

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST MICHAEL'S C of E HIGH SCHOOL**

Rowley Regis, West Midlands

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 104019

Headteacher: Mr R Worthington

Reporting inspector: Mr T Wheatley  
10013

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 249108

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:             | Voluntary controlled                         |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11 – 16                                      |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed  |
| School address:              | Throne Road<br>Rowley Regis<br>West Midlands |
| Postcode:                    | B65 9LD                                      |
| Telephone number:            | (0121) 559 5224                              |
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| Appropriate authority:       | The Governing Body                           |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mrs B Adams                                  |
| Date of previous inspection: | January 1997                                 |

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members |                    |                      | Subject responsibilities  | Aspect responsibilities   |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| 10013        | Ted Wheatley       | Registered inspector | English as an additional language                                 | What sort of school is it?<br>How high are standards?<br>How well are pupils taught?<br>How well is the school led and managed?                                   |
| 9132         | Janet Godfrey      | Lay inspector        |   | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development<br>How well does the school care for its pupils?<br>How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 2893         | John Manning       | Team inspector       | English   |   |
| 2919         | Phillip Armitage   | Team inspector       | Mathematics   |   |
| 27503        | Marie Foulds       | Team inspector       | Science   |   |
| 7084         | Jack Haslam        | Team inspector       | Design and technology<br>Information and communication technology |   |
| 30901        | Sue Schofield      | Team inspector       | Art and design  |   |
| 12118        | Allan Paver        | Team inspector       | Geography   |   |
| 19152        | Richard Merryfield | Team inspector       | History   |   |
| 3793         | John Ratcliffe     | Team inspector       | Modern foreign languages  |   |
| 1340         | David Wigley       | Team inspector       | Music<br>Citizenship  |   |
| 22042        | John Challands     | Team inspector       | Physical education<br>Equal opportunities                         | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?  |
| 18673        | Richard Wilkins    | Team inspector       | Religious education   |   |
| 2480         | Christine Gilder   | Team inspector       | Special educational needs   |   |

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## REPORT CONTENTS

|   | Page           |
|---|----------------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>  | <b>5 - 9</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  |                |
| <br>  |                |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>   |                |
| <b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>  | <b>10 - 13</b> |
| The school's results and pupils' achievements   |                |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  |                |
| <b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>  | <b>13 - 14</b> |
| <b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>                         | <b>14 - 16</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>  | <b>16 - 17</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>                                     | <b>17 - 18</b> |
| <b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>  | <b>18 - 20</b> |
| <b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>  | <b>20 - 21</b> |
| <br>  |                |
| <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>   | <b>22 - 27</b> |
| <br>  |                |
| <b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b> | <b>28 - 51</b> |

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Michael's Church of England High School has 997 11-16 year old pupils and is similar in size to most other 11 – 16 comprehensives. There are more boys than girls in the school, significantly so in Year 11. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average and the school draws pupils from areas of multiple deprivation, with many families receiving family income support.

The school has a 40 place unit for pupils with physical disabilities. The proportion of pupils with statements of special needs is well above average and the proportion on the school's register of special needs is above average.

The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities is small and a very small number have English as an additional language and are not in the early stages of English language acquisition. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average and literacy skills are poor; attainment on entry has been at this level for several years.

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

This is an improving school that provides a good standard of education. Pupils make good progress overall and some make very good progress. Teaching is good and much of it is very good or sometimes excellent. The direction for improvement provided by the headteacher is excellent; procedures to address all of the key issues arising from the inspection are firmly in hand. The school gives good value for money.

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

- The achievement of pupils as they move through the school is good.
- Teaching is good overall and is often very good.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good.
- The direction and commitment to improvement by staff and governors are very good and the headteacher provides outstanding leadership.
- The provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is very good; for social development, provision is excellent.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent.
- Links with the community are excellent and the relationships with partner schools and colleges are very good.

