

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SAMUEL KING'S SCHOOL**

Alston

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112378

Headteacher: Maurice Peddelty

Reporting inspector: David Morton  
13154

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 244872

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Church Road  
Alston  
Cumbria

Postcode: CA9 3QU

Telephone number: 01434 381236

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Christopher Reed

Date of previous inspection: April 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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13154	D Morton	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity Music	Information about the school  The school's results and pupils' achievements  How well are pupils taught?  How well is the school led and managed?  What should the school do to improve further?
13762	N Shelley	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  How well does the school care for its pupils?  How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30512	M Bailey	Team inspector	Science	
11190	W Burke	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
21971	J Glennon	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs Religious education	
19214	G Price	Team inspector	English	
3793	J Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
8329	G Salter-Smith	Team inspector	Physical education	
10564	J Tomlinson	Team inspector	Geography History	
8341	W Wimshurst	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Mathematics	

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>30</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Samuel King's School is a co-educational, comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16. There are 167 pupils on roll with 11 per cent more boys than girls; it is the smallest maintained secondary school in the country. The school is situated in the centre of the rural town of Alston and serves this and the families living on the surrounding Alston Moor; a small proportion of pupils travel some distance from Weardale. Students come from a range of backgrounds and the circumstances of this rural area fit the overall national picture. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, 15 per cent, is broadly average. Attainment on entry to the school is consistently broadly average. The school's population is stable, only around six per cent of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times. No pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds or have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils on the register of special educational needs, 29.3 per cent, is above the national average; the main needs of these pupils are dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs, 5.9 per cent, is well above the national average. The school is one of a small number of schools to gain e-Learning Foundation status and in 2002 it won the School Achievement Award for improvements in its examination results.

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

Samuel King's is a good and improving school. The headteacher, supported very well by key governors, provides very good and innovative leadership with a clear vision for the school's future development. Senior members of staff provide effective management support. National Curriculum test results at the age of 14 and results in GCSE examinations at the age of 16 have improved in recent years at a faster rate than found nationally and are above the national average. These strong features of the school are the result of good and sometimes very good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning. In relation to their starting point when they entered the school in Year 7, pupils leave having achieved well as a result of the good progress they make in lessons. The school, therefore, gives good value for money.

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

- The achievement of pupils is good; standards in lessons and results in examinations are above average and have improved steadily in recent years.
- Teaching overall is good; in more than one lesson in five it is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning ensure that they make good progress in lessons.
- The headteacher's good leadership and the commitment of key governors to monitoring the curriculum have resulted in the development of a now successful school.
- The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) is good and improving; planning for its increased and innovative use in the future is very good.

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

- The school does not pay sufficient attention to how it provides for pupils' personal development, especially in respect of their spiritual and cultural development.
- Teachers make insufficient use of assessment and other data to improve pupils' performance and especially that of boys.
- The school is not systematic enough in monitoring and supporting teaching and learning, and sharing the good practice that leads to the best standards in pupils' work.
- Too much of the day-to-day management of the school is being undertaken by the headteacher.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection in April 1996 has been good. Overall standards are higher and the proportion of good or better teaching has increased. Numbers on roll have grown as more pupils from beyond Alston Moor now attend the school. There have been improvements to the technology facilities and the school has taken full advantage of ways made available to extend its provision for ICT. Standards in science are now a strength of the school. There remains the need to apply assessment procedures to greater purpose and to take steps to raise all teaching to that of the best. Provision of resources, especially of books, remains an area requiring significant improvement.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	A

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

*In national tests in 2001 at the age of 14 in English, mathematics and science:*

- results in 2001 were well above average in science, above average in English and average in mathematics when compared with all schools;
- when compared with similar schools, results in science were amongst the best five per cent of similar schools in the country, results in English were well above average and those in mathematics were above average;
- these results represent good achievement overall;
- significantly, boys over recent years have been closer to or better than the gender national average than girls, although girls' performance has been better overall than boys in every year since 1997 except for 2000;
- results in these tests over the recent past have improved for girls and boys at a faster rate than that found nationally.

*In 2001, results in GCSE examinations:*

- were the best ever in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more of the higher grades A\* to C, 60 per cent, and were above the national average, but below the target the school set itself;
- governors set challenging targets for 2001, as they have for 2002, but given the quality of teaching and pupils' attitudes to their learning these targets, at 70 per cent, are not unachievable;
- girls have consistently performed better than boys in recent years: based on the last three years girls' results were above the national average whilst those of boys were close to it;
- apart from in 1998, results overall were the highest they have been in relation to the national average;
- when compared with all schools, results in these examinations were above average in 2001 and well above when compared with similar schools;
- the performance of all pupils in achieving the full range or more grades A\* to G indicates weaker performances overall than those achieving the higher grades;
- average and below average pupils are not doing as well, relatively, as above average pupils, especially boys;

- the school's results overall in GCSE examinations have improved at a faster rate than that found nationally;
- the best performing subjects were science and English literature in 2001 and the weakest, relatively, were English language, German and mathematics;
- results in 2001 represent very good achievement and progress over the two years of the GCSE courses.

*Standards seen during the inspection:*

- are above average overall and the achievement of pupils is good.;
- in science were well above average, in English above and in mathematics broadly in line with national averages;
- the quality of teaching and subject leadership in the recent past accounts for this;
- the teaching of literacy and numeracy as part of the new initiatives in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory;
- pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy are sufficient to enable them to meet the requirements of all subjects of the curriculum. Pupils' skills in the use of ICT are less well developed;
- standards seen across the curriculum are broadly above average and pupils with special educational needs achieve well;
- standards are better than they were deemed to be at the time of the previous inspection when they were seen to be in line with the national average.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are pleased with almost all of their experiences in school; they have positive attitudes to their learning, often bringing out the best in their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are polite and self-assured in lessons; around school behaviour is mostly good even though, sometimes, pupils tend to be a little self-centred and insensitive to each other and to adults in the building.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils respond well to the opportunities offered and take responsibility when given it. They develop as capable, self-confident young people; most have a balanced outlook on life.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is slightly below the average for secondary schools, mainly owing to a small number of pupils with a poor record of attendance. Most pupils are punctual in arriving at school and moving between lessons.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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 in the great majority of lessons is successful. Teachers respond well to the positive attitudes pupils bring to their learning and their willingness to work hard in lessons. Teachers involve pupils in discussion, and question and answer sessions to which pupils respond fully. Talk in lessons is good and contributes to effective learning. In around a fifth of lessons,

whilst almost always satisfactory, teaching is less successful because it relies too much on pupils' willingness to compensate for teaching that is not stimulating, takes too little account of pupils' prior learning and does not have objectives for the lesson that are clear and shared with pupils. In a minority of cases, not enough attention is given to planned teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. As a result, some pupils only slowly overcome their reading and writing problems and are slower to cope with the demands of their work. However, nearly three-quarters of the teaching is good and about a fifth is very good. Teaching is good overall in all subjects except history and physical education where it is satisfactory. Teachers working within their specialisms know their subjects well and most work is matched to pupils' learning needs.

The good teaching, the support given in lessons and the attitudes of pupils are the main reasons why pupils achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. Homework has a good impact on learning. Marking at its best helps students to improve and in each subject pupils are aware of their progress in relation to the targets that have been agreed. However, assessment is used insufficiently to inform planning and the ways lessons are taught. When teachers show an enthusiasm for their subject, for example in art and design, English, geography, modern foreign languages, ICT and science, it spreads to pupils. This leads to an ambience for learning that breeds success.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Despite the need to use a high proportion of part-time staff, the full range of National Curriculum subjects is taught. Provision for science and modern languages is good and the overall programme for Years 10 and 11 is enhanced by courses in business studies, design realisation, travel and tourism and the expressive arts. Provision for music and religious education is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The needs of pupils are well met through skilful personal support. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. The school provides opportunities that enhance pupils' personal development. It takes steps to ensure an outward-looking philosophy is key to pupils being aware of the world beyond Alston Moor, whilst celebrating the many positive features of this North Pennines community. However, pupils' personal development is an aspect of the school's provision that lacks imagination and flair and is not given sufficient consideration in most subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. The school provides a secure environment in which the personal needs of pupils are considered important. Methods of assessing pupils' progress are unsatisfactory but are currently under review.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Good. Parents have confidence in the school and are pleased with the quality of education it provides. The school works hard to keep parents informed and encourages them to be partners in their children's education.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The very good leadership of the headteacher gives the school a clear sense of direction and an outward-looking approach to teaching and learning. The management and organisation, whilst sound, makes too many demands on the time of the headteacher who feels he cannot delegate any more to members of staff who already carry a range of responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors know the strengths and areas for improvement of the school; their rigorous monitoring and support of the curriculum and analysis of pupils' work is outstanding and a significant support to the school. However, there are some breaches of statutory requirements of which governors are now aware.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Basic evaluation of performance is sound, but sufficiently effective assessment procedures are not fully in place and available data is not used sufficiently to help teachers' planning.
The strategic use of resources	Good. This very small school crucially applies the principles of best value not only in its application of funding, but in its use of people and other resources. There is scope for improvement, however, in the allocation of time for the headteacher to focus on raising even further the quality of education provided by the school.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school helps children grow in maturity and take responsibility.</li> <li>• The improvements to the ICT opportunities for themselves and their children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small minority of parents would like the school to work more closely with them.</li> <li>• Some parents feel there are not enough extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. However, in their judgement, inspectors feel the school does all that it can to invite parental involvement and that the range of extra-curricular activities is reasonable for a school of this size.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall by the time pupils leave the school. This is the result of teaching that is usually good and often very good; standards also reflect the very positive attitudes pupils have towards their work in lessons. As a result, the quality of learning is good and pupils achieve well.

2. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons. In all subjects they make progress at the same rate as all other pupils. They make satisfactory progress in geography, history, music and physical education, and unsatisfactory progress in religious education. In all other subjects they make good progress. All pupils who are withdrawn for extra help in literacy make good gains compared to their attainment on entry to the school at the beginning of Year 7.

3. Pupils with particular gifts are identified in English, mathematics, science, ICT and modern languages; these pupils achieve well and make good progress in these subjects and, in the case of modern languages and science, their progress is very good. These successes are because teachers in these subjects provide work that extends and challenges the better of the higher-attaining pupils. Within design and technology, steps are beginning to be taken towards meeting these particular needs, but in all other subjects provision for pupils deemed gifted and talented is not yet a formal part of teachers' planning.

4. Standards are well above average in science and above average across the school in English and modern languages; in Years 10 and 11 standards are also above average in art and design and design and technology. This is generally the result of mostly good and often very good teaching in these subjects; pupils are influenced by the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and as a result their attitudes to their learning are good and usually very good and, therefore, their achievement in relation to their previous attainment is good and in science very good. In all other subjects standards are broadly in line with the national average except in ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in religious education throughout the school, where in these instances standards are below average. In the case of religious education, this is owing to insufficient time being allocated to the subject so that statutory requirements are not fulfilled in Years 10 and 11 and there is no subject leader in post. By the end of Year 9, pupils' knowledge and understanding in applying and using the skills of computing have not picked up sufficiently from the low starting point at the start of Year 7 when they entered the school. Across most subjects in Years 10 and 11 boys do not achieve as well as girls or fulfil the promise they show in Years 7 to 11. Although a start has been made, the school does not apply sufficient strategies that are especially chosen to engender motivation and a desire to succeed in boys.

5. An example of the well above average standards in science was seen in a Year 9 lesson about developing skills to collect data and make observational skills in practical work. Pupils worked well collaboratively in groups of two or three and could talk easily about their work and what was happening in a chemical reaction; they used data loggers to record the temperature and recognised the gas being given off and how they could test this reaction. Similarly in a Year 11 science lesson well above average standards were seen in work about patterns of chemical change in preparation for the GCSE examination. The pupils were motivated in their work and higher attainers showed a good understanding of factors affecting rate of reaction and equilibria. Pupils understood well energy changes when using living things as in baking or brewing. In a Year 10 French lesson, pupils showed exceptional fluency

when commenting in sentences in response to questions, using various tenses. Within this group were some gifted and talented pupils from Year 8 who were coping equally well with oral work. In Year 11, pupils preparing for their GCSE French examination showed a breadth of vocabulary in written work that had expressive qualities. Higher-attaining pupils enjoyed recalling nuggets of language from earlier learning. Teaching in this lesson had high expectations of pupils at a time in the course when many teachers give up trying to improve pupils' standards in a foreign language.

