

INSPECTION REPORT

**MOUNT ST MARY'S CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL**

Leeds

LEA area: Leeds

Unique reference number: 108097

Headteacher: Mrs B King

Reporting inspector: Rev E Milroy
7602

Dates of inspection: 20th – 24th November 2000

Inspection number: 223845

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ellerby Road Leeds West Yorkshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Kehoe
Date of previous inspection:	March 1996

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C Edney 17453	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well is the school led and managed?
J Pinkney 20380	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
J Hunt 12885	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Mount St Mary's is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic Comprehensive school for boys and girls situated close to the city centre of Leeds. It provides education for 889 pupils. The school has a long and distinguished history. The original Victorian buildings have been developed over the years to form complex, compact but good accommodation. An above average number of pupils take up their entitlement of free school meals. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs (34 pupils) is above the national average. More than a quarter of pupils are placed on the register of special educational needs when they enter the school. Twenty six pupils have English as an additional language. Of the eight per cent of pupils of other ethnic groups most are of Afro-Caribbean heritage. The attainment of pupils on entry is just below average. The school's immediate neighbourhood and many of the parts of the city from which it draws suffer significant economic deprivation, although some pupils come from more prosperous areas.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is an effective school which has many more strengths than weaknesses. It provides well for the needs of all its pupils. Teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. Standards in English are well above average when compared with similar schools and above the national average for all schools. By the time pupils leave at the age of 16 they attain results close to the national average, judged by the points they achieve in their GCSE examinations. Effective and purposeful leadership has guided the school towards improvement very well. The school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in the core subjects rise from entry and are close to the national average at the age of 16.
- Teaching is good and a strength of the school.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils and among pupils themselves are very good.
- The school provides a very caring environment: the unique gifts and talents of individuals are sought, identified and fostered. The school lives its aims.
- The detailed assessment, monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress is a strength.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The contribution made by learning support assistants is outstanding.
- Links with community partners and parents are very good. They are extensive and support pupils' academic and personal development very effectively.
- The school's broad and balanced curriculum is enhanced by very good careers' education and work experience.
- The leadership of the headteacher and other managers is very good. There is excellent teamwork and a good team spirit among teachers.
- The school manages its finances exceptionally well.

What could be improved

- Attainment in several subjects at Key Stage 4, especially science where results are below the national average for all schools.
- The use of information and communications technology (ICT) in a range of subjects where it is not used sufficiently for teaching and learning.
- There is a shortage of modern computers to support teaching and learning.
- There are insufficient books in the library. During inspection there was not enough use of the facilities for research and teaching.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The key issues have been tackled with vigour and in all cases successfully. Attendance, then below the national average, has been raised to the national average for secondary schools. A new management structure was set in place, which is helping to lead the school very well. Provision and access to the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs, formerly restricted, are now very good. The co-ordinator for special educational needs now has enough time to manage the complex provision very effectively. Governors have fulfilled their statutory obligations with respect to health and safety policies.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	D	C	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Standards have continued to improve in line with national trends by the age of 14. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science the school performs well in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 attaining close to the national average for all schools. When these results are compared with those of similar schools the attainments are graded well above average. English results are particularly high. By the age of 16 the number of pupils achieving 5 subjects in the A*-C range is below the national average of 49 per cent but has risen from 33 per cent in 1999 to 36 per cent in 2000. When pupils' overall GCSE results are measured in terms of the points which pupils gain in the examinations attainments for both boys and girls are close to the national average for all schools and well above those achieved in similar schools. The number of pupils achieving 5 passes at grades A*-G in 2000 is 88.0%, at the national average. These results are above average in comparison with similar schools.

Standards in GCSE English are above the national average. Mathematics results are below the national average but have been rising steadily. In science results are well below the national average. High attaining pupils at Key Stage 3 do not make as much progress as expected in mathematics and science from the age of 14. In other subjects by the end of Key Stage 3 pupils reach the levels expected except in history where they are below average and in geography and music where they are better than expected. Results in art, drama,

French, history, Spanish, design and technology (graphics products and resistant materials) were well below average in the most recent GCSE examinations. In geography and food technology, results were close to the national average and in music for the very small number of pupils who take the subject, results were above average. The results in physical education are just below the national average. In French the improvement evident in Key Stage 3 has not worked through to Key Stage 4, and in foreign languages, as at the last inspection, some disaffected boys do not work hard enough. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve good standards. Pupils with special educational needs show good improvement in their standards of work as they move through the school, ably supported by their teachers and learning support assistants.

For all pupils across the school, in general, the standards attained by girls are better than those achieved by boys. There is, however, little difference in the attainments of boys and girls in mathematics and science.

In lessons and from the analysis of pupils' written and other work standards are at least at the average expected for pupils of the varying ages, and often better than those gained in the examinations. Better than average attainment was seen in the majority of lessons in English, geography, mathematics, ICT and physical education. The challenge to the school, its pupils and parents, is to help pupils sustain these higher standards in the long term.

Boys' achievements in modern foreign languages remain a serious concern. They progress well at Key Stage 3, but fall back in Key Stage 4. Pupils achieve well in gymnastics but the skills of evaluation of performance in physical education are less well developed. Pupils have no experience of work in textiles in design and technology and very limited experience of three dimensional work such as ceramics or sculpture in art. Pupils' skills of observational drawing are improving well. In ICT better provision is helping pupils to develop good skills of planning, and data collection and analysis.

The school has been successful in achieving the targets which it has set. New and sufficiently challenging targets have been created.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive for the vast majority. Pupils come to school in good heart ready to apply themselves well and enjoy their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good standards. Orderly, civilised, courteous and good humoured except for a very small minority of pupils whose behaviour is usually well managed.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. A real sense of Christian community. Provision for spiritual development is very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. In line with the national average. Improved from the last inspection.

Pupils learn to cope well with the possibilities and demands of school life. They enjoy very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. The school surrounds pupils with a strong Christian ethos and a sense that each person has unique talents and gifts to be fostered and offered in service and support to others.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection when it was mainly satisfactory. Of the 99 per cent of satisfactory lessons 55 per cent were good and better. Nineteen per cent, nearly one in five was very good and better. There were two outstanding lessons. Some of the best teaching was in English, geography, information technology, music and physical education. In English almost half the lessons have very good or excellent teaching. In mathematics teaching was satisfactory in all but one lesson, and good and better in 64 per cent. The teaching of science is satisfactory in all lessons and good and better in 43 per cent. There have been significant improvements in the teaching of modern languages where teaching was unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 at the last inspection. It is now satisfactory in all lessons at both key stages; good and better in 75 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 3, and good in half the lessons at Key Stage 4. Teaching is slightly better at Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4 in most subjects.

Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils and monitor and track their progress well. The good subject knowledge of teachers is used effectively to interest and challenge pupils. Homework is usually carefully planned to promote and link learning successfully.

Literacy is well taught in English lessons and in a variety of strategies across the school. In many subjects key words needed by pupils are displayed in the classrooms. Reading is good. Geography, history and science use the library regularly to promote literacy and extend study skills. Many subjects develop pupils' numeracy skills successfully.

As a result of good teaching most pupils learn well. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well and appreciate the very good support they are given.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Broad and balanced. Closely monitored by governors.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good at both key stages. Very good learning support assistants foster progress skilfully.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Pupils' learning, teaching and progress are very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Very good and sensitive provision for spiritual development. Strong commitment to teaching pupils right from wrong and fostering their talents. Cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares	Pupils are very well cared for. Procedures for monitoring

for its pupils	attendance and supporting personal development are very good. Very good pastoral support is given to pupils. Dedicated staff offer deep but unobtrusive help to all.
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The good links with parents support good attitudes to learning and have a positive impact on behaviour.

A broad and balanced curriculum is provided at both key stages and includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. In Key Stage 4 some pupils are offered a work related curriculum which involves them in appropriate courses in school in English, mathematics and science and vocational courses at a further education college. These arrangements provide well for pupils. Curricular provision for ICT is much improved since the last inspection; although there are not enough modern computers for widespread subject use. Statutory requirements are fully met. The health, safety and well being of all pupils is carefully and successfully promoted.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good. A good culture of accountability exists to drive up standards. Very good monitoring and use of resources. Excellent teamwork and shared commitment to improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Supportive and committed governing body. Excellent grasp of curriculum issues and the financial challenges faced by school. Carry out their statutory responsibilities effectively and meet requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is self-aware. The headteacher, senior managers and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Regular review of each department's progress is a strong feature of the evaluation of performance. Teaching is systematically monitored.
The strategic use of resources	There is very good use of available resources and the school is alert to, and successful in obtaining any additional resources through specific grant. All financial resources are exceptionally well managed. Principles of best value are carefully and consistently applied.

Teachers are well qualified. Science laboratories have recently been refurbished and updated to excellent standards. The level of learning resources has improved since the last inspection. They are generally satisfactory. However in English many textbooks are outdated and there is a shortage of fiction in the library. In art attainment suffers from a lack of resources for teaching three dimensional work, in ceramics and sculpture for example.

The leadership provided by the head teacher and other key staff is very good. The strengths and weaknesses of the school are very well assessed and weaknesses are tackled sensibly and vigorously. The school is well supported by a committed and knowledgeable governing body. Governors and staff apply the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school and make progress.• The teaching is good.• The school expects their children to work hard.• The school is well led and managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework.• More information about how their children are getting on at Key Stage 3.• Some parents do not work closely with the school.

Inspectors agree with the positive statements of parents. The school has a good homework policy, which makes a positive contribution to attainment and progress. It is not always implemented consistently. The school recognises parents' concerns about reports which are to be reviewed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Attainment

- 1 Pupils enter the school with just below average attainments. By the end of Key Stage 3 at the age of 14, pupils achieve average results in comparison with schools nationally. Results in English are well above average for those reaching the expected level five, and close to the national average for those who attain level 6 or better. Results in mathematics have improved since the last inspection. Results are lower than the national average for both grades 5 and 6 and beyond. In science results are lower than in mathematics and below national averages for both levels 5 and 6. However, when these results are compared with those of schools in similar circumstances they are seen to be well above average in English, at the average in mathematics and above average in science. Results in these three core subjects when considered together are well above average compared with the results achieved by schools in similar circumstances. National comparisons show that results over the last four years are close to the national average for all schools.
- 2 When results at GCSE are compared with results nationally the proportion of pupils achieving five grades at the higher levels of A*-C is below the national average. When considered against similar schools results are above average. The proportion of pupils achieving five grades at A*-G is again below average nationally, and when compared to the results achieved by similar schools they are average. Fewer pupils attain one A*-G grade than the national average and the proportion achieving these standards is below the average of similar schools. However, the school provides alternative qualifications for the pupils, for example the Certificate of Educational Achievement in science and those low attaining pupils who have access to this certificate succeed.
- 3 In terms of the average points score for GCSE, both boys and girls achieved close to the national average and well above average when compared to similar schools.

Attainment in English

- 4 Pupils' attainments on entry have risen gradually and this is reflected in the national test results at the end of Key Stage 3 when the pupils are aged 14. In 2000 the results were above the national average for all schools and well above average for comparable schools. The results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests again show a rise on the 1999 figures. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' examination results in GCSE are again above the national average although for English literature results are below average. Girls out-perform boys at both key stages.

Mathematics

- 5 In the 2000 National Curriculum tests the proportions of pupils achieving the expected level five and the higher level six were below the national average for all schools. However, when compared with the results of schools in similar circumstances, these attainments are at the average. By the end of Key Stage 4 results in GCSE examinations are below the national average but have been rising in recent years and this rise continued in the current year, 2000. Inspection findings show that standards of attainment in lessons are broadly in line with those expected for pupils of this age. In

the latest examinations and in classes there was no significant difference in boys' or girls' attainments in this subject.

Science

- 6 Pupils' attainments in the Key Stage 3 national tests in science were below average in national terms, but judged above average in comparison with similar schools. The results in examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below the national average for pupils gaining grades A*-C in GCSE but all pupils achieved a grade in the A*-G range, above the national average. In 1998 results were close to the national average, but there is no discernible trend. Many pupils do not achieve as well as they should considering their attainments in Key Stage 3, particularly those of high prior attainment. In lessons Key Stage 3 pupils attain broadly in line with national expectations for pupils of this age. The school has taken steps to improve levels of attainment by adding another hour of curriculum time in Year 9, better setting arrangements in Key Stage 4 and a change of syllabus to one more suited to the needs of pupils.

Other subjects

- 7 Standards in the work seen in other subjects at Key Stage 3 show that they reach those expected in all subjects except history, where standards are below those expected by pupils at the age of 14, and in geography and music where they are better than expected. In some subjects the assessments which teachers make of pupils' levels of attainment are unrealistic. They are too generous in art, design and technology and information technology but lower than they need be in English. GCSE results in art, drama, French, history, Spanish, design and technology (graphics products and resistant materials) were well below the national average for the percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades of A*-C. Results in geography although below were close to the national average as were results in food technology. For the small number of pupils who take music at Key Stage 4 results are above average. Standards of work seen in lessons and in the analysis of pupils' written and other work are often better than the examination results indicate. Standards in geography are good, and in science, art and design and history work is often at the standard expected from pupils of the relevant ages. The intermittent attendance of pupils in some examination groups, for example in history and design and technology, where pupils do not complete coursework, slows down progress. Pupils who opt for history are given booklets which support continuous learning and help absent pupils to catch up if they have the motivation.
- 8 In other subjects, particularly foreign languages, the improvements evident at Key Stage 3 have not worked through to Key Stage 4. In these subjects there is still a degree of disaffection, mainly from older boys who do not work hard enough. Arrangements to increase performance by placing pupils in groups with others of a similar standard, and the adoption of one first language, French, instead of the two studied now, have not yet had a positive impact. The school monitors its results vigilantly, attempts to account for differences and sets in place strategies to improve standards and increase pupils' progress.