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

- The attainment of pupils is below average overall.
- Standards of literacy in Years 10 and 11 are below average.
- Provision for some pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

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

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

The school has made good improvement since it was last inspected in January 1997. The school uses assessment information well to monitor pupils' progress and to set targets for improvement. Financial planning and expenditure are very closely linked to planned improvements in learning, teaching and the curriculum. The roles of governors, senior management and middle managers have improved significantly and have a sharp focus on raising standards. Teaching has improved and standards are rising.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

| Performance in:   | compared with |      |      |                 |
|-------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
|                   | all schools   |      |      | similar schools |
|                   | 2000          | 2001 | 2002 | 2002            |
| GCSE examinations | D             | D    | C    | A               |

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

In the national tests taken by 14 year olds in 2002, attainment was below average overall which indicated good progress for these pupils because they entered the school with levels of attainment well below average. Results in English were in line with the national average and well above average compared with similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were below average and average compared with similar schools. Results have improved in recent years, in line with results nationally. In teachers' assessments in other subjects, attainment was below average, but improved on recent years. Inspection evidence shows continuing improvements. In English, pupils achieve very well considering the very low levels of attainment on entry to the school.

In the GCSE examinations taken in 2002 the average points score obtained by pupils was in line with the national average and well above average compared with similar schools. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE was well below the national average but broadly average compared with similar schools. The percentage obtaining five or more A\*-G grades was above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The proportion obtaining at least one GCSE was below the national average and average compared with similar schools. The school did not meet its targets agreed with the LEA, but these were unrealistically high. The great majority of pupils obtained at least a pass grade in the GCSE examinations they entered for, although the percentages obtaining an A\*-C grade were below average, reflecting well below average attainment on entry to the school. Over recent years, GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than results nationally. Taking into account these pupils' performance in the end of Year 9 national tests in 2000, they have achieved well and many achieved very well. Results in mathematics and science were lower than expected; the school was experiencing staffing problems in those subjects at the time. Inspection evidence shows that standards are below average overall but that they are rising.

The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is broadly satisfactory. It is good where support is used effectively. It is not as good as progress made by other pupils because individual education plans are not as detailed as they ought to be to guide teachers, but they are improving. The progress made by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds is good as a result of the school's practice of good personal support.

Pupils' literacy skills are below average but the school has made enormous strides in helping pupils improve them. Standards of numeracy are also below average, but are gradually improving. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are below average, in spite of good work in some subjects. In other subjects they are not high enough, but the school's plans to remedy the situation are advanced.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school                | Very good. Pupils like coming to school. They listen to teachers and each other and they contribute well to discussions in lessons.  |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around school, including pupils with identified behavioural problems.  |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Pupils are keen to accept responsibility and they carry out their duties effectively and with good humour. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils have a very caring attitude towards pupils with special educational needs. |
| Attendance                             | Satisfactory. Attendance has improved significantly in the past year. Pupils are generally punctual to school and 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 and learning are good. In over a quarter of lessons, teaching and learning are very good and sometimes excellent. In just under a half of lessons, they are good and in about a quarter they are satisfactory. In a very small number of lessons, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good and teaching problems in mathematics and science associated with staffing difficulties have been resolved. Teaching is very good in music throughout the school and in physical education and child development in Years 10 and 11. There is some very good teaching in all subjects. Where teaching is at its best, teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to plan a wide range of interesting activities, question pupils and to explain new ideas and knowledge. Pupils learn well from this. Teachers manage pupils effectively and establish very good relationships in lessons that enable pupils to learn confidently and well. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally good and often high, with a consequent positive effect on how well pupils learn.

Unsatisfactory teaching is associated mainly with unsatisfactory expectations and management of pupils.

The teaching of literacy is generally good, although teachers do not always give enough guidance on how pupils can correct their mistakes or guide pupils' reading in Years 10 and 11. Teaching of numeracy is satisfactory – the new policy has not been fully implemented by all departments.