6. Where standards fall below the national average there are a variety of reasons. In a Year 10 drama lesson a skilled music teacher lacked the knowledge of drama conventions to extend pupils' work sufficiently. In a Year 9 lesson in religious education, lack of continuing study of the subject prevented pupils from quickly acquiring a sense of focus to learn effectively when trying to relate religious belief to the notion of children's rights. Pupils were unable to show how people from different cultures might have a different set of values, one reason being the teaching of religious education is not sufficient and consistent for the nature of faith and culture to be embedded in pupils' understanding. In a Year 11 lesson in physical education, pupils struggled with the acquisition of skill and understanding of concepts such as physical motivation whilst revising for their GCSE theory examination. Previous work had not been encapsulated in a revision plan for them and their independent skills were insufficient to compensate. Although standards of literacy are around the national average, and better than this in higher-attaining pupils, amongst lower-attaining pupils another cause for lower standards are their weak skills of literacy on entry to the school in Year 7. These impede pupils' learning in those subjects requiring effective reading and writing. Only the very weakest pupils receive regular help in developing their reading skills. The pupils' skills of numeracy, on the other hand, are generally average and allow pupils to use a reasonable range of these skills in graphs and representational work in subjects such as science, geography and design and technology. Standards in the skills of ICT are limited as there is no regular pattern for developing these through the school at present, although resources and planning are in place to make a significant difference to the current standards in the near future.

7. Results in National Curriculum tests in 2001 were above average overall compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools. Results improved in recent years at a rate faster than the national trend. The successful results in GCSE examinations in 2001, being above the national average overall for pupils achieving five or more grades in the higher range of A\* to C, therefore, reflect teaching that is secure and motivates pupils to work hard and extend themselves. Overall results were above the national average in 2001 compared with all schools and well above when compared with similar schools. The trend of improvement was more rapid over recent years than that found nationally. The school fell short of the targets governors set, but these were very challenging in 2001. Pupils are able to take responsibility for much of their own learning by this stage and good learning habits have given them the confidence to expect to achieve their target grades this year.

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

8. Pupils are pleased with almost all of their experiences in school and have positive attitudes towards their lessons. Their behaviour is good and their personal development is satisfactory. Relationships between pupils are very good. Attendance is slightly below the average for secondary schools, but the small numbers make genuine comparisons difficult. The previous report was slightly more positive and the school has not yet improved enough some aspects of pupils' personal development. Parents are pleased with pupils' standards of behaviour.

9. Pupils are right to say that they enjoy school mainly because of the quality of teaching and support that they receive and the friendly atmosphere. They are confident to express their views. For example, they say that they enjoy extra-curricular activities but wish there were more. They value careers education but say that they do not feel as well prepared for the next stage of their careers as they should be. Almost all pupils value their education, work hard and try to do their best. Involvement in the school's activities varies. Many take part in the annual pantomime and in fund raising events. More boys than girls take part in sports and games. Participation is satisfactory overall but is restricted owing to limited facilities and the need for pupils to leave school on time owing to the school's location.

10. A large majority of pupils behave well or very well in lessons. The numbers of incidents of bullying and exclusions are few. In the few instances where behaviour is less than good, it is owing to teaching or activities that are insufficiently stimulating. Behaviour around the school is less reliable. It is sometimes irresponsible and insensitive to others. Many pupils are not as welcoming to and keen to talk with visitors as is usually the case.

11. Pupils get on very well together and are mutually supportive particularly during lessons. Pupils respect the views and contributions of their peers. When given the opportunity, for example as a member of the school council, pupils act responsibly but there are too few opportunities for pupils to undertake responsibilities. Pupils respect the plight of others and raise funds for charities. They develop some appreciation of the lifestyles of others through trips abroad and occasional external visits and visitors but social and cultural experiences beyond school are limited and, consequently, pupils' personal development is infrequent.

12. Attendance is slightly below the average for secondary schools when taking account of the number of pupils who are educated off site and the amount of absence that is attributable to pupils not being able to reach school on the transport provided because of weather conditions.

13. Unauthorised absence is below the average. The amount of absence that occurs owing to family holidays that are taken in a term is greater than that usually found in secondary schools. A few pupils have a poor record of attendance and this has a greater effect on overall attendance in a small school. Most pupils arrive on time for the start of school.

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

14. Overall, pupils' learning is good and they achieve well in relation to the standards they were attaining when they entered the school at the start of Year 7. There are key reasons for this; teaching is good, based on teachers being enthusiastic for their subject, knowing it well and teaching it with flair and imagination. Secondly, the school has engendered in pupils good work habits and attitudes that bring them success; for example homework is set regularly, is appropriate and undertaken thoroughly by most girls and boys.

15. Almost three-quarters of the teaching seen during the inspection was good or better, over a fifth being very good. This is better than usually found in secondary schools. Teachers are usually effective in matching the work to the learning needs of pupils.

16. In most lessons where teaching reflects the enthusiasm and knowledge of the teachers, pupils are motivated to want to learn well. Teachers respond to this enthusiasm and develop it further by involving pupils actively in lessons. They encourage questions and pupils have confidence in providing responses. In the best lessons this encourages debate between pupils so that they deepen their understanding of issues further.

17. Lessons are planned carefully and often take account of particular areas which have been identified through assessment strategies. Unfortunately this is not always the case and the lower standards achieved by boys, especially in Years 10 and 11, are often because marking and other forms of feedback are not carefully given and the response of pupils to such approaches recorded or evaluated. Inconsistencies in these areas challenge sometimes the good attitudes pupils bring to their work, their motivation wanes and potential is less fully realised. Thus, teachers do not always realise that their good work, for example through skilful introduction of topics that enthuse pupils, is sometimes lessened because during the later parts of lessons or when marking homework, their intervention does not hit the right buttons for raising pupils' standards. The best marking uses phrases such as "your work would be of a higher standard if...", perhaps in relation to more thorough attention to the detail of grammar and spelling. To do this, teachers need to analyse with greater care the ways in which pupils are working, so that they can interpret future learning needs.

18. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. The teaching of basic literacy in withdrawal groups is good. Pupils follow suitable programmes of study that match their needs. Teaching is well structured and the good and sensitive relationships that teachers have with pupils create an atmosphere in which pupils are keen to learn. In mainstream lessons nearly all teachers are aware of pupils' individual education plans and provide work that matches their needs. Generally the support provided by learning support assistants is effective. However, on occasion it is less effective because they do not have enough subject knowledge and do not have enough time for planning.

19. Relationships in lessons are very good and teachers use these effectively to establish an atmosphere in which ideas can be exchanged freely and some independent learning encouraged. Learning is most effective when teaching involves pupils closely and actively in what they are intended to do. Such teaching is imaginative and well resourced. It recognises where pupils have weaknesses in literacy and makes compensation for this. Exercises developed from the national literacy strategy are used effectively in some subjects, notably in English in Years 7 to 9; in most subjects attention is given to helping pupils improve their skills in reading and writing, although reading skills are not taught as widely as vocabulary and writing skills.

20. Good teaching was seen in an art and design lesson with Year 10; it owed much to the good relationships that had been established over the pupils' time in the school. For example, pupils began working independently on continuing work, without prompting, the moment they entered the art and design room. The emphasis of this teaching was in helping pupils to find ways of learning for themselves based on the knowledge, understanding and skills that have been previously developed. One very original boy, for example, took what he knew of the work of Salvador Dali to make a self-portrait through a mirror. This included the rocks of Skye and trees as a life-force, adventurous experimentation with colour that gave a sense of life's journey that was at once bizarre yet real. A girl, more conventionally, through painting and very good work with colour in an excellent sketchbook of fish studies, showed a variety of imaginative approaches such as a vicious all-green underwater study in three dimensions to other contrasting work showing fine detail. Skilful intervention by the teacher encourages this independence and experimentation in ways that match the learning potential of pupils. Teaching is one-to-one, meeting individual learning needs. The teacher's time is well orchestrated to include help for all pupils so that learning moves at a fast yet controlled

pace throughout the lesson. Such teaching is an exemplar of much of the best teaching in the school. In English, for example with a lower group in Year 11, in a lesson about James Fenton's poem 'Nothing', the interactive whiteboard was well used to brainstorm the ideas in the poem; the pupils' response to what they knew of the poetic medium was allowed expression. Pupils responded with insight and articulated their responses to the poem effectively, for example 'he is infatuated' and 'I can see both sides'. Some pupils were sufficiently self-possessed to be independent to discuss confidently with the teacher meaning and form in the poem. Learning, therefore, was very effective because of the teacher's good planning, pupils' recall of their previous learning about poetry and a tight focus by the teacher and the pupils on the objectives of the lesson in relation to GCSE requirements. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall, but uneven. In some subjects opportunities are missed whilst in other imaginative approaches to consolidating these basic skills are clearly successful. Teaching is usually successful in meeting the differing learning needs of all pupils, although those of boys are not as comprehensive yet as the school seeks for them to be.

21. In the rare examples of teaching that fails to achieve this quality of learning from pupils, for example in a revision lesson with Year 11, the management of pupils was weak and good learning attitudes were not established. Expectations of good behaviour were not given and progress made in the lesson was slight. Similarly, expectations of what can be achieved by pupils with different learning needs are too low, or, teaching assistants in lessons are not properly briefed of what they are to do in support of pupils' learning. Insufficient stress is placed by the teacher on the need to get detail right, whether of measurement or of sentence construction, for example. Questions are not formed in ways that encourage pupils to seek detailed answers.

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

22. The quality and range of opportunities for learning are satisfactory overall. The full range of National Curriculum subjects is met thanks to the willingness of many teachers to work part time, more than half the total establishment. There is good provision in modern languages; all pupils begin to learn both French and German in their first three years, with the further opportunity to take two languages for GCSE. For pupils aged 14 to 16 the curriculum is enhanced by the provision of courses in business studies, design and realisation, travel and tourism and expressive arts, though drama suffers from the lack of a coherent policy, with consequent time-tabling and staffing difficulties. Music, physical education and ICT are taught through to examination level.

23. However, statutory requirements are not met with regard to the provision of religious education according to the locally agreed syllabus. There is insufficient time in the first three years to cover more than a small part of the syllabus, and in Years 10 and 11 only a third of the time is available for the subject because it forms part of a carousel together with careers education and personal, social and health education, which leaves inadequate time for the requirements of the agreed syllabus to be met. Good work was seen in personal, social and health education, but there are shortcomings in careers education, where there is insufficient personal guidance for pupils, owing to insufficient time being allocated to personal, social and health education. Tutorial time is not used well enough. However, the school works hard to retain the interest and involvement of the minority of pupils at risk of becoming disaffected. Friends from the local business community have sometimes contributed to pupils' learning. Difficulties with staff have meant that the full range of the National Curriculum is not met in music; pupils have insufficient engagement with the work of established composers and musicians.

24. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They are fully included in all parts of school life and follow the same curriculum as other pupils. The only exception is that a small number are sensibly exempt from modern foreign languages to have extra lessons in literacy. There is, however, insufficient flexibility in the timing of withdrawal lessons with the result that some pupils regularly miss some lessons in the same subject each week

25. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory, and there are booster sessions to support pupils' learning in a number of subjects, for example history and geography. In physical education there is good provision for boys but for girls provision is no better than satisfactory. A range of activities is offered, and pupils compete at district level, involving journeys over a considerable distance. Drama and music combine to produce an annual show, and there are annual trips for Years 8 and 10 to either France or Germany. However there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to learn to play musical instruments, and the school has been unable to sustain its band. In science too there are too few opportunities for learning outside the formal curriculum.

26. Links with other schools are good in the local area, and developing well with schools further afield. An imaginative induction programme is offered to pupils from local primary schools. Full information on choice of courses is available to pupils about to move into the next stage of their education.

### ***Pupils' personal development***

27. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are satisfactory but limited overall. During the inspection three assemblies were observed led by outside speakers. There is no attempt to enhance these reflective gatherings heightened, for example through the use of music. Pupils enter the hall in an orderly fashion, chatter sensibly together and fall silent when required, but there is no sense of anticipation of a special occasion. Pupils are not asked to reflect quietly and personally on issues raised such as world poverty, being true to your own individuality or using your talents to enhance the sense of community. It is as though the spiritual quality of human beings is too complex to consider even though it is what makes us tick as individuals. In lessons, the good attitudes pupils bring to their learning were rarely used to go one step further. In history or religious education, for example, the reality of events often overshadows considerations of human feelings and emotions and the way they have an impact on people. Questions such as 'How would we feel if...' are rarely asked in any subject. In more effective lessons moments that are 'special' are marked, for example in listening to each other's successful group composition in music or empathising with situations in Robert Swindell's 'Stone Cold' in English, or in the poems of Seamus Heaney.

28. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. Pupils show a good understanding of right and wrong and the opportunities for them to exercise moral judgements occurs in some of the best teaching in science, English, geography and religious education. When pupils consider literature, racism, advertising strategies, reasons for warfare, the abuse of mobile phones, moral issues are often raised. However, too few teachers of other subjects seek to consider the moral implications embedded in them. As a result, especially in Years 7 to 9, pupils have a very narrow perspective of personal and communal morality. The natural curiosity of young people increases in Years 10 and 11 and pupils raise questions about damage to the environment and global warming, terrorism, conservation and the personal morality seen in relationships. These sorts of issues are well tackled in personal and social education but, unless it is central to examination requirements, rarely in some subjects. Opportunities to enrich learning are missed.

29. The very good relationships in the school, especially in lessons, are examples of the successful social development of pupils. The school promotes equality in its documents and

in daily practice. It provides shared social experiences through assemblies, the annual pantomime and other communal events in the school. Pupils have a voice and a sense of responsibility in a number of aspects of school life. In several subjects there are opportunities for collaborative work such as group composition in music, team games in physical education and role-play situations in modern languages. There are some useful links with the community of Alston Moor that open pupils' eyes to the variety of life that surrounds them. Some of the displays about school show a number of ways in which pupils are encouraged to contribute to the needs of society. Despite these very positive features, pupils do not always show sensitivity to each other; boisterous, if not unruly, behaviour does not take account of pushing and bumping those who are not part of it. Courtesies with each other in opening and holding doors are not always apparent. An openness and friendliness with visitors or adults often requires the adult to take the first step. Taken all in all, therefore, the school's provision for social development is satisfactory.

30. The cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. The culture of their community is rightly valued and pupils are proud to be a member of their school. Teachers value pupils as individuals and recognise pupils' musical preferences and tastes in fashion. Opportunities are also provided for wider appreciation of the arts through visits to theatres, galleries and concerts as well as having artists in residence in school. The world beyond Alston Moor is celebrated and brought closer to pupils; trips are taken abroad each year, notably to France or Germany as part of the modern languages enhanced curriculum. Music and art and design take account of other cultures than English; world faiths and cultures are part of the curriculum in religious education and history. However, there is little energy in celebrating other cultures across the curriculum generally. A strength of the isolated community of Alston Moor lies in the traditional values it sustains amongst its members; in school, however, the responsibility to make pupils aware of the attitudes, values and traditions of a wide range of cultures from across the world is under-developed. This sometimes leads to a lack of understanding when cultural differences lead to unrest elsewhere in Britain or abroad.

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

31. The arrangements for pupils' welfare are satisfactory. The procedures for monitoring and supporting behaviour are good and for personal development and attendance are satisfactory.

32. Child protection procedures are in place. Although guidelines are included in the staff handbook, the school does not ensure that permanent and temporary teaching and non-teaching members of staff understand requirements through training and periodic reminders.

33. Health and safety procedures are generally sound although a few aspects in physical education, ICT and design and technology departments do not meet the required standards. First aid provision is adequate and the school uses the services of specialist agencies to support pupils' welfare. Relationships between adults and pupils are constructive and mutually respectful and contribute to an environment that is conducive to learning and in which pupils feel valued, trusted and supported.

34. The school satisfactorily monitors attendance and promptly contacts parents to obtain reasons for absence. It has not yet been sufficiently successful in reducing absence that is attributable to family holidays taken during a term. It does not use enterprising methods to effectively promote improved attendance amongst pupils.

35. Good teaching and class management effectively promote good behaviour in lessons. The school is less successful in developing responsible conduct outside lessons. Procedures, such as reports and pastoral support plans, are in place to monitor pupils whose unacceptable behaviour has been noted. Expectations of good behaviour are high and pupils are given trust. The pastoral structure that is in place adequately supports pupils' immediate needs but the absence of a form of periodic review, by which tutors and senior pastoral staff can discuss and offer guidance to individuals, inhibits pupils' personal and academic development.

36. Some opportunities for initiative and responsibility are offered to pupils. The school council, fund raising for charities, being a buddy to younger pupils and a school bank are examples. However, only a few pupils participated in an industry initiative. Young Enterprise and Project Business schemes are available to pupils in alternative years. Few cultural experiences are arranged and community service does not feature in the curriculum.

### **Assessment**

37. Procedures for the assessment and its use are unsatisfactory overall. Although staff awareness has been raised regarding the importance of assessment for planning and learning purposes and in-service training has been received, since the assessment co-ordinator left no one has monitored the effect of this training on marking or written feedback to pupils. Currently marking practice is inconsistent throughout the school. The school's system for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress although satisfactory overall has weaknesses at the level of storage and retrieval of assessment data and of using this information to inform curricular planning. National Curriculum levels and predicted GCSE grades are known but pupils are insufficiently involved in checking their own progress against agreed criteria for individual subjects, and in setting goals for personal improvement. Teachers are not always aware of pupils' level of understanding of the criteria applied to assessing the standards they achieve. Misunderstandings are also evident as some lower attaining pupils, revising for their GCSE examination, fail to understand the words used in written examination questions. These are missed opportunities for raising the quality of learning and ultimately the standards reached; particularly by lower attaining pupils.

38. The school has a centralised electronic means of analysing assessment results and of predicting examination grades at GCSE; also for checking individuals or groups of pupils' progress. This process is at an early stage of development however, and is not yet fulfilling its intended role because teachers do not all understand how to access and use the facility. The school provides guidance to pupils and parents about levels of attainment. Reports on progress are heavily weighted in favour of effort and motivation and too little concerned with sharing information about progress in the development of skills or gains in knowledge and understanding of specific subjects. Pupils' personal targets reflect this emphasis. There is no report on ICT for Year 11 pupils.

39. Within lessons, pupils are insufficiently involved in the assessment process with too few opportunities allowed for reflection on meaning and for developing thinking strategies. The best practice of emphasising skills to improve learning occurs in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and art and design. In order for assessment to improve standards, pupils must understand what counts as quality in their work. A sample of boys interviewed in Year 9 perceived that this practice was shared with them in English, ICT and art and design, whilst a sample of Year 11 boys highlighted similar procedures in geography, history, French and ICT. Written feedback to pupils is best in English and mathematics. There is no assessment in place in religious education and in ICT assessment is weak in Years 7 to 9.

40. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. Annual reviews for pupils with statements of special educational need are carried out

correctly and punctually. There is an efficient system for collecting information from subject teachers before the review. Parents or carers are invited and about half attend. All the requirements on the statements are fully met. Pupils have individual education plans in accordance with the Code of Practice although the situation is complicated as the school moves towards implementing the new code. Targets on the individual education plans are properly concentrated on literacy, numeracy and behaviour. However, they are of uneven quality, some being too vague to allow a proper check to be made on progress. They are reviewed twice each year in the light of teachers' comments. The system of collecting teachers' comments is informal but works effectively. Nearly all teachers are aware of the targets on pupils' individual education plans and take account of them in their planning and teaching.

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

41. Parents are confident in the school and are well satisfied with its provision. The school's partnership with parents is good. The previous report called for the school to find ways of involving parents more in the work of the school and pupils' learning but it has made only modest gains so far.

42. Parents are right to be pleased with the quality of education that is provided for pupils. They say that they value the improvements that have been made in ICT provision. They have positive and supportive attitudes towards the school and its aims and practices but very few parents are involved in the life and work of the school.

43. The information that is provided for parents is good overall. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents omit some information that is required by statute. The school newsletter is attractively presented and interesting but is published only twice a year. The school provides good information about pupils' progress every half term. The reports give details of pupils' current level of attainment expressed as a National Curriculum level or GCSE grade and how pupils' are applying themselves under four different headings. Targets for improvement are included, although they are not sufficiently specific in some subjects. Very little information is included about what pupils know, understand and can do. Previous reports are included so that parents can see how pupils have progressed over time. Two meetings are held each year so that parents can consult with teachers. The meeting held earlier in the year is well attended but the later one is not. The school has commenced taking the views of parents and other schools on a range of matters so that the views of the community are considered when planning school developments.

44. Parents are involved in the day-to-day life of the school in only a limited way and the school has not canvassed parents for their support or audited them regarding what expertise, experience or practical help they might be able or willing to offer. Attendance at and support with the school's annual pantomime are good and some parents provide help with transportation for out-of-school activities. Some parents are involved in fund raising with parents of two other schools. The school has successfully involved about twenty parents in basic computing skills courses, has organised an after school sex and drug education session for them and arranged a workshop for accelerated learning techniques in science. The school communicates well with parents regarding strategies to assist their own children regarding behavioural problems. It is less successful with a few parents regarding attendance. Homework diaries are not used as well as they could be for frequent communication and in order to raise standards and keep parents well informed.

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

45. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and the overall management of the school is good. As a result, the school is largely successful in ensuring that pupils do their best, their aspirations are met and the school moves forward with a clear sense of purpose and a view of its own development. It benefits from a governing body, the key members of which fulfil their role as critical friends of the school very well, especially in their monitoring of the effectiveness of the curriculum pupils receive. In consequence, the teaching and support staff of the school strive to make pupils' learning effective and appropriate to their needs. Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior management and within departments is less systematic so that good practice is rarely shared.

46. All members of staff enjoy working in the school and appreciate the opportunities that a small school offers in giving effective support to individual pupils whilst, at the same time, strive to ensure that difficulties experienced as a small school are minimised. Senior members of staff, work closely with the headteacher, providing able support. Currently, there is no deputy headteacher within the substantive structure of the school, so that the support of senior staff is significant. The whole staff, teachers and support staff, enjoy working with the headteacher and value the improvements that have been made to the school in the last three years. The outstanding contribution of the school's site manager and administrative staff are examples of such commitment. The school is attractive and clean and the day-to-day organisation is very efficient. Parents, too, are pleased with the overall commitment of key staff in the school and, most particularly, with the leadership of the headteacher. Although there are problems maintaining appropriate staffing in a small school, in many ways they are not as severe as elsewhere since people who know the school are keen to work there, even on a part-time basis. Nonetheless, there are problems, most notably in that the school's budget is very tight and providing sufficient senior management support for the headteacher is not easy, with the result that he spends a proportion of his time fulfilling tasks that take him away from the core of his role of nurturing and sustaining the quality of the education provided by the school. Processes of delegation are difficult since all members of staff carry a number administrative roles in this small school. Nonetheless, governors are faced with the task of seeking ways of establishing a little more delegation in order to release the headteacher's time for more analytical and supportive work to improve, even more, learning and teaching in the classroom.

47. Leadership gives the school a very clear educational direction that looks beyond its immediate circumstances. Efforts made, for example, to achieve the status of the e-Learning Foundation, increase the number of computers available to pupils, and, with other small schools in Cumbria, to achieve rural academy technological college status that overcomes geographical isolation and enhances the learning opportunities of all pupils is a remarkable, far-reaching and imaginative focus for the school's immediate development. However, it is not at the expense of current needs. The work of the school in ensuring that teaching and learning are effective has led to examination results improving steadily year by year. In 2001, not only were they the best ever, above the national average in tests at 14 and in the GCSE examination, and showed improvement at a more rapid rate than overall national improvement, the school also gained the prestigious School Achievement Award.

48. The school promotes and realises equality of opportunity, serving very well, as a strict priority, the immediate needs of pupils living in this attractive yet isolated part of the country. The school strives to link its work with the aspirations of its community. At the same time, a few teachers encourage pupils to see beyond Alston Moor across the country as a whole and, further, with a growing understanding of the inter-dependence of nations that, too, are made up of many closely-knit communities that value their own identity. Insufficient stress is placed on the significance of equality of esteem, for example of a variety of races and cultures; this has particular importance for a close-knit community that is indigenous in nature.

49. The pupils' growing maturity, their pride in their school and very positive attitudes to learning are an important part of the school's very purposeful atmosphere. Whilst there is scope for substantial further development in broadening horizons and realising more fully all aspects of personal development, the steps taken to ensure that pupils achieve well and do as well as they possibly can is a key strength.

50. The school has a commitment to be a constantly improving school and has the capacity to be such. It is aware of the areas that require improvement and these are central to its effective development plan. The partnership of management and governors in moving this plan forward is a strong and effective one. The school is aware, for example, of the need to improve boys' performance in Years 10 and 11 and to use techniques of assessment and the interpretation of data more fully in order to raise standards even more than has been managed already. The concept of middle management, for example heads of subject, is difficult with so few members of staff, but whilst the school overcomes this well and staff do come together to discuss effective ways of making policies a reality, there remains insufficient curriculum development in some areas, through, for example joint moderation of pupils' work. There is not a clear-cut mechanism for evaluation to occur, so practice is uneven across subjects, although the will to constantly improve is there. The way subject and pastoral leaders carry out evaluations of the effectiveness of the work in their particular areas is patchy and becomes difficult when staff leave and replacements need to be slotted into a stretched staffing model.

