

# INSPECTION REPORT

**WALBOTTLE CAMPUS TECHNOLOGY  
COLLEGE**

Throckley, near Newcastle upon Tyne

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne

Unique reference number: 108524

Headteacher: Mr D.Besford

Reporting inspector: Richard Hancock  
(OFSTED No: 2715)

Dates of inspection: 16 October – 20 October 2000

Inspection number: 223756

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	13 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hexham Road Walbottle Newcastle upon tyne
Postcode:	NE15 9TP
Telephone number:	0191 2678221
Fax number:	0191 2646025
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J J Paterson
Date of previous inspection:	25/09/1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Richard Hancock (Ofsted No: 2715)	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards? a) The schools results and achievements
			How well are pupils or students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Husain Akhtar (Ofsted No: 9561)	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
Valerie Banks (Ofsted No: 4677)	Team inspector	Geography	
Norman Bertram (Ofsted No: 10316)	Team inspector	History	
Alan Brewerton (Ofsted No: 10905)	Team inspector	Science	
Mark Gill (Ofsted No: 13003)	Team inspector	Physical education	
Peter Harle (Ofsted No: 11672)	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
John Hunt (Ofsted No: 12885)	Team inspector	Mathematics	
John Mallinson (Ofsted No: 12121)	Team inspector	English	
Caroline Orr (Ofsted No: 16950)	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
		English as an additional language	
Jacqueline Pentlow (Ofsted No: 30563)	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Equal opportunities	
Graham Preston (Ofsted No: 1990)	Team inspector	Design and technology	Sixth form
		Information technology	
Phil Redican (Ofsted No: 31680)	Team inspector	Art	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd  
Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Walbottle Campus Technology College is situated on a large site outside the village of Throckley to the west of Newcastle-on-Tyne. The school caters for boys and girls in the 13-19 age range and most of the pupils transfer to the school from local middle schools. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds and from a very wide geographical area, including the western part of the city. There are few pupils from families of ethnic minority background and few pupils for whom English is an additional language on the current roll of 1326, of whom 196 are in the sixth form. Some 18% of pupils are entitled to a free school meal which is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils on the register of special educational needs is below the national average as is the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. At Key Stage 3, teaching in the majority of lessons is good and pupils make progress in their learning, although their overall attainment is still below average by the time they reach the end of this key stage. Although attainment in GCSE remains below average, with boys and moderately able pupils doing less well than they should, more able pupils often produce very good work. The ethos for learning is positive throughout the school including the sixth form where standards are broadly average. Pupils are well cared for, receive good careers guidance and have useful experience of the world of work. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. The school is not complying with statutory requirements in relation to the teaching of music and religious education. The school is well led and well managed, although the monitoring of teaching needs to be more rigorous. Links with parents are weak. There are good levels of planning and the school has the capability and will to succeed. It is giving satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Careers education
- Provision of vocational courses
- Overall progress made by the more able pupils
- Provision for sixth form students
- Develops good relationships between pupils and teachers
- Provides good support for pupils with behavioural difficulties through the AIMS initiative

#### **What could be improved**

- The overall attainment of pupils in GCSE examinations
- The management of information and communication technology [ICT]
- The monitoring of teaching
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs
- The organization of the curriculum and the criteria for allocating pupils to teaching groups
- Information for parents and their links with the school
- Complying with statutory requirements for teaching music, religious education and collective worship

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in October 1995 and its overall improvement since then has been satisfactory. Progress towards establishing all aspects of sixth form provision has been very good. Longer term planning is much improved especially in relation to staff development but the monitoring of teaching is still not thorough and systematic. Some progress has been made to ensure that ICT is used across the curriculum but provision is limited. There has been improvement in GCSE results over time. Attendance figures have improved year on year but are still below the national average. The legal requirements for collective worship and music are still not in place.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	E	D	D	E
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	E	

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

By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 3 the overall attainment of pupils in English is below average but their work shows improvement and progress is satisfactory. Although attainment varies widely in mathematics it is below average overall. These results are also below average when they are compared with those of similar schools. In science the attainment of pupils is below average but when these results are compared with those of similar schools, although they are still below average for pupils reaching level 5 or above, they are close to the average for pupils reaching level 6 or above. Overall results at GCSE have been improving and the trend in improvement has been in line with the national trend. Whilst GCSE results in English are still below the national average, pupils' work shows improvement. Results in mathematics are still below the national average. Although attainment in science is also below average the trend in improved attainment since the previous inspection is in line with the national trend. In the sixth form standards are close to those expected nationally but are below average in mathematics and science. There is clear evidence that most pupils are making progress in the school. The overall achievement of pupils in science is near to the national average and many pupils in English produce very good work throughout the school. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good when they receive good focused help. Good progress is made by sixth form students in general. Good levels of achievement are reached by sixth form students in art. Good progress is made in ICT in the sixth form. In the school as a whole there is good progress in history. More concerning is the low achievement levels of many of the moderately able in English, often boys, at both key stages. The same group of pupils lack confidence and independence in design and technology, and demonstrate weak progress in modern foreign language and geography at Key Stage 4 often through a lack of interest.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. The majority of pupils have a positive attitude to the school but a significant minority have a poor attitude to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The behaviour of pupils is often good although there is some unsatisfactory behaviour by a minority of pupils.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are good throughout the school. The personal development of the majority of pupils is also good. They show good initiative and independence and take on responsibility well.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. The rate of attendance has been slowly improving but is still below the national average.

There is a particular strength in the positive way most pupils view their school, the respect they show for one another and the view they have of learning. The only weaknesses are to be found amongst a minority of pupils who find learning difficult or uninteresting. There are also strengths in the pupils' behaviour in many lessons where they bring concentration and responsibility to their studies especially when undertaking enquiry, investigation or research. A good feature is the behaviour of pupils between lessons and around the site. There are weaknesses in the behaviour of some pupils who disrupt lessons and interfere with learning. There are real strengths in the pupils' personal development in the independence and sense of responsibility most of them are acquiring. Whilst attendance rates show an improving trend they are still below the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 13-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

*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.*

In the school as a whole quality of teaching is good or better in 55% of lessons. It is very good or excellent in 16% of lessons. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in 5% of lessons and is satisfactory in 40% of them. The teaching was weakest in Year 11, where it was unsatisfactory in 11% of lessons. The major strengths of teaching include the good relationships between teachers and pupils which helps to establish a positive ethos for learning in most classrooms, excellent planning, especially in music, the quality of feedback given to pupils on what they have learned, the enterprising and effective ways in which material is presented, the use of homework to reinforce and extend learning, and the levels of challenge provided for the higher attaining pupils. Major weaknesses in teaching are found in lessons where teachers talk too much and do not expect pupils to think for themselves, assessment is not used to motivate pupils or to help them know what they have to do to improve, and too much time is spent practising what pupils already know rather than on introducing activities to promote new learning. At both key stages teaching is good and often very good in music, and is largely good in all other subjects apart from mathematics, art and information and communications technology where it is largely satisfactory. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory. Teachers identify basic reading needs and focus well on addressing these but the teaching lacks breadth and does not take into account of the wider literacy needs of pupils in the wider school curriculum. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory but needs to do more to enhance pupils' interest in number and to show its application throughout the subjects of the curriculum. Teaching is helping most pupils to make satisfactory progress, particularly the higher attaining pupils. Pupils of moderate ability are faring less well. The overall quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory. Many pupils are learning how to analyse, to support opinions with evidence, to research and to investigate but some moderate to lower attaining pupils are not getting the same opportunities to develop these skills.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 but the progress of many pupils is hindered by the banding system. Good in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. The provision made by the school does not match the range of need either in extent or nature.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. As a group, attainment does not differ from that of other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Moral and social provision are good but the provision for spiritual and cultural development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school cares well for its pupils through its pastoral programme and its provision for personal, social and health education.

The school is not working effectively in partnership with parents at the present time. Statutory requirements are not met in the teaching of music, or religious education. The school is not holding a daily act of collective worship. The curriculum is good in the sixth form. Careers education and vocational courses are making a good contribution to pupils' development. The strength of its care for pupils lies in its pastoral programme and the support for pupils from year heads and form tutors.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership. Clear direction provided and good ethos for learning established . Some very good management practices such as the staff development programme, but improvements needed to ensure that monitoring improves teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory support for the school but statutory responsibilities are not being fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory data is being collected and some useful information gained about staff development but the information needs to be used more systematically to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	To a limited extent resources are being used to plan ahead but not in detail with regard to the escalating area of special educational needs and resourcing issues relating to ICT and the library.

The school is well staffed to teach the national curriculum and other subjects. There is a good staff development programme. Newly qualified teachers are given good support. The school is very short of learning support assistants. The school benefits from good administrative and technical support staff. The site is well looked after. The grounds are well maintained and newly decorated areas add to the ethos. The school is clean and tidy. Accommodation is satisfactory although there are weaknesses: the library is in need of refurbishment, more laboratories are required, a greenhouse requires restoration or demolition and the drama room and some of the changing rooms are very drab. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. There are no major shortages of resources but more attractive readable texts are needed for Key Stage 3 pupils with reading difficulties and more ICT equipment is needed as well as greater access to ICT. The major strength in leadership is the sense of direction being given to the school by a team pulling in the same direction. Performance data needs to be more coherently collated and acted on more systematically. Monitoring of teaching lacks rigour. The governing body, whilst supporting the school, is not fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. The principles of best value are understood by staff who handle finance. Best value is sought when ordering stock but the school has not yet gone down the road of evaluating its overall performance against agreed criteria. The ethos of the school is positive and most pupils do make progress in the school. However, the expenditure on pupils is high and they still do not reach average standards by the time many of them leave the school. Taking into account that the attainment of the pupils is below average when they start in Year 9, and the good learning ethos, the school can be said to be giving satisfactory value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The way the school cares for pupils</li> <li>• That pupils like the school</li> <li>• That pupils are expected to work hard and to give of their best</li> <li>• That the school is approachable if they had problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information about pupils' progress</li> <li>• Better links with the school</li> <li>• More consistent homework</li> <li>• More extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>

Parents are right to expect more information about the progress of pupils and also need to know more about the school's criteria for allocating pupils to teaching groups and to the thinking behind the way in which it organises the curriculum. They are also right in believing that the links with the school are weak. The school is responsive and does care for the pupils and the majority enjoy coming to school. Homework is regularly set but it is inconsistent because pupils in the higher attaining groups are more likely to be set homework than pupils in the lower attaining groups. Whilst extra-curricular activities are not an especial strength, provision is satisfactory over time and in the case of cultural activities promoted by the English and art departments and the activities promoted by science teachers it is good. The extent of musical activity outside school hours is limited.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below the national average. By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 3, after just two terms in the school, their attainment is still below average but standards are improving. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 4 the overall level of attainment is still below average but there have been improvements in performance in the GCSE examinations during the last three years in line with the national trend.
2. In 1999 in GCSE and GNVQ examinations the percentage of pupils achieving the equivalent of 5 grades A\* - C was 38% compared with the national average of 46% and 85% achieved the equivalent of 5 grades A\* - G compared with the national average of 90%. The average points score per pupil was 31 compared with the national average of 38. 43% of girls in the school gained 5 grades at A\* - C compared to 57% of girls nationally. 34% of boys in the school gained 5 grades A\* - C compared to 43% of boys nationally. The school met its targets. In 2000 only 28.9% of boys achieved 5 grades A\* - C and 39.7% of girls did so. The school's targets were not met. Boys are under-performing especially in the average and above average category.
3. Although results in the National Curriculum tests for English at the end of Key Stage 3 are still below average, they are close to being average. For those pupils achieving level 6 and above the results are above average, indicating that these pupils are making good progress through the key stage and achieving well. The weakest pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress but achieve standards which are well below national expectation. Their vocabulary is very limited and spelling and punctuation are weak. In general there is a wide difference in attainment between the highest attaining pupils and that of other pupils. Results in GCSE for English Language and English Literature are below the national average for both boys and girls. Standards in the sixth form in most years have been slightly below the standard expected nationally, but in the year 2000 literature results were well above the national average. In the school as a whole most pupils learn well and make progress that is at least satisfactory and at best good. This is particularly true for the highest and the lowest attainers. Those in the middle sets are least successful in this respect, and their progress is no more than satisfactory. In the school as a whole standards of speaking and listening are below national expectation. Standards of reading are at national expectation but there are weaknesses in writing.
4. In mathematics, although attainment varies widely it is below average overall. This is borne out by the National Curriculum test results at Key Stage 3 in both 1999 and in 2000. These results are also below average when they are compared with those of similar schools. Results for the GSCE have also been below the national average. In 2000 these results were particularly poor when only 24% of the pupils who were entered achieved grade A\* to C. This compares with a national average of 46% in 1999. Although there has been some variation from year to year boys and girls overall achieve equally well in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Overall levels of attainment in mathematics are lower than in the other two core subjects at these key stages. Although there has been some variation in the National Curriculum test results and for the GCSE since the last inspection, standards of attainment overall have been maintained over this period. GCE A level results in mathematics have improved in recent years. In 2000 81% of students entered gained grades A to E. This compares with a national average in 1999 of 88%.
5. In mathematics and in numeracy generally the majority of pupils show a good understanding of basic concepts but weaker pupils lack the same understanding and require significant support from teachers in order to make further progress. The majority of students in sixth form mathematics classes are working at expected levels.
6. In science the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. There was little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Nonetheless, since the last inspection the trend in improved attainment has been in line with the national trend and the test results in 2000 represent an improvement on the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 and above, although fewer pupils reached level 6 or above. However, these latest results are likely to be close to the national average and this represents good 'added value' since the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average. Lower attaining pupils are not doing as well as

they might. However, by the age of 14 pupils of all abilities have learned new skills, increased their knowledge of scientific facts and their understanding of scientific concepts and have made progress in investigative science. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. The trend in improved attainment since the previous inspection is in line with the national trend. By comparison with the results which pupils obtained at the age of 14, these results represent satisfactory 'added value'. Results in the sixth form are below average.