Overall, the school meets the needs of all of its pupils, although for some pupils with special educational needs learning is unsatisfactory because some individual education plans are not detailed enough.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect   | Comment  |
|--|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum  | Good. The curriculum is planned to be responsive to pupils' specific needs. The range of vocational and prevocational courses is very good. The provision for extra-curricular activities is outstanding. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is not fully established.  |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs  | Good overall and improving. Support, where it is available, is usually used well, although there is sometimes not enough help for physically disabled pupils. Individual education plans for pupils with statements are variable in the details of pupils' learning needs, but are improving under new leadership. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development | Very good overall and excellent for social development. Provision is underpinned by Christian beliefs and values that permeate all aspects of the school's daily life and work.  |
| How well the school cares for its pupils   | Good. Attendance and behaviour are well monitored and procedures to maintain and improve them are good. There are some health and safety issues associated with the buildings. The use of assessment information to guide pupils' learning is generally good.  |

The school works closely with parents and strives to improve links so that parents can be effectively involved in helping pupils make good progress in school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect   | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Very good and improving under outstanding leadership by the headteacher. Senior staff work effectively with the headteacher in planning improvements. The headteacher, senior staff and others with responsibilities work closely together to improve the quality of education.                  |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities             | Good. Governors have a high level of involvement in the school. They are generally well informed, have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and make decisions based on improving provision and raising standards. Overall, they meet their responsibilities well. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance                       | The school monitors its performance at all levels effectively and has very clear priorities for improvement. Teaching is observed and evaluated and support given to aid improvement.  |
| The strategic use of resources                                   | Very good. Planning for expenditure is very good. It is linked to the school's plans for raising standards and thorough procedures are followed to ensure the school receives best value for its expenditure.  |

Staffing and resources are good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory with weaknesses in several subjects and some safety concerns. The school is working very hard with the local authority to resolve these.

## 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>• Children like school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and children make good progress.</li> <li>• The school deals with parents' concerns well.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of children.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Children become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The school offers a wide range of activities outside of lessons.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information provided about pupils' progress.</li> <li>• How closely the school works with parents.</li> <li>• Some parents are concerned about the amount of homework given.</li> <li>• A small proportion feel that some pupils' behaviour is poor.</li> </ul> |

Inspectors are in agreement about the strengths that parents identified. Parents' concerns about information on pupils' progress are partly justified. The school reports regularly on pupils' progress and provides opportunities for parents to meet teachers. This is good, but some reports lack sufficient detail on what pupils know, understand and do and what they need to do to make further progress. Inspectors feel that the school works closely with parents and that the quality and quantity of homework are generally good. Although there is some poor behaviour, the school's procedures to deal with this are very good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average and the literacy skills of many pupils are poor. This has been the case for several years and, while there have been some improvements in recent years, they have been minor and have varied from year to year. There are also significantly fewer higher attaining pupils entering the school in Year 7.
2. In the national tests taken by pupils aged 14, in 2002, attainment was below average overall. In English, the percentage of pupils obtaining the national average or better was in line with the national average, and so was the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels in the national tests. Compared with similar schools, attainment was well above average. Results have improved significantly over recent years and the pupils who took these tests in 2002 have made very good progress from when they entered the school.
3. In mathematics, results were below average for both the percentage of pupils reaching the average levels or better and for those obtaining the higher levels in the 2002 national tests. Results were similar in science, but the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels was in line with the national average. Compared with similar schools, attainment was broadly average. Attainment has improved over recent years. The pupils who took the national tests in 2002 have made good progress in both mathematics and science from when they entered the school despite the disruption to staffing experienced both those subjects.
4. In teachers' assessments in all other subjects, the attainment of 14 year olds was below average overall, and well below average in music, a reflection of well below average standards on entry to the school and staffing problems elsewhere in the school. The impact of low levels of numeracy are still evident in standards in most subjects, although in Years 7 to 9 there is some improvement that is starting to have a positive effect on standards.
5. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 9 are below average overall, but rising. Standards in English and science are broadly average and in mathematics are below average. Standards are above average in design and technology and music as a result of new appointments to the school and reorganised teaching. In ICT, physical education, drama and religious education, standards are broadly average, which is considerably better than expected for pupils because of their attainment on entry. In art and design, history and modern foreign languages, standards are below average but nevertheless this is better than expected. Standards are well below average in geography; the appointment of new staff and work they have initiated has not had sufficient time to have had a noticeable effect. Overall pupils are achieving well.
6. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2002 the average points score per pupil was in line with the national average and well above average compared with pupils from similar schools. Although the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades was well below the national average, it was average compared with similar schools. This is good when taking into account the low starting point of these pupils. The percentage obtaining five or more A\*-G grades was above the national average and well above the average of pupils in similar schools. The percentage obtaining at least one GCSE A\*-G grade was below the national average but in line with what pupils in similar schools achieved. Overall, these results are good and for some pupils they are very good, considering their low levels of attainment on entry to the school.
7. Even though the percentages of pupils obtaining an A\*-C grade was below average, in almost all subjects at GCSE, pupils obtained at least a pass grade. Results were best in ICT and child development. The school did not meet the targets it had negotiated with the local authority, but these were set unrealistically high; it did well to achieve the results it got.
8. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards in Year 11 are generally below average but are rising. Standards in English and mathematics are below average and in science they are well

