learning. For example, temporary transfer of some individual pupils to the Zacchaeus Centre is to be extended shortly by the school's own on-site centre to assist in improving the behaviour of pupils who are temporarily

unable to manage in mainstream classes. More opportunities are being developed through a special arrangement with employers for pupils to appreciate and experience the world of work. This is effectively providing them with greater incentives to make the most of the educational opportunities now available. The school's participation in Excellence in Cities is also helping to meet the needs of pupils who are generally gifted, or who have particular talents. These pupils' needs are carefully and accurately identified. Teachers understand fully what can be achieved so that they adapt work and methods to meet pupils' needs effectively, and identified pupils are provided with wider opportunities to stimulate their thinking and expand their learning.

4. From September 2000, the school gained the status of a Sports College. This has resulted in more staff able to play a more active part in community sport, for example in partner primary schools, and in expanding sports provision within the school. The opportunities for pupils to participate in sport are now very good, and increasing. Pupils' standards of achievement in sport reach the highest level. For example in judo, basketball and Gaelic football, teams and individuals reach finals in national competitions. Provision is growing rapidly, as in rugby where coaching and support from local clubs is quickly expanding. Sports provision overall is of high calibre. Pupils who excel at sport are provided with support and expertise, but all pupils enjoy a much wider range of opportunities to enable them to achieve. Other material benefits, for example a significant increase in the numbers of computers available, have accompanied the school's achievement of Sports College status and its link with the Birmingham Grid for Learning. Participation in the University of the First Age programme and other local initiatives has further extended educational opportunities for pupils to extend knowledge and skills.
5. Apart from successfully bidding to participate in these and other initiatives, the headteacher and key staff have had the challenge of integrating the new developments into the purposes, plans and work of the school. This has been accomplished very skilfully and successfully. New developments have been effectively brought within the school's processes of planning, monitoring and review. Initiatives are managed very well and clearly linked to serve the school's fundamental purposes, and help all pupils to extend their opportunities to acquire worthwhile experience, knowledge and skills.
6. Despite the inherited financial deficit, the headteacher and governors have not been deterred from aiming high to expand opportunities for learning and the resources to support these. Teaching and learning have remained priorities, and the principles of best value have governed use of the funding available. For example, the school achieves examination results which compare very well with those of schools of similar type across the country, and are impressively high shown in the data comparing the school to others with like intakes in the city, provided by the local education authority. The local and national educational initiatives, with which it is involved, provide the challenge to improve further by extending the range of educational opportunities available to pupils. The school consults widely with pupils, parents, staff and through the parish and closely considers their views which then influence planning. It gets good value for the services it buys.

Teaching is of very good quality and enables pupils and students of all levels of attainment to learn successfully and reach high standards of achievement and behaviour.