- 9 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve standards which gradually improve as they move through the school. Good standards are generally promoted by the individual education plans and the liaison with subjects. In some subjects the plans are not sufficiently specific to raise standards further. Work is well presented and little is unfinished.
- 10 Provision for those pupils who have English as an additional language is very good. Literacy development is a key focus. Their progress is supported by good use of learning support assistants when necessary and by specialist teaching. For example, four pupils from Macau are taught by a bi-lingual teacher with English and Cantonese languages. Although these pupils take time to acquire a solid foundation in the second language, they do so quickly. They were able, for example, to give directions about the school building clearly, after a few weeks. In mathematics progress is very good and pupils are well able to contribute to lessons as well as receive from them. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils are making progress in line with their peers. They take evident pride in the presentation of work. The school analyses the examination results of these pupils individually but group numbers are too small and variable for feasible year on year comparisons with the majority.
- 11 Gifted and talented pupils are identified across the years. The school is at an early stage of specialist provision. There is some evidence that higher attaining pupils do not fully reach the standards of which they capable in science and mathematics, although pupils of high aptitude in modern languages achieve well.
- 12 Overall, the achievements of girls are generally better than those of boys.
- 13 Pupils' achievements are at least satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and they make progress, but some boys lose ground at Key Stage 4, affected by absence and in some cases, loss of motivation, particularly in foreign languages.
- 14 In art skills of observational drawing are improving. Pupils have growing confidence in their graphic skills. In design and technology pupils acquire a satisfactory understanding of the design process and at Key Stage 4 there is good graphical presentation of folders. In geography, pupils build successfully on the investigational skills which they develop in fieldwork and apply their knowledge well. In history pupils acquire the ability to understand sources of evidence, to distinguish bias and the nature of propaganda. In information technology by the age of 16 pupils preparing for a project showed they had developed good skills of planning, data collection and analysis. However, although pupils in Year 9 in a mixed ability class were able to write instructions for control purposes, many required help and support. Achievements in ICT are improving with the increased provision. In modern foreign languages boys' achievements remain a serious concern, especially at Key Stage 4. Both girls and boys progress satisfactorily at Key Stage 3, but girls achieve more. Achievement in music at both Key Stages is above average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in music, and all pupils by the end of Year 9 develop skills of composition and good listening skills. In physical education, pupils achieve as well as expected. Pupils make good progress across Key Stage 3, especially in gymnastics, and pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and several have achieved success in GSCE. Skills of evaluation in performance are less well developed. There are several limitations to achievement. One of these is in the curricular provision in art and design and technology. Pupils have no experience of work in textiles in either subject and in art pupils have little experience in three dimensional work, for example in sculpture or ceramics.

- 15 Pupils generally enter the school with average levels of literacy although there is evidence that these skills may have risen recently. Tests of reading on entry show that half the pupils have scores below their chronological age of 11 years. About a quarter score at levels two years below their chronological age. Standards of literacy improve by the end of Key Stage 3 because of the strategies introduced by the English department. Standards of speaking and listening vary across subjects. In English, mathematics, history and geography, pupils are given good opportunities to work in groups and share ideas so that they speak with confidence and express their views clearly. In many subjects including mathematics, science, art, history and geography there are good opportunities to develop technical vocabulary and writing skills. Relevant technical words are displayed clearly in teaching rooms to help pupils achieve better standards and gain confidence in their writing. The standard of reading is good by the age of 14. In geography, history and science pupils visit the library to retrieve information, and classify and interpret data from CD-ROM. Lower attaining pupils are well supported in their reading by the special educational needs department.
- 16 Standards in numeracy reflect standards in mathematics and are in line with the national average. A successful Numeracy summer school in this year developed better standards in pupils moving from primary schools. This initiative is part of the recovery programme for those Year six pupils who failed to reach the national expectation for pupils aged 11 years. Across the key stages data are represented in various forms in information technology, English, geography and history. For example, in history pupils analysed the ages and occupations of people killed in a disaster. Good use is made of statistics in geography in river and soil studies and in litter and traffic surveys. Pupils use quantitative data satisfactorily in science although pupils do not always record and convert the units they are working in satisfactorily.
- 17 In information technology standards have improved significantly since the last inspection with the acquisition of new equipment and better provision. Standards are satisfactory in general, but there is not enough use to improve standards across the curriculum. The school is moving fast in its provision with limited resources but it has a way to go. Many pupils have better provision at home than at school, which disadvantages some pupils who do not have this additional access.
- 18 Differences in attainment and achievement by boys and girls are evident. In general girls achieve better than boys although in mathematics and science there is little difference between the standards achieved. The school is aware of the strengths and the weaknesses in its standards and has set in place a variety of strategies to combat underachievement and raise standards. The school has a programme to tackle the underachievement. However, there is little evidence of its impact.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 19 The great majority of pupils at the school have a positive attitude to their work and, as the previous inspection report indicated, their good behaviour supports the quality of life and learning within the school. They learn to cope very well with the pressures and opportunities of school life and enjoy good relationships with their colleagues and with their teachers. Their attendance has much improved since the time of the previous inspection and is now in line with the national average.
- 20 Most pupils come to school in good heart. They look smart, are calm and relaxed, and arrive in good time to enable teachers to make a prompt and efficient start to the day. In lessons these pupils listen carefully, apply themselves well and enjoy their learning.

There is a very small minority of pupils who show little enthusiasm for some lessons. They are less punctual, are easily distracted and disrupt teaching by, for example, chattering to their colleagues or moving about the classroom. This is most marked in lessons which lack pace or challenge. When inappropriate behaviour is not curbed immediately by the teacher it tends to escalate and detracts from the learning environment for all.

- 21 Mount St Mary's is an orderly and civilised environment. Pupils recognise the good standards of behaviour which are expected of them and respond well. They move about the grounds and the building in a purposeful manner and generally cope with the very crowded conditions in some corridors and stairways with courtesy and good humour. They are particularly kind and thoughtful to visitors who may be unsure how to negotiate the rather complex geography of the building. The school makes appropriate use of the exclusions procedure to deal with incidents of serious misbehaviour. There have been no permanent exclusions in the previous twelve months. The use of fixed term exclusions is broadly in line with other schools nationally and is reducing as the school adopts alternative strategies to deal with such problems.
- 22 Relationships in the school are very good. Pupils work well together and show maturity in their social relationships with both colleagues and teachers. All members of staff are treated with respect and courtesy. The few pupils who act in an anti-social manner occasionally, are shown tolerance and understanding. Whilst oppressive behaviour undoubtedly occurs, as is reflected in the school's behaviour records, there was no discernible apprehension amongst the pupils about bullying. There is a real sense of Christian community which contributes positively to the quality of life and to the learning environment.
- 23 Levels of attendance which were a cause for concern at the time of the previous inspection are now satisfactory. They have increased progressively for each of the last four years and are in line with the national average. The school is working hard to further improve the attendance, particularly in Key Stage 4, and to encourage punctuality across the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 24 Teaching is predominantly good across the school. It has improved from the last inspection when it was mainly satisfactory at both Key Stages 3 and 4. The improvements in teaching are shown by the judgement that of the 154 lessons seen only two were graded unsatisfactory. Fifty five per cent were judged to have good and very good teaching, and 19 per cent, nearly one in five, had very good or outstanding teaching. Single unsatisfactory lessons occurred in drama and mathematics. There is good teaching in all subjects, but during the week of the inspection none was seen in design and technology. In this subject, however, there is evidence of some previous good teaching, for example in aspects of graphic design. Teaching is best in English where 76% of lessons were good and better. There are high proportions of good and very good teaching in geography, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music, and physical education.
- 25 Teachers care for their pupils and have a good knowledge of their needs. Accurate information about pupils' prior attainment and the very effective tracking and monitoring system helps teachers to keep a close eye on the personal and academic achievements of pupils. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace so that skills, knowledge and understanding are developed successfully. However, in the second part of a number of lessons when they are expected to work individually, many pupils

chatter with their neighbours on matters un-related to the work in hand. This slows the rate of learning. Those teachers who have the highest expectations of behaviour and pace in the lesson successfully teach to the last minute as in a Year 11 mathematics lesson on applications of the sine rule. Pupils know that they have to work hard. In interviews with pupils about general school life, pupils were clear about those subjects in which they had to work hardest. English and religious education were named most frequently by the oldest pupils. Many teachers give pupils time targets for the sections of the lesson and this helps to maintain an appropriate pace of demanding work.

- 26 Teachers have clear objectives for the lessons and pupils know what they have to do and what they are expected to learn. The deep subject knowledge of teachers is often used to interest and challenge pupils successfully. This was well shown in a history lesson where pupils were helped to understand the lives of protestant martyrs in the reign of Queen Mary. Their spiritual understanding was well promoted by the discussion.
- 27 The best teaching is underpinned by good planning which shows clear routes to further learning. For example, a very well planned unit of work on natural hazards in geography led to a series of good lessons which included interesting and relevant resources. Pupils considered the recent flooding and its origins. Related homework was carefully planned with different tasks tailored to the needs of both high and low attaining pupils. In contrast there are a few examples of barely satisfactory planning. In a design and technology lesson on bridges there was a lack of carefully planned and easily achieved practical tasks to underpin the learning and excite the pupils. In the one unsatisfactory mathematics lesson planning lacked detail so that the challenges for the higher attaining members of the group were overlooked. Boredom, unnecessary chatter, and lowered concentration resulted.
- 28 Homework is often used well to link and prepare for new learning. This was especially well seen in the one religious education lesson inspected by invitation, to assess the contribution of the subject to spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' learning. Studies of the nature of prophecy led naturally, through homework on the biblical prophet Amos, to the work of Archbishop Oscar Romero and present day prophetic social work with the homeless in the City of Leeds.
- 29 Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for. Learning support assistants make an outstanding contribution to pupils' progress: they work as a team, they are well prepared and sustain the work and progress of the pupils to whom they are assigned. Individual Education Plans guide the teaching of pupils with special educational needs but not all are sufficiently specific to the subjects which pupils learn.
- 30 For the very few pupils who show extreme behavioural difficulties the school provides a learning base where pupils are taught intensively on a one-to-one basis and then reintegrated into their usual lessons. Teachers generally manage this small group of pupils well, although these pupils challenge and test teachers severely in some lessons. For example, in a science lesson in Year 10 on the digestive system, the lowest attaining set of pupils showed little co-operation from the start of the lesson and several pupils constantly disrupted the learning. The teacher's stamina and patience improved the slow start and by the end pupils produced work well-linked with the set task so that learning developed effectively. The learning mentor system, housed in 'the flat' also gives valued support to other pupils with learning difficulties. Overall management of pupils is good.

- 31 Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well taught and well integrated by teachers. They achieve at least as well as their peers. In the early stages of language acquisition they are behind in subjects where there is much oral and written work, but are able to demonstrate their skills and abilities in mathematics which teachers harness successfully. They make good progress and are well supported by teachers.
- 32 The school's work for gifted and talented pupils is at an early stage. Pupils with these abilities have been identified throughout the school and some training has been undertaken. However individual subject departments have not yet spelled out their particular teaching strategies and provision, although developments are carefully coordinated by one teacher supported by the Excellence in Cities resources. In many lessons a good range of activities sustains interest and motivation across the one hour period and extends learning successfully. In a very good English lesson in Year 7, pupils built on an earlier lesson where they had derived a model for letter writing. Notes gave guidance on format, then, working from the drama text they were studying pupils were moved from facts to feeling for character. They identified vocabulary, engaged in lively interactions using flashcards and brisk oral questions which became increasingly challenging. A very good plenary session checked that learning objectives had been met.
- 33 In satisfactory but weaker lessons teachers sometimes spent far too long on exposition, leaving pupils little room for individual work and response.
- 34 Teachers make good opportunities to develop pupils literacy and numeracy in many subjects using techniques and strategies spearheaded by the English department. Technical terms are well taught, to give greater precision to pupils' oral and written work. For example, in mathematics, pupils were able to explain 'hexominoes' and interpret the sense of words such as 'jump' and 'swarm' in art when discussing visual images. Occasionally teachers do not use new terms with sufficient frequency to establish confident use of new ideas, as in a science lesson when pupils were learning about the components of solutions. In history teachers help pupils to make good notes as they highlight key sentences and phrases in a text studied by the whole class using an overhead projector transparency. A variety of strategies is used to develop writing skills such as the use of letter or diary form. Some short question and answer techniques help low attaining pupils to develop short sentences well but higher attaining pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop the extended answers which lead to sustained pieces of writing.
- 35 The standard of reading overall is good. Lower attaining pupils are supported in their reading by the special needs department. The home/school reading partnership 'Family Focus' where parents act as helpers, is already having a positive impact on the reading progress of pupils in Year 7. The increased reading skill helps pupils to benefit from the teaching in many subjects.
- 36 There are good examples of the teaching of basic numeracy. It is an everyday feature of modern languages lessons where pupils are taught to speak about dates, birthdays and times using the 24 hour clock, or to play number games. In physical education pupils are taught to work out their heart rates from pulse measurements with different types of exercise.
- 37 Many subjects incorporate the use of statistical data into the teaching as in geography. The school has identified the need for a whole school policy for numeracy in its

forward planning to help subjects to map the use and development of numeracy systematically.