below average. In science and mathematics, this is because the effects of staffing difficulties are still being felt, although much is being done to help pupils catch up. Some of the highest attaining pupils in science have not made as much progress as they ought to have made but staff are working hard to remedy this. In design and technology, standards are average, a result of improved teaching and organisation. In ICT, music, physical education, religious education and drama standards are broadly average and in geography, history and modern foreign languages they are below average. In art and design, standards are well below average, largely because a large number of lower attaining pupils choose this subject. Overall, the achievement of pupils is good. Lack of literacy skills and disrupted teaching are the most significant features that have impeded how well pupils achieve, and both are improving. Work in Years 10 and 11 developing from the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy used in Years 7 to 9 is only just starting to help standards rise in literacy.

9. Standards in literacy are average by the end of Year 9 and below average by Year 11. Pupils are well supported in the large majority of subjects where teachers promote careful attention to reading and writing. This is especially true in design and technology and science, where pupils write accurately for a range of purposes. In French they have good opportunities to read aloud and do so well. More could be done to support writing in history and geography, where many pupils struggle to express their ideas. Pupils with special educational needs also find writing difficult. Pupils read for fifteen minutes every day in a session dedicated to this purpose. Standards are improving, most noticeably in the early years.
10. Standards of numeracy in the subjects of the curriculum are broadly satisfactory. However, many pupils have an insecure grasp of the four arithmetic processes such that even older pupils add numbers by counting on their fingers. A very good use of numeracy occurred in English when a pupil drew comparisons between two literary works by displaying her findings on a Venn diagram.
11. ICT skills are below average. There are opportunities in English, design and technology, modern foreign languages, business studies and geography for pupils to use and develop their skills, and there is planned use of graphic calculators in mathematics. These lessons are successful but the practice is not established across the school. There is very little use in other subjects.
12. Most pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress over time, and some achieve well in relation to their achievement on entry to the school. They achieve well in developing literacy skills. Their progress is good in science, design and technology, music, modern foreign languages, history and religious education. However, in all subjects, progress could be improved by ensuring that individual education plans contain clearer targets, are used to plan teaching and are closely monitored and reviewed by teachers, pupils and parents.

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

13. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. Relationships and personal development are very good. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and punctuality is satisfactory. Most parents agree that their children like school.
14. The very good attitudes of pupils in lessons have a positive impact on learning. Pupils are interested and very attentive in lessons, they concentrate very well, respond very well to questions and persevere to produce work they take pride in. They nearly all try hard and are not afraid of making mistakes. They make oral presentations confidently. Pupils particularly enjoy music and dance where they work diligently to improve. Attitudes are unsatisfactory in only a very few lessons where teachers do not challenge pupils enough. In these lessons, a few pupils, usually boys and often the less able, do not listen, become bored and distract others from their learning.
15. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good, including those with identified behaviour problems. Pupils know how to behave properly and respond very well to the high expectations of good behaviour. Pupils are polite and helpful to each other, staff and visitors. They behave very well in assemblies and show very good respect during prayer and periods of reflection. The one-minute silence for Armistice Day was conscientiously observed. On a very