7. In the school as a whole the attainment of pupils in other subjects is below average. Standards in art in the sixth form are good. However, there is wide disparity between the standards reached by the most able pupils, which are often high and the standards of the moderately able and weaker pupils. There is still a wide gap between the attainment of boys and girls in English but in a number of other subjects, notably science, there is now little disparity. Pupils with special educational needs often reach appropriate standards of attainment when they are taught by teachers specifically addressing their needs but overall provision is inadequate and consequently there are many pupils who are not reaching their potential.
8. There is clear evidence that most pupils are making progress in the school.. The overall progress made by the majority of pupils at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory and is sometimes good but because they have only been in the school for a short period of time pupils have not been able to make up the ground lost when they entered the school with below average attainment. However, at both key stages the more able make noticeable progress in most subjects. The overall achievement of pupils in science is near to the national average and many pupils in English produce very good work throughout the school. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good when they receive good focused help. Good progress is made by sixth form students in general who do well enough to go into higher education in almost all cases. Particularly good levels of achievement are reached by sixth form students in art. Good progress is made in information and communications technology [ICT] in the sixth form. In the school as a whole there is good progress in history.
9. More concerning is the low achievement levels of many of the moderately able in English, often boys, at both key stages. It is the same group of pupils who lack confidence and independence in design and technology and who demonstrate weak progress in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4 often through a lack of interest. Many pupils also show limited progress in geography at Key Stage 4.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. The majority of pupils have a positive attitude to the school and their overall behaviour is satisfactory. Both of these factors help their learning. Most parents feel that their children like the school and this is certainly evident in the friendly way in which pupils mix with each other, relate to staff and approach their work in lessons. Most pupils are interested in what they are doing and take an active part in their learning. Their response is mostly good, especially in Year 9, in the sixth form and in upper ability classes generally. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson pupils made good progress in learning about rotational symmetry because they concentrated so well. Because most pupils have responsible attitudes to study they learn effectively by undertaking research in history and geography. Most pupils do their homework and coursework efficiently. The presentation of work, particularly by girls, is largely thoughtful. Those with special educational needs respond well to the support that they receive and take their own learning seriously. Pupils with behavioural difficulties respond well when undertaking activities provided by the AIMS (achievement, improvement and motivation for success) unit. Pupils' involvement in extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.
11. In contrast to this positive picture, there are many pupils who are compliant rather than enthusiastic in lessons. There is also a significant number of pupils, including those with behavioural difficulties, low attaining boys and some Year 11 pupils, who are not adequately interested in lessons and demonstrate unsatisfactory attitudes to work and school. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson several boys ignored the well-established school rules and constantly shouted out and tried to dominate the lesson through poor behaviour. In Year 10, an English lesson was barely satisfactory because pupils were restless and inattentive and in a mathematics lesson pupils quickly lost interest in the work they were required to do and became disruptive. There are also many pupils who do not attend the school regularly or promptly.

12. Pupils' attendance follows the local trend of improvement and has improved since the last inspection but is still unsatisfactory as it is below the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence, although reducing, is twice the national average at present. Unauthorised absence among Year 11 pupils is higher than in the rest of the school and most of this is due to truancy.
13. Whilst the behaviour of the pupils is often good and is mostly satisfactory, it does present a mixed picture. Most pupils behave well in lessons and many, particularly older pupils and those in higher ability classes, behave very well. The majority of pupils conduct themselves well when they are moving about the site between lessons, at break and at lunchtime. The school does have a significant number of pupils with behavioural difficulties who easily become frustrated. Pockets of disruptive behaviour were observed in many lessons but disruptions were usually well contained. Pupils are open and friendly. They move around the school in an orderly way, particularly on stairs and in the corridors. Pupils hold doors open for adults. Mealtime runs smoothly. The end of the school day, when many pupils take a bus home, is orderly.
14. Pupils say, and the records of exclusion show, that there have been some incidents of fighting which have been dealt with firmly and effectively. Inspectors saw some examples of immature and inappropriate, but not oppressive, behaviour. Pupils treat the school's property with care. Permanent exclusions have reduced but the fixed period exclusions have increased since the last inspection and both are above the average for this type of school. Whilst reasons for exclusions are carefully considered and correct procedures for exclusions have been followed, the increase in the number of fixed period exclusions, faster than the local trend, looks odd in view of well organised strategies for behaviour like the AIMS provision.
15. The pupils' personal development is good and is greatly influenced by the good relationships which exist throughout the school. Pupils readily take initiative and show responsible attitudes towards their learning and take an active part in the life of the school when there are opportunities for them to do so. The older pupils in particular show good levels of confidence and maturity when organizing social events and hearing younger pupils read. A school council is being developed in Year 10 and pupils are showing interest in exercising the responsibilities which it could bring. Most pupils approach their coursework well and are acquiring the skills to study independently. Those who take part in residential trips cope well with living away from home. Pupils enjoy good relationships with each other and with staff. All groups of pupils work and play together well. They show respect for one another and have regard for the feelings and opinions of others. In class discussion they listen and contribute well, a quality which was observed in many personal, social and health education lessons. In some areas, such as attendance or the extent of permanent exclusions, the school has improved its performance, but the overall picture is not as good as it was at the time of previous inspection when behaviour and attitudes were good.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

16. In the school as a whole quality of teaching is good or better in 55% of lessons. It is very good or excellent in 16% of lessons. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in 5% of lessons and is satisfactory in 40% of them. The teaching was weakest in Year 11 where in 11% of lessons it was unsatisfactory.
17. In the majority of lessons at Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching is good or better. In about one quarter of all lessons it is very good or excellent. In the very best lessons, all of which occurred in music, teaching showed excellent planning, a very strong grasp of the subject, including the use of the full range of musical terminology, and a grasp of how to present it to motivate pupils. Good use was made of target setting to motivate pupils and feedback focused on what the pupils needed to have learned. Practical activity was at the centre of the learning and the pupils thrived on this.
18. Teaching was also very good in some lessons in English, science, geography, physical education, German, art and music. In these lessons teachers gave pupils immediate feedback on their learning, and often used specialist terminology well to increase pupils' grasp of concepts. Material was well presented in an enterprising way, often through the use of overhead transparencies, whiteboards, posters, charts, slides and drawings. Teachers thought hard about how they could communicate key ideas to pupils, a good example occurring in a geography lesson on earthquakes, where excellent use was made of analogies to help pupils understand the nature of tremors. In all of these lessons relationships between pupils were

very good and the teachers showed strong organisational skills. Much of the work was challenging. For instance, in science pupils were being given opportunities to develop their thinking through the use of extended writing and in art pupils were being helped to understand the nature of surrealism through an exploration of its expression in literature.

19. There is some good teaching in most subjects. In these lessons teachers manage time well, use homework to reinforce and extend learning, interact easily with pupils, use a wide range of strategies to develop learning, phrase questions carefully, and organise practical activities which help pupils to learn. Relationships are good. Attention is often paid to ways of reinforcing or developing the literacy skills of pupils which was a particular strength in science teaching. Good use was made of specially prepared booklets in design and technology and history to develop learning.
20. In 40% of all lessons the quality of teaching was no more than satisfactory. Although these lessons were managed well and the relationship between teachers and pupils were still good, teaching lacked elements of flair and imagination. Teachers talked for too long and too few opportunities were given to pupils to think for themselves, sometimes the case in English and science lessons. Little use was made of targets to motivate pupils and assessment was often a weak feature. Too much emphasis was placed on reinforcing learning rather than on developing it. This was especially the case in some information and communications technology lessons and mathematics lessons, where too little was expected of pupils generally. Consequently, although pupils were still learning they were doing so at a much slower pace. In lessons which were unsatisfactory, objectives were not clear or were limited, pupils did not understand the purpose of the lessons and no use was made of assessment to help pupils to see what they had to do to improve their work.
21. In the majority of lessons at Key Stage 4 the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are properly organised, objectives are clear and work is mostly matched to the needs of the pupils. But many of the lessons are mundane. The way in which the material is presented does not excite the pupils. This is especially the case in some lessons in mathematics. Furthermore, in 11% of lessons in Year 11 the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory because teachers failed to create a good atmosphere for learning, did not expect the pupils to show initiative, told them too much and failed to develop understanding, impart knowledge or build skills.
22. The quality of teaching is much better in lessons in Year 10 than in Year 11. In this year the overall quality is good although there was less very good and excellent teaching than in Year 9. In the best lessons levels of challenge are strong and expectations are high. Teachers expect the pupils to succeed and many of them do. In this teachers are helped by the good relationships which they build up with pupils, the setting of homework to apply the skills learned in lessons and the constant encouragement and praise they give pupils. Feedback is immediate and pupils know where they stand. They are working to targets to take them on to the next stage of learning. Particularly good examples of this were seen in science, where good opportunities were given to pupils to undertake independent research into photosynthesis. Pupils showed confident use of the internet and CD Roms and went on to give talks on their findings using posters to illustrate their presentation. In this way the pupils also enhanced their speaking and listening skills. The teacher expected the pupils to excel and they did so, their behaviour being exemplary. In a well organised geography lesson on the nature of the climate of the equatorial forest, pupils were given a wide variety of activities which involved everyone. Working in groups, pupils produced a climate graph, the teacher used intervention to change the pace of working when this was needed, made use of time limits which led to the pupils working briskly and was able to generate excitement as pupils grappled with real issues. Speaking and critical skills were also being very well developed by this learning activity.
23. There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching in the school as a whole. Whilst some teaching is very good, and a considerable amount is good, much is no more than satisfactory and some is even unsatisfactory. This means that pupils are not being exposed to good teaching in all lessons and this is unlikely to result in improved all round attainment, especially in the GCSE examination when the weakest teaching is to be found in Year 11. The monitoring of teaching and learning by heads of department and by members of the senior management team has not resulted in sustained improvement in the quality of teaching and learning which can be observed in all lessons.
24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. There is a good awareness on the part of the teachers of general special needs issues but only limited

knowledge of the specific needs of individual pupils on the special educational needs register. Many individual education plans lack detail, targets are very generalised and do not often relate to the areas of study covered by the subject. Consequently, teaching is not pinpointed and does not address the pupils' learning needs. The teaching of basic literacy skills is satisfactory. It focuses on a narrow range of need, keeps pupils on task, and is helping to maintain their self-esteem but fails to address the full needs of pupils or to make adequate links with the rest of the curriculum.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

25. The curriculum is broad and balanced at both key stages. It has improved significantly for pupils studying in the sixth form, which now offers an appropriate balance between academic and vocational courses. However, in the main school there is insufficient time for drama, music and religious education. In the case of both music and religious education this prevents the school from meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Agreed Syllabus, a situation identified at the time of the last inspection.
26. The school's system of banding pupils creates anomalies and interferes with the school's wish to allow equality of access to the full curriculum. Furthermore, the nature of the extra provision made for teaching literacy at Key Stage 3, together with the content of the New Options West curriculum for less able pupils at Key Stage 4, is also leading to inequalities in provision. Pupils are being withdrawn from a geography, history and modern foreign language lesson weekly for extra literacy work. Whilst the intention to help pupils develop their literacy skills is good, the consequence is that these pupils lose a third of their course work time in each of the three subjects in Year 9 and do not have full access to these subjects at GCSE level. This issue is further compounded by the fact that some 15% of pupils, who are initially placed in the various bands on entry to agreed criteria, find themselves in a different band at Key Stage 4, which means that the pupils selected according to the original banding for extra literacy work may be found to be of a much higher ability making their lost time in geography history and modern foreign languages potentially even more important. The banding system is applied across all subjects of the curriculum except for personal, social and health education[PSHE], which is taught in mixed ability classes. This setting does not contribute to progress in subjects such as art, drama, music and physical education. It is also true that with such a high proportion of pupils finding themselves in a different band at Key Stage 4 the reliability of the criteria of the original banding must be called into question.
27. The content of the curriculum is suited to most pupils but those with special educational needs do not have full access to it because their needs are imperfectly identified and provision to meet their needs is inadequate and unsystematic.
28. Whilst the New Options West is enterprising in offering a vocationally oriented course to less able pupils, its content is not always appropriate and needs further refinement. Insufficient attention is being given to how the course might provide for cultural elements, and in particular the European dimension, to compensate for the fact that pupils do not study French. Some of the pupils on the scheme could cope with the GCSE design and technology course, which would offer certification of greater status than the current certification.
29. The school does not have a coherent literacy policy, although many departments are successful in addressing the literacy needs of pupils by improving their speaking and listening skills, the use of writing frames and focusing work in the classroom on key words. A programme for improving pupils' literacy skills amongst low attainers in Year 9 has recently been introduced by the English department but its aims have a long way to go before being fulfilled. The mathematics curriculum contains significant elements aimed at raising the numerical skills of pupils and although most other subjects have little by way of specific numeracy content in their schemes of work, pupils do not lack the skills to make progress.
30. Curricular provision is strong at all levels in design and technology, geography and physical education. Provision for careers education is especially good. Vocational courses, found at foundation, intermediate and advanced level, are also very good.