- 38 The teaching of information technology is good in the separate lessons taught in specialist rooms. Teachers give clear explanations and use questions frequently to check pupils' understanding and progress. A good range of activities maintains pace and interest and learning is good. In subjects across the curriculum the use of information technology is underdeveloped, largely as a consequence of insufficient modern computers, but in some cases, due to lack of confidence on the part of teachers. The school has made great strides since the last inspection mainly from its own fund-raising efforts. Recent grants for the National Grid For Learning paid for wiring on the complex site and just two new machines.
- 39 The school monitors its teaching regularly to raise standards and has begun a programme recently to further monitor systematically those subjects where attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is lower than it should be. Overall the school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses in teaching and working hard to improve it further.

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

- 40 The quality of the school's curricular provision is good. The curriculum for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Statutory requirements are fully met, although the cross-curricular provision of information and communication technology is still under-developed due to the lack of computers in subject areas. Since the last inspection pupils with special educational needs now receive their full allocation of teaching of modern foreign languages. The curriculum sub-committee of the governing body monitors the school's curriculum closely, and regularly receives and considers items relating to changes in subject courses.
- 41 Overall the curriculum is balanced and well planned. The timetable allocation for subjects is satisfactory, allowing for sound delivery of the curriculum. There is a good range of options for pupils in Key Stage 4 leading to GCSE examinations. A small group of disappled pupils receive a modified work-related programme in Key Stage 4. They spend two days in school following a basic core of subjects, and either three days on work experience, or a mixture of work experience and vocational courses at the further education college. As part of their core studies in school, pupils in this group receive an appropriate course in science leading to the Certificate of Achievement with the possibility of entering for a GCSE examination in science. The school has not yet fully implemented a clear policy to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils. A co-ordinator has recently been appointed and subject areas are currently identifying their own strategies for provision within their teaching programmes.
- 42 The teaching programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is sound and is allocated adequate teaching time in both key stages. It contains appropriate courses on sex, health and drugs education. The existing programme has been only loosely monitored. A co-ordinator has recently been appointed to conduct a thorough review of the course with the aim of producing a new scheme of work that will also include the new requirement for citizenship. Careers education and guidance is particularly well developed and is a strength of the school. Pupils in Year 9 are well prepared in considering possible career opportunities when deciding on their options

for Key Stage 4 studies. They receive further guidance in Year 10 on selecting careers before undertaking a two-week period of work experience during the summer term. There is very good liaison with the local careers advisory service, and the school has an extensive bank of local employers willing to accept pupils from the school on work experience. Many teachers volunteer to be involved with supervision of the pupils in the workplace, and good use is made of pupils' experiences in the follow-up sessions in school. Opportunities for further and higher education courses are the focus for sessions in Year 11 for those continuing in education and careful counselling and assistance are given to those pupils seeking full-time employment on leaving school.

- 43 The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities in spite of the limitations imposed by the lunchtime arrangements. The school organises an early bird club from 7.30 a.m. each morning. A number of sports teams and coaching sessions are organised for both boys and girls. Water polo is available for pupils in Key Stage 3, and trampoline sessions are arranged for pupils as part of their GCSE programme in physical education. Pupils are able to learn and develop musical skills through participation in various singing and band groups. Pupils doing GCSE art are able to extend their creative talents in after school sessions and there are also clubs for computing and creative dance. Educational visits are well organised in various subject areas. Fieldwork is an integral component of the geography curriculum and visits abroad for French language and skiing occur regularly. The school makes particularly good use of its chaplaincy and retreats for pupils' personal and social development. The school has forged strong links with a wide variety of community groups, such as Social Services, Leeds Diocesan Catholic Care, Faith in Schools, SPACE (Positive Alternatives to Crime) and reading volunteers, all of whom make significant contributions to the life and work of the school. There are close and productive links with contributory primary schools, Notre Dame Sixth Form College, further education colleges and the university as well as local banks, businesses, the Royal Armouries museum and the church community.
- 44 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The school has a comprehensive policy for pupils' spiritual development which permeates its life. A strong Christian ethos supports pupils in their day to day lives. Good opportunities for collective worship are provided daily in main assemblies and short form periods at the start of the day when pupils are able to share concerns, pray and reflect on the needs of the world. They do so with appropriate reverence. Pupils participate in liturgy, for example sharing the responsibility of leading the liturgy at the annual prize giving and celebration of achievement. A chaplaincy team supports teachers with well prepared materials on a weekly theme. From time to time all pupils are offered the opportunity to take part in more extended retreats and the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Pupils speak appreciatively of the impact of these experiences on their personal lives and understanding. The small chapel provides a quiet space for reflection and is available to those of other faith heritages as well as Christians. Subjects contribute to pupils' spiritual and moral development. English and history provide well. When studying novels in English moral themes are brought forward and pupils are helped to learn of the nature of prejudice and discrimination and the social and cultural contexts in which they operate. They are helped to recognise the response of the human spirit in conditions of suffering and adversity. In many lessons in this subject teachers draw excellent responses from pupils by the respect they show for pupils' contributions and the encouragement given to share responsibility for learning and improving each other's progress. The positive impact of religious education is seen in the colourful displays which celebrate and dignify pupils' efforts, and show respect for other faiths and cultures.

- 45 The school's provision for moral development is good. The school's clear set of principles and values positively influences pupils. Personal and community responsibility are stressed. The pupil's part of the home-school agreement includes the statement that ' I will try to live my life by Christian principles by showing care for others. I will behave sensibly and treat others with respect and courtesy.' Pupils are helped in many lessons to know the difference between right and wrong. In physical education pupils play in a fair way in the competitive elements of the subject and show good sporting behaviour. The importance of honesty is stressed in mathematics. In science there is consideration of moral dilemmas such as those presented by genetic engineering. Pupils have the opportunity to give to charities and those less fortunate than themselves, for example, by the support of a local catholic hospice.
- 46 Pupils' social development is good. They have many opportunities to work as partners or small groups as well as in whole class situations. Year councils meet each term to take responsibility for the school's corporate life. The school council, with representatives from each year group meets shortly afterward. Pupils learn to relate successfully with adults in community in the residential opportunities which they are offered. The good work experience scheme in Year 10 helps them to understand the wider world of work.
- 47 The school's provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Good opportunities for pupils' aesthetic development are provided in music, drama and dance in particular. Significant contributions are made by history and geography. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced by residential learning opportunities in this country and abroad, for example to Spain. The study of poetry from other cultural contexts enriches the teaching of English. World music and cross-cultural experiences in dance add to this provision. The school has direct links with an African school. Pupils learn about the lives of children from another part of the world and support them more personally by sending items of clothing such as sports shirts.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 48 The governors have resolved issues identified in the previous inspection report by approving a comprehensive health and safety policy and ensuring that registration procedures comply fully with legal requirements.
- 49 Mount St Mary's is a very caring school where there is much emphasis on the individual needs of pupils and where their welfare is paramount. Teachers and support workers know their pupils very well and are able to provide the help and guidance which enables even the most vulnerable to cope with the vicissitudes of daily life in the school. There are good procedures to promote regular attendance and high standards of behaviour. Arrangements to assess pupils' attainment and progress are effective and the results are used constructively to inform planning. The good quality of the support and advice provided to pupils has a positive impact on their level of attainment.
- 50 Health and safety procedures are good. They take full account of the complexity of the building, the risks associated with the surrounding environment and the special features associated with the provision of a swimming pool. Designated members of staff are familiar with their responsibilities in relation to the building and departmental heads regularly review safety procedures associated with particular subject areas. The tenets of the child protection policy are widely known and the school's procedures comply with local guidelines. Good use of the science and religious education curricula is made to raise pupils' awareness of the dangers of abuse. Plans are in hand to review the provision of personal, social and health education throughout the school to ensure that pupils are helped to become increasingly independent, self confident and knowledgeable about themselves and about healthy and safe living.
- 51 Following criticism in the previous inspection report the school has worked very closely with the education welfare officer to identify reasons for pupils' absence and to encourage more regular attendance, particularly in Key Stage 4. An imaginative range of incentives associated with target setting for individuals and year groups and a strategy of early enquiry for absence and home visits, have proved very effective. The overall attendance rates have risen progressively over the last three years to meet the national average. The school's brief and explicit rules of behaviour are well supported by a clear system of rewards and sanctions. The policy is effective in promoting good behaviour across the school and making clear its intolerance of bullying. The school has also developed in-house learning support facilities which make very good provision for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties or whose challenging behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion. Such pupils' behavioural and academic progress is very carefully monitored and they are reintegrated into mainstream classes whenever possible. This initiative has been successful in reducing the number of both permanent and fixed term exclusions from the school.
- 52 Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development and their overall academic progress are good. The weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report have been resolved. The school's efforts are ongoing and are built into the school development plan. A sophisticated and comprehensive assessment policy is in place. It involves both staff and pupils very fruitfully in setting targets, reviewing progress and evaluating attainment. A wide range of strategies, including mentoring, work scrutiny and tracking, are used effectively to focus efforts on attainment. Communication amongst the various members of staff involved and between staff and pupils is regular and constructive. The merit system is used well to celebrate both academic and personal development and helps to motivate pupils. Opportunities are taken to involve the support of parents by personal letters as well as

the more routine communication through work planners and parents' consultation evenings. Written reports, including the annual report, provide good information about pupils' attitudes and progress. The school complies fully with statutory requirements in its provision for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well cared for and are enabled to make very good progress. The good quality, overall, of the educational and personal support provided by the school is effective in raising the attainment of pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 53 Parents continue to hold the favourable views of the school which were the subject of comment in the previous inspection report. The overriding impression from the parents who expressed views is one of enthusiasm for the school and pride in its tradition and standards.
- 54 One hundred and ninety one parents returned the questionnaire and twenty eight attended the meeting for parents. They particularly liked the fact that their children were happy at school, they are well behaved, work hard, are well taught and make good progress; parents have great respect for the good management of the school and find the teachers to be very approachable. A few parents expressed reservations about the homework provision and the communication of information about children's progress. The inspectors found that the school had a good homework policy, which makes a positive contribution to attainment and progress across the school. They recognise that it is not always implemented consistently. Parents who identified their concern about reports on their children's progress indicate that they are unhappy with the lack of information on attainment at Key Stage 3. The school is aware of this concern and includes in its development plan a review of the arrangements for parental information.
- 55 The school greatly values the support of parents and fully recognises the important contribution which they can make to assist their children's learning. Parents generally respond well. They support the work of the school and many of them co-operate with the school's staff to raise much-needed funds to support the school's resources. There are many effective links and heads of year play a central role in developing these. For example, they liaise with parents to improve their children's punctuality and attendance, speak with them formally and informally about their children's progress, and monitor parents' consultation and information evenings to ensure that alternative opportunities are provided for an exchange of information. Very good pastoral and social links are maintained. Parents are made to feel welcomed into the school to join in the liturgy of the Mass with their children, to view drama and musical productions or to celebrate award ceremonies. There are good links with the primary schools and parents of Year 7 children are made to feel very welcome from the start of their association with the school. Pupils with special educational needs and their parents benefit from the very caring and supportive environment, which they find in the school.

- 56 The range of strategies employed by the school to communicate with parents makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home. The school's official documentation, including the prospectus, the governors' annual report and the regular newsletters are well presented, informative and helpful. Parents of pupils for whom English is an additional language receive good help from specialist support workers. Annual reports on pupils are comprehensive documents which give parents a clear idea of how well their child is coping with the work and environment of the school. They comply fully with statutory requirements. There are opportunities for parents to learn about the curriculum and about projected building and other developments in the school. They are treated very much as part of the school community and as valued partners in improving the learning, behaviour and personal development of their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 57 The leadership provided by the headteacher and other key staff is very good. The headteacher joined the school just before the last inspection four years ago. She quickly assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the school and set about establishing a supportive culture of accountability to help drive up standards. As a result teamwork in the school is now excellent. There is a shared commitment to improvement at all levels and openness on the part of teachers to discuss these matters. There is also a clear sense of unity between all staff, teaching and non-teaching, with regard to the school's mission and the need to support each other in its realisation. Heads of department and heads of year perform well. The review of the work of each department by senior management is scheduled in the school calendar and is the central focus of the school's arrangements to monitor and evaluate the work in classrooms and the standards achieved. This is highly valued by heads of department. Similar arrangements are in place for heads of year who have planned mentoring sessions with a senior manager who is always available for advice and support. The well thought out use of the school's impressive pupil performance data and pupil tracking procedures are a strong feature of these middle management reviews. The management of the school's provision for pupils with special educational need is very effective. At the last inspection the co-ordinator did not have enough time to fulfil the complex duties assigned to the post. The various aspects of provision, in-class support, direct teaching, specialised on-site bases and overall curricular provision are very well co-ordinated and support pupils' progress effectively.
- 58 The school's management structure is very good with clear lines of accountability and effective communication, aided by a well-developed committee structure. This helps the school to function well and provides a forum for every member of staff to express their view and play an effective role within the school. These regular meetings also play an important role in establishing a common sense of purpose and shared vision throughout the organisation. Members of the senior management team and other managers are invested with appropriate levels of delegated responsibility to respond positively, both in the short and long term, to managing a school with a small but significant number of challenging pupils. The high profile of a very supportive and approachable senior management team around the school is valued by staff and contributes significantly to good order and corporate working.
- 59 The arrangements in place for development planning are very good. The School Development Plan is a comprehensive document with clear priorities and targets. Associated resource implications, success criteria and training needs are identified. Planning is done on a three-year cycle with an action plan produced every academic year. The governors and the senior management team finally decide the priorities for

development with opportunities built in for full staff involvement in the process at the formulation stage. All departments also have their own development and action plans, which reflect their contribution to the whole school plan. Good, well thought out procedures are in place for regular monitoring and review of progress in implementing plans, both at departmental and whole school level.