few occasions, the behaviour of some boys in lessons is unsatisfactory. This is usually associated with a history of temporary teachers and where behaviour is not well managed. In the last reporting year, there were 63 fixed term exclusions involving 56 pupils, mostly boys, and four permanent exclusions. This is relatively low compared with similar schools. Exclusions are for vandalism, abuse towards a member of staff or violence. The rate of exclusions has fallen since the behaviour policy was revised and staff received training in behaviour management. Pupils are trustworthy and behave very well at break times, although several girls gather in the toilets to smoke cigarettes. Pupils take very good care of resources and equipment and have good respect for most of their school environment, with the exception of the toilets. Although some litter is dropped each day, volunteers from the environment group regularly clear it up.

16. Relationships across the school are very good and contribute positively to pupils' learning. Pupils form very good and constructive relationships with each other and with their teachers. Relationships with their form tutors are variable, often depending upon the length of time they have been together, but are always at least sound. Pupils cooperate very well in mixed pairs and groups and share resources well. They show a genuine concern for others in the school community. Able-bodied pupils take very good care of the physically disabled. Relationships between different racial groups and across the ages and genders are very good. Pupils listen sympathetically to each other and respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. As a consequence, pupils grow in confidence. 'Big Buddies' look after new Year 7 pupils very well and help them settle into school. Younger pupils are happy to turn to peer tutors for help. Bullying and racism are very occasional problems, usually associated with pupils from deprived backgrounds whose social awareness is less well developed. The school deals with all reported incidents quickly and effectively. Younger girls find the presence of smokers in the girls' toilets at break times off-putting.
17. Pupils' personal and social development is very good. They enjoy the very many opportunities they have to show initiative and take responsibility. Pupils appreciate their role in a democratic society, especially through sport, drama, the school council and the newly introduced programme of citizenship. Members of the school council elected by their peers aim to improve school life by, for example, looking at lunchtime arrangements, considering the introduction of lockers and dealing with the problems of the toilets. Pupils apply for the posts of head and deputy head boy and girl and are interviewed formally by members of the leadership team. Pupils of all ages volunteer to be trained as peer tutors and under the guidance of senior peer tutors enjoy the task of managing other pupils at break times, which they do efficiently and in a gentle and friendly manner. Pupils are very good ambassadors for the school. At open days they enjoy showing new parents around the school. Year 11 peer tutors visit primary schools to listen to readers and talk to pupils about life at St Michael's to alleviate any fears they may have about moving to secondary school. Members of the environment club take responsibility for keeping the school clean and tidy and encourage others to do so through an impressive display in one of the corridors. Pupils act as librarians and older pupils run the school bank efficiently. The Year 9 receptionists take their duties very seriously and are very helpful. All pupils know the systems well and are very good at performing routine classroom duties such as returning registers, handing out books and tidying up after lessons.
18. The very good participation in a wide range of residential and curriculum visits, sports, performance and community activities contributes very positively to personal and social development and to academic progress. For example, 34 Year 7 pupils visited Edgmond Hall, 95 went to Birmingham Repertory Theatre and nearly all went to a quarry and golf range. Art pupils visit London, textile pupils visit the NEC Clothes Show and business education pupils go to a local car factory. Many go on European visits and exchanges. Pupils carried out a social audit of a local estate to see how the area could be improved. Music, drama and dance pupils perform in the local community and a good number are involved in community sports. Eleven pupils are members of the Sandwell Youth Orchestra and 29 pupils performed the school production of 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. There is also good support for a wide range of local, national and international charities, such as Strip for Shelter, MIND and Save Our Soles. The pupils often choose to support causes that touch their own lives such as cystic fibrosis.
19. Attendance is satisfactory. It is broadly in line with the national average and better than the average for the local education authority. It has improved since the previous year when it was below the national average. Truancy and authorised absence are broadly in line with national