31. The PSHE programme is relevant, comprehensive and well managed and includes work on sex education and the misuse of drugs. It is effectively integrated with the pastoral system in the school and is thoroughly monitored.
32. For some time the sixth form has provided a sound mixture of academic and vocational courses but from September 2000 the school has adopted a new curriculum that addresses the desire to increase breadth to ensure that all pupils have opportunities to develop key skills in their programmes of study.
33. The extra-curricular provision made by the school is strong in the sixth form, where it includes exciting and valuable residential course opportunities. It is also very good in the school as a whole in English, with a day in the Lake District centring on the work of Wordsworth, theatre visits and poets in residence. The art department organises visits to galleries. Comparable provision is found in science. It is not strong in other subjects and consequently is uneven in the school.
34. There are good links with the local business and industrial community. Science and vocational studies benefit directly from these links, including placements in commerce and industry. Art has some good links with architects and designers and makes use of artists in residence for stained glass window work, printmaking and mosaics. Work experience is successfully built into the PSHE programme. Relationships with the middle schools are good and there is some helpful liaison on the curriculum which prevents work from being repeated.
35. The anthology of writing produced by the English department is a good example of the scope the pupils have to compose in both verse and prose. Many of the contributions show true depth of feeling and a sensitive awareness of the world. Photographs of the pupils show them greatly enjoying the occasions, when writers and story tellers visit the school. They also benefit from working with artists in residence. Visits to theatres and art galleries also promote pupils' cultural awareness. There is, however, little emphasis on the study of the diversity of cultures in the curriculum as a whole although multicultural themes are introduced in work in food and textiles and aboriginal art is studied. There are good opportunities in some lessons in English for pupils to study the moral issues raised by a study of literature such as was Henry V justified in killing women and children? Moral issues connected with genetic engineering are also discussed in religious education and pupils have opportunities to study the dangers of stereotyping in their study of Hitler and Germany. In geography, decision making on the use of land raises moral questions in connection with the environment.
36. In their study of Tollund Man in history pupils have opportunities to reflect on mortality but the spiritual dimension is a weak feature of the curriculum generally. The social aspects of the curriculum are better provided for and pupils have good opportunities to work together in many lessons, particularly in English, science, physical education and in art.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

37. The school cares well for its pupils. As was the case at the time of the previous inspection, the pastoral system is well organised. Tutors and other members of staff are aware of the individual needs of the pupils and of any action that needs to be taken. Proper procedures are in place to address issues of health and safety. Risk assessments are in place and good attention is given to health and safety in lessons. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory, although it has been several years since staff and the designated person were trained in the procedures. Procedures to protect pupils from any oppressive behaviour are successful. Pupils are happy at Walbottle. All this has a positive impact on the quality of education received by the pupils. The site is well-maintained and well cared for.
38. The arrangements for supporting pupils and monitoring their personal development are good. Form tutors take much of the responsibility for pupils' personal development in their pastoral role. The school keeps good records about pupils' personal development, and aspects are discussed at the regular pastoral meetings. Personal and social education is good; pupils are well supported and guided on matters related to their health, welfare and futures. Careers guidance is very good. Whilst in-class support for pupils with special educational needs is inadequate, they, as well as those who have low self-esteem or have attendance or behavioural problems, are well supported through the initiatives like the behaviour management programme, AIMS, New Options West and the work placement initiative known as OWNIT.

These initiatives also help low attaining pupils in making appropriate progress. Similarly, able pupils' programme and mentoring middle-ability Year 11 pupils who want to raise their grades at GCSE, help these pupils in improving their academic performance. A shortcoming in the provision is the lack of effective strategies to address underachievement by low attaining boys. Pupils are well supported by specialists; for example, by the education psychologist who visits regularly or by the education welfare officer who is based at the school.

39. The school benefits from the local initiatives and strategies to improve pupils' attendance. The education welfare officer is very supportive and enthusiastically and diligently follows up all cases of unexplained absence. Improving attendance has been a governors' priority. The situation is getting slowly better. Recording and reporting requirements are fully met. Appropriate attendance data is generated and there are many procedures to monitor and promote attendance, but they are not effective in achieving fast and adequate improvement. There are no established means, like a multi-agency forum, to involve parents in addressing attendance concerns and not all absences are followed up by the same day contact with parents. Promptness to lessons is not always demanded. Attendance remains unsatisfactory.
40. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' behaviour are satisfactory. The good work and behaviour of pupils is acknowledged and rewarded by staff through certificates and commendations. Where incidents of inappropriate behaviour occur, pupils are sanctioned, including exclusions. Procedures for eliminating bullying and oppressive behaviour are good, and such incidents are low. Pastoral system, 'on report' and AIMS slips help in monitoring behaviour. There are pockets of inappropriate behaviour but those involved are dealt with appropriately and successfully within the school. Provisions like AIMS are particularly effective in containing concerning behaviour but with the implication that behaviour modification takes place outside lessons.
41. As at the time of the last inspection, procedures for assessment and their effectiveness vary but are satisfactory. The assessment of pupils' progress and monitoring of their academic performance are satisfactory on balance. For example, the practice is good in English, geography, history and science but unsatisfactory both in design and technology and in information and communication technology. Marking of work is not consistently good across the subjects, though it is better in the sixth form. Tracking a pupil's progress and setting individual targets for improvement are developing; for example, the English department increasingly uses a progress track sheet. Pupils generally know how they are getting on but not always in terms of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, except at appropriate stages. Progress information to parents is inadequate and does not provide them with early and well-informed opportunities to influence their children's progress. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in working out individual education plans for their children.
42. Assessment information on pupils who join the school in Year 9 is used to group them in classes that suit their ability and to predict outcomes at the end of Years 9 and 11. The system is too rigid; moderations and reviews are not well embedded across the school. Most teachers keep good records of pupils' progress based on initial and later assessments. Test and examination results are analysed and the information is purposefully used by some subjects in modifying the next stage of pupils' learning; for example, history and science make good use of examination results in setting subject targets, and in English, Yellis and Alis predictions are wisely used to adjust the work, and analysis of examination results have led to giving more time to areas of weakness. Use of assessment is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology. Procedures for assessment and their effective use in planning the curriculum and supporting pupils are difficult to monitor since there is no assessment coordinator for the school.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

43. Parents were positive in their support of the school at the time of the last inspection. Although they did not play a particularly prominent part in day to day school life they felt well represented by the parents' advisory committee. Now parents are still largely positive of the school's work but their involvement in the life of the school is lower.
44. Parents are pleased with the school's expectations, which are high, and the support for their children's personal development which is good. A significant minority of parents are unhappy

about the information they receive on their child's progress and the ways in which the school works with them. These views are well founded. Pupils' progress is not well reported. There are, for instance, no interim progress reports at present and the annual progress reports, whilst broadly informative, give little information about what pupils or their parents can do to improve standards. Some parents are not satisfied with the amount of homework and range of activities outside lessons. Inspectors found that homework is regularly set and that the amount is usually appropriate but higher attaining groups are more likely to be set homework than pupils of moderate ability. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.

45. The governors fulfil their responsibility and publish a prospectus and report to parents although attendance at the governors' annual meeting is very low. Whilst attendance at parents' evenings to discuss pupils' progress is good, attendance at other events is often sparse. The parents' advisory committee no longer meets. There is no other established system to consult parents on wider matters like financial decisions or to explain how the school monitors its work and pupils' performance, or jointly to address concerns regarding pupils' performance. Use of the 'day book' for a two-way contact is not well developed. Parents' participation in the work of the school is unsatisfactory and there is a lack of effective strategies to reach out to them. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in the process which leads to the identification of individual education plans for pupils. Links with parents are ineffective at present and the chair of governors was quite right to say in his last year's report that the school must seek ways of improving communication with parents and encourage more involvement in school life. The governors' annual report does not include all the vital information required by law, including the school's National Curriculum assessment and public examination results, and the arrangements for making provision for pupils with special educational needs.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

46. The prospectus sets out clear aims for the school in a form and language which prospective parents would be likely to find helpful. These aims are also carried forward in the priorities of the school improvement plan. The school has a sense of purpose and the headteacher, senior management team and heads of departments are providing good leadership which results in a school which normally runs smoothly on a day to day basis, where appropriate organisational routines are in place in a community which is orderly and has an atmosphere which is conducive to learning.
47. The governing body supports the work of the school. It helps to shape the future direction of the school by becoming involved with the preparation of the school improvement plan. Organized into appropriate sub-committees, it ensures that meetings are held regularly, significant items are adequately addressed, decisions taken and that minutes are properly conducted. It is helping to produce a learning environment which is safe and free from major safety concerns.
48. The school is especially enterprising in ensuring that it benefits from grants and initiatives which it can use to expand its provision. The governing body is helpful in supporting the school in this way. Its members are also involved in the day to day learning of the school, for instance by supporting the environment club or pupils with learning difficulties. This helps them to have direct experience of life in the school. There are also plans for the governors to become further involved with departments on a wider scale, which shows that the school is thinking ahead.
49. In some important respects the governing body is not fulfilling its statutory duties. Provision for teaching music and religious education at both key stages is inadequate. There is no review of the school's provision for special educational needs. The annual report to parents has many omissions, namely the progress made by the school on the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report, the school's examination results with clear national comparisons and a summary of the extent and nature of staff development. The school is not holding a daily act of collective worship.
50. The school has introduced a range of monitoring procedures. Whilst these are basically sound they are inconsistently applied and their outcome is often ineffective. Monitoring of the staff development programme and of the personal, social and health education programme is good. The monitoring of teaching is not systematic or thorough and is not producing the evidence the school needs to build on the undoubted strengths it has in teaching or to be rigorous enough in getting rid of its weaknesses. This has a direct bearing on the attainment of pupils, especially in

Year 11, which needs to be improved but is only likely to be so if teaching is consistently good and matches the best practice that the school has to offer. The monitoring of the outcomes of the school's provision for special educational needs is also weak. The overall monitoring of the progress made by specific groups of pupils, e.g. those of moderate ability, is not systematic. In all of these instances the school does not possess the key information it needs to help it improve its overall performance.