51. The management of provision for special educational needs is good. The special educational needs coordinator keeps very full and up-to-date records. The system for disseminating and collecting information from other teachers is effective. All statutory requirements concerning statements of special need are met. The school is well placed to have the new Code of Practice fully functioning by September. However, some of the targets on individual education plans are not specific enough and data is not analysed to measure the overall success of the special needs policy. The governing body keeps aware of developments through the agency of a governor who has close knowledge of the school's work with special needs pupils.

### ***Finance***

52. Financial management is good and the school gives good value for money. The school uses the funds available to it to raise standards by achieving small teaching groups and, for example, by improving learning resources and developing opportunities such as the current rural academy initiative. The specific grants received are used for their designated purposes. The school receives the small schools special allowance because it does not enjoy economy of scale and inevitably incurs higher costs per pupil than the majority of secondary schools. A recent audit confirmed that financial controls are satisfactory. The method by which monies are allocated to subjects requires review in order to devise a more equitable approach that more closely meets actual departmental needs.

### ***Staffing***

53. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers more or less match the demands of the curriculum. Provision for music and drama have been difficult in recent years, but steps have been taken to establish better provision for music. In some subjects, for example art and design and design and technology, as there are only one or two teachers covering a very wide National Curriculum in these subjects, teachers' resolve to embrace the full requirements of the subjects is compromised. The school's strategies for appraisal and performance management work well. Professional development training of staff is focused on the needs identified in the school development plan.

### ***Accommodation***

54. The accommodation is adequate and enables the planned curriculum to be taught effectively, although until planned changes for art and design are in place, development in this subject is retarded. There is little spare capacity because the school has two small classes in each year group. The school has taken a conscious decision to organise classes in this way in order to avoid large classes and overcrowded rooms. Recently refurbished rooms in design and technology provide a good learning environment. There are two dedicated ICT rooms of high quality and good display enhances pupils' learning. Dedicated rooms in mathematics and English are spacious and the interactive whiteboard is used well in the English room. The library is small and does not provide a stimulating environment for study. Religious education has no dedicated room. The subject is taught in a number of different bases and this restricts the opportunity to use display to enhance and stimulate learning. There is restricted access to indoor space for physical education and this has a negative impact on girls' motivation. One of the outdoor hard areas has significant disadvantage. There is no protective netting in place to prevent balls striking classroom windows and the tennis court marked out is very close to the side walls.

### ***Resources***

55. Across the school resources are satisfactory. ICT resources are very good. When set against the number of pupils the availability of computers in school is higher than average. The generous provision of notebook computers for pupils, the use of interactive whiteboards and the strength of computer links through the e-Learning Foundation further encourage many pupils to use ICT in their daily studies. In modern foreign languages and science, in particular, good use of ICT resources is helping pupils to learn well. However, in geography, history and design and technology teachers are not making sufficient use of ICT in lessons.

56. In English and geography new book purchases have helped to enhance learning but shortages of books, particularly in science and modern foreign languages, are having an adverse impact on pupils' achievement. The library does not provide adequate support for pupils' learning. The collection of books, especially non-fiction, is small and includes stock that should be discarded. No proper system for accessing, classifying or issuing books is in place and pupils have no ICT facilities there. The level of staffing is inadequate at the equivalent of one day a week. For all these reasons the library is not widely used by pupils to support their learning.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to improve further, the following areas of concern should form the basis of the governors' post-inspection action plan:

- (1) The school should pay more attention to how it provides for pupils' personal development, especially in respect of their spiritual and cultural development by:
  - giving pupils more opportunities in English, science, design and technology, geography, history, ICT and religious education to explore values and beliefs implicit in these subjects,
  - giving pupils opportunities to identify what gives them a buzz in their learning and why, especially in English, mathematics, science, art and design, drama, music and physical education,
  - encouraging, in lessons, pupils to initiate and contribute their views to discussions on social and moral issues,
  - in the management and organisation of non-lesson time developing in pupils a greater awareness of each other and the different natures amongst their personalities that all merit respect,
  - encouraging pupils to seek opportunities to build bridges of learning with all with whom they come into contact within the life of the school,
  - increasing the opportunities for pupils to make decisions in lessons and about the daily life of the school, to work independently and with other people,
  - in assemblies and elsewhere, providing opportunities to reflect on what is special about being human in a setting where thinking and feeling are helped through the creation of a reflective atmosphere,
  - heightening pupils' thinking and feeling through increasing their corporate experience of social and cultural enrichment through literature, the arts, geography, history, science, design and technology, foreign languages, visits abroad and religious education,
  - preparing pupils better for life in a culturally diverse society within the full range of the curriculum and through a wide use of cultural images about school.

(Paragraphs: 10, 11, 23, 25, 27-30, 49, 64, 147)
- (2) Ensure that teachers make more use of assessment and other data to improve pupils' performance and especially that of boys by:
  - sharing measures that are effective in raising standards in Years 10 and 11 particularly,
  - improving the impact of marking and written feedback on pupils' learning,
  - storing and using assessment data to inform curricular planning,
  - encouraging pupils to check their own progress against the criteria of examination requirements in subjects,
  - paying closer attention to detail and accuracy in pupils' work and ensuring their understanding of key vocabulary relating to examinations in particular subjects,
  - analyse regularly the content of lessons to make sure that pupils have suitable opportunities to be closely involved through carrying out enquiries themselves and being active partners in what is to be learned,
  - increasing opportunities for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to be more involved in assessment of their own achievements,

- giving pupils opportunities for reflection on the nature of their learning that is good and increase opportunities for the development of their thinking skills,
- increasing the contributions of subject teachers to support and evaluate the achievement of individual targets of pupils.

(Paragraphs: 17, 37-40, 51, 82, 95, 113, 140, 148)

(3) The school should be more systematic in monitoring and supporting teaching and learning, and sharing the good practice that leads to the best standards in pupils' work by:

- ensuring that learning in all lessons has rigour and pace in the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills that is seen amongst the best teaching and learning in the school,
- encouraging more variety, challenge and imaginative approaches to learning and teaching that, whilst satisfactory, does not fully engage pupils' involvement,
- giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning rather than limiting them to follow a route solely and too frequently determined by the teacher,
- recognising that pupils respond best to active and participatory learning, especially in groups,
- encouraging high expectations in all teachers.

(Paragraphs: 45, 50, 71, 82, 127, 141, 149)

(4) Release the headteacher from some aspects day-to-day management of the school in order that he can devise and put into practice for more of the working week approaches for himself and other members of staff to tackle the matters raised in the preceding three key issues.

(Paragraph: 46)

Additional concern:

- Provision of time for religious education is insufficient to meet the needs of the locally agreed syllabus.

(Paragraphs: 142-150)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	16	39	18	2	0	0
Percentage	0	21	52	24	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	167
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	25

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	49

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

Authorised absence

%
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Unauthorised absence

%
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School data	9.1
National comparative data	8.0

School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.2

*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 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	16	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	8	8	12
	Girls	13	9	12
	Total	21	17	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (53)	57 (78)	80 (78)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (13)	47 (44)	37 (44)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	9	8	11
	Girls	13	12	12
	Total	22	20	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (63)	67 (63)	77 (81)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	53 (28)	53 (25)	40 (66)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	12	13	25

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	7	10	12
	Girls	8	12	13
	Total	15	22	25
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	60 (50)	88 (83)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per pupil	School	42.6 (38.6)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	167
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	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)	13.04
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	12.6

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	122

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81.6
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	18.7
Key Stage 4	14.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	6 672 396
Total expenditure	665 197
Expenditure per pupil	3 983
Balance brought forward from previous year	46 806
Balance carried forward to next year	54 005

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.8
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	167
Number of questionnaires returned	46

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	44	7	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	41	9	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	54	11	0	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	57	5	0	2
The teaching is good.	39	54	4	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	33	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	17	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	41	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	44	41	15	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	52	41	4	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	39	7	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	31	7	7	7

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

### **ENGLISH**

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Good teaching enables pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve well.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and work hard in lessons.
- Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection.
- Good leadership and management are resulting in pupils achieving higher standards in English.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Too few lessons provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and show initiative.
- Lesson planning does not focus sufficiently on developing and extending pupils' speaking and listening skills.

58. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are the result of good teaching and very positive attitudes from pupils. Pupils' achievements by the end of Year 9 are good in relation to standards on entry to the school. Their achievements by the end of Year 11 are good in relation to standards at the start of Year 10. Standards of work have improved since the previous inspection as a result of good leadership and management. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

59. Levels of attainment on entry to the school are average. By the end of Year 9, as a result of good teaching and their own very positive attitudes pupils reach above average standards of attainment that represent good achievement across the three years. National Curriculum test results for 2001 were above national averages and well above those achieved by schools with similar backgrounds. Over the last four years results have improved more rapidly than nationally. Girls and boys have achieved equally well on average against national figures. Test results in English were a little better than those in mathematics but less good than those in science. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress.

60. In Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve well. GCSE results for English in 2001 were at national average levels but for English literature they were well above. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest GCSE grades was below average and the proportion of those not achieving at least grade G was also a little below the national average. However, a comparison of 2001 GCSE English grades against levels the pupils achieved two years previously in National Curriculum tests shows that most pupils made well above average gains. Over the two years this represents good achievement. Girls out-perform boys in English compared with results in other subjects but in English literature boys perform comparatively better than girls. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other students because they are well taught in smaller groups and receive good additional support in class. Standards overall in English are similar to those in mathematics but less good than those in science.

61. Work seen during the inspection for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is above average. Most pupils participate well in whole class discussions showing average levels of confidence and fluency when speaking. However, few lessons challenge them to talk independently in order to develop more advanced oral skills. In one lesson focused on how advertisements seek to

persuade, the teacher asked Year 8 pupils to discuss written questions in pairs but the exercise was geared to written rather than oral responses so that the scope for developing speaking and listening skills was limited. Pupils read aloud with confidence and are encouraged to develop the valuable study skills of skimming and scanning texts for information. Work on a good range of modern and pre-twentieth literature and other texts encourages them to analyse closely for meaning and to 'read between the lines'. The very limited provision afforded by the school library does not have so important an impact on developing pupils' reading as is usual in secondary schools. Pupils at all attainment levels write accurately and at length. They show increasing confidence as they become aware through good teaching of the need to consider the purpose of their writing and for whom it is intended. Higher attaining pupils especially show in their imaginative writing, such as the horror stories written by Year 9 pupils, that they are able to write lively and well-controlled pieces using a good range of expressive language. Pupils make regular use of ICT to prepare and present work and further extend their knowledge in tasks such as Year 7 pupils' comparison of web sites aimed specifically at boys or girls.

62. In Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to take part readily in class discussions. When a poet's portrayal of unrequited love was discussed in a class of lower attaining Year 11 pupils everyone contributed, often with perceptive comments such as, 'I can see both sides' and 'He is infatuated.' However, on another occasion when higher attaining Year 11 pupils were asked to consider in groups whether the age at which people can buy cigarettes should be raised, they were deflected from developing independent ideas by the teacher's frequent interventions. Pupils read GCSE literary texts closely and gain good understanding of how writers achieve their effects. Analysis is evident in work on poetry, especially that on poems by Seamus Heaney, and is often sensitive and perceptive. Other very good analysis was evident in comparative essays on poems by Victorian and modern authors. Many pupils write very well in their personal pieces on the 'My Family' theme. The work of lower attaining pupils is typically shorter and less well developed and all but the highest attaining pupils are less confident when handling discursive writing. Written work shows good use of drafting and re-drafting to raise standards and ICT is widely evident in the high proportion of word-processed written assignments.

63. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is well founded on very good relationships between pupils and their teacher. As a result classes are skilfully managed so that pupils behave well and enjoy their learning. Good learning occurs in a friendly and supportive classroom atmosphere. Teaching ensures that lessons are carefully planned to break the learning process up into clear stages that all pupils can readily follow and understand. The class teacher makes sure that learning objectives in all lessons are shared with pupils from the outset. This results in pupils making good progress as they work confidently towards goals that they can clearly identify. However, in some cases pupils might move from stage to stage more rapidly, as seen in a Year 7 lesson when higher attaining pupils had to summarise surface points in a passage before they were allowed to go on to detecting implied messages. In these cases lesson planning is not yet sufficiently flexible to encourage such pupils to make more rapid progress. Teaching is focused very clearly on enabling all pupils to reach their full potential in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. The new head of department has concentrated on raising standards in English and external examination results have already improved. Pupils learn well when they have opportunities to evaluate their work against given criteria for success, as seen when Year 11 pupils measured their own responses to James Fenton's poem 'Nothing' against model answers at different grade levels. Good strategies for improving basic literacy are increasingly at the centre of lesson planning, although the use of resources from language textbooks does not always provide the most engaging or appropriate materials to stimulate good learning.

64. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department, who is the sole full-time English teacher, has made notable progress in tackling some of the areas for development that were identified in the previous inspection, so that improvement is good. Schemes of work for pupils in Years 9 to 11 have been thoroughly revised and those for Years 7 and 8 are currently being reviewed to take full account of the new national framework for learning. Standards of achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 9 now match those of older pupils. Shortcomings in resources have been met by the purchase of new books that offer greater challenge to pupils. The teaching of close reading skills has been systematically developed for pupils in all years. Opportunities still remain, however, for further development of collaborative tasks for pupils that require them to use personal initiative. Procedures for assessing and supporting pupils' progress are satisfactory.

***Basic skills: the use of skills of literacy to support learning across subjects***

65. Standards of literacy are average. Pupils are competent communicators when talking in class. Reading skills are also average and enable pupils to meet the demands for reading in all subject areas. Good support for reading is offered to lower attaining pupils in geography and to a lesser extent in physical education and design and technology. Little notable support for reading occurs elsewhere, although in modern foreign languages good opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills are provided through reading aloud and drama. Teaching here also focuses on developing pupils' advanced reading skills, such as scanning and inference. Extended writing occurs in English, science, geography and history but elsewhere pupils have only a limited range of writing challenges. In science, especially, the attention to good expression through the development of skills of literacy is impressive. However, in general pupils write accurately using a satisfactory range of expression. Key technical words are displayed in most subject areas but they are only occasionally used as a focus for teaching in lessons. Frames to support the writing of lower attaining pupils are used in geography, science and design and technology. Overall there is only patchy evidence of the school literacy policy being put into practice.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- Good assessment procedures effectively support pupils' learning.
- Good teaching ensures that overall achievement is good.
- Leadership gives a clear direction to the subject.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The achievement of boys is not high enough.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning.
- There is insufficient balance between whole class teaching and individual learning.
- The presentation of pupils' work is not good enough.

66. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. Good teaching ensures that pupils do their best. Pupils' achievement in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 is good in Years 7 to 9 and, in relation to standards at the start of Year 10, is good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' attitudes, the quality of the teaching and activities matched to pupils' needs cause the quality of pupils' learning in mathematics to be good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

67. In the 2001 national tests at the age of 14, attainment was average when compared with all schools and above average when compared to similar schools. These results

represent good achievement in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7. After 3 years of declining performance results significantly improved in 2000 but fell back slightly in 2001. Girls usually do better than boys. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C grades in the GCSE examination was above average. These results represent good achievement in relation to pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. Boys' results were not as good as those of girls. The proportion gaining A\*-G was above average. Pupils performed as well in mathematics as they did in most other subjects studied. Results have improved steadily since the previous inspection and more of the higher grades are now achieved.

68. In the work seen standards overall are average at the age of 14. Pupils' levels of attainment on entering the school in Year 7 are below average in mathematics. Many pupils have difficulty with place value and ordering and rounding numbers. By the end of Year 9 achievement has been good. Number skills are satisfactory for the majority of pupils; they handle numbers confidently during mental activities although lower-attaining pupils still have difficulty with doing calculations in their head. Overall standards are above average for the highest-attaining pupils. Algebraic skills are developing well although still weak for the majority of pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of shape and space and handle data confidently. Pupils develop their problem-solving skills well. In a Year 7 lesson, to develop pupils' thinking skills, pupils were seen investigating number patterns and beginning to look for rules. By the end of Year 9 most pupils can do this well and write them as formulae.

69. Standards in the work seen are average at the age of 16. The work of the current Year 11 is not as developed as the group that took the examination in 2001. Pupils achieve well although the achievement of boys is not as good as that of girls. Number skills are generally satisfactory for the majority of pupils. Most pupils use decimals and fractions confidently although some have difficulty with percentages. Algebraic skills are still weak for all but the highest-attaining pupils. Most can simplify expressions although solving equations is still not clear for many. Pupils' understanding of shape and space is satisfactory. Average-attaining pupils use Pythagoras' Theorem to find lengths of sides whilst lower-attaining pupils calculate areas of triangles accurately. Data-handling skills are satisfactory; lower-attaining pupils use conversion graphs accurately and higher-attaining pupils understand probability well. Problem-solving skills are good; most pupils can now tackle investigations confidently, identify patterns and rules, predict and test hypotheses..

70. The overall quality of teaching is good. As a result of this good teaching the quality of learning is good. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, achieve well. Teachers have good subject knowledge that helps them explain concepts clearly and develop pupils' skills and understanding. Teachers usually manage and organise pupils well. Pupils have been well organised to ensure that they can work effectively on their individual learning programmes. The numeracy strategy has been well implemented in Year 7. Starter activities are being used well in lessons to develop pupils' mental skills. The use of computers to develop pupils' ICT skills and support learning is not yet a regular feature of the learning programme. However, the new laptop computers were used effectively in a Year 8 lesson with the lowest-attaining pupils to develop their understanding of multiples. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good due to good teaching, tasks well matched to their needs and good support provided in lessons. Effective use is made of homework to build upon pupils' learning. Pupils set themselves targets for their homework that are checked by the teachers. Although clear expectations are set for pupils during lessons not enough attention is given to the presentation of results. This means that many pupils do not present their results well enough. Good assessment procedures are used effectively to support pupils' learning. Marking of pupils' work is good. It is regular and provides supportive comments to ensure that pupils make good progress with their learning. Pupils are given opportunities to mark their own work and are expected to check their learning by completing

“review and recap” tests regularly. These are recorded on pupils’ progress sheets and used effectively to identify weaknesses and move pupils forward. Although whole class teaching is being introduced in Years 7 to 9 there is not enough of it in Years 10 and 11; as a result a clear focus on key mathematical processes is not a regular enough occurrence. At the moment, therefore there is an inadequate balance between whole class teaching and individual learning.

71. Leadership and management are good. The programmes of study produced for pupils at different levels ensure progression for all groups of pupils as they move through the school. They are suitably prepared to match the needs of different groups of pupils and assess their standards. The new numeracy strategy is being well implemented. The leadership in mathematics provides a clear direction for the development of the subject and there is a clear commitment to raising standards. Although areas for action have been identified the process of monitoring and evaluating their development is not clearly set out. No formal process for the monitoring of teaching is in place. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

***Basic skills: the use of numeracy skills to support learning across subjects***

72. The effectiveness of the teaching of the basic skills of numeracy across the school is satisfactory. The school has made all staff aware of the national numeracy strategy and some attempt has been made to involve subjects in reviewing their contribution to pupils’ numeracy skills. For example, in geography a very good audit has been made of where different elements of numeracy have an impact on the teaching of geography. At present, however, the lack of a school policy for numeracy across the curriculum is resulting in an inconsistent approach.

73. Standards of numeracy are generally average across the school. These are reflected in, for example, science where pupils can carry out calculations effectively and measure accurately; the development of these skills in science is carefully structured. Year 11 pupils use graphs well in their coursework and use formulae confidently. In design and technology pupils weigh ingredients and measure lengths accurately and draw a range of graphs when analysing statistics. In geography pupils use grid references confidently and in Years 10 and 11 use a variety of graphs confidently and accurately in their coursework. Opportunities are missed to reinforce aspects of numeracy in art and design, history and music.

**SCIENCE**

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **very good**.

**Strengths**

- Science results in both the national tests at age 14 and in GCSE have improved significantly since the previous report and are now very good.
- Pupils’ achievement is very good throughout the age range.
- Teaching and learning are good across all aspects of the subject.
- Pupils enjoy science; they have a positive attitude to the subject and want to do well.

**Areas for improvement**

- The monitoring of the work of the department is not systematic enough to provide consistency and a sharing of good practice.
- The marking of work does not give pupils sufficient information on how to improve.

74. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. These standards are attained because of good teaching. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school are very good. Pupils' very positive attitudes to work contribute to their very good achievement in science. Pupils make very good progress in the development of scientific knowledge and understanding as they move through the school.

75. The results of the national tests at age 14 improved significantly in 2000 and this standard was maintained in 2001. Results were well above the national average for all schools and very high compared with the national average for similar schools. These results represent very good achievement for pupils who were of average attainment on entry to the school three years earlier. Over recent years girls have performed better than boys, apart from in 2000. The results in science were better than those in English and mathematics. Results in the dual award science GCSE examination have steadily improved over the last few years. In 2000, the percentage of A\*-C grades was well above the national average for all schools and very high compared to the average for similar schools. All but one pupil in the year group were entered for the examination and all pupils achieved a grade. The achievement of these pupils was very good. Pupils' performance in science was better than in English Language and mathematics. Girls performed better than boys.

76. The standard of work seen in Years 7, 8 and 9 is well above the national average and is consistent with the national test results. Pupils have good practice in developing their experimental skills and they have a good understanding of the processes involved in a scientific investigation. They have good planning and observation skills and can apply the principle of a 'fair test'. However, lower-attaining pupils are not sufficiently accurate in the collection of their experimental results. Pupils in Year 9 have a good knowledge of the factors that affect the rate of a reaction. Higher-attaining pupils can explain these in terms of the kinetic theory. Pupils know how to test for common gases and higher and average-attaining pupils can name the salts formed in simple reactions.

77. Work seen in Years 10 and 11 is well above the national average. Investigative skills are being developed in a structured way. This was apparent in a Year 10 lesson in which pupils were planning an investigation into the factors affecting the resistance of a wire. The teacher illustrated the criteria used in marking practical coursework by a stairway. Through discussion of this, pupils gained knowledge of examination board requirements. They were then given copies of a pupil's plan and asked to mark it using the given criteria. This activity gave pupils a deeper understanding of planning investigations. Having realised the necessity for preliminary work to inform their planning, pupils moved on to carry out experiments to decide for themselves suitable ranges of lengths and thickness of wires to be used in their investigation. Pupils with special educational needs were helped by the teacher to think through their planning step by step. Pupils were well motivated by the teacher's lively manner and the carefully structured activities enabled all the pupils to make very good progress. By the end of Year 11 pupils have developed very good practical skills. All pupils have very good recall of scientific facts and the higher-attaining pupils show a good depth of understanding of scientific concepts.

78. Literacy skills are good. There is some planned development of literacy in science with an emphasis on the correct use and spelling of key scientific words. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop 'reading for meaning' and oral presentational skills. Strategies need to be developed to support the effective use of numeracy skills in science. Good attention is, however, given to developing pupils' graphical skills in a structured way. By age 14, pupils can choose an appropriate scale when drawing line graphs and by 16 have a good understanding of the line of best fit. Pupils are competent in using ICT to collect measurements, and to research, analyse and model information. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teachers but in some lessons do not make as

much progress as other pupils because of the lack of scientific expertise of support assistants. The development of more suitable resources, such as writing frames, would provide further support for these pupils. More enrichment activities involving problem solving and the application of knowledge to new situations would make more demands of higher - attaining pupils.

79. Overall, teaching is good throughout the age range and this results in good learning. Three quarters of the lessons seen were good or better. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection, particularly in Years 7 to 9. A key strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers manage their classes; they insist on high standards of work and behaviour so that pupils are not distracted from their learning in lessons. The very good relationship between teachers and pupils engenders a positive attitude and interest in science. Teachers are encouraging and supportive, making good use of praise to boost pupils' confidence. Pupils are well motivated and collaborate well in group work. They have good independent working skills and sustain concentration well because the teaching is planned with a variety of activities. However, pupils do not readily volunteer answers to questions posed by the teacher, which has a negative impact on their progress.

80. Pupils are very well prepared for examinations with good concentration on examination technique and frequent review sessions throughout the course. This, together with pupils' positive attitude to work makes a significant contribution to pupils' very good achievement. For example in a Year 11 revision lesson pupils were given sets of word cards to arrange into groups. They then reported back to the rest of the class using the key words to explain different aspects of chemical change. The sets of cards were organised to meet the individual needs of pupils. Throughout the lesson the teacher questioned pupils skilfully, getting them to clarify their thinking and reinforcing good examination practice. The pupils were involved in active learning, consolidating their previous knowledge well. They sustained concentration throughout the lesson, worked hard and gained in confidence.