7. Teaching is a great strength of the school. Well over half of all lessons seen during the inspection were of very good or better quality. Many lessons were excellent. Almost all teaching was at least satisfactory. Teaching enables pupils to learn successfully and make very good progress. The teaching of literacy is very effective, for example, in extending pupils' vocabulary and capacity to write coherently and analytically. Numeracy is well taught, enabling pupils to achieve highly in using skills of number to solve problems. Teachers demand maximum effort from pupils. They are determined that pupils will gain from the rigorous learning experiences which they carefully prepare. Planning is of exceptionally high quality and lessons follow a carefully thought-out sequence of learning activities. For example, an excellent Year 9 English lesson on how linguistic effects are achieved was very well planned; the teacher helped pupils to share the aims and objectives of the learning they were to undertake, supported by a carefully chosen example of a poem with which pupils were already familiar. Most lessons are very challenging and rigorous learning experiences for pupils of all levels of attainment. Teachers demand much of pupils who often relish the strong sense of achievement and satisfaction that they gain from the successful learning of new knowledge and skills, often conducted at a brisk pace. For example, a very good Year 12 lesson, on the causes of the revolution of 1905 in Russia, challenged students to use well chosen sources of evidence and judge their importance as part of their own explanations of events. A Year 11 mathematics lesson, using graphs and graphical calculators, ran at a dynamic pace, but learning was achieved in a calm and measured way without any sense of panic. The fast pace set by the teacher was further stimulated by the hard work and enthusiasm of the pupils to extend their understanding of the topic, which they achieved very successfully.
8. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use effectively to enthuse and motivate pupils. For example, a teacher's knowledge helped and stimulated a Year 9 class using an electronic circuit, in design and technology, to make excellent response to challenging questions on the project. The pupils had wide-ranging abilities and all gained well from the experience at their different levels of understanding. Teachers' very good understanding of the requirements of the examinations which pupils are to take help them to achieve highly. This was apparent, for example, in a Year 11 geography lesson on prior fieldwork at Swanage. The teacher developed and clarified pupils' knowledge and skills from the experience that will be required for pupils to achieve well in the future examination.
9. A very good range of methods is used by teachers to speed the rate of pupils' learning. Methods include clear expositions and explanations to which pupils almost always listen carefully. Questions are clear and well put, enabling pupils to clarify their own thinking. Summaries concluding lessons are often very skilfully used, with teachers recognising the importance of this technique to pupils' retention of the learning of the lesson. Teachers of all lessons in GCSE and AS business studies use this method very effectively to reinforce pupils' and sixth-form students' learning. They reinforce their clear lesson objectives and key points of learning during lessons with highly effective summaries to help pupils to achieve highly for their levels of ability. In almost all lessons, pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, learn successfully, gaining in knowledge, skills and understanding.

10. Above all, teachers have consummate skills in managing pupils. Lessons invariably begin and end with well-managed routines that train pupils to behave sensibly, properly and maturely. Pupils' time in lessons is very well managed. For example, the teacher of an excellent Year 7 lesson in food studies, on what constitutes a healthy breakfast, provided very effective learning for life for pupils who recently transferred from primary school. General principles of behaviour were firmly applied, enabling pupils to think hard about the purpose of the lesson and apply themselves fully to the task using the teacher's advice and guidance very well.
11. The very good quality of teaching enables pupils to achieve at or above the standards that might reasonably be expected of them. The school realises well its stated purpose to enable pupils to achieve their potential for learning. For example, in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 1999, pupils attained above average standards overall, and standards within the top five per cent of schools of similar type, a remarkable achievement. Results in 2000 continued to be very good. In GCSE examinations in 1999, pupils achieved standards in the attainment of five or more GCSE grades A* to C in the top five per cent of schools of similar type, a very impressive result. In 2000, pupils' attainment was again strong. Attainment at GCSE overall is regularly in line with that of all schools nationally and well above that of similar schools. Pupils achieve very well for their levels of ability in all subjects. For example, in English, they achieve very good standards of speaking and listening, and in techniques of literary analysis. Their writing is appropriate in style, is sensitive to the reader and is substantially correct. In mathematics, pupils have good standards of numeracy, use it very well to solve problems, and mainly achieve to teachers' high expectations. In science, pupils achieve high levels of scientific understanding and develop good practical skills. Pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented are well supported and make very good individual progress with other pupils.
12. Pupils respond very well to the high quality of teaching they receive. They behave very well in carefully planned lessons in which there is little opportunity to be distracted because the pace of learning demanded by teachers is so brisk. Out of lessons, pupils behave very well. Behaviour at break and lunchtime can be boisterous, but it is invariably good humoured.

The school provides pupils with a powerful sense of the importance of fundamental spiritual and consequent moral, social and cultural values.

13. The school has a strong sense of spiritual community. The work of all members of the school, staff and pupils, strongly supports the fundamental spiritual purpose defined by the school's mission statement. This requires all to develop their talents and to use them in service to others within that community of faith of which the school is a part. School practice endorses this purpose day-to-day. Staff and pupils, half of whom are not from Roman Catholic families, universally follow it, and parents recognise its importance. For example, assembly begins with prayer and reflection. The message of one assembly involved thinking, by means of a well-presented symbolic play acted by Year 7 pupils, about how to get out of 'deep holes', or personal difficulties. The thought of service to others was emphasised by well-chosen music, a single lighted candle and effective visual images. The essential underlying spiritual message was further reinforced by reference to Christian theology and values. Pupils of all religions present gained from the experience and participated throughout. All learning, within the school community, is underwritten by faith. For example, an excellent Year 11 lesson in physical education on motivation in physical activities, made pertinent reference to St Paul's *First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Pupils were challenged to reflect

on intrinsic and extrinsic factors as influences motivating their own efforts and behaviour.