51. The finances of the school are well managed and there are good systems in place for ensuring that financial operations are efficiently conducted. The audit reports have not found any major weaknesses in the school's systems. Any recommendations identified in the audit reports are acted on by the school. Whilst the school is aware of the principles of best value, there is only limited use of their criteria, largely in the form of ensuring that best value is obtained from major purchasing supplies and equipment. For instance, there is no monitoring of the allocation of money to individual pupils on the register of special educational need to ensure that the match is adequate and appropriate and that pupils are making progress. This information can then be used for strategic planning.
52. Books and materials are largely adequate although books in the library need replenishing, books for some pupils with learning difficulties are in short supply in some English classrooms and the ICT equipment needs updating and expanding, especially in the dedicated computer areas in music, and the library. The school grounds are well maintained and newly decorated areas have improved the ethos in the school. The school is clean and tidy but the library is in need of refurbishment, more laboratories are required, a greenhouse requires restoration or demolition and the drama room and some of the changing rooms are very drab. There are no practice rooms for music and the music area generally is unsatisfactory.
53. The school has adequate staff for teaching the national curriculum and vocational subjects. This provision is enhanced by teachers and volunteers specialising in the management of pupils with behavioural difficulties. The number of support staff for special education needs work is insufficient. More support is needed for information and communications technology. The school benefits from administrative support staff who are of good calibre. They are well trained, organised and have a very positive approach to their work.
54. The staff development programme is very well managed. Needs are carefully identified, a good match is obtained between need and provision, and the training is closely linked to priorities in the school's improvement plan, the technology college priorities and government initiatives. The outcomes are meticulously monitored and evaluated. There is evidence that investment in this area has had a direct bearing on improving the quality of teaching. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers is good. There is a sound basis to the appraisal system.
55. The school is beginning to collect relevant data in relation to pupils' attainment and progress. At present this is to be found in a number of different forms and locations and is not readily available in an edited cogent form which is of most use to teachers. Furthermore, some staff are unsure as to how to use the data and what it means for their work in the classroom. This means that critical information is not being fully used to help teachers improve the attainment of pupils.
56. The ethos for learning in the school is largely positive. The majority of pupils behave well and are keen to learn. The attainment of pupils on entry is below average. Whilst their attainment remains below average they do make progress as they go through the school. The school is spending more money than most similar secondary schools on the pupils. When all these factors are taken into account the school can be said to be just giving value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to improve the school further, the headteacher, staff and governing body need to work to raise standards in the school by:
1. Improving the overall attainment of pupils in GCSE examinations, especially that of pupils of moderate ability, by setting them clear targets for improvement and closely monitoring their progress; [paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 20, 21, 23, 55]
  2. Improving the management of information and communication technology [ICT] so that it caters more effectively for the developing skills of the pupils by incorporating a clear sense of progression in the schemes of work and ensuring that applications are embedded in the work of all departments; [paragraphs 65, 124, 132, 133, 140, 145]
  3. Ensuring the consistent systematic monitoring of teaching to check that challenging targets and assessment procedures are being fully used in the classroom to raise standards especially at Key Stage 4; [paragraphs 20, 21, 23, 50, 87, 96, 103, 123, 133, 140]
  4. Improving provision for pupils with special educational needs by ensuring that their weaknesses are identified in detail on entry, that their progress is carefully monitored to check that they reach appropriate standards and that there are sufficient support staff to help them make progress; [paragraphs 24, 49, 50, 51, 52]
  5. Reorganizing the curriculum and the criteria for allocating pupils to teaching groups in such a way as to ensure that the progress of pupils is not impeded; [paragraph 26, 89, 104, 113]
  6. Providing more information for parents and improving their links with the school through the use of interim reports and annual reports which give parents more assistance in helping to improve standards [paragraphs 43, 44, 45]
  7. Complying with statutory requirements for teaching music, religious education and collective worship. [paragraphs 26, 49, 141, 154]
58. Other, less significant matters, for the school to attend to are:
- The need to improve library provision [paragraphs 52]
  - The cogent interpretation of data on pupils' attainment and progress. [paragraph 55]
  - Ensuring that the governors' annual report to parents meets all statutory requirements. [paragraph 49]

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	211
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	65

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	15	39	40	5	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1130	196
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	205	0

Special educational needs	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	141	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.62
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.15
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	194	207	401

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	93	111	97
	Girls	155	109	97
	Total	248	220	194
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62	55	48
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33	28	19
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	106	58
	Girls	131	117	55
	Total	217	223	113
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54	55	28
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24	20	7
	National	31	37	28

### 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	167	160	327

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	57	138	149
	Girls	68	139	147
	Total	125	277	296
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38	85	91
	National	46.6	90.9	95.8

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31
	National	38

### 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	27	34	61

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	10.7	11.8	11.3	3.3	6.0	4.9
National	17.1	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	4
White	1318
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	53	5
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	94
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### Education support staff: Y9 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

#### Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73%
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#### Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y11

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	22.4
Key Stage 4	22

### Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3390899
Total expenditure	3365650
Expenditure per pupil	2539
Balance brought forward from previous year	106438
Balance carried forward to next year	131687

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1326
Number of questionnaires returned	262

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	58	8	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	32	54	4	0	10
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	50	7	2	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	55	11	4	8
The teaching is good.	26	52	4	2	17
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	16	41	13	8	22
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	41	3	1	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	38	2	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	19	45	16	4	16
The school is well led and managed.	27	49	3	0	20
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	52	4	1	13
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	40	7	3	34

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### ENGLISH

59. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below the national average. Although results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are still below average, they are close to being average. For those pupils achieving level 6 and above the results are above average, indicating that these pupils are making good progress through the key stage and achieving well. These results are better than those for similar schools, and better than the test results in mathematics and science. Results in GCSE for English Language and English Literature are below the national average for both boys and girls, but with the difference in attainment being the same as the difference nationally. Standards in the sixth form in most years have been slightly below the standard expected nationally, but in the year 2000 literature results are likely to be well above the national average.
60. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards vary widely between the highest and the lowest attaining pupils. In the best work pupils show they can comment perceptively on characters in a Shakespeare play and in *Oliver Twist*, they can compose lively stories with realistic dialogue, they become aware of the devices used in different sorts of poetry and they can analyse the language used in advertisements. The writing is accurate and well presented. In lower attaining classes pupils write less competently though often at great length; for instance, analysing a tourist booklet or retelling the story of the *Lady of Shalott*. They take notes about technical terms, such as metaphor, simile, homophone and oxymoron, but are less adept in using them. The weakest pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress but achieve standards which are well below national averages. Their vocabulary is very limited and spelling and punctuation are weak. In general there is a wide difference in attainment between the highest attainers and the rest.
61. By the end of Key Stage 4 the best pupils are achieving very high standards, well above the national average. Creative writing is well structured with vivid imagery. The range of critical writing is wide, including work on the diary of Ann Frank, *An Inspector Calls*, *Of Mice and Men* and *Macbeth*. Pupils are dissecting character portrayal in fiction, analysing the use of a writer's language, and commenting intelligently on the issues raised, such as the abuse of power or evasion of guilt. However, the weakest pupils are still well below national averages, the quantity meagre and grammatical accuracy weak. Much of the writing - describing events experienced by the pupil or those that occur in a work of fiction - is confined to a series of brief statements of what happens next. Such writing makes little attempt to use words freshly or to convey emotion or to comment on character.
62. Standards at the end of the sixth form are close to national averages. In their study of literature students read widely and critically; they write fluently, showing a deep knowledge of the texts. They can discuss issues such as the relationship between a son and his mother, comparing the treatment of such a theme in *Sons and Lovers* with that in *Hamlet*. In their study of language students acquire good knowledge of new concepts and technical terms, investigating successfully how a word has changed its meaning over time, how new words are formed and how analysis of language provides insights into the writer's intentions. The best students are attaining very high standards. Weaknesses lie in lack of analysis, in failing to use quotation effectively and in the weak structuring of an essay so that key issues are not made clear at the start of an essay nor conclusions at the end.
63. Standards of speaking and listening are below national expectation. It is clear that time is spent in developing these skills but little was observed during the inspection. In a Year 9 class of low attainers studying *The Highwayman*, pupils did not speak often, but when they did the speaking was clear, using complete sentences. Some pupils in Key Stage 4 read a dialect poem with zest and were well applauded but, in general, speaking is limited to a few words or phrases. When pupils worked in small groups the speaking was enthusiastic and productive, but this was rare. The quality of speaking observed in drama lessons varied. In some it was given little prominence, and results were below national expectation. Speaking in the sixth form varied from the almost silent to the intelligently animated.
64. Standards of reading are at national expectation. Pupils in higher sets have no difficulty with understanding the texts but those in low sets often struggle. Those with the lowest level of

attainment sometimes cannot cope with the books available for them. Reading is encouraged with a fortnightly lesson in the library for all Year 9 pupils. Pupils keep a record of what they have read, and engage enthusiastically in the annual "readathon" and in the recent book week, a huge success in every way.

65. Standards of teaching are largely good in all key stages but there is some unevenness in quality. Strengths arise from good planning, knowledge of the subject, organisation, class management, enthusiasm, and developing constructive relationships. Teachers set clear objectives, and see that they are achieved. Marking varies but at its best is thorough and helpful. Teachers take particular pains to help those in the lowest sets, giving much attention to individuals. Group work was seldom observed but when it was the results were highly productive. Where there were weaknesses they arose from giving the pupils too little independence. Teachers in some lessons did most of the talking, providing pupils with little opportunity to work on their own, to ponder, to argue and to learn from each other. They seldom use computers, either for independent research or to improve style and presentation through redrafting.
66. Pupils learn well and make progress that is at least steady and at best good. This is particularly true for the highest and the lowest attainers. Those in the middle sets are least successful in this respect, and their progress is no more than satisfactory. Scrutiny of books and observation of lessons shows much work that is routine, a making of notes or a filling in of words left blank. There is rather less emphasis on imaginative and independent thinking.
67. The standards recorded at the last inspection have been broadly maintained. Results in national tests and examinations have remained at much the same level, helping many students to obtain results better than their prior attainment would predict. Measures have been taken to improve the quality of speaking but little of this was seen during the inspection week. There is still room for improvement in the use of information technology. Furthermore, the gap in attainment between boys and girls is as much an issue as it was four years ago and boys' standards are much lower than those of girls. The quality of leadership has remained high. The fourteen teachers teaching English are given full support through well considered delegation of responsibilities, comprehensive schemes of work, an excellent stock of worksheets and books, well directed training, thorough monitoring of lessons, and a mutually helpful environment. Enthusiasm for the subject is also maintained by an unusually broad range of extra-curricular activities, a credit to all the teachers who organise them.
68. Drama is taught in Year 9 as part of the English curriculum, each class experiencing a ten week course. Drama is an option in Key Stage 4 the twenty-five pupils entered for GCSE in both of the last two years achieving results well above the national average. Pupils generally achieve well in Year 9 despite the lack of time, and it is to the credit of the department that sufficient numbers can be recruited for the GCSE group. Standards of teaching vary, and there is some unsatisfactory teaching but in lessons overall teaching is satisfactory. Some weakness lies in the lack of opportunity given for pupils to try out their own ideas while in some lessons pupils are not sure what they are supposed to be learning and for what reason. The drama room has been improved recently but remains drab with inadequate space and facilities.
69. There is currently no programme for improving literacy in the teaching of all subjects. However, the school has decided to give the lower attaining Year 9 English sets a course in literacy of four periods a week. This is designed to identify the literacy skills these pupils most urgently need in each subject and direct teaching specifically to improve those skills. The teaching is good, but the course units have not been sufficiently thought out. They lack coherence, and vary in the complexity of language presented to the pupils. Some are too difficult and others bear little relation to anything else those pupils are studying. However, the attention given to literacy in all subjects, though not co-ordinated, is generally good. Help with speaking and writing was observed in many lessons. Many departments display the key words needed for their particular subject. This is particularly strong in physical education where low attaining pupils are helped by teachers putting important words on the board. In history, science and physical education pupils use technical terms confidently. The quality of speaking and listening is good in mathematics, science, modern languages, art and geography. In physical education pupils listen attentively to instructions. In art teachers make a connection between surrealism in painting and in writing. Pupils can generally interpret the language used in their text-books, but standards of literacy are lower than the national average in many of the lower sets.

## MATHEMATICS

70. Although attainment varies widely at the end of Key Stage 3 it is below average overall, as is borne out by the national curriculum test results in both 1999 and in 2000. These results are also below average when they are compared with those of similar schools.
71. Results for the GCSE have also been below the national average. In 2000 these results were particularly poor when only 24% of the pupils who were entered achieved grade A\* to C. This compares with a national average of 46% in 1999. Although there has been some variation from year to year, boys and girls overall achieve equally well in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Overall levels of attainment in mathematics are lower than in the other two core subjects at these key stages. Although there has been some variation in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results and in the GCSE since the last inspection, standards of attainment overall have not been maintained over this period.
72. GCE A level results in mathematics have improved in recent years. In 2000 81% of students entered gained grades A to E. This compares with a national average in 1999 of 88%. Standards of work seen in mathematics lessons at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are variable and depend to a large extent on the band and set being observed. For example, a top set in Year 11 made good contributions during group work in which the teacher derived and then used the sine rule to solve triangles. The majority of pupils showed a good understanding of the basic concepts involved and were able to apply them to solve triangles that had been set for them to undertake on an individual basis. On the other hand, most pupils in a lower set in Year 9 had difficulty in undertaking examples concerning rotational symmetry. Many lacked an understanding of the concepts involved and required significant support from the teacher in order that they could make further progress. The majority of students in sixth form mathematics classes are working at expected levels.
73. Teaching is mainly satisfactory. In only a limited number of classes is teaching either better or worse than this. All lessons are well planned and teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Most classes contain an appropriate range of activities and in some pupils make good contributions during the group work. For example, in a Year 11 class the teacher gave a lively and interesting presentation on the solution of linear algebraic equations. The pace was brisk and challenged the pupils. Frequent questions were used to check the level of understanding of the pupils. Learning support materials, including an overhead projector transparency, were used well to support the learning. The pupils clearly enjoyed the approach and made good progress. Although in most classes the management of pupils is effective and the standards of discipline maintained are high in a few classes this is not the case. In a Year 11 class, for example, the teacher had low expectations of the pupils and spent much of the time attempting to maintain the attention of the class. Pupils during the class were allowed to work for too long on one type of activity with the result that they lost concentration and failed to make further progress with the tasks set. Although for most classes homework is set on a regular basis, this is not always the case. Where homework is set its non-completion by some pupils is not always adequately followed up by all teachers. Few attempts are made to contextualise the work being undertaken. Almost all topics are taught as isolated academic exercises with little attempt to relate these to practical applications. Although some use is made of information and communications technology, to support the teaching, this is limited.
74. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in classes are almost always at least satisfactory and frequently good. Most classes are well behaved, and pupils maintain concentration and complete the tasks that have been set. Relationships between pupils and with the teacher are mainly supportive. During some aspects of the group work pupils make good contributions to the development of the topic. However, pupils arrive late to some classes and overall attendance is low. Some pupils make inadequate or poor responses to the homework that is set.
75. The curriculum at each of the key stages and in the sixth form is appropriate and meets the statutory requirements. Current provision meets the requirements of the majority of pupils. Pupils who are unlikely to achieve a GCSE grade are entered for a Certificate of Achievement in Year 11. Students in year 12 can now work towards an AS level in mathematics. Appropriate schemes of work have been developed and agreed and these meet the full range of abilities. However, opportunities to enliven the experience of pupils in mathematics are not always taken. Many subjects do not make substantial use of numeracy. However other than for the

lowest attaining pupils there is no evidence of a lack of numeracy skills impeding pupils' progress in learning. An annual numeracy week is organised in order to raise the profile of numeracy in the school. Outside individuals and organisations are invited into the school and talks and challenges are arranged for the pupils. There is a system of regular testing of pupils in the lower school and most teachers keep good records of pupils' progress.