averages, although much absence is parentally condoned. Attendance in Year 11 was the lowest with less than 90 per cent. Pupils with low attendance achieve significantly worse than those with good attendance. The poor attendance of a small number of students adversely affects overall attendance figures. Punctuality to school and lessons is satisfactory and most lessons start promptly, although there is some time slippage caused by the movement of pupils between lessons. Physically disabled pupils miss the last few minutes of lessons in order to avoid congestion in the corridors and to give them time to reach their next lessons.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching and learning are good and in just over a quarter of lessons, they are very good and occasionally excellent. In just under half of lessons, teaching is good and in a quarter of lessons, it is satisfactory. Teaching is unsatisfactory in only a very small proportion of lessons. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
21. Where teaching is excellent or very good, teachers plan their lessons very well and include a wide range of activities to interest and motivate pupils. In these lessons work is usually challenging, arising from teachers' very good subject knowledge. Teachers question pupils and encourage them to make full, accurate answers so that they develop a good knowledge and understanding of what they are learning. For example, in a science lesson on the relationship between pressure, force and area, questioning was challenging and encouraged pupils to think out their answers carefully before answering. This approach is also evident in English, mathematics and physical education and to a lesser extent in other subjects, but it is good practice that is spreading as a result of the development work done on teaching and learning.
22. In the few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, teachers did not prepare as well as they should have done; methods and materials were not suitable and this led to unsatisfactory learning and poor behaviour which teachers then found difficult to manage.
23. Teachers' day-to-day marking of pupils' work is generally good. They give clear indications to pupils about how well they are performing and make suggestions, often in discussion, about what they need to do to do better. Homework is set regularly, with a few inconsistencies, and teachers use homework well to support classroom learning. Teachers also provide opportunities for pupils to select different, but related, homework, if they feel they will achieve more by doing so. This is a positive approach to helping pupils become independent learners.
24. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and lead to a secure atmosphere for learning in which pupils are willing to risk giving tentative answers or explanations in discussions, knowing that they will be encouraged and supported. Discipline is very good in the great majority of lessons as a result of the effective working relationships.
25. The school has experienced some staffing difficulties, particularly in being able to appoint and retain suitably experienced and qualified teachers. Over time, this has had an impact on attainment, most noticeably in science and mathematics, but also in other subjects where breaks in continuity of teaching have restricted pupils' learning. Staffing has now improved, although pupils have fallen behind in their work in some instances and staff are working hard to help pupils to catch up.
26. The teaching of the skills of reading and writing is good in most subjects but the marking does not always draw careful attention to how pupils can correct their mistakes. Teachers in design and technology, science, French and religious education make good use of their time to reinforce good habits in reading and writing. The teaching of numeracy across the school is satisfactory but needs further development. The policy was only recently finalised and has not been fully implemented.
27. The teaching of ICT skills is unsatisfactory overall, largely because there are not enough planned opportunities in lessons, but it is improving.
28. There is some good teaching by class teachers and by support staff for pupils with special educational needs. However, individual education plans are not detailed enough to help teachers plan their lessons so that work is fully matched to pupils' needs, although many teachers provide

a good level of support for pupils with special educational needs. The situation is improving, after the appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator. There are some gaps in learning support, especially for pupils with significant physical disabilities, limiting pupils' ability to participate, particularly in practical subjects and with some writing tasks.