- 60 The school has good procedures for staff development to meet staff and school needs. It has recently acquired the Investors in People award which verifies good personnel management practice in such matters as training for newly qualified teachers, induction of new staff and its well focused training programmes to improve teaching and to generally develop staff expertise and experience. It has also made good progress in introducing Performance Management, with an agreed policy and training for team leaders.
- 61 The school's governing body is very supportive and committed to the school and its improvement. Governors are aware of their statutory responsibilities and discharge them effectively. They are well informed and have an excellent grasp of curriculum issues and the problems the school faces, particularly with regard to finance. Governors also work closely with the headteacher and her senior team in strategic planning to determine the overall mission and direction for the school.
- 62 The school makes very good use of its financial resources. All delegated funding is well targeted to match the needs identified in the development plan. The Standards Fund is administered properly; it is meticulously monitored and used effectively. The school works constructively with the local authority and with the diocese to secure additional funding to improve the school's facilities. A particularly impressive bid has been made, for example, for Lottery funding to develop the outdoor facilities for physical education.
- 63 The school management is familiar with the principles of best value and able to demonstrate how it applies them consistently when making financial decisions. Recent examples are the review of catering arrangements that resulted in a better service at lower cost from a different contractor, and an investment in light sensors which has led to greater economy in the use of electricity.
- 64 Financial administration and control are very good. Appropriate delegation of budgets to departmental heads has proved to be a cost effective and efficient way of handling day-to-day expenditure. Overall administration is supervised with meticulous care by the bursar who works very closely with the head teacher and ensures that adequate information is regularly presented to governors to enable them to carry out their statutory responsibilities. Appropriate action has been taken on the recommendations of the recent auditors' report.
- 65 Expenditure at the school is broadly in line with that for similar schools nationally. Taking into account the school's socio-economic circumstances, the attainment of pupils at entry, the context in which the school operates, and the good improvement that has been made since the previous inspection, the school provides good value for money.
- 66 The accommodation at Mount St Mary's School has character. It is unusual but quite functional. Since the previous inspection the school has worked well to brighten teaching areas and enhance corridors by attractive and interesting display. Security fencing has been installed and is effective in minimising the vandalism that was previously a problem. The outside fabric of the building is regularly maintained and

looks well. A very pleasant reception area helps to make visitors feel welcome. It houses a large statue of Mary. This, together with an adjacent chapel of the Blessed Sacrament set the tone for the overtly Christian environment, which characterises the school.

- 67 Despite the complexity of corridors and stairways that can confuse the visitor, the nature of the building does not inhibit the teaching of the National Curriculum. There are sufficient classrooms and other teaching areas of appropriate size for this purpose. Pupils soon learn to find their way around quickly and efficiently. There is no undue loss of time between lessons.
- 68 Accommodation is satisfactory for teaching English, mathematics, history, geography, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology and art. For science it is very good. The school has invested in a major refurbishment of the laboratories, and apart from the lack of information technology equipment, they provide excellent facilities. Accommodation for music is good. Problems in two areas remain. For drama there is a lack of space; the dance and drama studio is constantly in use for dance and the main hall, regularly used as an alternative, lacks the privacy to create an appropriate environment. Imaginative use has been made of space to create an additional small gymnasium but facilities outdoors for physical education are still inadequate. The school continues to work closely with the local authority in order to develop nearby land for this purpose. Maintenance of the swimming pool continues to be a drain on school resources.
- 69 The library is an excellent room. A former chapel, the aesthetics of the room create an impressively peaceful, learning environment. It incorporates a careers library which is very well used. The weakness of the main library is that it is not easily accessible to pupils and the records indicate that it is at present much underused, less than eighty books per week being borrowed.
- 70 Overall the level of resources has improved since the previous inspection. The school has increased its investment, focussing carefully on areas where there is greatest need. Resources are now satisfactory for mathematics, science, history, geography, music physical education, design technology and drama. They are good for modern foreign languages where regular use is made of tapes, overhead projectors and information and communication technology. For English, many textbooks are outdated and there is a marked shortage of fiction in the library where the ratio of books to pupils is at only half the recommended level. In art resources are good for two-dimensional work but pupils attainment suffers from a lack of access to ceramics, sculpture and other three dimensional work.
- 71 The one area of need, which affects all subjects apart from modern foreign languages, is the shortage of information and communication technology equipment. Despite the considerable investment, which has been made by the school since the previous inspection, the ratio of computers to pupils remains at 14:1, compared with a national average of 8:1. The school is very conscious of this shortcoming and improvement has been a central part of the school development plan to the year 2002. The most recent projects have been to develop the library as a multi-media resource for personal study and to incorporate appropriate wiring for computers in the refurbished laboratories. These investments have yet to bear fruit but are a good indication of the school's priorities in this area.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

72 The school is well placed to make further improvements identified in the inspection. In particular staff and governors should:

Raise the standards in science at Key Stage 4 by:

- implementing fully the plans for more curriculum time in Year 9 and closer setting arrangements in Key 4,
- developing more challenge to higher attaining pupils. (paragraphs 6, 105, 106)

Raise the standards in modern foreign languages in Key Stage 4 by:

- consolidating the improvements in teaching at Key Stage 3
- establishing one first language, French, from year 7 to build higher achievement in more pupils by the end of Key Stage 4 (paragraphs 154, 156, 157)

Extend the use of information technology in subjects across the curriculum by:

- ensuring that teachers plan the opportunities for use in their schemes of work
- assisting those staff who lack confidence to gain further training
- as resources allow increase the number of modern computers available to support teaching and learning. (paragraphs 90, 103, 104, 112, 121, 128, 153)

Make increased use of the library by:

- planning to extend its use for teaching and learning in all relevant subjects extending the book stock
- encouraging more informal use by pupils and increasing the borrowing rate (paragraphs 70, 79)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	154
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	17	36	43	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	889	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	201	N/A

Special educational needs

	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	236	N/A

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	26

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	79	93	172

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	55(57)	48(45)	38(38)
	Girls	80(85)	61(57)	43(48)
	Total	135(142)	109(102)	81(86)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	78 (80)	62(58)	47(49)
	National	63(64)	65(62)	59(56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32(25)	33(28)	13(12)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	29(25)	53(39)	42(48)
	Girls	44(61)	63(54)	65(65)
	Total	73(86)	116(93)	107(113)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	42(49)	66(53)	61(64)
	National	64 (64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14(19)	38(28)	21(26)
	National	31(31)	39 (37)	29(28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	86	84	170

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	28	73	79
	Girls	33	73	76
	Total	61	146	155
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	36(33)	88(90)	91(92)
	National	49(46)	88.8 (90.7)	94.4(95.7)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35.6(34.2)
	National	38.7 (37.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	17
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	13
Indian	6
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	818
Any other minority ethnic group	17

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	31	0
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: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	50.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

Total number of education support staff	17.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	509

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.7
Key Stage 4	22.3

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2,426,430
Total expenditure	2,416,950
Expenditure per pupil	2,363
Balance brought forward from previous year	-53,320
Balance carried forward to next year	-39,837

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	889
Number of questionnaires returned	191

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	47	5	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	4	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	48	8	3	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	43	17	5	1
The teaching is good.	47	44	2	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	42	18	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	35	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	25	2	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	39	41	13	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	45	41	4	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	42	5	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	37	9	3	14

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

ENGLISH

- 73 Standards of attainment on entry have risen gradually and were broadly in line with the national average in 2000. This improvement is also reflected in the standards being attained at the end of Key Stage 3. The results in the National Curriculum tests in 2000 were above the national average and well above average in comparison with similar schools. These Key Stage 3 results continued the upward trend of the last three years. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment in GCSE English is above the national average, but is below the national average for English literature.
- 74 There is a difference between the attainment of boys and girls at both key stages, with girls out performing boys particularly at Key Stage 4. At both key stages pupils with special educational needs are making very good progress and are achieving standards that are consistent with their peer groups. At Key Stage 4 virtually all pupils attain very well with most achieving grades in the A* -G range at GCSE. Pupils with EAL are making very good progress at each key stage.
- 75 By the end of Key Stage 3 standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory and frequently good. An excellent example of how these skills are developed was a Year 8 lesson where accent, dialect and appropriate register were discussed. Pupils learned the difference between formal and informal language by exploring tone and expression in speech. The use of emotive language was enthusiastically discussed in a Year 7 lesson on the poem 'The Wall'. In this lesson the pupils took an active part in building up a display of vocabulary, which prompted further discussion.
- 76 Standards of speaking and listening at Key Stage 4 are generally good. In a Year 10 lesson on 'An Inspector Calls' the discussion helped pupils understand the significance of the symbolic role of the character Eva Smith. However, although teachers' planning indicates that there are opportunities for speaking and listening, there seemed to be little opportunity for this in practice during the inspection. Some classes are unused to discussion and collaborative learning and need more opportunities for speaking and listening to improve their skill and confidence.
- 77 Standards in reading are broadly in line with national averages at the beginning of Key Stage 3. The scores on reading tests administered when pupils enter school show that approximately one quarter (24 per cent) have reading ages two years behind their chronological age: not high enough to benefit from secondary education fully. The home school reading strategy introduced in Key Stage 3 helps to improve reading skills, but is it not monitored with sufficient rigour to allow precise feedback to pupils nor to maximise its impact. Many pupils at this age read fluently, explore vocabulary and are able to refer to textual evidence to support a viewpoint. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on 'The Highwayman', pupils successfully identified metaphors in the poem and were able to give relevant examples.
- 78 By Key Stage 4 pupils are reading with a good degree of sensitivity and understanding. The best example of this improvement was a Year 11 lesson where pupils were able to interpret key features in the poem 'Stealing'. The pupils went on to analyse the poem, identifying themes, characteristics of the thief and the poet's use of language. This, they did, with a degree of sensitivity and empathy. Low attaining pupils read well. Frequently, these pupils read books outside lessons, both before school and at lunchtime, in the welcoming special needs support base. The use of the library

however, is limited. Only a small number of pupils borrow books and use the reference facilities. The library, as an integral part of the reading strategy, is not fully exploited.

- 79 Standards in writing are average at the beginning of Key Stage 3 but a wide range of writing strategies helps pupils to improve. For example, a carefully constructed writing guide helped pupils in a Year 9 lesson on the poem 'The Guitar Man' to write about images in poetry. Pupils redraft their work to improve its quality. Dictionaries are available in all classrooms and pupils refer to them frequently. The presentation of coursework in Key Stage 4 is excellent and shows a high level of commitment to the subject. There is much evidence of pupils of all capabilities, throughout the school using information technology as a tool for improving presentation. Pupils in the special needs base are well supported by key words displayed in the classroom. In English rooms pupils are encouraged by clear and helpful guidelines to understand the criteria which are applied to the marking of their work. Some lower attaining pupils still experience difficulty with accuracy in spelling and grammar, but they produce imaginative pieces which clearly demonstrate an understanding of audience and purpose in their writing.
- 80 Teaching is good and in almost half the lessons very good or excellent. The high standards of teaching contribute substantially to the good progress which pupils make. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language are making very good progress.
- 81 All teachers display good subject knowledge and have high expectations of pupils. Planning is excellent; teachers explain what they expect pupils to learn at the beginning of a lesson and return at the end of the lesson to check that the learning has taken place.
- 82 The appropriate tasks set for the mixed ability groups are not always sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils. In the more successful lessons pupils are drawn into taking an active part because tasks are well structured. Good questioning techniques and feedback to pupils allows them to make very good gains in understanding. A good example was a Year 7 lesson on 'The Terrible Fate of Humpty Dumpty' where pupils developed an understanding of the skills needed to write an informal letter.
- 83 Good pace, high expectations of pupils, stimulating and well planned lessons and extended plenary sessions to consolidate learning are all features of lessons where progress is good or very good. There were many examples of such teaching. Progress was less assured where time was not managed as effectively and the learning objectives were not kept in focus. Homework, although set and marked regularly, is not always of a consistent standard and does not contribute as much as it could to learning.
- 84 Pupils' attitudes are very good at both key stages and behaviour in the classroom is generally good. Pupils respond in a mature manner in discussions and are enthusiastic about their work. They sustain concentration, have a business like approach to their work and co-operate well with each other and their teachers. Indeed warm relaxed relationships are a feature of most lessons. Pupils enjoy the subject and appreciate the work of their teachers.

English as an Additional Language

- 85 Provision for the 30 pupils on the school roll who have English as an additional language (EAL) is very good and promotes high standards. The school receives specific funding for three Chinese children who had no English when they joined the school. Literacy development is a focus for these pupils, they are supported either within the subject area or are taught separately by an English - Cantonese specialist.
- 86 Pupils with EAL are closely monitored and assisted wherever possible by Learning Support Assistants; as a result they are making very good progress. Their work is well presented and indicates the ability to write in a variety of forms for a range of purposes. In Key Stage 4 pupils with EAL are working in line with their peers. The high level of presentation in the pupils' books indicates an obvious pride in their work.
- 87 The management of pupils with EAL is excellent. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures the early identification of their needs. If these needs are seen to be acute they are placed on the register of pupils with special educational needs and extra support is made available. At present there are only 6 pupils on the register.
- 88 The department is led by a team of two energetic and enthusiastic teachers. The work of the department is well focussed on raising attainment; especially in literacy and increasing examination results. Much has been done to remedy the issues raised in the last inspection report. Examination results are analysed carefully and targets are set to help individual pupils to achieve their maximum potential. There is a clear commitment to raising levels of attainment even further and to improve the range of teaching strategies to help to achieve this goal.
- 89 The sound leadership of the acting heads of department together with the high level of staff commitment provide a firm basis for success. This is a good department serving its pupils very well.