76. The management of mathematics is satisfactory. The need to raise attainment levels particularly at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 has been recognised. Recent initiatives designed to achieve this include the introduction of the regular testing of pupils, a mentoring system, coursework and revision classes. Monitoring and review procedures have also been developed. These include a link to a member of the senior management team for regular reviews and a systematic programme of teaching and learning observations. An annual review of the work of the department is also carried out and this includes an analysis of examination results. A departmental improvement plan is agreed as part of the annual review. Despite these policies and procedures there is little evidence of improvements either in the quality of teaching and learning or in attainment levels. Observations of teaching and learning have yet to result in the sharing of good practice across the teachers concerned and although GCE A level results have improved those for GCSE were very poor in 2000. There is a satisfactory level of resources to support the work of the department. Good use is made of display materials and these enliven the environment in the department.

## SCIENCE

77. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. This is borne out by the 1999 test results. When these results are compared with those of similar schools, they are still below average for pupils reaching level 5 or above but are close to the average for pupils reaching level 6 or above. There was little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Nonetheless, since the last inspection the trend in improved attainment has been in line with the national trend and the test results in 2000 represent an improvement on the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 and above, although fewer pupils reached level 6 or above. However, these latest results are likely to be close to the national average and this represents good 'added value' since the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average.
78. The inspection of pupils' work at the end of their first year in school shows that attainment is getting close to the national average with higher attaining pupils doing well. For instance, they understand that all substances are made up of particles, can draw conclusions to science investigations based on evidence obtained during an experiment, understand the relationship between electric current, voltage and resistance and understand the optimum conditions under which photosynthesis takes place. Although lower attaining pupils can describe a food chain and can understand the laws of reflection they cannot describe the nature of refraction. However, by the age of 14 pupils of all abilities have learned new skills, increased their knowledge of scientific facts and their understanding of scientific concepts and have made progress in investigative science.
79. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. In 1999 the examination results in the double award GCSE were below average both for the proportions of pupils gaining grades A\* - C and those achieving grades A\* - G. The number of grades achieved at the highest levels was lower than the national average even though they were above average for girls. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. Approximately 80 percent of pupils were entered for the double award examination. This was below the national average. The trend in improved attainment since the previous inspection is in line with the national trend. By comparison with the results which pupils obtained at the age of 14, these results represent satisfactory 'added value'. The GCSE double award results obtained in 2000, show a slight improvement with an increase in the numbers of pupils obtaining the highest grades representing good 'added value'. In 1999 a further 7 per cent of pupils were entered for the GCSE single award science examination. In 2000 this number had increased to 16 per cent.. The results of the 1999 examinations were well below average with no pupils gaining grades A\* - C and 91 per cent achieving grades A\* - G. Results fell in 2000 with, again, no pupils achieving A\* - C grades and only 72.9 per cent gaining an A\* - G grade.
80. Evidence obtained during the inspection shows that current overall standards at the beginning of Year 11 are in line with expectations. High attaining pupils at the start of Year 11 can recall that the rate of a chemical reaction increases as the surface area of solid reactants increase,

due to an increase in the frequency of collisions between particles. Pupils whose attainment is in the middle of the range are less secure in their understanding of the factors which affect rates of chemical reactions. The lowest attaining pupils are very insecure in their understanding of scientific processes. For example, they have a limited knowledge of the methods used to separate mixtures of substances or of the position and function of some of the major organs of the human body.

81. Results at GCE Advanced level in 1999 were well below average in biology, chemistry and physics. Whilst results for chemistry improved in 2000, those for biology, even though improved, are still likely to be below average. Physics results in 2000 fell below those for 1999. The results obtained in the 1999 General National Vocational Qualification intermediate level were good. All students achieved at least a pass grade, 44 per cent obtained a merit grade and one student achieved a distinction. There were no entries for this qualification in 2000.
82. The department is covering all attainment targets and investigative science is well integrated into the teaching programme. However, there is little evidence of planning or of evaluation in investigative science. The standard of literacy is, overall, good. Higher attaining pupils cope well with extended writing. They use scientific terms with confidence and spelling is good. Less able pupils are less confident and tend to be more restricted in the range and extent of their written work, often limiting their writing to short sentences in which spelling and the use of scientific terms are less secure. Standards of numeracy, whilst being at least satisfactory overall, are a weakness with lower attaining pupils. The use of information and communications technology to support learning is still far from satisfactory. Reports issued to parents provide useful information on attainment, attitudes and progress, but do not provide focused, subject specific strengths and weaknesses in each attainment target nor targets for improvement.
83. Throughout the school the quality of teaching is good. In Year 9 teaching was good or very good in most lessons. In Years 10 and 11 teaching was at least satisfactory in all but one lesson, where it was unsatisfactory. In most lessons, teaching was good or very good and in one lesson it was excellent. Teachers make use of their very good subject knowledge in providing very effective explanations and in asking questions which challenge or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. They give clear objectives which pupils understand, classroom management and organisation are very effective and the pace of lessons matches the needs and tasks of pupils. Lessons are, on the whole, very well planned. There are a very few lessons, however, in which planning needs to be more focused so that the pace of the lesson is maintained. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and homework is given when appropriate which either consolidates or extends classwork. Teachers manage pupils very well and time is rarely wasted during lessons. Nevertheless, in many lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11 work is over-directed by the teacher. Pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to develop the skills of independent learning. As a result, many students in Years 12 and 13 have yet to develop the more advanced skills of independent research and the development of topics, both of which are an essential prerequisite of A-level courses. This seriously affects their attainment at A-level. Whilst books are always marked and comments are often made, marking does not always indicate the level at which pupils have performed nor does it always indicate how pupils can improve.
84. The identification of appropriate and challenging learning objectives coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables pupils throughout the school to make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and information. In the majority of lessons pupils work hard and at a good pace. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils work well independently and in groups, think out problems for themselves and concentrate hard. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but this would be stronger if they were adequately supported by more classroom assistants. This is especially the case when the pupils have behavioural problems.
85. Apart from a very few pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory, the behaviour of pupils and their attitude to science are both good. Pupils listen well to their teachers, respond positively to the various activities and show interest and enjoyment. Most pupils answer and ask questions well and have the confidence to discuss scientific ideas and experimental results with their teachers and with other pupils.
86. The science curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The allocation of curriculum time is slightly above average in Years 9, 10 and 11 and is adequate in the sixth form. However, the arrangements for allocating pupils to attainment bands based

upon an aggregation of performance in English, mathematics and science has a detrimental effect upon the opportunities for some pupils to make the level of progress which is appropriate to their abilities and aptitudes.

87. The science department is well led by an able and dedicated head of faculty, who is supported by an able team of heads of subject departments all of whom provide clear educational direction. Short-term development planning which is in line with school development planning is effective and manageable, but planning for long term departmental development with longer term targets, costing and focused success criteria has yet to be carried out. Procedures for assessment are well established in Year 9 and are used effectively to monitor progress, identify and support underachievement, and improve attainment. These procedures are now being introduced in Years 10 and 11. While formal monitoring by the head of faculty and heads of department of the quality of teaching by regular lesson observations takes place, formal monitoring by line managers from the senior management team has yet to be established. Teaching staff are well qualified and they are effectively deployed. The number of laboratories is inadequate and results in a significant number of lessons being taught in ordinary classrooms. This has a detrimental effect upon the quality of teaching and learning. The siting of gas cut-off valves in some laboratories is unsatisfactory as in the event of an emergency teaching staff would have difficulty in turning off the gas supply. Technical support for the department is good. Resources, in terms of books and scientific equipment, are generally good. However, the provision of up-to-date computers, and appropriate software, is poor. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. While attainment has not changed significantly in the tests for pupils at the age of 14, results at GCSE have improved and the quality of teaching and learning are better. The scheme of work for physical processes has been improved so that it is now easy to use by all teachers.

## **ART**

88. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. Although assessments made by teachers indicate that standards are broadly in line with national expectations, they have been over-estimated. At the end of Key Stage 4 results are well below average. Over the last three years there is no clear trend in the G.C.S.E. examinations and results have remained well below average. In the 'A' level examinations results are good, with all students achieving passes, a good proportion achieving higher grades. At this level the average points score shows a steady rise over time, indicating rising standards.
89. In the work seen in the school, standards are below average at Key Stage 3. Pupils can use a variety of materials to produce work in two and three dimensions and use their knowledge of the work of other artists to inform their own work. Pupils' attitudes are good at this key stage, and they show a willingness to talk about their work freely. However, their drawing and painting skills are poor, and they show little confidence in using the materials. At Key Stage 4 standards are well below average because of the inconsistent quality of teaching and the effects of the school's option system, which means that a much higher proportion of lower ability pupils take art as they have no choice in the matter. Pupils can draw from observation in chalk pastel and in wax resist with confidence, and they can use information and communications technology effectively to design and produce posters and advertisements. However, their composition work is weaker and they do not show confidence in handling paint. In Post-16 education, on the Advanced level courses, standards are above average. Students can draw well and show a good grasp of technique in handling line, tone and colour. For example, some high quality drawing is seen in car and motorcycle designs, which show a high standard of finish and a good grasp of form. They have good research skills, and their work shows good development of ideas as a result. On the GNVQ intermediate level course, standards are at an average level. Students vigorously investigate a range of processes and materials, and are confident enough to experiment with printmaking techniques to produce attractive and colourful results.
90. Achievement at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils make gains in their ability to use a range of materials in both two and three dimensions, and they gain knowledge of a range of artists and designers and use this knowledge to inform their own work. For example, some constructions are seen, based on surreal skiescapes, which show the influence of Magritte and Dali and are interesting and informative. At Key Stage 4 achievement is satisfactory. Pupils learn to draw from observation and to use colour in a bold and effective way.