14. The school's fundamental purpose as a spiritual community of faith has consequences for the achievement of very high moral and social, and very good cultural, provision. Pupils recognise right from wrong and accept the rules requiring high standards of behaviour, which are applied with great vigour by senior staff and all teachers. Strong expectation exists that moral values will result from spiritual conviction, and they do. The school is a community alive with learning opportunities and a strong sense of social responsibility. Pupils come from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds, religions and traditions, but all share equally in the opportunities provided within the school community. The provision of courses for pupils' personal and social education throughout the school is of very good quality. Charities to help people who are experiencing great difficulties abroad are given considerable support by the positive acts of practical Christianity shown by staff and pupils. The provision of cultural opportunities is very good and also flows from the base of spiritual purpose. Lessons enable pupils from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds to expand their experience well. Self-portraits in art, for example, enable pupils of different races literally to face physical differences and reflect on the advantages of a diversity of culture and identity. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is provided and extends cultural opportunities well. Provision for extra-curricular sport and music is excellent.

Relationships are exceptionally good, creating a community in which pupils' excellent attitudes strongly support their commitment to learning.

15. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. Pupils and sixth-form students respect their teachers because they will not accept standards below what they know each pupil can achieve and inadequate effort and commitment are known to be unacceptable. Teachers' level of care for pupils is very good, but it involves rigorous expectations that pupils will act responsibly, work hard and achieve their best. Pupils and sixth formers learn from the very good, positive and demanding relationships they have with teachers that they will achieve well, if they work hard, and most of them do so. They make the most of their opportunities for learning. Pupils and students do not distract each other from the work in hand. They commit themselves to the work that is carefully planned for them with a strong sense of purpose, gained from their teachers.
16. Pupils' and sixth-form students' attitudes to learning are excellent. They try hard and achieve their best in lessons because they have confidence in their teachers' strong commitment to their success. They almost invariably listen attentively in lessons. In art lessons, for example, they continue to apply themselves to the work in hand, avoiding loss of time, while listening, either individually or as a class, to regular guidance and advice on how to manage techniques. Pupils enjoy the challenge and stimulation of work in music lessons where they have opportunity to use their imagination to develop their individual skills, for example when composing a piece of music. In almost all lessons, they respond very well to the rigour of learning, and concentrate hard throughout the well-planned lessons they experience. Pupils want to learn, concentrate hard and show considerable interest and commitment.

Analysis and use of performance data are excellent, and used very successfully to ensure that pupils and students are helped to achieve their best.

17. The school is exceptionally competent in the analysis and use of assessment information. Data on pupils' attainment is increasingly used to track their progress and achievements through the school. The information is available to the headteacher and senior staff to assist them in making decisions on school practice to support pupils' achievement. Performance data concerning pupils is being used increasingly, by subject departments, to set targets for what pupils can achieve, so that underachievement is quickly identified and action taken to remedy it. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are provided with information on their performance every six weeks, when they are graded for effort and attainment. All pupils are given these grades, and rewards for attainment, effort and improvement follow. The assessment system is well established in Years 10 and 11, and enables staff to set targets for pupils to aim for at GCSE, based on pupils' prior performance. Information on current standards is posted to parents each half-term, and they have an open invitation to visit the school and consult teachers on concerns about their children's progress. Pupils' personal tutors review progress towards their personal targets with them, and if underachievement is indicated, a system of reporting to parents is operated weekly. Pupils are expected and supported to improve in those subjects in which they are underachieving. The system enables teachers and pupils to share performance data; each teacher's recording of marks and assessments is now an open book to inform all of what standards are being achieved, and prior data shows what should be expected.
18. Performance data is effectively used to help pupils and students to improve their work. Teachers increasingly use it to define, recognise and reward what constitutes high achievement or underachievement for each individual pupil and student. Each subject department is developing or planning systems to track pupils' progress through the school. Data is increasingly being used to determine rate of progress and expectation for the achievement of different groups of pupils within the school, so that support can be provided where needed. In the sixth form, a national data system enables prospective grades in future examinations to be forecast. This information is shared with students, and tutors monitor regularly to determine whether progress is sufficient.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils' competence in information and communication technology in all subjects