81. The specialist science teachers have good subject knowledge and explain scientific concepts clearly; they have appropriately high expectations and ensure that the learning objectives are made clear to the pupils, thus focussing their learning. This good practice needs to be spread more widely across the department. In some lessons, taught by non-specialist teachers, expectations were low and there was insufficient focus on supporting pupils' learning. The marking of written work is inconsistent across the subject. Some teachers mark thoroughly and make constructive comments. These need to be more specific to show pupils how to improve their work and adopted by all teachers in the department. Homework is insufficiently used to give opportunities for the application of knowledge so developing pupils understanding.

82. Leadership and management of science are soundly applied. Resources are efficiently organised by the laboratory technician and are now adequate. The improvement since the previous report is very good. There has been a significant improvement in standards throughout the age range, but particularly in the national tests at age 14. Teaching and learning have improved. At the time of the previous report they were judged unsatisfactory up to age 14. They are now good. A greater variety of teaching methods is used, expectations have been raised and pupils now have good independent learning skills. To sustain the high standards and to improve further the teaching and learning, the monitoring and evaluation of science needs to be more systematic and rigorous in order to share good practice and provide all pupils with a more consistent learning experience. Assessment procedures need to be developed to monitor and support pupils' progress by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' learning.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**.

### Strengths

- The use of sketchbooks for research and development, especially in Year 11 is good.
- The one-to-one support given to pupils to meet their differing learning needs is good.
- The detailed assessment of individual pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11 informs planning, teaching and learning effectively.
- Teaching is good.

### Areas for improvement

- The range of artistic experience within lessons is currently limited to drawing and painting, with occasional use of design in ICT.
- Accommodation limitations undermine the range of work.

83. Standards of work seen are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. This is because teaching is consistently good, pupils achieve well and make good progress from their starting point at the beginning of Year 7. As they learn more about the nature of art and design as they get older they bring good attitudes to their work and are keen to do well. As a result their learning in Years 10 and 11 is good and they make good progress in lessons.

84. The standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are average. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as a result of good support given through the teaching. Pupils explore ideas and gain access to visual information, including images from different historical and cultural contexts. Pupils used ICT creatively in Year 9 as part of a project entitled 'Your Secret Underground World' when they designed a poster as though advertising their work as a film. Pupils showed good compositional skills, use of different fonts and colour to draw the eye. Pupils, including lower attainers and those with special educational needs, were well motivated in this work, and worked well individually at their task, valuing the skilful intervention of the teacher in assessing, extending and supporting their work. They also talked together purposefully about their work and supported each other. When pupils use first-hand observation as a basis for their work, they achieve greater perceptual depth; standards, whilst average overall, show good achievement by pupils in drawing, through their use of effective shading techniques and accurate observation. Work with colour is less assured, although there are examples of imaginative work in Year 7 in interpreting their own portraits with a sense of form and composition following a study of the approaches of Matisse, Picasso, Warhol and others in what makes artists paint portraits.

85. The proportion of pupils at the age of 16 gaining the higher grades A\* to C in GCSE examinations in 2001 was below the national average, but by the time current pupils reach the end of Year 11 the standards of most are close to the national average. Achievement is good during Years 10 and 11; this is in part due to the more mature approach of pupils who are keen to succeed but is also a result of good personal one-to-one teaching that relates well to older pupils. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys, although the boys tend to be more adventurous. For example, one Year 11 boy, worked effectively and responded well in the art and design room over a series of lessons whilst finalising a piece of sculpture he was submitting for the examination. He and others sustained a chosen theme in their work and respond to the influence of important artists, especially of the twentieth century such as Dali and Picasso. Their work demonstrates personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. Sketchbooks are annotated and used effectively and technical language develops well. They respond well to regular written assessments by the teacher which provides helpful hints for

them to move forward. Their painting skills develop well compared with those in earlier years. Still life drawings are good and have a strong focus; for example a Year 10 group's observational drawing was above average in work which was linking natural objects to letter illumination. Their tonal studies, use of line, texture and colour work at their best are above average. One boy's experimentation of the relationship between fantasy and reality led to a surrealist painting of a land and seascape, with excellent examples of pencil shading traced through preliminary detailed trial and error in his sketchbook before reaching the final composition. This pupil wrote accurately and extensively about his view of this work and his research into the culture behind it that influenced the way he approached the shading tasks. Another boy represented his own recurring dream, in three dimensions, where he is trapped in a cell within a religious setting. His work was influenced by his research into a number of surrealist artists looking at sub-conscious worlds. This research also influenced another of his pieces about the nature of stress. This pupil was articulate in his description of what his work attempted to represent; he was engaging fully in the art and design process of making and evaluating. Similar attention to detail and realising of artistic intentions was seen in a third boy's detailed study of feet and hands where hands and feet become inseparable in function and place.

86. These descriptions of some of the best work seen in Years 10 and 11 reflect the consistently good one-to-one support and teaching given to pupils. A wide range of teaching methods and artistic approaches is undertaken. Pupils are encouraged to work as artists and the expertise of the teacher is put to good effect. As a result learning is good. The art and design room is well organised to meet the demands of the tasks, whether with Year 7 or Year 11. Younger classes are brought together at suitable intervals to reinforce learning points and evaluate progress. The teacher uses detailed assessment in her record book and knows what pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, need to do to improve further; she shares this with them purposefully.

87. Art and design occurs in cramped conditions and this limits the range of genres possible. Little work is possible in ceramics or screen-printing, for example. This situation is due for immediate improvement as part of a building programme. Since the previous inspection there has been good overall improvement and steady improvement in teaching and learning in art and design. The subject is well managed. Contact with the work of established artists has been significantly improved and now forms a key part of pupils' learning. They know more about the nature of art and design as a result. Art contributes well to pupils' cultural and spiritual development; in a sense these two aspects of art and design in the school are symbolised in a large, textile wall-hanging that has Faith as its central theme.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is good.

### **Strengths**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Results in GCSE examinations have steadily improved.
- Throughout Years 7 to 11, pupils achieve well in relation to their starting point at the beginning of Year 7.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Provision for and use of ICT are inadequate.
- Procedures for involving pupils in assessment are not in place.
- Pupils' literacy development receives too little attention.

88. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average by Year 9 and above average by Year 11. Pupils' achievement in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 is good in response to good teaching throughout the school. The majority of pupils have very good attitudes to the subject. Good team planning ensures that lessons are well prepared and that most pupils make good progress. Inconsistencies occur in marking procedures, written feedback to pupils and literacy expectations in Years 7 to 9. Teachers miss opportunities to practise and reinforce pupils' application of the basic skills of literacy. These shortcomings limit learning and impose a ceiling on the attainment reached particularly by lower attaining pupils.

89. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average skills. They do not attend master classes at the high school prior to entering the school and their previous experience of the subject varies greatly. In Year 7 they learn to plan as individuals and work in teams as they cook and evaluate results. They learn to make templates and 'batch' produce items such as metal trowel blades. Their achievement is good with evidence of improved accuracy in weighing ingredients and measuring materials. Pupils are encouraged to use and understand technical words and to recall previously met processes. In both technology areas they are expected to use time well and to observe health and safety rules. The majority reach the high standards set by teachers. ICT is not currently a part of the design and technology experience for this age group in any significant way.

90. By Year 8 pupils, including those with special educational needs, are supported well in making sensible design decisions for themselves. They also work safely and take responsibility for their own actions when handling sharp-edged tools. The individual designs for a toy produced by these pupils and the high levels of concentration of most pupils ensure that progress in lessons continues to be good and achievement, in relation to their prior learning, is appropriate. Lack of provision of computers and appropriate software limits the opportunity to analyse nutritional value in food. Whilst equipment and software for computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture are planned, these have not yet had an impact on pupils' learning.

91. Standards of work seen during the inspection for Year 9 pupils are average. The majority of pupils are achieving well; attitudes, personal development and relationships are good. Variations in how boys and girls learn are evident with boys very interested in the technical aspects of the design for a steady-hand game and quickly involved in the practical application of ideas. Girls on the other hand are concerned with the presentation of ideas. As a result, in the lesson seen, girls were well behind the boys in developing ideas into practice. Pupils in the food group learned the reasons for using food probes and understood criteria such as appearance, texture and cost. Higher attainers proved very perceptive in observing that manufacturers placed more emphasis on illustrations, in package design, than on cooking instructions. Presentation of work is often good but spelling problems still persist.

92. Skilful teaching in Year 10 ensures that pupils acquire technical words and that well-planned worksheets help pupils with special needs to understand ideas and learn to apply these to their own course work. Teachers write thoughtful and pertinent comments on pupils' work in progress. Spelling is a problem in this year group. ICT is used mainly for presenting work.

93. Standards of work for Year 11 pupils, as seen from lessons and studying pupils' work, are above average. Emphasis on targeting pupils and raising awareness of what pupils need to do to improve grades has led to a big improvement in standards. In a food technology lesson, boys and girls drew on previous knowledge and asked pertinent questions. Girls used time well and efficiently made notes for revision purposes. Boys reacted more quickly than

girls to the teacher's questions. When given time for reflection they offered good explanations of for example, the chemical changes taking place as a cake bakes in an oven.

94. During the period 1999 to 2001 results at GCSE were in line with national averages for A\*-G grades. During the same period pupils' performance in the higher A\*-C grades ranged from below average in 1999 to above average in 2001. In 2001 pupils performed as well as they did in the other school subjects.

95. The two well-qualified teachers are served efficiently by an experienced and knowledgeable technician. There is a very good team spirit. Senior management has monitored teaching and learning and this has resulted in improved literacy provision. The range of reading and writing opportunities offered in different technology areas is not consistent. There is awareness of the need to involve pupils in assessment and the importance of target-setting, but satisfactory implementation requires regular monitoring to ensure consistency of practice, including marking. Currently targets recorded in reports to parents are too concerned with effort and motivation and not enough is said about the standards achieved in the subject. Some teaching lacks confidence in using ICT and the department lacks the necessary equipment or resources to implement this aspect of the curriculum. Accommodation is adequate for needs. Cleaning in the resistant materials room is not good enough with high levels of dust still evident although a new dust extraction system is preventing further dust deposit. The current provision of single periods for Year 9 limits opportunities for extended practical activities in food and resistant materials.

96. Good progress has been made in tackling those issues raised by the previous report; namely in raising standards and improving levels of achievement by better planning, sharing learning objectives and improving assessment procedures. The subject is well managed. Statutory requirements are met.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

### **Strengths:**

- The relationships within the department encourage a good attitude to learning.
- Teaching is consistently good with well-planned lessons and a willingness to improve.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- ICT skills are limited and a greater variety of techniques need to be included in lessons.
- The use of assessment to track pupils' progress and to examine the value added by the department is not strong enough.

97. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. Teaching is good and encourages the pupils' good learning. The achievement of pupils, in relation to standards at the start of Year 7, is good. Overall the attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good.

98. In Year 7 pupils enter with a very varied experience of geography and most are slightly below average. The well-planned teaching that includes clear aims and assessments of pupils' learning enables them to make good progress. Fieldwork is an important part of the studies and Year 7 pupils are able to benefit from the close proximity of the River Nent to develop their skills of observation through field sketches. The majority of pupils are able to describe some of the processes related to tectonic activity but are less confident about describing patterns of development. Their interest is stimulated by the work on mountaineering and the climbing of Everest where they use a range of resources and visit the exhibition centre at Penrith. This work is well planned and a good example of the quality of

teaching that is good and confident enough to adapt the National Curriculum for the benefit of pupils. Many pupils are familiar with basic skills of map work but not able to name significant features, such as the Tropics on world maps.

99. The results of GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are still below the national average. In 2001 only 40 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\* to C, although all pupils achieved a grade. The department is successful with pupils with special educational needs and with low achieving pupils. Only rarely are high grades achieved. The numbers of pupils taking geography are small and percentages figures have to be regarded with caution.

100. The standards of work seen in GCSE groups during the inspection are average. This is because schemes of work have been radically improved and the teacher has high expectations. The difference between examination results and current classroom standards is because this teacher is new and has had the opportunity to take the examination group from the outset, thus ensuring better planning, continuity and progression.

101. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 competently carry out fieldwork under guidance and many produce good quality studies of tourism in Keswick. Many of these studies show a clear understanding of the issues and a good use of graphical skills to analyse the data and to reach realistic conclusions. The lower achieving pupils are often only able to reach simple conclusions and require great support with their organisational skills. The majority can describe patterns and use case studies to develop their thinking. The work on Blackburn shows their understanding of land values and urban development. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of physical processes and can describe landforms associated with glaciation. They use appropriate technical vocabulary although their spelling is sometimes inaccurate.