Points for development

- Develop work closely matched to the needs of high attaining pupils.
- Adopt a rigorous approach to the monitoring of reading.

Drama

- 90 Standards in drama are satisfactory. Most pupils are able to work in small groups to develop improvisations. Pupils in Key Stage 3 explore ideas successfully and create small performances. The best example of these features was seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were asked to explore the theme 'conflict'. Pupils also use drama to explore ideas and develop cameo performances, for example in a Year 9 lesson on 'colour', pupils were able to represent 'colours' using small un-scripted scenes. Some pupils at Key Stage 3 were not able to express their work using the language of drama and were unaware of technical terms such as mime, body language, freeze frames and role-play.
- 91 In Key Stage 4 pupils gain not only an understanding of the dramatic process through participation but are also able to explore meaning and feelings. In a Year 11 lesson pupils explored the use of monologue using 'A Cream Cracker Under The Settee' which enabled them to empathise with the plight of a lonely old lady. Lower attaining pupils in this group gave an excellent presentation based around the theme of 'loneliness'; these pupils worked enthusiastically to produce a convincing performance about two lonely people who met by accident.

- 92 Most pupils make satisfactory progress in drama at both key stages but in a Year 11 lesson some pupils needed more direction to enable them to sustain a role and develop their initial ideas into performances.
- 93 The quality of teaching in drama is satisfactory. Teachers follow the excellent schemes of work and produce lessons which have some continuity, although many of them lack training in drama techniques. Teachers produce positive responses from pupils and refreshingly lively pieces of work. Teacher feedback to pupils is satisfactory in most lessons but more is necessary in order to enable pupils to gain confidence and develop their skills further. Some pupils in a Year 8 lesson were observed managing and evaluating their own improvisations and making subtle changes to them. The work of drama is enriched by annual school performances.
- 94 The subject is taught by seven drama teachers, most of whom are not specialists in the subject. They strive to fulfil the demands of the subject. The work lacks a good underpinning of clear and well understood criteria, including those for classroom management, target setting and assessment. In the best lessons preparation and planning are good but heavily reliant on the department's handbook, both for content and practical advice. There is a lack of understanding of the key features of good drama teaching. This needs to be rectified if GCSE results are to improve and the subject strengthened as an option in Key Stage 4.
- 95 Although the drama department has adequate facilities in lighting and sound systems and the use of the dance studio, the use of the hall is unsatisfactory. Using the hall means furniture has to be moved at the beginning of the lesson to make space available. The acoustics are poor and the teaching space is continually interrupted, especially before the lunch break. Considerable time is lost from these lessons.

Points for development

- Set out clear criteria for class management, target setting and assessment.
- Offer teachers further training in the skills of good drama teaching.

MATHEMATICS

- 96 On entry to the school attainment in mathematics is in line with national average. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests the proportion of pupils gaining level 5 or more is below national average, when compared against all schools. Similarly, the proportion gaining level 6 or above is also below the national average. The performance of girls and boys was broadly similar. Results in the 2000 Key Stage 3 tests showed further improvement on those of 1999, with the rising trend of improved results continuing. When compared with similar schools, the proportion gaining level 5 and level 6 is above national average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, 37 per cent of pupils gained an A to C grade, compared with 46 per cent nationally. In recent years, the proportion of pupils gaining a C grade in mathematics has shown a rising trend and this continued in 2000, with results once again improving and rising to 40 per cent. There was no significant difference between boys and girls' attainment in both the 1999 and 2000 examinations.
- 97 Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the national average. Generally, pupils make good oral contributions in their lessons and are able to talk confidently about their work. Pupils make appropriate use of calculators. They

also demonstrate good techniques when carrying out practical investigations and show evidence of beginning to think mathematically about their findings. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 demonstrate confidence with algebraic manipulation. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are also broadly in line with national average. The more able pupils continue to be proficient with algebra. Generally, pupils are confident with techniques of data handling and use statistical terms associated with the work appropriately. Graphing skills are well developed and pupils use their graphs effectively to solve problems.

- 98 Pupils achieve well and are making good progress in Key Stage 3. They make particularly good progress with the acquisition of numerical skills building on the good practices of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools. They also make steady progress in acquiring the technical language associated with the subject and use terminology well in lessons. Pupils with SEN make good progress against their prior attainment on entry to the school. The quality of learning throughout the key stage is enhanced by the teachers' insistence on high standards of presentation of work. Work is neatly set out with well-drawn diagrams and appropriate working.
- 99 At Key Stage 4 the overall quality of learning is satisfactory. Average and low attaining pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well. Standards of presentation of work are maintained at a high standard throughout the key stage. Some pupils of higher attainment do not progress at a sufficiently fast rate to achieve the higher A and B grades predicted by their results in the National Tests two years earlier. Pupils with SEN at Key Stage 4 who are making good progress at Key Stage 3 continue to do so through sensitive and caring teaching and targeted support from Learning Support Assistants.
- 100 Most pupils are co-operative and are keen to learn. They settle down quickly and they attend lessons well equipped. Behaviour in the majority of lessons is generally good. In a few lessons, a small number of pupils persist in chatting sometimes while the lesson is being taught and when they work as individuals. Most, but not all, teachers usually manage this behaviour competently using strategies available to them. In all classes relationships are very good and pupils are generally polite.
- 101 The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory throughout the department, with some good and very good teaching taking place. In over 90 per cent of lessons observed the quality of teaching was satisfactory and better and in just over 60 per cent of lessons it was good with a proportion of very good. Teachers plan their work successfully to motivate pupils. They work hard to establish positive relationships, which leads to good attitudes to the subject and learning. In most instances the pace of lessons is brisk and good use is made of homework at both key stages to reinforce and practise work covered in class. In the best lessons question and answer techniques are used well and pupils are challenged to think about their work. In these successful lessons good use is made of warm-up sessions at the beginning of the lesson to practise mental arithmetic skills, particularly at Key Stage 3. A recurrent feature of these good lessons is the high expectation of teachers. They work hard to drive up standards. The over teaching of topics is a shortcoming in some lessons. This leads to pupils losing interest and insufficient time is made available for pupils to work individually. In general, there is good variety of activities in the lessons.
- 102 The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met with satisfactory procedures in place for assessing pupils at both key stages. The total time allocated to the subject is sufficient. Schemes of work provide teachers with a good guide for their lesson planning. Different programmes are planned to suit pupils of different levels of

attainment. All the attainment targets are covered. Investigational work is well integrated into the programme of study. The department is at an early stage in its use of ICT and planned work takes place in Year 7 only.

- 103 The head of department provides effective leadership and a strong sense of direction for mathematics. The ethos for the subject is good. The well thought out procedures for planning and evaluation linked to a strong commitment to raising standards through good teamwork, are paying dividends. The head of department monitors and supports the work of teachers through lesson observation and informal contact. The issues raised in the previous report have been corrected. The quality of teaching and learning is now good at Key Stage 3. All teachers in the department are suitably qualified with a good balance of experience. Accommodation is good and resources for learning are satisfactory. There is good provision of textbooks. Class sets are available and each pupil has a textbook to keep at home for homework. However, there is no departmental facility available for ICT work although the department has access to the school's central computer suites.

Points for development

- Raise the level of challenge for high attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 to enable more to attain higher grades at GCSE.
- Increase the use of information and communications technology.

SCIENCE

- 104 Pupils' attainment in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 was below the national average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. The results were not as good as those in English or mathematics. The results were much the same as in 1999 but the proportion of pupils reaching higher than the expected levels (level 6) was lower. Teachers' assessments differed considerably from the test scores. The department is undertaking a review of its moderating procedures to ensure more accurate assessment of pupils' attainment levels. Since the last inspection there has been no significant improvement in attainment. The school's results have broadly followed the national trend but have remained consistently below the national average.
- 105 In the GCSE examinations for double award science in 2000 the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well below the national average, and was almost the same as in 1999. Boys and girls did equally well, which is against the national trend. Since the last inspection the trend in the GCSE results has been erratic. Except for a high point in 1998, when the results approached the national average, results have remained well below average. When compared with similar schools however, the subject achieves results which are above average.
- 106 Standards of attainment near the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with expected standards, and slightly better than indicated by the 2000 test results. This is due to the growing impact of the comprehensive assessment procedures now in place which ensures closer tracking of pupils' progress. Higher attaining pupils produce good quality work but they are not routinely given planned extension work to ensure that they achieve well in the higher levels of the curriculum. Pupils generally have sound knowledge across all areas of the curriculum. They understand electrical circuits, how electromagnets are formed and how they are used in electric motors. They understand how rocks are produced in different ways and how volcanoes are formed.

They know about the structure and function of the major organs in the human body, and receive a balanced course on sex education in Year 7. Pupils have sound skills in designing and carrying out simple scientific investigations. For example, they learn about friction by measuring the forces needed to pull trainer shoes across various surfaces, and how the number of coils of wire around a steel nail affects the strength of electromagnetism produced.

- 107 The standard of attainment in Key Stage 4 is below expected levels. Higher attaining pupils do not consistently produce work in line with their capability, particularly those near the end of the key stage. In general, pupils have good knowledge of evolution, genetics and of the principles of genetic engineering. Their knowledge of chemical reactions is sound. They use chemical equations and carry out calculations of percentage composition of compounds competently, from their formulae. They understand about energy transfer processes and understand the relative advantages and disadvantages of different energy generating processes. Coursework investigations are generally of a satisfactory standard with clear presentation of the planning, results obtained and the conclusions drawn. Lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 receive a modified Science Plus course, which prepares them for the Certificate of Achievement but can also lead to entry to the GCSE examination for those pupils who do particularly well.
- 108 Achievement in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils' attainment in science on entry to the school is broadly average and they make satisfactory progress through the key stage. They develop sound practical skills and extend their ideas on how to construct and carry out a fair test in science. They measure and record results satisfactorily and present them well in neat tables and well-drawn graphs. They gain sound general knowledge of the science topics covered. They display particularly good understanding of aspects of astronomy. They know about the constellations, the solar system and basic facts about the planets. They are encouraged to use their knowledge and imagination to describe their experiences as a space traveller visiting one of the planets. They develop a good working knowledge of the structure of the human body. For example, pupils link together their knowledge of the lungs and of the circulation of the blood to develop a sound understanding of the process of respiration and how the body obtains its source of energy. They learn about ideas of how particles are arranged in solids, liquids and gases and later link this understanding with their basic knowledge of chemical reactions to formulate a simple picture of how such changes take place.
- 109 Achievement overall in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. In relation to their prior attainment in Key Stage 3 many pupils do not reach the standards which could be expected of them. In particular, many pupils capable of achieving the higher grades in GCSE are not being adequately challenged to achieve their potential. This is partly due to the setting arrangements still in operation in Year 11 which do not effectively concentrate such pupils into a coherent top teaching set. It is also due to teachers' low expectations. Planning does not take account of suitably challenging extension work to stimulate the imagination of higher attaining pupils to enable them to gain the highest grades in GCSE examinations. Pupils generally make good progress in their investigative skills, and this is reflected well in the quality of the coursework exercise in each subject area. Although pupils generally develop sound factual knowledge they do not become sufficiently confident in applying their knowledge to new situations. For example, pupils in a top Year 11 set were not confident either in making predictions or in giving explanations of the properties of diamond and graphite using their established understanding of covalent bonds and their strength. Lower attaining pupils achieve well in their Science Plus course. They receive very good support and

encouragement from teachers and many of them enter for, and gain, a grade in the GCSE examination.

- 110 The quality of teaching is predominantly satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and teaching is good or very good in forty per cent of the lessons observed. Teaching is slightly better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. Teachers have good subject knowledge and generally plan lessons well to meet the needs of pupils. Literacy development is well supported. For example, a lower Year 10 set preparing for a modular test was presented with a number of key words in an envelope. They were initially to collect the words linked with the digestive system, then arrange them in order and then develop this task into answers to an examination question. The task was then repeated with two other questions and resulted in pupils gaining valuable revision and guidance for answering examination questions. Learning objectives are identified for each unit of work although specific lesson objectives are not always clear or shared with pupils. Teachers generally use questions well to assess knowledge and understanding. Key words are used effectively to develop correct terminology although opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce new words orally. For example, in a lesson with Year 7 pupils the new terms "solute", "solvent" and "solution" were not used often enough by the teacher or the pupils whilst they were looking at examples of substances dissolving in different liquids. Teachers plan a variety of activities and set appropriate tasks, but expectations of pupils are not always high enough, particularly in Key Stage 4, and tight schedules and time targets are not always set for pupils to complete tasks. Good standards are set for written work including the drawing of diagrams and graphs, and the presentation of tables of results. Pupils' work is marked conscientiously. Supportive comments are made and teachers make clear to pupils how their work could be improved. Teachers generally manage pupils well and supervise them effectively, interacting wisely. However, in many lessons there is a substantial minority of pupils who maintain a low level of non-productive conversation against which teaching has to take place. This requires the teacher's regular attention to check behaviour and progress. It reduces the overall rate of learning for all pupils. This feature is a particular problem with lower sets in Key Stage 4, but is present in all sets. The best teaching and learning was observed where clear objectives were shared with pupils, a variety of activities were planned, good pace was maintained and progress was reviewed at the end. For example, a Year 9 lesson on respiration proceeded at a brisk pace with pupils involved in revising their ideas on carbon dioxide and the circulation of the blood, discussing the design of a demonstration to show the presence of more carbon dioxide in exhaled air, writing an account of the experiment and reviewing progress at the end.
- 111 The department is well led. The head of department has a realistic view of what needs to be done to raise standards and these are set out clearly in the development plan. Increased timetable time in Year 9 and the planned introduction of CASE (Cognitive Advance through Science Education) material into Key Stage 3 are sound moves to raise attainment in the key stage. New setting arrangements and the introduction of new modular GCSE courses are appropriate strategies in Key Stage 4. The implementation and development of improved assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are promising. The effectiveness of these changes can then be evaluated. The use of information and communication technology is still very under-developed due primarily to the lack of access to computers and appropriate software. There have been significant changes in staffing recently. These have stabilised and there is now a sense of team spirit and common commitment to succeed. The recently acquired new laboratories provide high quality accommodation and facilities and many new opportunities for teaching. Equipment and resources are adequate and are very efficiently administered by the technical staff.