91. Higher ability pupils achieve well, and they can use line fluently and with confidence when working from observation. Lower ability pupils achieve well, and pupils with special educational needs achieve well. This is because there is a good match between the pupils' interests and abilities and the activities they are given to do. However, pupils of average ability within the school at Key Stage 4 do not achieve well. This is because the teaching they receive is not of a consistently high quality and the activities are not taught in a lively enough or imaginative enough way. Because of this they do not approach the work with enthusiasm and do not engage with the work on offer. Standards are not as high as they could be in this group. In Post-16 education, achievement is good. Students have access to a well-taught and imaginatively structured curriculum, and there are good teacher-pupil relationships. These factors produce good levels of achievement.
92. Teaching is satisfactory and learning is satisfactory overall. In the lessons seen, one third were good or better, and one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. At Key Stage 3, teaching is satisfactory and learning is satisfactory. In the best lessons there are lively lesson introductions that make very good use of a range of teaching aids, including prepared drawings, slides and imaginative groups of objects. This has a strong effect on pupil motivation and pupils learn at a very good level as a result. This was seen in a lesson exploring surrealism, which captured the imagination of the pupils who responded very well and made very good gains in their learning.
93. Another feature of the teaching is the high level of encouragement used to help pupils who are having difficulties in the work. However, weaker aspects of the teaching are seen when the pace of the lesson is too slow, and there is a lack of variety in the lesson, with pupils kept for too long on one aspect of drawing. In Key Stage 4 teaching is satisfactory and learning is satisfactory. In the best lessons there is a good match between the abilities and interests of pupils and the work they are given to do. This was seen in a lesson with a class of lower ability pupils, who were making large figures and animals in wire and paper. The pupils were able to handle these broader materials with confidence and were able to learn at a good level as a result. However, in some lessons there are weaknesses in engaging pupils in the work. This was seen in a lesson introducing the examination in art and design, where the introduction was too long, and too long was spent in considering ideas in a pedestrian manner. This resulted in an obvious lack of interest and a lack of application by pupils, and so levels of learning were unsatisfactory.
94. Some of the lessons seen are too directed by the teacher, without enough variety of activity, and with a limited number of outcomes possible. This means that pupils are unable to use their initiative or develop the work themselves. In post-16 education, teaching is good and learning is good. In the best lessons there is a very good atmosphere for learning created, which enables students to grow in confidence and produces very good learning. Challenging questions are asked, which stretch pupils understanding, and they make very good gains in learning as a result. This was seen in a lesson contrasting the art of Christo with the art of Andy Goldsworthy, where the teacher's questioning required pupils to make connections and distinctions between different aspects of their work. Some of the teaching, however, does not show the same sense of challenge, and learning is more limited as a result.
95. Since the last inspection there has been a satisfactory level of improvement. 'A' level examination results have improved and are now good. Shortcomings in the curriculum at Key Stage 3 have been addressed, and it is now satisfactory. Work in graphics has improved and it is now a strength of the department. The department has been relocated and the teaching rooms refurbished, and most of the accommodation is light and of a good size. Links with industry have improved, and the subject makes a very good contribution to the cultural development of the students and pupils. However, standards at Key Stage 4 have not improved, and they remain well below average. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the department which is having a negative effect on standards and preventing improvement from being as good as it could be.
96. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is energetic and committed leadership of the subject and the subject leader provides a model of very good teaching. This is a major reason why standards have risen in the sixth form. However, standards of teaching across the department are not consistent and are not as good as they need to be to raise standards. There has been good monitoring of the work of the department, but not enough action taken to address weaknesses and so improve standards.

97. To improve further, the department should investigate ways of raising standards at Key Stage 4 that will be effective. These should focus on improving the quality and consistency of teaching in all areas, and addressing the imbalance of low ability pupils in the examination groups. In addition, more imaginative ways should be used to teach drawing and painting at Key Stages 3 and 4.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

98. The attainment of pupils is below average by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 3. The majority of students, mostly in the middle and lower band groups, have yet to acquire a secure understanding of a design and make process. This contrasts with higher attaining students who work with greater independence in researching their design ideas and use graphical techniques well in some of their folder work. Most students can use different tools and equipment with some accuracy in working with the different materials of timber, plastic, food and textiles. Year 9 higher attaining students' for example, demonstrate good skills for joining and decorating textiles in a folk craft patchwork project, while lower attaining students are able to use sewing machines competently although the quality of their work is not high.
99. Most pupils entered for the GCSE design and technology courses are successful in gaining a graded result although overall standards are below the national average. Those pupils taking the graphic products option perform a little better and in the other course areas of food, textiles, and systems and control, pupils tend to do at least as well or better than in their other GCSE courses. However, the results for pupils taking the resistant materials option are well below national average.
100. Students come to the school with clearly lower than average knowledge and skills in the subject and benefit sufficiently from the range of learning opportunities to make satisfactory progress over the year. Even so, overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are below average and this is broadly reflected in the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments. The standards at the end of Year 11 are below national average, though there is considerable variation between pupils from the banded option courses. In the upper band option groups, students demonstrate knowledge and skills in line with or above those nationally. In systems and control, although graphical skills are less developed, students understand electronic circuits and can design and construct their own with good use of information and communication technology. Higher attaining students in the other courses including food, graphics and textiles, share strengths in researching and presenting design ideas in project work and have largely sound practical making skills.
101. The majority of the middle and lower band option groups have more limited understanding of design evident in, for example, the limited range of project ideas in resistant materials. Many are also less confident and independent in their practical making activities. This was clearly illustrated in a Year 11 food technology class where the teacher gave considerable help and support. Standards in the GNVQ Intermediate Part 1 course in engineering are a little below national average with students having a sound understanding of electronics and producing accurate scaled drawings but are less strong in their planning and evaluation. Most students, particularly the higher attaining ones, are achieving satisfactorily in their courses. However, a number of lower attaining students, including some with special educational needs, in taking a non-examination programme in Year 10 have slowed their progress in gaining a GCSE qualification.
102. The recently introduced courses of Vocational Advanced level in engineering and the GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary levels in design and technology have yet to be examined. The Year 13 students demonstrate a range of design and research skills close to national average though the self-management skills of some are not so well developed for them to meet project deadlines. Overall progress is satisfactory particularly in the Year 12 courses where, for example, in a design and technology lesson students showed a firm understanding of product evaluation and used the computer aided design facilities with growing independence.
103. The teaching is never less than satisfactory and in three quarters of lessons is good and on occasions very good. There has been a conscious effort to improve teaching and learning and the more recently appointed staff have brought additional strengths. Teachers are well informed and this specialist knowledge enables higher attaining students in the GCSE and Advanced level courses to develop a sound subject understanding. In the lessons where

teaching is good there is good organisation with appropriate use of resources and this helps ensure a safe and productive learning context. The best lessons combine positive whole class teaching with practical and folder work and regular use of information and communication technology. This variety sustains students' interest and enables them to develop better design and make skills. More recently, the staff have recognised the need to provide clearer and more focused targets to students through the use of exemplar material, regular research based homework and project assessment sheets. A good example of this was in a Year 11 graphic products lesson where there were very good wall displays of project work and disassembled products that helped students understand the standards required. However, the practice of more regularly monitoring and sharing with students the standards they are reaching in their National Curriculum and examination work is not yet firmly established and students are often unaware of their current level of attainment.

104. The students are generally very positive about the subject, particularly in activities involving practical making and the use of information and communication technology. Where this is the case, students show care and pride in their work. Behaviour in the higher band groups is always good and if students in the lower band groups are more unsettled on occasion, this rarely leads to serious misbehaviour. The growing popularity of the subject has contributed to the large numbers now taking the Vocational Advanced level and GCE Advanced level courses in the sixth form.
105. The head of faculty has enthusiastically led initiatives such as the development of computer aided design and manufacture and is now establishing a shared approach to the subject across what is a large team of teachers who have to work across the three school sites. The school has recognised the need to involve more staff in the leadership of the different strands of the subject such as textiles and graphics, although the existence of departmental structures within the faculty has slowed the development of a coherent subject identity. Curriculum planning for Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and ensures that the National Curriculum programmes of study are covered though the schemes of work are less varied than they might be in order to provide appropriate challenge for the different banded groups. A particular strength in both the Key Stage 4 and sixth form curricula is the range of courses available to students. Staffing is a further strength in the subject, and if the specialist accommodation is dispersed, in most areas the resources are at least satisfactory with particularly good information and communication technology facilities. The subject has made clear progress since the last inspection by improving the teaching and curriculum and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' standards of attainment.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

106. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is average. As the majority of pupils on entry are below average in attainment, they make good progress in relation to their prior achievement and are benefiting from demanding teaching. At the end of Year 9 most pupils use technical terms correctly and have a sound understanding of physical processes. They are particularly good at handling information which is a direct result of the department's increased emphasis on enquiry work. The use of information and communications technology is developing. Most write competently for a specific purpose because teachers give good attention to improving vocabulary and organising ideas. Lists of key words are used to good effect. When writing on the Kobe earthquake, higher attaining pupils showed good critical skills.
107. In 1999 pupils' attainment in GCSE was below average. The results in relation to similar schools were also below average. Girls outperform boys at higher grades. They both do worse in geography than in most other subjects. Over the past four years results have remained below average. In 2000 results fell well below those of 1999. Staffing difficulties resulting in some pupils being taught by temporary or inexperienced teachers were key factors in preventing the attainment of appropriate standards. The school has taken firm action to overcome these deficiencies. Staffing is more stable and teachers are now more experienced. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average but inspection evidence indicates that pupils in Year 10 are beginning to benefit from the measures taken.
108. In 1999 A-level results were below average for higher grades. Students do better than in other subjects. In recent years the proportion achieving higher grades has been below average but is improving. In 2000, three out of twelve gained higher grades. Inspection evidence confirms the rising trend and this is reflected by the grades already achieved by students in two examination modules. Standards at the end of Year 13 are average.

109. At Key Stage 4 progress is unsatisfactory over time for a significant number of pupils. Some have underachieved because of poor attendance, some as a result of the disruptive behaviour caused by a small group of boys and others as a result of staffing problems, now mainly resolved. In lessons and recent work seen, most are making good progress as seen in detailed work by Year 10 about the Mezzogiorno. At the end of Year 11, most pupils use technical terms correctly. Higher attaining pupils show good understanding of the effects of the Lynmouth floods. Middle and lower attaining pupils show below average understanding of climate and rivers and have difficulties in remembering work that they have learnt previously. Fieldwork to develop techniques and analytical skills is limited.
110. A-level students make good progress because teachers build effectively on work done earlier, as seen in a Year 12 lesson about rivers. They make good progress in handling and evaluating statistical information. Their numerical skills support their work well. At the end of Year 13, pupils have a sound range of techniques, developed through fieldwork. In their personal enquiries they show a high degree of initiative in undertaking research. Higher attaining students show good knowledge and understanding of concepts in work about ecosystems and global warming.
111. Most pupils have positive attitudes. This is shown by the large numbers who choose geography as an examination subject. It is less apparent in some Year 11 middle and lower ability lessons where pupils are compliant rather than curious. Most arrive to lessons prepared to work hard and participate enthusiastically in group activities, sharing their ideas well. Most are willing to take some responsibility for their learning and take care with homework. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, the result of teachers adapting work well for lower groups. However, there is insufficient in-class support and teachers do not use their individual plans for improvement.
112. The quality of teaching is good overall but there is some unevenness in teaching at Key Stage 4. It is very good in a quarter of all lessons, where teachers use their expertise to stimulate and develop pupils' understanding and provide good feedback at the end of activities. In the instance where teaching is unsatisfactory, the teacher lacks the subject knowledge to develop geographical ideas. Teachers are well organised and give clear guidance so that pupils settle quickly, behave well and lessons proceed briskly. Pupils' contributions are encouraged so they feel confident about giving answers. Most use resources well to provide pupils with a variety of experiences. Satisfactory lessons, where, for example, there is an over dependence on the textbook or pupils copy notes, do not always challenge or enable pupils to develop their ideas sufficiently. Some time is wasted when pupils are not kept fully on task. Good or very good lessons are lively and interactive with a good balance between instruction and activities. Effective use is made of group work to develop oral skills. These characteristics were seen in a Year 9 lesson about earthquakes, appropriately adapted for lower attaining pupils. The scene was set well so that pupils were interested and eager to participate. The teacher used knowledge effectively to develop understanding, for example, making good analogies between water ripples and earthquake waves. The lesson proceeded briskly and interest was sustained through increasingly challenging activities. By encouraging pupils to share ideas through discussion, the teacher helped them make very good progress in understanding. Homework is set regularly and usefully extends classroom work. Marking is inconsistent. Some is detailed and helpful, some is cursory. Assessment information is not used as well as it could be to help individuals to improve.
113. The acting head of department has effectively re-focused the direction of the department. Because this is a recent appointment, it has been difficult to carry out all monitoring duties effectively. Some pupils are taught in classrooms away from the main area, making it more difficult to monitor. Statutory requirements are fully met. Banding arrangements cause inequalities for some lower attaining pupils. They have one lesson less than the other groups, thus restricting their opportunities for movement. They do not have the opportunity to choose geography as an examination subject. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Most teachers are well qualified. Revised work plans include a variety of experiences with good opportunities for pupils to develop thinking skills. The school is aware that the appointment of a permanent head of department is necessary to ensure long term progress. Further development is needed to share good practice to ensure a sharper focus in all lessons and to make better use of information to help pupils make progress. Information and communications technology is insufficiently used.