19. It is a priority in school development planning to develop further pupils' competence in information and communication technology in all subjects. An important staff appointment has been made to enable co-ordination of provision to develop. However, at present, some 30 pupils in Year 11 do not receive their statutory entitlement to information and communication technology. This follows the change which the school is now making from a lesson specifically for the subject in Year 11, to providing pupils with the necessary skills and knowledge within all subject teaching. The school is planning direct action to support these pupils lacking essential access to the subject. Pupils' experience of the subject has developed considerably since the last inspection when the need for improvement of pupils' access to it was a key issue for action.
20. The school's recent successful application to become a Sports College has enabled it to extend and update its computer facilities considerably. This equipment is now installed, and staff training across the school is scheduled to follow from January

2001, with the assistance of national funding. At present some subjects are extending pupils' experience of the subject well, but this situation does not yet apply across all subjects, as the National Curriculum requires. For example, mathematics and English have timetabled time for information and communication technology. However, development in mathematics is ahead of that in English, and English teachers need more support and training in the necessary skills if they are to provide pupils with the skills and experience of information and communication technology within English. Pupils following the full GCSE course in information technology achieve good results. The use of information and communication technology is a key skill for development in sixth-formers' experience, and they are now recording their use of relevant equipment in log-books. Progress is being made in mapping the use of computers and other equipment across all subjects. However, effective use of information and communication technology is not yet in place across all subjects to the extent intended in school planning, or to the extent that it should be.

Realising plans as rapidly as possible to improve accommodation to support learning

21. Some aspects of the school's accommodation constrain and restrict learning. The school has important plans to improve its buildings. New sixth-form accommodation is planned for the coming calendar year, with accompanying accommodation for the teaching of history and geography. At present, accommodation for these subjects is largely in temporary buildings which, although adequate, does not provide an environment for learning to match the very good teaching which pupils' receive. Current sixth-form accommodation is shabby, and uninviting to students who otherwise gain considerably from their educational opportunities post-16. As the development of a sixth form is part of the school's recovery plan, following prior financial difficulties, it is very important for the viability of sixth-form development in future, that accommodation is inviting to students and appropriate to ensure that expansion occurs as planned.
22. Accommodation for sport places restrictions on the range of activities possible. Pupils have to travel considerable distances to sports fields and, therefore, indoor accommodation is particularly important to enable teachers to provide pupils with the curricular breadth they need to achieve their highest standards. The current fitness suite has plenty of good quality equipment, but space is very cramped. Dance, trampolining and table tennis take place in the school hall, which also doubles as dining accommodation. Additional accommodation for physical education is needed for the school to be able to provide fully for its role as a Sports College, for community sports activities to be suitably accommodated, and the difficulties of distant outdoor sports accommodation mitigated. The excellent standard of extra-curricular sport and the high standard of teaching of physical education deserve much better accommodation than they at present receive if pupils are to achieve fully the standards of which they are capable.

A substantial increase in books in the resource-based learning centre to assist independent learning

23. The school has established a resource-based learning centre during the last academic year. The provision of computers there is good, and sixth-form students in particular use these extensively during private study periods and after school. However, the number of books available is insufficient. The texts which are housed in the centre are up-to-date and appropriate for pupils' learning needs, but there is a lack of an

adequate number of non-fiction works, for example to support the wider reading required by advanced sixth-form courses. The number and range of fiction and non-fiction books require extension if the school is to provide overall for the reading needs of its expanding numbers of pupils and sixth-form students. At present, the centre is substantially below the provision expected nationally for a library serving a school exceeding 1000 pupils and students, because of difficulties in providing funds arising from the inherited financial deficit. A learning centre was not a high priority with the previous leadership and management of the school, but it is under current leadership.