Points for Development

- Raise standards of attainment at both key stages and especially the challenge for high attaining pupils at each key stage.
- Reduce the amount of inappropriate chatter in lessons by setting high expectations of behaviour and giving appropriately paced time targets.
- Ensure that pupils are clear about the objectives of lessons and what they are expected to achieve.
- Carry through the planned initiatives for improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

- 112 Standards in art are below the national average. The majority of pupils are approaching national expectations by the age of 14 at the end of Key stage 3, while a significant minority are meeting expectations. The results show that the girls are almost twice as successful as the boys. The work seen in school during inspection indicates that teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are generous. GCSE results in 2000 show that less than half of all pupils gained a pass between A* and C and, while these results are significantly better than in 1999, they remain well below the national average and are less good than at the time of the previous inspection. Here also the performance of the girls is considerably better than that of the boys. A quarter of the candidates were awarded a pass at grade D, showing how close the results are to meeting the national average for grades A* to C. Every pupil who was entered for the examination gained a pass between A* and G, which is better than the national average.
- 113 The work produced in school during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 is improving and is now approaching expectations. Much of this work includes developments and investigation based on observational drawing. Pupils are able to use colour theory with light and shade in exercises based on the paintings of 'Op' artists or when making atmospheric paintings of townscapes. They have growing confidence in their graphic skills when producing designs based on letter forms.
- 114 The attainment of Year 11 pupils remains below, and in a significant minority, well below average, mainly due to their dependence on images taken from magazines and books rather than from direct observation. Many of these pupils lack the confidence to carry an idea from original research, through experimental and investigative work to an original painting, print or graphic design. Work being produced by Year 10 pupils, however, is much closer to the national average. It has a greater emphasis on personal development and demonstrates a clearer understanding of the subject's requirements. Pupils are increasingly able to carry an idea forward to a range of possible solutions which typifies the rising standards.
- 115 The achievement of the pupils is generally satisfactory. Allowing for the wide range of previous experiences they have had when they arrive in the school, their achievement by the age of 14 is good. These younger pupils are able to take an idea from a drawing and develop it in stages, into a finished piece of work in paint, collage, pastel, print or occasionally clay. A particularly successful project is that of using inventive letter forms to portray words such as 'jump' then carrying the ideas forward into a decorative design suitable for a fabric design or wall-covering. The pupils' achievement by the age of 16 is unsatisfactory and reflects their poor grasp of the basic elements of the subject and an emphasis on the end-product, at the expense of the design process. Limited opportunities to work with a full range of two and three-

dimensional processes is preventing more of the higher attaining pupils from achieving the highest grades. Their progress is thus only satisfactory. Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11.

- 116 The large majority of pupils have good attitudes to the subject. The few exceptions to this are small numbers of younger boys who set out to antagonise their teacher or interfere with the learning of the rest of the class. In many lessons there is an undercurrent of non-subject related chatter. There is an occasional need for less experienced teachers to be more assertive in their management of pupils.
- 117 The quality of teaching and learning in the department is good. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good and reflects the teachers' subject knowledge and their methods of moving amongst their pupils, assessing work while encouraging the children's best efforts. Teachers give their pupils confidence to learn for themselves and from each other. In a particularly good lesson the class were looking at pupils' prints of a townscape and making critical judgements on the qualities and characteristics of the work. They made sensible, considered contributions to the discussion which followed, showing good knowledge of composition, perspective and proportion. They then went on to make good progress in the planning of their own prints in the practical session which followed.
- 118 Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and occasionally very good. In a very good lesson pupils working from their observational drawings of a still-life group, interpreted them in a Cubist style, then through a black-and-white graphic composition, into an abstract painting; selecting areas of interest and adding details, including elements of African art. These pupils were challenged and fully engaged and making great strides in their learning.
- 119 Teachers make good use of subject specific language and carefully explain new words or, whenever appropriate, revise definitions of words such as "composition" or "form". Their quiet, firm manner encourages pupils' attention. They have a genuine feeling for their subject which the children recognise and respond to. A particular strength of the teaching is the way teachers relate to their pupils, a quality which encourages co-operation and good efforts. The regularly set homework reinforces the learning in class and is marked constructively and helpfully, with praise and encouragement when appropriate. The pupils enjoy art and are confident in their teachers' ability and appreciate their care. The classroom assistants who work with those pupils who have special educational needs are equally supportive and make a most positive contribution to their pupils' learning.
- 120 The increased time allowed for art in Years 7, 8 and 9 since the last inspection is leading to significant improvements. Observational drawing is now placed at the centre of the curriculum from the beginning of Year 7, and lays firm foundations for learning. However, most of the work is essentially two-dimensional and gives pupils few opportunities to experience or experiment with sculpture, textiles or ceramics. The failure to work with information technology, a requirement of the National Curriculum, remains a problem from the last inspection. However, the wiring is in place to connect the department to the school's computer network. The percentage of the pupils who take art in Years 10 and 11 is low compared to the national average. There is a need to improve the quality of assessment at the end of Year 9 so that school standards more closely reflect national standards.

- 121 Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The leadership is particularly strong and the head of department sets high standards for staff and pupils alike but there has been insufficient management training to improve short, medium and long term strategic planning in the subject to ensure that the subject will continue to develop. The subject is less well resourced than at the time of the last inspection and requires increased investment to ensure that the curriculum will include those two and three-dimensional processes and techniques which are now commonplace in art education.
- 122 Since the last inspection the quality of teaching and learning has improved at both key stages. The increased allocation of time at Key Stage 3 has brought, and is continuing to bring, great improvements. The insistence on observational drawing and use of sketchbooks for personal research through drawing and design is leading to improving standards at every stage.

Points for development

- Take steps to raise standards of attainment overall and especially those of boys. Widen the curriculum to give better opportunities for the development of three dimensional work.
- Increase the management training for staff.
- Resource the subject to meet the needs of the curriculum especially in aspects of 3-dimensional work.
- Incorporate ICT into the teaching and learning of the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 123 From inspection evidence standards are below average in both key stages. This represents a decline in the standards described in the last inspection report. In the 1999 and 2000 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 teachers awarded pupils National Curriculum levels of attainment which were considerably above national averages. This was the result of over-generous marking which the department now recognises and is taking steps to put right.
- 124 In the 2000 GCSE examinations pupils taking the Food Technology examination were awarded grades that were around the national averages. Graphics Products and Resistant Materials pupils were awarded results that were below national averages. The 2000 results in all three subjects showed an improvement on the previous year's results.
- 125 At this time in Year 9 standards are below national expectations. Pupils taking the food technology courses have a satisfactory understanding of the design process through the structured approach taken by the teacher. They apply what they learn in their work. They acquire a suitable range of practical skills. However, their knowledge and understanding of the properties of the ingredients they work with is weak. Pupils following the resistant materials modules demonstrate confidence in a simple range of practical skills such as sawing, cutting and measuring, and work towards satisfactory standards of finish and quality as they work with plastics, metal and wood. They spend overlong on simple graphical tasks, the attention paid to their design skills is minimal. These factors depress pupils' standards of attainment in this area. They gain a limited knowledge and understanding of the properties of the materials they work with. Pupils have no opportunity to develop design skills with textiles as this materials area is not offered by the school.
- 126 In Key Stage 4 standards of attainment are below national expectations in all examination courses. A strength across all subjects is the graphical presentation of folders and in work books. These feature sound layout and informative labelling. In some classes there is good use of sketching to generate and communicate design ideas. Progress at this time of the year in Year 11 is not as far advanced as it could be and this is shown by the low volume of folder work thus far completed by many Year 11 pupils. Some of this is the result of the high number of absences in this year in some groups. There is further scope for teachers and pupils to negotiate agreed targets so that pupils do not wait until the last moment to complete their folders.
- 127 Attainment is just below national expectations in food technology groups. Standards of attainment in food technology have suffered as a result of recent staffing difficulties that have disrupted learning. Though pupils are producing work that follows the examination requirements, their folders do not often give a clear picture of their thinking as they work through the design process. For example, when they choose an area to work on for their major project they are required to show in their folders the thinking which led them to that choice. This is often not well argued or the reasons given are simplistic. Pupils have an insecure grasp of the importance of careful consideration of the questions they develop for their customer surveys. Many questions lack relevance and do not help to advance the pupils' understanding of the area they are studying. Their letters, for example, to hotel chains asking about typical menus for celebrations are not always well framed and questions are not well directed. There are a number of examples of sound research into ingredients such as exotic fruits. In food technology folders there are a number of examples of good use of ICT to aid the presentation and communication of ideas and information. This is achieved primarily at home since the

teacher has difficulty in booking the ICT facilities in the school and there is no computer available in the food room.

- 128 In graphics products folders are still at an early stage of completion. Higher attaining pupils are making good progress and are attaining sound standards through well-considered analysis of such things as likely locations for the wine bars and other outlets that form the focus of their projects. They produce sound research into promotional aspects such as packaging and décor. However their considerations of the results of their surveys are often superficial and add little to their arguments. The folders produced for resistant materials are generally tidy but rarely feature imaginative approaches to the presentation of their projects. There is some good use of sketching to develop ideas but this is not a strong feature. The contents of most folders are thin at this stage in the course and a significant number of folders are missing important elements due to absences. Scrutiny of the artefacts produced by these pupils show sound practical skills though overall standards remain below national expectations. All pupils have a satisfactory awareness of health and safety issues.
- 129 Teaching in the department is generally satisfactory in both key stages and across the materials areas that make up this subject and contributes to the satisfactory progress that most pupils make in this subject. Teacher's subject knowledge is sound and has a positive impact on learning. Teachers pass on their knowledge in a wide variety of ways including clear introductions and sound one-to-one support that is a strong feature of a practical subject. There is some weakness in the expectations teachers have of the pupils such as in the structures module in KS3 where the range of activities is limited and the freedom of pupils to explore and investigate different types of structures is curtailed. Teachers are aware of the need to sympathetically introduce pupils to the terminology associated with design technology and use techniques such as word banks and short tests to achieve that aim. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning and makes sure they are not put off discussion of matters relating to the subject by unfamiliar words. Planning is sound although some of the modules are unimaginative. Some tasks do not challenge pupils sufficiently and they spend too much time in KS3 drawing and sometimes tracing material that could be prepared for them in advance. This is the case with the introductory sessions to some modules. Instead of getting down to the practical work as soon as possible they are given overlong introductions. Learning in these lessons is at a pedestrian pace. The control and management of pupils is generally secure and pupils are made very aware of health and safety risks. However some teachers are less persistent than others in applying some of the workshop and workroom conventions such as making sure pupils take turns to speak in question and answer sessions. In their lessons pupils call out and often become frustrated when they are not listened to. Relationships are generally satisfactory and are best when the teacher engages pupils with lively and stimulating language or when pupils realise the value of the teacher's contributions during food technology practical lessons. Teachers use the department's assessment procedures well and are becoming more skilful at judging work against National Curriculum levels of attainment. Homework is set regularly though some of it lacks clarity and challenge such as when pupils are asked to find out 'something' about bridges. Pupils with special educational needs are given the same work as their classmates. Their learning is good when they receive the close support of the learning assistants who work well to make sure that their charges have full access to the curriculum.
- 130 The leadership of the head of department is strong and he has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department is already strong and has had a beneficial effect on teaching and learning.

Teachers are working together to increase the accuracy of their assessment of levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. Examples of pupils' work are considered to arrive at common standards and expectations. Support booklets are being developed for both key stages to lead pupils more effectively through the design process and to inform them about their progress. Teachers consider examples of pupils' work to moderate and discuss standards of attainment. The department is also actively considering the development of support booklets in both key stages to lead pupils through the design process and provide opportunities at every stage for them to record the progress they make. Booklets also provide pupils, teachers and parents with an immediate account of progress. Pupils can also use them for revision purposes. The assessment procedures developed in the department are good and are used effectively to track the progress of individual pupils and of classes. The results have been used well to highlight differences in the effectiveness of teaching in some areas of the curriculum.

Points for development

- Raise standards at both key stages in all aspects of the subject curriculum.
- Improve teaching to raise standards in both key stages.
- Carry out the plans to improve standards listed in the development plan.