## HISTORY

114. Standards at Key Stage 3 are near the national averages, with substantial numbers below. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1996 to 1999, pupils attaining the grades A\*-C were below national averages, with girls slightly higher than the boys. There were no A\* grades in the G.C.S.E. examinations in 1999. Compared with similar schools point scores for grades attained were below or well below national figures. In results in 2000 A\* - C grades were 53.2%, the result of specific improvement strategies. No comparison statistics for 2000 are available. It is a good progression from previous years. Included in the figures are a significant number of A\* grades, with boys scoring more than girls. The number of pupils taking the subject beyond G.C.S.E. has increased substantially and is in double figures. The predicted 95% A-E grades was attained but at the time of the inspection national figures were not available for comparison.
115. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils are attaining at below the average levels expected for their age, though a significant number are above. They use primary and secondary sources to obtain evidence on which they base judgements. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, describe events sensibly from evidence and understand the factors that, for example, led to women being given the vote. Higher attaining pupils effectively make comparison with the present day position of women. Workbooks for those with lower prior attainment ensure that facts, dates and personalities are known.
116. Pupils studying GCSE are now reaching standards which are close to national expectations. They carry forward investigation skills learned earlier into more complex situations. The majority of them do so with adequate skill. Most can describe historical events accurately and draw valid conclusions. Higher attaining pupils can use their own experience as well as factual knowledge to give reasoned pros and cons. Most write longer pieces clearly, with fluency being characteristic of higher grades. Virtually all can remember sequences of important events and people who were involved in them.
117. Achievement at Key Stage 3 is good. The attainment of pupils is below national expectations when they enter the school but are near to the levels normally expected of pupils aged 14 at the end. They use the tools of history to help understand the how and why of events. For example, they evaluate facts presented on a body from a grave in an archaeological dig in Denmark. Given a range of possible causes of death, they use the autopsy report, the condition of the corpse and known cultures of the times, to arrive at a reasoned conclusion that a ritual had attached to the death. When presented with sources relating to women's suffrage, most pupils evaluate the effectiveness of the various movements. Specially prepared material ensured that pupils with special educational needs made the same progress as other pupils.
118. At Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory, with a significant number of pupils achieving grades near or above nationally expected attainment levels. During the study of the twentieth century, the majority use documentary evidence to substantiate their views. For example, from their knowledge of the economic conditions in Germany in 1923 and accounts written at the time, they understand the attitudes of the people that led to the rise of Hitler. In Year 11 the significance of the Jarrow march is understood by looking at photographs and reading contemporary accounts from newspapers. Whilst most describe what happened and point out reasons, higher attaining pupils understand the deeper reasons for the depression, and that it was not uniform through Britain, because they can cross relate direct evidence and their own knowledge to bring a level of sophistication to longer answers.
119. At sixth form level students work more independently but along lines well established in history. They are accomplished researchers who handle different and complex sources from which they make lengthy, well reasoned arguments. Their study of the Irish Question is one that tests their early days in the subject, which later develops into knowledge and understanding of the complicated world of European political history. Individual studies of people like Sir Winston Churchill show a thoroughness of approach that is, in best pieces of work, of a high standard.
120. Written work contributes to pupils' skills of literacy by writing descriptively and at greater length, for example, when putting themselves in the place of Emily Davidson who threw herself in front of the King's horse in the Derby. When exploring the feeling of the ordinary people in Weimar Germany, they write dramatic prose. Numeracy skills used in interpreting graphs are less well developed.

121. Attitudes in history lessons are good. The vast majority of pupils in all key stages come to lessons with a keen willingness to learn. Virtually every pupil listens to the teacher with rapt attention and joins in question and answer session readily. During group sessions in lessons most pupils work with good concentration, and during this work, co-operate well with their classmates. Behaviour is rarely a problem, partly owing to teaching methods used and partly to the work ethos in almost every class. Pupils and students experience empathy with people of other times and cultures, mainly of European origin, that enlarges their experience, and gives insights into values of earlier times. They explore the moral aspects of living in different societies, including the treatment of people in Nazi Germany, which deepens appreciation of the human condition.
122. Most lessons observed at all key stages were above satisfactory, with the majority being good or very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Knowledge and understanding of history shone through virtually every lesson, with the planning reflecting this. Clarity of the aims of each lesson allowed pupils to understand what was to be covered and the standards expected of them. Good quality school produced resources included booklets for specific classes. For example the work on using historical skills of identifying and evaluating source material in investigating the fate of the man buried two thousand years ago was presented for pupils with special educational needs by using material of differing language in a way that captured and retained interest. Relationships in classes are good, which means that imposition of control is rarely needed. The vast majority of pupils want to do well for the teachers and for themselves. Active lessons, such as where pupils became detectives or where they give mini dramas, stimulate endeavour which leads to attainment of higher standards, an aim of every teacher of history.
123. The department is efficiently led with a high degree of co-operation. Effective delegation gives responsibility for areas of the curriculum to teachers. Monitoring of each other's lessons is valuable, though irregular. Where it happens, it contributes to raising standards. It is underdeveloped. Assessment of pupils has led to improvement in areas such as increasing the number of A\* grades among boys, raising of grades of a group of girls in GCSE grades from D to C, and producing booklets for pupils with special educational needs. Assessment lacks consistent monitoring of individuals and systematic recording and is underdeveloped.
124. Accommodation allows active lessons to take place. Rooms being separated widely across the building leads to inefficient use of books. The stock of class texts means that many classes have to share. This could be lessened if rooms were closer. The library books are of poor quality and not useful for research, particularly for sixth formers. Information and communication technology software is insufficient to allow research skills to be developed.
125. Since the last inspection standards of attainment and teaching have improved. For the future there is not only a capacity to improve further but also a desire that this should happen. Rigorous use of assessment as a development tool is a weakness, which staff can develop in co-ordination with work being done in other parts of the school. The department reflects the school's aims to present opportunities and to achieve good learning goals.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

126. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is well below the national average. Students come to the school at the start of Year 9 with skills well below those normally found at that stage and the limited time provided for information and communications technology (ICT) lessons in the curriculum, the need to share computers in most classes and the patchy and fairly limited opportunities provided for computer use in other subjects, result in them making unsatisfactory gains over the year. Within the taught programme students show sound skills in word processing and are able to combine text and simple graphics. They have some understanding of data storage and retrieval and can access wider sources of information using CD-ROM and the Internet. Students also have some limited experience of using computers for measurement and control through uses in other subjects such as design and technology, where students use computers in their designing and making projects. However, most students have not developed their knowledge and skills sufficiently to confidently and independently use computers to research ideas and use and combine different applications to present their work.
127. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. All students have some ICT use within the personal and social education lessons although access to the

technology is limited to a few hours over a year. Even so pupils showed that they could, with guidance, use a desktop publishing application to combine text and clipart to produce a poster as part of a drug education module. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs further benefit from additional use in the New Opportunities programme.

128. The students who demonstrate stronger knowledge and skills sufficient to reach appropriate standards in information and communication technology are those following the GNVQ courses in the subject at both Intermediate and Foundation levels. These students have a sound understanding of ICT and can use a variety of applications particularly those related to gathering and presenting information. For example, in a GNVQ Part 1 Intermediate lesson students understood relational databases and showed skills in evaluating their uses of ICT. Overall, while a significant minority achieve satisfactorily because of their GNVQ course studies, or because they make extensive use of ICT in producing their GCSE course work, the majority have too few challenging opportunities to sufficiently improve on their low attainment at Key Stage 3.
129. The sixth form now provides significant opportunities for ICT with all students doing key skills and over a quarter of students taking Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in information and communication technology. Standards in relation to those nationally are below average. This was evident in the newly introduced Vocational Advanced level in ICT where students were working on business letterheads in which they were combining text and scanned images and producing user guides. The standards were below what might be expected at Advanced level but students were making good progress in developing their knowledge and skills.
130. Students enjoy using computers and increasingly choose to study on ICT courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. They co-operate well, particularly in Year 9 where they have to share machines and behaviour is usually good given the cramped conditions in some rooms.
131. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and in a third of lessons is good. The stronger teaching is more evident in the work of specialist staff delivering information technology vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Those teachers are able to provide informed class explanation and individual support enabling students to develop to improve knowledge and acquire new skills. Also helpful are the clearly structured assignments in those courses with opportunities for students to plan their work and evaluate their progress. Teaching in Year 9 is severely constrained by the lack of lesson time with little assessment related to National Curriculum criteria so students have limited awareness of their standards and progress. The activity booklets in those lessons enable students to work with some independence but the materials are insufficiently challenging for many students for them to add significantly to their prior knowledge and skills.
132. The overall leadership of ICT is unsatisfactory. A series of circumstances have combined to make this so, including the existing co-ordinator limiting this role to Year 9 teaching, a proliferation of different ICT courses, each with different course leaders, and a lack of success in appointing an ICT co-ordinator able to assume a whole school role. The headteacher has endeavoured to provide strategic leadership and line manages the ICT network and technical support but important management functions are unmet. These include the monitoring and evaluation required to ensure a coherent and progressive development of the subject for all students, good quality delivery, a more rigorous school wide assessment system and an appropriate allocation of resources. While the school makes adequate provision to cover the National Curriculum programmes of study, the lack of whole leadership has contributed to the limited development of ICT across most of the other subject areas. There are some strengths, particularly in design and technology and in the recently introduced GNVQ and Vocational Advanced level courses in ICT, that meet the needs of the Key Stage 4 and sixth form students and properly reflects the philosophy of the school as a technology college. The school has good technical support but has fewer specialist ICT staff than it needs and recent budgetary constraints have limited its capacity to upgrade and expand its computer network facilities. There are good facilities in design and technology, learning support and the sixth form but Internet access is limited, particularly in the poorly resourced library, and the problems many subject staff have of getting into the computer suites is limiting the development of ICT across the curriculum.
133. While there have been improvements in the provision of specialist courses and the quality of teaching, the school has not made sufficient progress addressing the issues raised in the

previous inspection report concerning lack of curriculum time in Year 9, whole school monitoring and evaluation and cross-curricular development.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

134. In 1999, GCSE results in French were below average. A small group of higher-attaining pupils obtained broadly average results in German. A small group of lower-attaining pupils obtained results in Spanish that were well below the national average. In French and German, pupils' performance matched their performance in the other subjects they took, but in Spanish their performance was lower. In 1999, the difference between boys' and girls' results was similar to the national picture, but in 2000 it widened considerably. Between 1997 and 1999, GCSE results followed a similar pattern, but in 2000 the results worsened, particularly in French. [The reasons for this dip included some disruption in staffing and lower than usual overall attainment on entry to the school.] The low number of students taking languages at A-level each year makes comparison with national averages invalid. In 1999, out of the four entered, three students passed in French and German. In 2000, all seven students passed with grades between C and E. These results were similar to the students' results in their other subjects.
135. At Key Stage 3, the standards in lessons and other work are below national expectations. The end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments were slightly too generous in 1999, judging from the attainment of the Year 10 pupils who were assessed. Behaviour is good in virtually all lessons, but many pupils have already done French for three years and a significant number lack real interest in languages. Many pupils in French have weak speaking skills and are not willing to participate freely in conversations about themselves or school life. They listen carefully to the teacher using the foreign language and most understand, but they have more difficulty in understanding passages on tape. Most understand when they read short sentences with vocabulary they have been introduced to in the lesson, but generally only the higher-attaining pupils can recall the words they have learnt previously. Pupils rarely write at length and do not use the past and future tense until well on into the course. Teachers sometimes find it difficult to establish the exact range and complexity of vocabulary all pupils have met, because pupils come from several middle schools. A small number of higher-attaining pupils make good progress as beginners in German and develop relatively good listening and speaking skills at an early stage. This year, all other pupils have been introduced to Spanish in one lesson each week; many rekindle their interest in learning languages through this experience.
136. At Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in lessons and other work is also below national expectations. Pupils have a free choice of language until GCSE examinations. The majority choose French. Most of these pupils continue to develop listening and speaking skills satisfactorily through the units of the closely structured course. Many pupils are still very hesitant in speaking and require much repetition to understand the key points of listening tasks. Pupils develop their writing skills through practice in class and GCSE coursework, moving well from simple to more complex sentences. The development of reading skills is also tackled methodically; the higher-attaining pupils are taught literacy skills well to help their understanding. The middle and lower-attaining pupils need more frequent and consistent practice in reading shorter passages of the foreign language, in order to raise standards. For the past two years, about a quarter of each year group have chosen to begin learning Spanish, rather than continue with French. These pupils make initial good progress in the new language, which they enjoy and find relevant. Those higher-attaining pupils who continue with German develop their language skills well, following the same course structure as is used in French.
137. At Key Stage 3, pupils generally make satisfactory progress, given their below-average attainment on entry to the school. At Key Stage 4, progress is less satisfactory. The higher-attaining pupils continue to achieve to their potential, but a significant number of middle and lower-attaining pupils, particularly in Year 11, make unsatisfactory progress because of their lack of interest in languages. At Key Stage 3, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in the smaller classes created for them. At Key Stage 4, most of the pupils with special educational needs take the New Options West course instead of languages.
138. In the sixth form, students' attainment on entry to the course is, overall, in line with expectations for an AS course. Students still have difficulty in expressing their ideas and opinions in French, especially when they use the past tense. However, because of the closely structured teaching

and the obvious interest students have in doing well, they make good progress in both speaking and written work.