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

29. The quality and range of learning opportunities across the school are good. The statutory curriculum is in place for all year groups and is flexible enough during Years 10 and 11 to respond to most pupils' specific needs. The school meets the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Some pupils who would find it difficult to derive appropriate benefit from the full range of GCSE courses are disapplied from modern foreign languages to allow them to follow pre-vocational and life skills courses in Years 10 and 11. These courses are taught jointly with a local college. Pupils in these year groups also have the opportunity to choose GNVQ courses in information technology and manufacturing. In Years 7 to 9, all pupils follow courses in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, design and technology, French or German, art, music, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Pupils follow a course in drama in Years 7 and 8.
30. Teaching time is above average and the day is currently divided into six periods of 50 minutes each. Overall the time allocation to subjects is satisfactory. In physical education in Years 10 and 11 there is not enough time to cover the subject in sufficient depth and this is also the case for the religious education short course. There is a lack of continuity in drama, which is not offered as a discrete course in Year 9. Although there is a discrete course in ICT, ICT is not taught as an integral part of all subjects across the curriculum. The opportunities for the consistent application and development of computers to aid the development of pupils' skills are not sufficiently planned or co-ordinated. There is no tracking of the contribution of other subjects to the use of information technology, or identification of teachers' training needs for teaching ICT skills.
31. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme has been completely rewritten following consultation with all the relevant staff; it is now very well planned and makes appropriate provision for citizenship, careers, road safety and drugs awareness. Of particular note are the school's excellent arrangements for sex education which have had a focus on reducing teenage pregnancy. In Year 11, there is considerable focus on pupils' records of achievement which are presented at an annual leavers' service each May. Overall the programme makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development.
32. Provision for careers and vocational education is good. Vocational education and particularly links with business are strong and pupils regularly win regional and national prizes in business enterprise. There is a number of employers who offer work experience opportunities for pupils and the links with colleges through the vocational courses give confidence to pupils to extend their education beyond the statutory leaving age. All pupils in Year 11 are interviewed in small groups by the careers service and those who require an individual interview are offered one. Planning for careers education is extending into Year 7. It is taught through the PSHE programme. The careers office is well placed in school but is too small to house the careers library.
33. The school provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent, offering many opportunities for extension, enrichment and enhancement for pupils in the school. This is a testament to the enthusiasm and commitment of staff. Despite significant problems with poor accommodation, there is a good range of physical education and sports activities, including provision of the highest order in dance. In addition, there is a variety of activities for pupils in both music and drama, leading to opportunities for pupils to perform in many productions during the school year. Pupils also participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and each year group has access to a residential visit every year. It is the aim of the school to ensure that all pupils in the school participate in at least one residential visit during their school career. Many pupils are involved in the Young Enterprise initiative where the school is beginning to build a national reputation. Pupils are also involved in developing a shares portfolio and Year 9 pupils participate in a business simulation during personal and social education lessons.