GEOGRAPHY

- 131 Standards overall are broadly in line with national standards and teachers' expectations.
- 132 At Key Stage 4, between 1998 and 2000, however, the percentage of pupils attaining GCSE passes at grades A-C and above has fallen to well below the national average. The 2000 cohort of GCSE geography students did not score significantly worse in this subject, however, than in any others and their grades closely matched predicted grades. The results to some extent reflect the previous attainment of the pupils opting for the subject. Girls' results were similar to boys': this represents a reversal of the trends over the preceding four years.
- 133 In the present Year 11 cohort, with a wide range of attainment across the entire GCSE grade range, the majority are performing around the C/D borderline showing promise for higher attainment in examinations. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the GCSE syllabus are good for this stage in the year. The majority have completed or are near to completing their coursework projects.
- 134 They have a good grasp of the principles of physical and human geography, and the relationship between them. They have built on investigational skills gleaned in previous years' fieldwork and can apply their accumulated knowledge of fieldwork techniques satisfactorily, for example, to their GCSE projects on the Leeds central business district.

- 135 In Key Stage 3, standards of achievement are average for pupils of their age and in line with teachers' expectations. Most Year 9 pupils are currently performing on the level 4/5 borderline but all these mixed ability classes contain pupils with attainment and aptitude across the full range. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of human and physical geography and the relationships between them, for example, in describing the causes and effects of the recent flooding in Yorkshire. From Year 7 they use maps of different scales and increasing complexity and apply them in demonstrating and explaining a range of phenomena, for example, the limestone landscape of West Yorkshire, in Year 9.
- 136 The quality of pupils' learning is generally good in both key stages. They apply geographical techniques and skills, for example, population graphs and diagrams to explain the different population structures of countries with different rates of economic growth and development. Their investigational skills improve incrementally through the fieldwork programme and they relate what they learn in class to contemporary issues at home and abroad, for example, the problems of living along the San Andreas fault. Pupils settle down to work quickly and listen well to their teachers and to each other. They take good care with their written work paying particular attention to well-drawn and clearly annotated maps and diagrams. Their workbooks show that steady progress is made over time. Pupils are generally well behaved and have good relationships with their teachers and each other. They attend classes punctually and co-operate with their teachers by applying themselves satisfactorily in class and to their homework, usually completing the latter on time.
- 137 Teaching is good and better in three quarters of the lessons with one in four lessons satisfactory and one excellent. Teachers are well qualified with secure subject knowledge and are well up-to-date with subject developments in the 11-16 curriculum. Teachers have high expectations, are well prepared and have clear lesson objectives which are usually understood by the pupils. They present the pupils with suitably challenging class work and homework but also supply much support and encouragement. Classroom questioning is challenging and usually allows pupils time to formulate their answers. Classroom management and discipline are good. Teachers organise time well and provide a suitable range of resources and activities to engage pupils' interest and stimulate their imagination. For example, practical work on soils, carefully selected video clips, a variety of maps and CD-ROMS, along with a good balance of class teaching and group work, were all applied intelligently to generate a stimulating classroom environment. Different worksheets on the same topic are available for pupils with special needs enabling these pupils to be fully included in lessons and homework. Extension work for the more able is set less frequently. Work is usually marked regularly with helpful comments to aid further learning. Some marking is somewhat perfunctory, with negative and unhelpful comments.
- 138 The department is very well led and is managed efficiently. Teachers work co-operatively and well together and share resources and ideas. Departmental planning is excellent and comprehensively documented. Systems of assessment, tracking and review of pupils' work are effective. A good start has been made on monitoring standards of teaching and the department is in a strong position to move on to the new performance management initiative. The department is adequately accommodated and resourced.

Points for development

- Raise attainment at Key Stage 4 in GCSE by providing better extension work for more able pupils.

HISTORY

- 139 Attainment of pupils by the age of 16 years as shown in the GCSE results is well below national averages. The GCSE results for 2000 indicate that the percentage of pupils gaining at the higher grades remains similar to those of 1999, however, the percentage of pupils attaining grades at A*-G has risen. The achievement of girls is above that of boys by the age of sixteen. In the last two years twice as many boys as girls have taken the subject and more boys failed to achieve a grade at GCSE. The achievement of pupils by the age of 14, as assessed by the teachers, is also very much below that expected of pupil of a similar age. The percentage of pupils achieving at the higher levels also remains below the national averages. There has been an improvement between 1999 and 2000 in line with a national improvement at the end of Year 9. There has been an improvement in the achievement of pupils at the ages of fourteen and sixteen over the past three years. A significantly large number of pupils, especially boys, who fail to complete their courses or gain a grade at GCSE, have an adverse effect on the overall standards of achievement at 16.
- 140 Standards of achievement in lessons are in line with expectations of pupils of a similar age in Year 9. In Year 7 pupils understand the significance of the Battle of Hastings in changing the direction of British history. They know that there were three legitimate challengers for the title to the English throne at that time. Pupils can compare the relative strengths of each claim. In Year 8 pupils understand that the Christian religion changed during the Tudor period. They know about martyrdom and how this applied to both Catholic and Protestant clergy at the time. They can explore the bias in the contemporary historical accounts of these events. In Year 9 pupils understand that significant industrial changes took place in Britain in the 18th and 19th century. They know of the changes that took place in the mining industry during that period. They investigate numerical evidence to discover the relative ages of people employed in different jobs in the mines in 1815. They use that evidence, from the Felling Mining Disaster, to explore the working conditions of people in mining during the period. They understand that a consequence of this Disaster was an increased emphasis on improving safety measures, which led to the invention of the miner's safety lamp. Improvements in attainment have been achieved as a result of the department's review process which has focused on raising achievement in Year 9.
- 141 By the age of sixteen standards of achievement in lessons during the inspection, are in line with national expectations. Pupils achieve satisfactorily according to their capabilities. In Year 10 pupils understand that a change took place in the USA in the 1930s as F D Roosevelt replaced Hoover as president. They know that historical evidence can be biased and can place evidence in context. They can draw conclusions about bias and intention from the evidence. In Year 11 pupils understand that the New Deal was a policy promoted by F D Roosevelt in the USA during the 1930s. They know that the Republicans in the USA were against this policy. They can analyse historical evidence to gain knowledge about events at the time. The higher attaining pupils can identify the methods by which Roosevelt promoted his policies to the American electorate and can recognise that any evaluation of the policies can be distorted by hindsight. Overall standards of achievement are adversely affected by the significant number of pupils, who attend irregularly, or who fail to complete their course of study or final examination.

- 142 There has been a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The standards of written work and the teachers' use of marking and the assessment of pupils' work have been maintained. The management of the department remains good. However, these features have yet to have a significant impact of raising the standards of achievement of all pupils.
- 143 The behaviour of most pupils is good. Almost all pupils are polite, attentive and respond well to the demands made by their teachers. Pupils listen attentively and, when asked, participate fully in the discussions in lessons. They are well behaved and are careful about recording their work. The level of presentation in pupils' books is good. Work is neatly set out, writing is clear and headings are underlined so that pupils and teachers can easily keep abreast of completed work. A relatively small number of pupils, mainly boys, in Year 10 and Year 11, have irregular attendance. Their restlessness in class goes unchallenged.
- 144 Teaching is satisfactory overall. Nearly two fifths of the teaching is good and better. Teachers share enthusiasm and a commitment to obtain the best from their pupils. They provide challenge in lessons and expect pupils to discuss and develop their ideas about history. There is a very constructive rapport between most pupils and their teachers and this supports the pupils well in their learning. Teachers develop the basic skills of literacy and numeracy well. Pupils are guided in their writing to enable them to write at length. Words specific to the subject are highlighted so that pupils become familiar with them and spellings are corrected in pupils' exercise books. Teachers make good use of spoken language and this emphasis enables those pupils with English as an additional language to learn effectively. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by well-briefed learning assistants and by teachers. This support enables pupils to make satisfactory progress and to be fully included in the work of the larger group. Teachers recognise that irregular attendance of pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, is a great barrier to higher attainment. Course booklets written by teachers are offered to pupils to enable those with irregular attendance to keep up with the rest of the class.
- 145 Teachers evaluate and record the achievements of pupils regularly to ensure that pupils know that their work is of an acceptable standard. However, in Years 7,8,9 these evaluations are not related to specific historical skills so that pupils are not given sufficient information as to their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils know if their work is of an acceptable standard but they are not given enough information on how to improve their work. The evaluations of pupils' work are used to assess its level rather than to raise the standards of pupils' attainment. Homework is set regularly but occasionally lacks challenge and does not sufficiently reflect the level of and demand of work done in the lesson. For those pupils who experience difficulties with reading and writing homework tasks are not always well matched to their learning needs.
- 146 The management of the subject is good. Effective planning supports a consistent approach by all staff so those pupils are appropriately supported in their learning. Visits to places of interest including museums extend the teaching and learning opportunities, especially in Year 7. The head of department has a clear view of the priorities to raise standards of pupils' achievement. The strategies for achieving improvement are listed in the school's development plan and are being tried out and evaluated carefully.

Points for development

- Raise the attainment of boys by enabling them to sustain progress, especially in Key Stage 4 through improved attendance.
- Match tasks closely to pupils' learning needs.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 147 Standards achieved by pupils in ICT at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are at the expected levels. In the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 the school judged that 75% of the pupils achieved level 5 or above with girls performing better than the boys. This compares with a national average of 62 per cent. These very high standards were not borne out by the inspection. The results for the GCSE in office applications have improved and in 2000 53per cent of the pupils who were entered achieved grades in the range A* to C. Although national average rates are not available for this subject the percentage achieving these grades is about equal to the national average for the GCSE in business studies. Achievement in ICT is satisfactory throughout both key stages. Standards in ICT in the school have risen since the last inspection in 1996. At that time standards were considered to be satisfactory in Year 7 only, and pupils were given very limited opportunities to develop and increase their ICT skills.
- 148 In lessons and work seen at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, standards were mainly in line with national expectations with a few examples of classes operating either above or below this level. In one year 11 class working towards the GCSE in information technology, for example, pupils were preparing for the project which formed a significant part of the course. Pupils in the group had a good understanding of the detailed requirements of the project including planning, data collection and analysis. They were also clear about the detailed documentation which was required to support these aspects. Attainment for this group was above that normally expected and all pupils' projected GCSE grades were in the range A* to C. On the other hand, in a mixed ability Year 9 group using simulation software for control, many required significant support from the teacher before they were successful. By the end of the lesson most of the pupils were able to write the necessary sequence of instructions to achieve the required aim. Overall, pupils are more confident when undertaking ICT tasks relating to communicating and handling information. Their skills relating to controlling, measuring and modelling are less well developed.
- 149 Teaching and learning at both key stages are always at least satisfactory and frequently good. All lessons are well planned and most contain a good range of learning approaches. In a few lessons pupils are allowed to continue to undertake one type of activity for too long with a result that some pupils lose interest and fail to make further progress with the task that has been set. Many lessons are supported by detailed and good quality handouts. Appropriate and sensitive support is usually given to pupils when they are undertaking practical activities. In a few larger classes, however, some pupils have to wait relatively long periods before they receive the help that they require so that they can make further progress. Homework is regularly set, marked and returned to the pupils. Teachers, where appropriate, as part of the marking indicate to the pupils how the submitted work might be improved. Teachers keep good records of the progress of individual pupils. The main teachers of ICT have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Overall in classes the management of pupils is effective and high standards of discipline are maintained. In some of the larger classes the progress and learning of some pupils is impeded by the need to share computers.

- 150 Pupils have a positive attitude to their ICT work. They are generally well motivated and during the group work they respond well to the questions when required to do so. Pupils in a lower attaining Year 11 group, for example, showed a good level of interest in the work they were undertaking as part of a certificate in achievement in graphics. Pupils were learning how to collect data and then present it in different forms using a spreadsheet. Many in the group were responding well to the task set and became motivated when they were able to use the computer successfully to support their work. The standard of presentation of pupils' work is usually at least satisfactory and in some cases good. The behaviour of pupils in classes with a few minor exceptions is of a high standard. Pupils arrive late to some classes and this disrupts the learning of the pupils who are present.
- 151 The curriculum relating to the discrete delivery of ICT is appropriate. All pupils now follow ICT courses throughout both key stages so that their skills can be progressively developed and used. However, the current arrangements during Key Stage 3 in which pupils undertake ICT classes in short blocks of time can lead to a discontinuous experience for some pupils. Detailed and appropriate schemes of work have been developed and agreed covering the discrete provision. A number of subjects including geography and English are now making good use of ICT. In others including music and modern foreign languages and some satisfactory use is made. In the remaining subjects including mathematics, science, history, art and design and technology, opportunities to use appropriate ICT to support aspects of the work are being missed. In a number of subjects schemes of work fail to make references to the use of ICT as is required by National Curriculum.
- 152 The recently appointed ICT co-ordinator is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. There are plans in place to address the weaknesses. It is recognised that there is a need for closer collaboration with the other departments in the school to ensure that all schemes of work contain appropriate references to ICT and that this work is accurately assessed and contributes fully to pupils levels of attainment in ICT. Although there has already been a significant amount of ICT staff development some teachers continue to lack the confidence to make full use of their newly acquired skills in their teaching. The school has insufficient computers to properly support teaching and learning. At the time of the inspection the ratio of pupils to modern computers was about 14:1. This is a considerably higher ratio than found in similar schools elsewhere. The low number of computers leads to the need for sharing in the larger classes and inadequate access to the resources for subjects across the school. Better co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum and a need for increased resources were both issues identified at the time of the last inspection.