139. The quality of teaching is good overall. Half of the lessons seen were good, just under half were satisfactory and the remainder very good. Teachers' knowledge of the languages they teach is good and sometimes very good. They do not always use the foreign language enough for classroom instructions and interaction; 'help-cards' on display would help in this context. Teachers plan most of their lessons well with a good range of activities to cover the long lessons. More consolidation of oral work through chorus-work, games and information and communications technology activities would increase the range of activities and enable the less confident pupils to develop their speaking skills better. In a Year 9 class of higher-attaining beginners in German, pupils responded very well to vigorous teaching and were able to talk about themselves with confidence in German. Teachers mostly manage their pupils well and provide them with useful worksheets for homework and revision. In a Year 11 French class, the teacher led pupils carefully through the steps they needed to take to read successfully a seemingly difficult passage. In a few lessons, teachers do not ensure that all pupils are taking an active part in lessons; a significant number of pupils remain passive or chat amongst themselves, especially in some of the lower-attaining groups at Key Stage 4. There is very little extra support for these pupils.
140. The department is well led; recent worthwhile innovations include the development of closely structured learning units, and assessment and reward procedures. Two curricular changes need close monitoring to assess their value in raising standards: the introduction of Spanish at both key stages and the participation of a significant number of Key Stage 4 pupils in the New Options West programme, rather than in languages. Spanish effectively rekindles pupils' interest in languages, but pupils have reduced time, compared with French, in which to learn the language before they take GCSE examinations. The school has not yet fully explored the possibility of a multi-cultural dimension to the New Options West programme. Further development of liaison with contributory middle schools and in the use of information and communications technology would help to raise standards.

## **MUSIC**

141. There were no GCSE entries in music for 1999; results in 1997 and 1998 were well below the national average both for grades A\* to C and average points score; there were only four pupils in 2000- most of whom gained an A\* to C grade. There is no examination music in the sixth form. Teacher assessments for the end of Key Stage 3 were not available from the school. In the lessons seen at Key Stage 3 attainment was around the national average, but the work seen did not cover the full National Curriculum. Attainment in the lessons seen at Key Stage 4 was well below the national average ; however, the two groups concerned were not examination groups, being from the lowest ability set. The aural, compositional, notational and keyboard skills were a totally new set of concepts for most children, and the lower sets in particular found their comprehension difficult. The more able pupils rose to the challenge, composing melodies with a simple structure and using imitation and sequence. In some melodies there was a vital rhythm, but others did not have a sense of pulse. In the context of their prior experience and lack of skills, pupils with special needs were attaining appropriately, taking full advantage of the intensive teacher support – which was particularly good with the Year 10 group, where the headteacher worked in the classroom alongside the music teacher giving valuable individual support. Extra curricular work in music has also started and although the choir is small, it is growing every week and is already singing in two parts. Only 11 pupils have instrumental tuition and they are heavily subsidised by the school.
142. The issue in music at the last inspection concerning teaching and learning has been fully resolved. However, some issues remain; music at Key Stage 3 still does not satisfy statutory requirements; the reports do not contain adequate information on composition or listening; the lunch arrangements and after school buses still significantly impede the growth of extra curricular music. Information and communications technology is not part of work in music as there are no resources.
143. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 is very good; it is good at Key Stage 4. The best teaching is characterised by thorough security in music and in appropriate teaching methods; Planning, preparation and target setting are thorough, and closely linked to pupil ability – pupils know where they are going and the route they must take to get there. Relationships are

excellent and there is a very good working ethos in lessons; there is a sense of fun linked to hard work in most lessons, allied to excellence in classroom management and organisation. Pupils are learning by doing and then refining their skill using aural criteria to judge their success. In one lesson, a boy produced an effective eight bar tune using a simple initial melodic idea and then used imitation and sequence in a strongly rhythmic context to produce an effective melody. In a small number of lessons, management and class control tend to dictate content and method, and learning is technical rather than musical.

144. Pupil response at all levels is very good. It is open and positive, and pupils are often lively and enthusiastic. In one lesson two girls showed real delight when they realised that their tune was working and, what is more, memorable. The weaker pupils are over-aware of their own limitations, and need constant teacher support. Behaviour is good and pupils respond well to teacher input. They are strongly mutually supportive. Some lower ability pupils, generally boys, demand constant attention.
145. The curriculum has to take account of a very low starting point. The time allocation is inadequate to cover the National Curriculum. The teacher in charge of music is appropriately concentrating on areas in which pupils can rapidly attain success. It is a survival model making the most of inadequate time and rebuilding music's image in the eyes of pupils as quickly as possible. Music-specific information and communications technology does not exist. The foundations of an assessment scheme are being laid but it is, rightly, not a priority at the moment. The accommodation is cold, damp, and inflexible, with no practice rooms. Resources are inadequate with major gaps in tuned percussion, music technology, and information and communications technology and a good quality piano. The teacher in charge of music is doing a first class job in turning music round in the school. If music is to succeed, it needs radical action for improvement.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

146. The attainment of pupils is in line with the national average both at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Standards are above the average of other subjects in the school and pupils performed better in physical education than they did in their other subjects. Furthermore, in 2000 the attainment of pupils was significantly better, particularly at the higher grades, and as in 1999, results were better than those of other subjects.
147. At Key Stage 3 girls displayed good positional sense in netball and observed the two step rule correctly, although there was little variety or subtlety in their passing. Standards in boys' football are above average in all years and boys in Year 9 display good skills in the control and distribution of the ball, which results in fluent and well sustained attacking movements. Pupils taking the GCSE course display above average standards in most practical activities. This was exemplified by the work of Year 10 pupils, who quickly modeled a sequence of movements, demonstrated by the teacher, to produce good quality overhead clearance shots in badminton lessons. They were less effective in explaining this skill to other pupils, who relied on observation of the skills in practice to improve their own understanding. Year 11 girls display satisfactory levels of fitness while working on exercise circuits and have a sound grasp of the value of exercise for a healthy life style. Year 11 boys on the GCSE course play basketball games at great pace but they lack subtlety and the skills for close control skills and their shooting techniques are poorly developed. Year 12 students, following a community sports leader award course, plan, organise and manage games activities very well and their understanding of the range of skills involved showed through well in a review at the end of the lesson.
148. The standard of teaching was good or very good in nearly three quarters of lessons and was satisfactory in all others. Lessons are well planned so that pupils make progress in their learning and start with clear learning objectives, good use being made of white boards for this purpose. The management of pupils is very good and teachers' expectations are consistently high and well understood. Pupils behave well and are mostly very attentive and cooperative. In most lessons there is a good balance of activities and a good range of well matched teaching and learning styles are employed. These qualities were displayed well in a Year 9 football lesson, where very effective use was made of the space available for pupils to work in a number of small groups. The pupils were carefully guided through a series of skills of progressive difficulty, which many were able to apply successfully in a short game that followed. In this lesson, as in most others, pupils collaborated well and sustained good concentration

throughout. Where teaching is satisfactory there are a number of strengths but too much time is spent on developing skills in isolation and the pupils can become a little de-motivated. In some lessons, opportunities for pupils to contribute to the planning and management of their learning are missed, as are opportunities for them to evaluate their own and other pupils' progress. As a result many pupils do not have a secure understanding of their learning and progress. When the pupils are working outside in difficult conditions, the warm up activities sometimes lack opportunities to provide appropriate motivation. Teachers are consistent in ensuring that pupils, particularly the less able, understand any technical language introduced.

149. The curriculum is broad and largely balanced and enriched by very good community links. However, the current lunch time arrangements impact badly on extra curricular opportunities and the rooming arrangements for GCSE theory lessons affects the efficiency of teaching and learning. Sixth form participation can only take place at the expense of other options. Schemes of work are detailed and up to date and take good account of basic skills where appropriate. Assessment is systematic and is built upon a common approach adopted by the feeder middle schools, an outcome of the very good links. Management is efficient and there are very strong professional relationships. Teachers are conscientious in recording the outcomes of lessons, which contributes to a careful review of each unit of work and informs a well structured development plan. Arrangements for identifying individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses and for providing targets to raise attainment lack structure. The indoor accommodation, particularly some changing areas, drab and the floor markings for games are poor. By contrast, displays around the school are informative and promote physical education effectively.
150. Progress from the last inspection is good. Attainment in the GCSE has improved. The standard of teaching is higher and a greater range of teaching and learning styles are employed. The curriculum has been improved with the introduction of a community sports leader award and community links are more diverse.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

151. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is below that expected by the Newcastle Education Authority Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, which the school uses. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is also below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Key Stage 4 pupils are now studying for either the half course GCSE or a Certificate of Achievement and as yet no examination statistics are available. Religious education in the sixth form takes the form of complementary studies and as such is not formally assessed.
152. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have an understanding about belief and consider questions concerning the meaning of life. They also consider prejudice, in particular the effects of the holocaust. The standard of the work that they cover is satisfactory. However, due to the limited time allocated to the subject not all areas of the syllabus can be covered in sufficient depth. Pupils at Key Stage 4 consider a number of ethical issues, including euthanasia, genetic engineering, racism, sexism, war, pacifism and human rights. Whilst studying these topics, they consider how Christian and other religious beliefs affect an individual's attitude to the problems and are encouraged to form their own balanced views. Pupils in both key stages use high levels of technical terms with understanding. The sixth form pupils are able to consider ethical issues at a deeper depth by means of two one-day conferences and a visit to Lindisfarne Island where the monks often give them a guided tour and allow questioning about their faith. The pupils' written work is weaker than oral work and for a number of pupils low levels of literacy hinder their progress. Progress can be seen within lessons and from year to year in the more refined way in which issues are discussed and the more sophisticated form of writing.
153. The teaching of religious education is good, with almost two thirds of the lessons seen being good or better. There is no significant difference between the teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4. Strengths within teaching are the lively way in which the topic is introduced, a good challenge and a variety of methods leading to high expectations. The project and assessment tasks also demand that pupils consider in depth the issues surrounding the topic being considered. In many cases there is a link with current topical issues which stimulate discussion; examples during the inspection included the problems associated with separating Siamese twins and the problems of world debt and famine in third World Countries. The learning from religion in how beliefs and opinions affect the actions of people is a strength within the department. Weaker areas in teaching occur when teachers tend to give the information rather than drawing ideas

from the pupils and, on occasions, time wasted at the beginning and end of lessons. The needs of all pupils are catered for and there is no significant difference between the progress of different groups. Attitudes to religious education are good. The pupils arrive with expectancy and work well throughout, being prepared to contribute to discussions and take pride in their display work. This enables good progress to be made in the time available.

154. The curriculum provided for religious education at both Key Stage 3 and 4 is unsatisfactory in that the time allocated is only half that expected by the Agreed Syllabus and this means that either topics have to be omitted or they are not studied in sufficient depth. In this respect the school is not meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The department is making the best use of the time available by group research work, where different groups research different aspects of the work and then present their findings to other members of the class. The two day projects, where pupils in Year 9 set up displays on living beliefs, and the Year 10 human rights workshops are valuable additions to the curriculum. Years 9 to 11 do not go on educational visits within religious education and so the opportunity to add a direct experience of religious places of worship is missed. The course in the sixth form does fulfil the statutory requirements and good use is made of visiting speakers. However, the provision is weak on the world religions element and, now that the GCSE course is followed at Key Stage 4, there is a danger of some topics being repeated.
155. The leadership of the department is good. Schemes of work and assessment criteria have been revised in line with the new levels of attainment required nationally, clear help is provided for the non-specialist teachers teaching religious education and a number of cross-curricular links have been established. The positive aspects of the last inspection have been maintained, teaching is now good and the profile and status of religious education have been enhanced. Resources in the department have been increased but they are still only just adequate. The issue of religious education being taught in two buildings still exists so that the sharing of resources, such as textbooks and the ability to work as a department, is virtually impossible. In order to improve further, the department needs to increase the time allocated in order to bring it to the level expected by the Agreed Syllabus, look at the continuity issue from Key Stage 4 to the sixth form in light of the GCSE course and ensure that all pupils have a complete set of any shared research and work.

## **SIXTH FORM PROVISION**

156. At the time of the last inspection the sixth form provision was considered to be a weak feature of the school. Now there are much improved facilities and the school is offering a good range of courses. On offer are GNVQ courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels and this is good provision because of the sense of progression it leads to. The curriculum is balanced with a good range of academic and vocational courses. Work experience is provided for students on GNVQ courses and other students have a good opportunity to learn about the world of work through attending conferences on understanding industry.
157. The scope for personal and social education has been expanded and the overall cost effectiveness of the provision has been improved with the rise in student numbers. The provision is also successful in the extent to which it leads students to study at higher education levels.
158. Although the attainment of students is no more than in line with national averages most students do succeed in obtaining the grades that are predicted for them and in this sense they make good progress. Despite some lessons where the teaching is very good, the quality of teaching overall is no more than average and there is room for further in service development to focus on how students of this age best learn. The ethos in the sixth form is good.
159. Students use the library well, especially to find out about the scope for further study. They have good access to ICT facilities. Their own personal development is enhanced through the personal, social and health education programme and the opportunities they have to support learning in the middle school and in the AIMS base.
160. Theme days, such as the one on conservation, conferences devoted to religious issues and field courses in geography and science all provide a good range of opportunities for a varied learning environment. The sixth form is being well led and there is a good plan for guiding sixth form development. The role of the assistant head now needs developing further in terms of specific responsibilities and tasks.