24. The resource-based learning centre is well staffed, and Year 7 pupils receive a useful introduction to it so as to encourage their reading and skills of information seeking. The school has begun the process of planning the development of pupils' independent learning skills so that further use may be made of the resource-based learning centre. However, mapping use of these skills across the curriculum and expectations for departments of how they are to develop these are not yet fully in place. There is good practice in some subjects, for example in geography. A progressive development of pupils' and sixth-form students' independent learning skills is essential if pupils and students of wide-ranging abilities are to extend learning to the full. As the numbers of sixth-form students increase, the learning centre should be provided with sufficient texts and students with progressive development through the school of skills to support independent study. The skills of learning how to learn, to access knowledge for themselves and the books needed, in addition to the computers available, are essentials for students following all courses, and particularly advanced courses. These skills are increasingly needed by the growing numbers of students intending to continue to higher education – if they are to achieve their full potential for learning in school and beyond.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

25. In order for the school to improve its standards even further, governors and management should:
- (1) Extend the use of information and communication technology in all subjects in order to improve pupils' competence by implementing current plans for the further development of the subject, and meet statutory requirements for all pupils in Year 11. *(See paragraphs 19 and 20.) This issue was part of one of the last inspection, and forms part of the current school development plan.*
 - (2) Improve buildings to support learning by ensuring that planned developments take place for sport, history, geography and the sixth form. *(See paragraphs 21 and 22.) This issue is partly addressed in the current school development plan.*
 - (3) Further extend pupils' and students' opportunities for independent learning by increasing the number of books available in the resource-based learning centre, and ensure that pupils and students develop the skills to use these and all resources for learning well. *(See paragraphs 23 and 24.) The issue of developing independent learning is part of the current school development plan.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
16	44	25	14	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	930	107
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	244	26

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	143	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	198

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	92	90	182

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	67	54
	Girls	67	70	51
	Total	124	137	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (76)	75 (70)	58 (67)
	National	63 (64)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	18 (41)	42 (39)	31 (32)
	National	28 (38)	42 (38)	30 (28)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	76	48
	Girls	69	69	51
	Total	128	145	99
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (77)	80 (64)	54 (61)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (31)	35 (37)	30 (29)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	66	58	124

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	32	62	65
	Girls	34	56	57
	Total	66	119	122
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	53 (37)	96 (98)	98 (99)
	National	47 (45)	91 (90)	95 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38 (35)
	National	38 (37)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	14	18	32

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	10	10.2	10 (14.2)	3	3.4	3.3 (1.5)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	13	77
	National		83

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	80
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	4
Indian	107
Pakistani	64
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	6
White	555
Any other minority ethnic group	181

This table gives the ethnic background of pupils as in January 2000.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	65.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	7.8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	116

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.2
Key Stage 4	24.3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	14	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	25	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	2	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	41	0
Other minority ethnic groups	3	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,661,197
Total expenditure	2,654,981
Expenditure per pupil	2,642
Balance brought forward from previous year	-260,605
Balance carried forward to next year	-254,389

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1037
Number of questionnaires returned	651

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	44	7	1	3
My child is making good progress in school.	38	42	5	1	14
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	45	4	1	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	43	8	3	11
The teaching is good.	44	42	3	0	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	35	10	3	13
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	35	5	1	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	26	1	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	35	43	11	2	9
The school is well led and managed.	43	41	3	0	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	43	5	0	11
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	36	4	1	9

Figures may not total 100 because of rounding.

Many parents with children in Year 7 indicated that they had so little experience of the school that they were unable to make an informed judgement on many of the statements in the questionnaire. Therefore, many of these parents have responded in the 'don't know' category.

Other issues raised by parents

Written comments and views given in the parents' meeting largely expressed strong support for the school, and the standards it achieves. Parents have confidence in the fundamental values which the school promotes and in the care it takes of their children.