Points for development

- Extend the training opportunities for those teachers who lack confidence in the use of ICT.
- Take all available steps to increase the number of modern computers available for teaching and learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and Spanish

- 153 In recent GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well below the national average in French and Spanish. Results in Spanish have been particularly poor. However, the proportion of pupils gaining A-G grades was more encouraging, and more in line with national averages. In French, the proportion of A*-G grades shows improvement, but the A-C grades are well below the national average. Girls consistently achieve better results than boys, particularly in Spanish, with boys' results being extremely poor.
- 154 At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment in work observed in French and Spanish are generally below national expectations. However, pupils of high ability perform well in both oral and written work. Their oral responses in the target language are satisfactory and sometimes good, but spontaneous use of French or Spanish is rare during lessons. Pupils generally comprehend the written and spoken word well in French and Spanish. Several tenses are being used with confidence, though not always with accuracy.
- 155 At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment levels are, in general, low, although some pupils are achieving satisfactory standards. Course work for the GCSE has been a success, but basic errors are still being made in the target language. Some lack of confidence is apparent, and listening skills are rather poor, as evidenced in the GCSE listening component. Sentence structures are generally very basic with little use of adjectives and adverbs. However, considerable improvement has been achieved in the GCSE writing section.
- 156 Boys' and girls' progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, but girls tend to achieve better, with satisfactory progression into and through Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs also progress satisfactorily, and receive additional help. Allocation of teaching time in Years 9 & 11 is below the national norm, but normal by key stage allocation. The allocation of teaching time in Years 7, 8 and 10 is satisfactory, and in line with national norms. The setting of modern languages classes seems to work well in general, and few pupils find themselves outside their attainment levels. The school plans to change to one first language introduced for the whole of Year 7 so that the sets will be more cohesive and enable teachers to focus their teaching more precisely to the learning needs of pupils. Boys' attainment and progress are a serious concern.
- 157 Pupils' behaviour in most lessons is satisfactory, but occasional difficulties occur. Most exercise books are neat and well presented. Pupils usually bring essential materials and settle down well in lessons. Relationships are good, and pupils work well in pairs and in groups. Activity changes during lessons are generally achieved with good humour and order.
- 158 Teaching in French and Spanish is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. All teachers are well qualified, have good subject knowledge and demonstrate

enthusiasm. Lessons are well planned, with various teaching strategies utilised in both key stages. Electronic equipment is used to advantage and classroom control is good. Opportunities for natural and spontaneous use of the target language are somewhat limited and this aspect could be improved by encouraging discussion of subjects which are popular with, and familiar to pupils.

- 159 The department has many strengths and is well led, with good team work evident. Policies and documentation aspects are good as are the efforts of all teachers in the department, to improve attainment levels in both French and Spanish. A stable staffing situation exists, but learning outcomes and examination results do not match the efforts of the subject teachers.
- 160 Improvements are manifest in certain areas, e.g. coursework and writing skills in Key Stage 4. However, progress overall in Modern Languages is minimal, and seems to be the result of general disaffection with Modern Languages, particularly with boys, towards the end of Key Stage 4. There are grounds for optimism that improvements in attainment, progress and examination results will arise from the long-term, concerted efforts of the Modern Languages teaching staff and pupils.

Points for development

- Sustain the improvements made in course work and writing skills.
- Strengthen the opportunities for discussion in the foreign language.
- Improve listening skills.
- Implement planned changes in organisation.
- Tackle the disaffection of boys to improve attainment.

MUSIC

- 161 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is good for the small numbers entered for GCSE. Two candidates were entered in 1998 and two in 2000. All achieved grades A*-C. There were no entries in 1999 as there were not enough pupils wanting to do music to make the course viable. There are currently 15 pupils studying music at Key Stage 4, not all of whom are specialist musicians. The course is open to all regardless of prior attainment. About half the group are approaching the national average and with the increased use of information technology standards are improving. In a Year 11 lesson all were using computers, some using programmes from a dance range, some learning to write music, all learning through a programme of their own choice. This lesson gave pupils a range of creative freedom previously associated more with art lessons than music. The tasks were accessible to all. Pupils created chord sequences, wrote a bass line, or mixed elements to create sophisticated and enjoyable music in their chosen idiom.
- 162 Attainment near the end of Key Stage 3 is approaching national expectations. Pupils show a good understanding of the elements of music such as pitch, rhythm, texture and dynamics which they can identify in the music they listen to and use in their own compositions. Pupils are familiar with notes and rests and can represent their melodies on the staff. They appreciate the shape given by four bar phrases and can improvise against a constant rhythm or melody. They appreciate the value of repetition and understand how to develop a motif or phrase by variation. In performance most can keep with the beat and pupils of all levels of attainment play well together. Listening skills are good at the end of the key stage, but knowledge of composers and their works is less developed. Class singing is a regular and popular part of the course.

- 163 Achievement in both key stages is above average. Pupils with special educational needs join in all activities and make good progress in relation to prior attainment. Lessons are well planned so that learning objectives are realised and often demonstrated in performance by the end of the lesson. Years 8 and 9 groups, composing to accompany video clips, produced vivid and interesting sound tracks by the closing plenary session. Excellent help from Learning Support Assistants enables all to create appropriate sounds and to fit these into the time sequence. A Year 7 class were learning to read notation through the use of the pentatonic scale. They understood the difference between the drone beat and the melody. By improvising in pairs they learned to keep with the beat and keep together. Individuals progressed well at their own rate due to good resource sheets. Year 8 pupils increased their keyboard skills by playing the blues scale and blues scale motifs, graduating to composing their own patterns by the end of the lesson.
- 164 Behaviour is never less than satisfactory and is frequently good or better, due in the main to meticulous organisation, the variety of teaching styles used and the consistent application of rules and procedures which the pupils understand. Pupils are well motivated and show pleasure in acquiring musical skill. They work particularly well in groups showing trustworthiness when left in practice rooms for short spells unsupervised.
- 165 The quality of teaching is mainly good or better. None of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Very good planning and lesson preparation and skilful class management enable pupils to make good progress. The methods used are strongly practical but pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 can also use graphic scores and can represent rhythm and melody on the stave. Lessons move at a brisk pace, instructions are given slowly and clearly and at short intervals so that pupils always know what they have to do and how long they have to complete the task. There are frequent changes of activity all moving the class to the goal for that lesson. Very good subject knowledge and teaching skills ensure the involvement of all individuals in a communal task. The lesson ends with an effective plenary session which could be a performance or a quick review of skills and knowledge with a competitive element and liberal rewards. This closing review is also a recapitulation and consolidation of the work done. Good timing is vital.
- 166 There are excellent work schemes, work sheets and home made visual aids. The meagre stock of classroom instruments is well stored, well cared for and put to good use.
- 167 The curriculum meets the needs of the National Curriculum and the examination syllabus and is greatly enriched by extra-curricular activities.
- 168 Extra-curricular music is focussed on lunchtime activities and some after school rehearsals. There is a keyboard club which meets throughout the year, rock and pop groups, a rock band, singing groups and guitar clubs, all of which are marked by enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- 169 Forty three pupils receive free instrumental tuition from five peripatetic teachers, guitar and woodwind being the most heavily subscribed. Pupils are prepared for practical examinations, some Key Stage 4 pupils are currently working at grade 5. One pupil is taking part in the Leeds University MELODY project working with members of the Northern Saxophone Quartet. Links are very good.

- 170 In these tuition sessions teaching is good and very good. The teachers are skilled musicians with highly competent teachers. Their expectations are high and the tasks set are challenging.
- 171 The music department takes part regularly in liturgies and assemblies. Other contributions to the life of the school include an annual summer concert, Christmas carols and the entertainment of senior citizens. The school's musicians have continued to raise funds for Pennyfield special school and St.Gemma's Hospice.
- 172 Since the last inspection timetable arrangements for Year 9 music have been changed to give greater continuity and standards have improved. There has been some upgrading of keyboards for class use but further improvements are needed if the department is to take advantage of the new PCs and an increasing range of software including Cubasis.
- 173 The department benefits from excellent leadership. Communication and organisation are strong features. Documentation is excellent. Pupils with special educational needs are served well. The department is strong on providing equality of access both in class, in examination courses and in instrumental opportunities. Planning for continuity is also a priority. Assessment and self-assessment are built into work schemes. An Instrumental Teaching Profile is in use in peripatetic instrumental lessons.
- 174 Music makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of pupils both through the content of the curriculum and through the professional management of the department.

Points for development

- Increase the knowledge of composers.
- Upgrade resources to take advantage of new software.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 175 Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 have been maintained since the last inspection and they are in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils are competent and confident in a range of activities that, during the inspection, included gymnastics, swimming, dance, health related fitness, football and netball.
- 176 Inspection evidence shows that standards of attainment among most pupils at Key Stage 4 are also in line with national expectations. Pupils build effectively on the knowledge and skills acquired earlier. Most pupils who are studying physical education and dance at GCSE level achieve standards that are at least average for the course. However, standards in physical education in one Year 10 examination group are below average. In Year 11 the written work seen indicates that pupils have a satisfactory understanding of theoretical aspects of the course.
- 177 A total of 19 pupils were entered for the most recent GCSE examination in physical education. Of those, 47.0 per cent achieved the higher A* - C grades and all obtained A* - G grades. Although just below the national average the results continued the gradual improvement that has been taking place in recent years. Pupils were also entered for GCSE dance. Of the 23 candidates involved, 35 per cent obtained A* - C grades and all achieved A* - G passes. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades was significantly below the results of previous years.

- 178 In relation to their prior attainment pupils generally achieve at least as well as expected throughout the school. The majority of pupils make good progress in Year 7 and this is sustained throughout Key Stage 3. A group of Year 7 girls made very good progress during a gymnastics lesson in which they developed imaginative sequences linking balance and flight. Boys in Year 7 progressed particularly well in a dance lesson where they produced expressive and explosive movements in response to a given theme. Towards the end of the key stage girls in Year 9 are progressing well in swimming whilst Year 9 boys attain good standards in football. In one of the examination groups in Year 10 pupils can distinguish between the effects that different types of exercise have on the heart rate. Pupils in Year 11 show a good understanding of the effects of performance enhancing drugs and a sound background knowledge of sport in general. Pupils on the register of special educational needs who are fully integrated into all physical education lessons make at least satisfactory progress at both key stages. In some individual cases progress is good. Several pupils on the register of special educational needs have been successful in examination courses.
- 179 The majority of pupils are very well motivated. Their attitude towards physical education is good and they enjoy what they are doing. In Year 10 a significant number of pupils in one GCSE group lack the motivation and self-discipline necessary for a course of this nature. Their poor attitude is in contrast to pupils in Year 11 who work with interest and maturity. In most groups the level of participation is good. The majority of pupils respond promptly to instructions and they co-operate with others very willingly in practices aimed at improving their level of performance. Pupils are aware of the importance of safety and in general they treat equipment with respect. Pupils are always correctly dressed for physical activity. Behaviour in almost all lessons is good.
- 180 Teaching is at least satisfactory and in about sixty per cent of lessons teaching is good and very good. Lessons are always purposeful and well organised. Well-designed tasks enable pupils to build on previous learning and so make progress. Demonstrations are used effectively where appropriate. Good use is made of time and resources to ensure that pupils are all actively involved throughout. In some lessons questions could be used more effectively to encourage pupils to think about what they are doing. There are also insufficient opportunities given for pupils to evaluate each other's work.
- 181 Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. It is not possible for activities to take place during the lunch break, as there is insufficient time. Activities therefore all take place after school. Several other colleagues support the departmental staff in delivering the extra curricular programme. The school competes against other schools in a number of different sports. Several individual pupils have achieved recent successes in football, girls' football, netball, cricket, rugby and athletics.
- 182 The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements and the department continues to offer a wide range of choices for pupils at Key Stage 4. Day to day organisation is extremely effective. During the inspection three students on initial teacher training were well integrated into the department. A number of significant improvements have taken place since the last inspection. Teachers now meet together formally on a regular basis. There has been a gradual improvement in GCSE results. Several changes have been made to the curriculum in response to Curriculum 2000. A lottery bid has been completed to upgrade the outdoor facilities at the school. Such an improvement is certainly needed. There has been no change at all in the poor

quality of the outdoor provision, which at the time of the previous inspection was described as 'depressing'.

Points for development

- Continue to raise standards in both the core and examination aspects of the subject.
- Extend the use of ICT particularly to support the work of the GCSE candidates.
- Develop and implement effective policies for literacy and numeracy.
- The subject below was inspected as part of the Key Stage 4 provision made by the school.

SOCIOLOGY

- 183 The achievement of pupils by the age of sixteen is below national averages. This subject was introduced into the curriculum two years ago and the current Year 11 are the first group to go through the course in the school. Pupils in Year 11 can understand the difference between "the rich" and "the wealthy" in British society. They can also identify examples of informal and formal social control and can evaluate their written responses against a guidance scheme. In Year 10 pupils understand the idea of a role model and know that the family is important for socialisation. They can compare aspects of the family with other agents of socialisation.
- 184 The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are attentive and interested in their work and respond positively to the demands made by the teacher. There are co-operative and relate well to each other when they work in small groups. The behaviour of a minority of pupils in Year 10 is potentially disruptive but well managed.
- 185 Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is used to interest and motivate pupils in their learning. The good planning and preparation of lessons, with clear objectives, helps the pupils to engage and manage their learning. The use of appropriate vocabulary is stressed and pupils are encouraged to build their own word banks to assist in their understanding. Good management of any disruptive behaviour, by the teachers, ensures that the learning of the majority of pupils is not affected.