102. The teaching of examination classes is good because the teacher has a thorough knowledge of the material and the requirements of examiners. The revision lesson with Year 11 pupils gave them confidence and support at this late stage of their work. The use of assessment data is not yet sufficiently developed to help pupils to improve or for teachers to quickly spot underachievement. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods and the inclusion of the thinking skills work is to be commended. This is beginning to help pupils to become more independent learners because the majority are too willing to let teachers do the work. Pupils are often quiet, well behaved but passive in lessons.

103. Examination results are still not high enough but this is one of the priorities for development. The department does not yet make full use of ICT to enhance the learning of pupils but the recent addition of some new equipment is beginning to address this. The improvement since the previous inspection has been good but all the hard work in this well managed department is only just beginning to have an impact on results.

## HISTORY

The provision for history is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths:

- The knowledge teachers have of their subject is good and they manage pupils well.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.

### Areas for development:

- Standards across all years and the results in GCSE examinations are not high enough.
- Teaching styles, including appropriate use of ICT, are not sufficiently varied to motivate and challenge all pupils.
- The planning of lessons is inadequate and the purpose of the lessons is not clear to all pupils. The effectiveness of their learning is not regularly checked.

104. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. Teaching is satisfactory and pupils' learning and consequent achievement are satisfactory. The attitudes of most pupils to their learning are also satisfactory.

105. Pupils' achievement through Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and by the end of Year 9 their standards are average. They develop a good sense of the periods that they study but their sense of chronology is less assured. Many pupils know about the Roman period in Britain and something of the people of the time but they do not always make the links between different periods. They learn some of the skills of using historical sources but have a restricted range of resources and are too dependent on textbook materials and worksheets. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, especially when classroom assistants support them.

106. Teaching is usually satisfactory because the teacher has a good knowledge of the subject and can use anecdotes and details to interest pupils. However, the teaching of basic skills is not thorough and the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. The Year 9 lesson using the CD-ROM on Germany did not inspire many pupils and was an inappropriate use of the new equipment. The girls, in particular, were not challenged or excited by the work. There is an interesting scheme to use the National Curriculum levels more effectively to indicate the standards being achieved by pupils; when used with pupils' self-evaluation, this should improve the way in which assessment can lead to improved learning. Marking is regular but not always accurate and there are too many cases of spelling mistakes in key words that are not noted and, on occasions, helpful comments or marks are not given. These are key shortcomings in teaching but, overall satisfactory learning of cause and effect in history is the result of basically sound teaching.

107. The examination results at the end of Year 11 are well below the national average. In 2001 only 19 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\* to C, although all pupils achieved a grade. Over the last three years the results have declined and in the previous two years almost 10 percent of pupils failed to achieve a GCSE grade. The department does not have any useful analysis of assessment data to explain these results or to check, at an early stage, pupils who may be underachieving.

108. The difference between the poor examination results and the average standards of work seen during the inspection is a result of changes in staffing and a reorganisation of schemes of work. Pupils have detailed knowledge of the Vietnam war and many can comment on the development of the super powers. They continue to consolidate their skills with source material. However, many are reluctant to write at length, to weigh up evidence and to develop their arguments. The course work on Killhope colliery enables pupils to

consider the local heritage and to carry out enquiries and many produce good detailed accounts.

109. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Teachers are good historians and, especially with the local work, can extend the learning of their pupils. Assessments have been used to modify the curriculum and a new syllabus is now in place in Year 10. The department has assumed that the prefix 'modern' will attract boys and motivate, them but has not considered the effect of the changes on girls who sometimes show less interest in the study of war. Marking is regular and often helpful.

110. The behaviour of pupils is satisfactory; they listen and respond appropriately, and, as a result, their achievement over the courses is satisfactory. There is a significant proportion of pupils in Years 7 to 9, however, who are not well motivated and whose achievement could be better than satisfactory. These pupils show little interest and they show limited pride in their work. This attitude is sometimes evident in Years 10 to 11 where a small proportion of files are disorganised and contain graffiti. In a number of instances pupils do not complete their work.

111. The continuing low results and the limited challenge to higher achieving pupils means that there has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The management of the department is unsatisfactory. The appointment of a new part-time teacher is a step forward but as yet there has been too little time for this to have any significant impact on results or standards.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- There is very good provision of resources.
- Good planning ensures all pupils improve their standards.
- Good leadership provides a clear direction and commitment to improving standards.
- Teaching is consistently good and results in good learning by pupils.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The coordination of cross-curricular ICT is insufficient to ensure that statutory requirements are fully met.
- The assessment of pupils' attainment as they move through Years 7 to 9 is inadequate.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and new developments rarely occurs.

112. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average at the end of Year 9, but average by the end of Year 11. Pupils' enter the school with well below average skills but achieve well during Years 7 to 9 because the teaching is good. This good achievement is maintained during Years 10 and 11. Pupils' attitudes, the quality of the teaching, the very good provision of resources and activities matched to pupils' needs cause the quality of pupils' learning in ICT to be good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

113. As pupils begin school in Year 7 their skills in ICT are well below those expected at this age. They know about writing words and calling up pictures but very few are familiar with databases or spreadsheets or using computers to control machines. The scheme of work ensures that pupils increase their understanding of these areas and by the end of Year 9 most pupils are confident users of the hardware and software. Pupils access the programs they need, recall, save and print their work effectively. They understand how to

create a spreadsheet for a specific purpose and can construct and search databases. Pupils know about changing the appearance of text including size, shape and colour and about placing it in different areas of the page. Although generally by the end of Year 9 attainment is still below average, especially as the range of skills mastered is limited, this represents good achievement in the skills that pupils can use effectively. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls and both are achieving well. In 2001, the results of teacher assessments showed that 86 per cent of pupils achieved level 5 and above. This was over 20 per cent higher than average. The assessment procedures do not provide an accurate picture of pupils' attainment; not enough detail is recorded of pupils' strengths and weaknesses across the subject and the implication this has for teachers' planning.

114. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11. By the end the end of Year 11 standards are average. Although results in the 2001 GCSE examination were well below average this was an improvement on previous years when only a very small number of pupils studied the course. All pupils now follow a GNVQ course in the subject and results so far show that a significant improvement is expected in 2002. As most of these pupils had very little ICT during Years 7 and 8 their achievement has been good. Pupils have successfully built upon knowledge gained earlier in the school and have good understanding of the use of software packages to handle and communicate information. For example, they use spreadsheets and databases and create links to web pages. They understand about annotating their work to explain how they arrive at their conclusions. They have not yet had enough experience of using devices to control events.

115. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject. All, including pupils with special educational needs, are keen to work. Most of them listen well, watch demonstrations closely and a few volunteer comments and ask questions which indicate higher levels of learning. Pupils settle down well to practical tasks and cooperate well with each other when asked to share ideas. Behaviour is good. Pupils respect the equipment used.

116. The overall quality of teaching and learning in ICT is good. As a result all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, achieve well. The teachers' subject knowledge is good and this results in clear explanations which develop pupils' understanding. Lessons are well managed and organisation is good. The new interactive whiteboard is used well to gain pupils' attention and to demonstrate what pupils are going to do during the lesson. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on control, the teacher used the whiteboard very effectively to introduce pupils to creating a set of instructions to operate traffic lights. Good questioning helps pupils to think and produce better work. Lesson planning is thorough and ensures pupils have formal instruction and information to settle and focus them on their work. Pupils' work is well marked with helpful comments provided so that they can improve present and future work.

117. Leadership is good. The teacher in charge of the subject has given a clear direction in the last three years and is clearly committed to raising standards. The provision made for ICT at the time of the previous inspection was unsatisfactory. All pupils did not get their entitlement to ICT and as result standards were low and pupils' progress was unsatisfactory. There was no teacher who had an overview of planning and the equipment was not used effectively. Very good improvements have been made since then. All pupils now receive at least one lesson each week that has resulted in good progress for all pupils and improving standards. The teaching of the National Curriculum is now well planned. This has been made possible due to a dramatic increase in equipment mainly through the e-Learning Foundation. The quality and quantity of resources are now very good and are beginning to be used well across the school. Although areas for action have been identified, the process of monitoring and evaluating their development is not clearly set out. A network administrator has been appointed to help with the new developments.

### ***Basic skills: the use of ICT to support learning across subjects***

118. The use of ICT by other departments is variable. The coordination of the use of ICT in subjects has not been adequately tackled since the previous inspection. The lack of a school policy for ICT across the curriculum is resulting in an inconsistent approach across the school. Although some subjects have begun to use the new interactive whiteboards and laptop computers to support learning it is not yet being coordinated throughout the school. As a result the experiences provided for pupils in lessons other than their ICT lessons is limited. There is some good practice in some subjects. For example, in a Year 8 German lesson the teacher used audio-visual equipment and laptop computers effectively so that pupils could work at their own pace and provide immediate feedback to the teacher. In mathematics, the laptop computers are used well to develop the number skills of the lowest attaining pupils in Year 8. At the moment, however, not all subjects are effectively using ICT to support learning or involved in assessing pupils' ICT skills.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good**

### **Strengths**

- The leadership of modern languages is strong and sensitive to pupils' needs.
- Members of staff and pupils have a shared commitment to success.
- The teaching of basic skills, including ICT, is good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- There is insufficient monitoring and support of teaching and learning.
- The provision of books as a resource for learning is inadequate.

## **French**

119. French is taught alternately with German as first foreign language, currently in Years 7, 9 and 11.

120. Standards of work seen on inspection are above average throughout the school, except for Year 9 where they are well above average. This is because teaching is consistently good. Pupils' achievements are good in the first three years and satisfactory in the GCSE years. Pupils' attitudes to French also cause the quality of learning to be good.

121. Teaching and learning are practically based and effective. Listening and speaking are strengths, which develop early in response to the teacher's use of French in the classroom. Writing also develops well, as pupils are taught to cultivate habits of improving their writing by adding qualifying words or phrases. The languages department has contributed to the overall literacy strategy of the school, and this makes its impact on the quality of writing even in a foreign language. All pupils including those with special needs have adequate writing skills to record what they are learning. Reading skills are satisfactory at the level expected but the school has ambitious plans to improve these further by the development of a comfortable Reading Corner where pupils may read for pleasure or to research information. They already research information about France on the Internet, though this is not yet possible in the department.

122. Assessments by teachers for Year 9 in 2001 relate to German not French, though the well above average standards recorded match those of the present Year 9 in French. GCSE results in 2001 were from five second languages candidates, all of whom achieved A\* or B grades, very high results which represent very good achievement. One Year 10 pupil with experience of living in a francophone country took GCE Advanced level in 2001 on the basis of one period a week of teaching and obtained the highest possible grade, which is outstanding achievement. In 2000 all 11 candidates obtained at least a grade C, which is well above national average standards and approximately a grade better than the average for other subjects in the school. Results in 1998 and 1999 were also well above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs, who studied for and entered the GCSE examination in French obtained at least a grade G, which represents significant achievement in response to very effective teaching. Girls do better than boys but the gap is not as wide as is usually seen. Learning in French is good in both written and spoken genres. Three or four pupils a year do not take a foreign language.

### **German**

123. Standards of work seen during the inspection are broadly average but rising to above average with the six second language pupils in Year 11. Achievement in the first language groups is satisfactory, but it is good in the second language groups in Years 9 and 11. Pupils' attitudes, which were negative in the recent past, have improved in response to a newly appointed part-time teacher and are now good.

124. The quality of teaching and learning are similar to those described in French. However it was in German that the best use of ICT was seen. Pupils make good use of twenty newly delivered laptop computers. Software provides language learning material to develop listening, speaking and reading skills, and good lesson planning ensures that these are consolidated by a follow-up written exercise. Teaching and learning are good, with very good use of spoken German and high expectations overall.

125. GCSE results in 2001, the first from a whole class, were well below the national average and also approximately half a grade below the average for other subjects in the school. Some pupils did not achieve a grade G. This relates to unsatisfactory teaching and learning at that time.

126. Leadership and management in modern languages are good. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The high standards of the department relate to the vision and drive of the subject leader, who exercises the role of head of department without benefit of formal status, as she works part-time and has little if any non-contact time in school. She has made a powerful impact on the school, not least by annual Year 8 and 10 trips to France or Germany, which she has promoted. A visit to Freiburg was about to take place at the time of the inspection. Such activities go a long way towards making the school the outward-looking community it is.

127. The incoming teacher of German, another part-time teacher, has also made a strong impact on learning in her subject. However, these two teachers need the opportunity to observe each other's teaching, so as to share best practice and further develop the quality of teaching across the department. Putting German on a proper footing in the school has been a worthwhile improvement since the previous inspection, with the clearest improvement seen in the recent past. Improvement in teaching methods has been good, especially in literacy and ICT.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The teaching of music seen during the inspection was good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to music and are keen to learn.

### Areas for improvement

- The extent of musical experience provided for pupils is limited.

128. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. Teaching is good and pupils achieve well in relation to their overall standards at the start of Year 7; given difficulties of recruitment of permanent teachers, the progress made by pupils in lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9 is commendable, and learning is good.

129. There has been no better than satisfactory improvement in the provision for music since the previous inspection. The provision of a teacher of music has been uneven. An effective teacher has taught in the school for the equivalent of a day each week but has now left. The remaining teaching has been undertaken by differing supply teachers and continuity has suffered. A new appointment has been made for next year, but the current provision, overall, is unsatisfactory.

130. Pupils in Year 7, working with a supply teacher, listened well to musical extracts and in response to very good, sensitive teaching visualised images created by the music. They worked well together in sharing their responses. The teacher successfully linked this work to some surrealist work on the paintings of Dali that pupils have experienced in art and design. Pupils' attitudes are very good and ensure effective learning. Earlier in the term Year 7 had worked on creating chord sequences to match melodies that they had composed earlier. The range of practical experience they receive in music-making and listening and interpreting is good and they achieve satisfactory standards. However, there is no evidence of singing.

131. In Year 8, pupils have been creating their own funeral marches, using a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments, again based on a melody within a chord sequence. This lesson was well managed and pupils showed a sense of presentation in their work, which had shape and form. The teacher intervened well, for example teaching pupils that by breaking the chords down into two notes they could increase the funeral atmospheric nature of their compositions. Pupils responded well to this intervention. Similarly, the teacher helped in establishing rhythmic patterns that had added subtlety, with pupils interacting musically with each other. However, pupils failed to sense an over-dominance of bass, percussive sounds that, even for a funeral march, overshadowed the creation of mood that rested in the melody. The teacher saw this as something to be tackled at the next lesson. Pupils worked well in this lesson and their learning was effective. The standards of their compositions varied, but overall were average in relation to National Curriculum levels.

132. In Year 9, pupils had been working on fanfares. Those heard on an audio-tape were of an average standard overall, although a couple of the groups' work was above average. In these better compositions pupils show an understanding of shape, form, dynamics and climax. In the lesson observed the fanfare to be created was for a wrestler proceeding to the ring; the class was asked to use C, F and G chords in any order linked to a melody for the fanfare. Using a blues format, in small groups pupils were quick to respond to the task that was well explained by the teacher. They responded well to the need to take responsibility for their own work, although were not always sensitive when it came to listening to other people's ideas. The boys, in particular, tended to be over-assertive except for one group where the

girls took a strong lead. The outcomes of this work were not fully realised in the lesson, but good musical learning took place as a result of effective teaching. There, is, therefore, an observable thread and development in the work through Years 7, 8 and 9 which indicated useful progression. By the end of Year 9, therefore, pupils perform their own compositions and improvisations to each other with confidence and a sense of presentation. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their classmates. All pupils have insufficient opportunity to consider the work of established composers and practising musicians; this is largely the result of inconsistency in the provision of music teachers so that a coherent programme has not been able to be planned and maintained.

133. In Year 11, a small group of six pupils, including one girl from Year 9, managed to complete practice tests in rhythmic and melodic dictation despite being moved around several rooms owing to external vandalism to the music room windows over the weekend. They persevered well with their tasks in difficult circumstances. They showed skills in recognising and recording rhythms accurately and it was clear they were ready for this aspect of the imminent GCSE examination. In this examination in 2001, the previous Year 11 group of four students achieved three grade C awards and one at grade E. The group was too small to make any valid national comparison.

134. Unfortunately, during the inspection, no evidence was provided through recordings or live in lessons of any other musical experiences. It was not possible to glean whether any vocal work is experienced by pupils or to what extent they appraise the work of established musicians. The full requirements of the National Curriculum have not been met. A small number of pupils receive instrumental tuition but have limited opportunity to play in an ensemble in school. The school produces concerts from time to time and an annual pantomime.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Pupils behave well in lessons.
- Teachers pay good attention to developing pupils' literacy skills and use of ICT.
- A good proportion of boys is regularly involved in extra-curricular activities.

### Areas for improvement

- Boys achieve higher standards than girls in lessons provided for all pupils.
- The number of girls involved in extra-curricular activities is low.
- The range of activities taught in Years 10 and 11 does not include many which interest girls and they are less well motivated.
- Risk assessment of activities and working spaces has not been completed.

135. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 9 and Year 11 are average and pupils' achievement in relation to their prior standards is satisfactory. Within these satisfactory standards, boys achieve more highly than girls because more of them take part in extra-curricular activities and sport out of school hours and they consequently have more opportunity to practise and improve. These average standards are achieved because the teaching is satisfactory and pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons also contribute towards the satisfactory rate of learning in lessons.

136. In Year 9, pupils have a secure understanding of health related exercise. They know how to warm up and prepare for exercise. Many pupils understand what type of exercise they should carry out in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle but they are not always certain of how much is needed. Boys' performance in cricket and tennis is satisfactory. A small number of higher attaining boys use a good range of strokes consistently and effectively in response to the requirements of the game. Most pupils know how to perform the basic strokes and can use them selectively in a game. Girls' performance in tennis is below average. Many girls have weak skills and have difficulty sustaining a rally. Pupils arrive at the school with average standards and by Year 9 they achieve satisfactorily. More boys than girls take up the opportunities in extra-curricular activities and this helps them to make better progress, especially in tennis.

137. In Year 11, the standard of work of the very small number of pupils following the GCSE course is below average. However, these standards represent satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' starting points. Girls tend to achieve well in the theory and less well in the practical work. For boys, the situation is reversed. The GCSE results over the past few years reflect a similar picture.

138. In physical education lessons taught to all pupils, boys' standards are higher than those for girls. Boys' performance in tennis is average. Most can use a range of strokes strategically to outwit an opponent in singles. Girls' performance in cricket is below average. Girls' throwing and catching skills are basic. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of health related exercise. Pupils understand the elements of fitness and they know how to use the weights room to develop different elements of fitness such as strength or muscular endurance. Across the school pupils' evaluation skills in games activities are weak. Boys achieve more highly than girls because they are involved in more activities out of lessons. The programme of activities taught in Year 10 and 11 includes more activities and sports that interest boys than girls and many girls lose interest and consequently do not make good progress.

139. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Teachers know the pupils well and are aware of their needs. Teachers encourage pupils to select equipment, such as different sized bats and racquets, which best suit their needs and aids their progress.

140. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory across the school. Pupils learn to use the technical language of the subject because teachers display important words in working areas and refer to them in lessons. Pupils learn correct techniques and skills because teachers have a secure knowledge of the activities which they teach and pupils benefit from the individual help and guidance they receive. Pupils behave well in lessons and relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils respond positively to calm, firm and fair management. Pupils taking the GCSE course cover a good range of material but they need help in organising their written work to enable them to learn from it more efficiently. GCSE pupils are not given their target grades for GCSE until late on during the course. For much of the course they are not aware of whether their work matches their potential. Homework is given regularly and pupils benefit from marking that indicates what need to be improved clearly. The pace of some lessons is slow and pupils lose motivation. Teachers' planning is satisfactory. Although learning objectives are identified and shared with pupils they are narrow. They do not include enough opportunities for pupils to evaluate and improve their performance. Nor do the activities included give pupils enough opportunities to work on their own or take responsibility for planning or evaluating their work. These were features for improvement during the last inspection.

141. The quality of leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The teacher responsible for the subject has a number of responsibilities in other areas of this small school and this limits time available to manage the subject. However, she has been effective in a number of areas. The quality of planning and assessment is more consistent and basic skills of literacy and ICT are taught effectively. However, there are no formal procedures to monitor and develop teaching and learning; there is not enough emphasis on improving the quality of teaching in the development plans and assessment information is not used by teachers well enough to guide planning and teaching. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards are similar and pupils' positive attitudes have been maintained. The quality of teaching is much the same but there are improved systems of assessment.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils have good attitudes and behave well.

### Areas for improvement

- Not enough time is allocated to religious education and in Years 10 and 11 legal requirements are not met.
- Pupils' standards of work are below average and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- There is no subject leader.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.
- There is no subject base.

142. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average. Teaching is generally good and pupils make good progress in lessons, helped by their good attitudes and behaviour. However, not enough time is allocated to religious education. Also, as there is no teacher with responsibility for religious education, the subject is poorly led and managed. Consequently pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school are unsatisfactory.

143. In Years 7 to 9 pupils' standards are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils know and understand basic information about Christianity and most of the other major religions of the world. In Year 9 they concentrate on a study of Judaism. This includes some of the main events in Jewish history, with particular reference to the life of Moses, Jewish ritual and the holocaust. In addition teachers ensure that pupils consider how religion affects the lives of believers, for example by a study of an orthodox Jewish home. Teachers also require pupils to consider how religion affects their own lives. Religious education is shared on the timetable with personal and social education. Thus the time allocated to the subject is less than half that recommended by the locally agreed syllabus and consequently pupils' knowledge and understanding are not good enough.

144. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' standards remain below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. All pupils in Year 10 follow either the GCSE short course or a Certificate of Achievement course. Year 11 pupils do not receive any religious education and consequently are denied their legal entitlement. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in the short course in 2001 was below the national average. This was better than in the previous year when results were well below the national average. Results in the Certificate of Achievement were good in both years. As in Years 7 to 9, in Year 10 religious education is

shared with personal and social education and insufficient time is allocated. Nevertheless pupils understand the main facts about Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism. They take the opportunity to reflect, for example on whether they would be able to abide by the five precepts of Buddhism. A discussion was observed in which pupils spoke engagingly about their own thoughts about Christian confirmation and marriage, and listened respectfully to what others had to say. Pupils on the certificate course show, too, that they can think clearly and adopt sound values.

145. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The school has no teacher with specialist qualifications in religious education but teachers' subject knowledge is sufficient for the levels at which they are teaching. Indeed, they put their own subject specialisms to good use. As many lessons are based on discussion all pupils have opportunity to develop their speaking skills. However, much of their written work is brief with ideas not fully developed because teachers do not provide enough help in showing them how to structure and express their thoughts; therefore, despite good teaching in many aspects of classroom practice, teachers are not helping pupils achieve their potential because of their own lack of detailed expertise in the subject to enrich pupils' learning and achievement.

146. Where lessons are planned in detail teachers share the objectives with the pupils at the outset, thus ensuring that teaching and learning both have a clear focus. In some lessons, however, planning is not detailed enough and the lessons lack structure. Even in these lessons pupils learn quite well because of the very good management skills of the teacher and the very good relationships that they have with pupils. These combine with the good attitudes that pupils bring to lessons and create an atmosphere where most pupils are interested in what they are doing and want to make progress. Nearly all pupils behave well and consequently learning is not disrupted. Their exercise books and files are tidy and well presented. They are not, however, given enough opportunity to use computers. Pupils with special educational needs gain from being taught in small groups and from the good knowledge that teachers have of their needs. However, the lack of time means that their progress, like that of all other pupils, is unsatisfactory.

147. A strength of the teaching is the prominence that teachers give to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A banner sewn by Year 8 pupils has a quality of vitality about it reflecting the enthusiasm of the pupils. Older pupils are encouraged to reflect on the possibilities of life after death. Nevertheless, pupils do not have enough opportunity to reflect on the way events can affect people's inner lives. In most lessons pupils consider social and moral issues such as the plight of the Afghans caught up in the recent hostilities. Pupils are made aware of the different cultures associated with faiths originating in different parts of the world although a few boys show intolerance of ways of life other than their own.

148. Teachers' main weakness is that their comments on written work are not aimed at showing pupils how to improve their religious knowledge and understanding. This is largely because there are no descriptions of what pupils are expected to know or be able to do. The result is that pupils have only a very general idea of what progress they are making.

149. No teacher has responsibility for leading religious education and as a consequence the subject is poorly managed and lacks direction. Teaching and learning are not monitored and there is no systematic way of knowing what aspects of the subject need improving. There is no development plan and no vision for the future. The lack of a subject base diminishes the importance of religious education in pupils' eyes.

150. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Pupils' attainment and achievement are no longer satisfactory. There is not sufficient time allocated and in Years 10

and 11 the curriculum does not meet legal requirements. Assessment procedures have still not been developed.