34. The policy for promoting literacy is effective and results in very good improvement in Years 7 to 9 particularly. A good feature of the strategy is that all departments have co-operated well to produce very good resources and guidance to support pupils' learning. Most teachers use them to good effect. The innovation of the daily reading period works well in most of the younger classes but less so with older pupils because teachers have few ideas about how to vary the approach during the week to gain maximum benefit.
35. The teaching of numeracy is not fully established but provision is satisfactory overall, and improving. The mathematics department has run a very successful whole school numeracy INSET day. It created useful documentation including a numeracy users' toolkit and a wide-ranging and thoughtful policy statement. However, most departments have yet to assimilate the material into their work, few having a specific numeracy policy, for example. A notable exception is English, which has embraced numeracy very effectively, for example, by using time lines to clarify the chronology of 'Great Expectations'.
36. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The curriculum is appropriate and flexible to meet the range of needs and abilities of the pupils. It enables pupils wherever possible to gain accreditation for their learning and achievements and combines school and college/work experience opportunities that are tailored to the aptitudes and interests of pupils with special needs and physical disabilities. Work done under the guidance of the newly appointed special educational needs coordinator to provide individual education plans for all pupils with special educational needs is good, but is in its very early stages and has not spread to all pupils.
37. The school's clear vision of its distinctive identity and mission as a Church of England voluntary controlled school drives its very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Its provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection, and is now very good. It nurtures pupils' spiritual growth through high-quality acts of worship in year and extended assemblies, and celebration of key Christian festivals. In most, but not all instances, tutor time provides pupils with very good opportunities for personal reflection on weekly themes. All subjects plan their schemes of work to ensure that pupils meet the spiritual dimension of human experience in lessons. There is particularly good practice in religious education, English, the creative and expressive arts, science and geography.
38. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral development, within a clear Christian framework. It has drawn up its code of conduct in consultation with pupils. Most pupils know right from wrong, and behave very well. They enjoy excellent relationships with each other and their teachers, based on mutual respect and care. Pupils give practical expression to the values of caring in supporting a very wide range of charities, and helping the elderly. Teachers provide very good role models for pupils. A well-planned PSHE programme gives pupils very good opportunities to explore religious and secular responses to moral issues, such as those surrounding sexuality or health. The school also plans very well for other subjects to confront pupils with ethical issues in lessons. For example, Year 8 pupils are challenged to explore and respond to issues of drug abuse through drama.
39. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' social development. It raises their self-esteem through public recognition of their personal achievements in all aspects of its life. It provides excellent opportunities for them to develop their social skills through residential experiences, outdoor and adventurous activities, educational visits, sports clubs and teams, and a very wide range of societies and extra-curricular activities. Most subjects encourage pupils to develop skills of collaborative working in pairs and small groups. The school provides pupils with excellent opportunities to learn to take responsibility and show initiative in its daily life. They learn to exercise leadership through senior posts in Year 11, such as Head Boy and Girl, the School Council, the Big Buddy scheme, the nationally recognized peer tutoring programme, and extensive routine duties such as reception work in school time, and at special events. Contemporary social issues are very well addressed through the PSHE programme, the innovative Citizenship programme, and a wide range of other subjects, such as history and geography.
40. The school makes very good provision for pupils' cultural development. It offers wide-ranging opportunities to develop skills in music, dance and drama. Pupils have represented their country

in Contemporary Dance. Regular school concerts and musical and dramatic productions enable pupils to develop the skills of performing for an audience. Pupils' appreciation of their own cultural heritage is raised through visits to theatres, museums and galleries. Their understanding of other European cultures is deepened through recreational and sporting visits abroad, and the annual German exchange. Since the previous inspection, the school has done much to promote pupils' understanding of the importance of the contribution of cultures other than the Western European to the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century civilisation. Many subjects now promote pupils' appreciation of the multicultural diversity and richness of contemporary British society. For example, pupils are introduced to the beliefs and customs of the major world faiths, and to literature, poetry, music, art, textiles and food from different cultural traditions.

41. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is excellent. A range of activities takes place on the school site during the day, in the evenings and at weekends. The school has strong links with local charities who make contributions to the curriculum and for whom the school is a committed fund raiser. A variety of strong business links is used to support business education to very good effect and good links with local employers are also used to help deliver a very good range of work experience opportunities in Year 11. There are regular visitors from the local and wider community to support various other aspects of the curriculum, including personal and social education, citizenship, physical education, religious education, history and some work-related learning.
42. Liaison with local primary schools is very effective. The Key Stage 3 coordinator teaches regularly in some of the primary schools and some Year 6 pupils and staff visit the school once a week for physical education lessons. There is a well structured programme of meetings for primary school staff and for all primary school pupils to visit the school on at least two occasions before they start secondary school. Liaison with local colleges is also very good and pupils benefit from this when choosing their post 16 route.
43. Equality of access and opportunity is very good. This is a very inclusive school. There is access to all areas of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities for all pupils, including those in the physical disability unit.

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

44. The school provides a good level of pastoral care for pupils, which has a positive impact on achievement. There is good educational and personal support and guidance to enable pupils to make further progress with their learning. The school takes good care of pupils' welfare.
45. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. There is good liaison with primary schools and a well-organised induction process. There is a good programme of guidance and PSHE to support pupils' personal development. The pastoral team structure has recently been revised to good effect. The heads of years and form tutors play an important role in supporting and mentoring pupils. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are well tracked through individual student profiles, pastoral support programmes, academic audits and annual reports. There are regular pastoral meetings which ensure pupils maintain good progress. Pupils are confident in turning to tutors or heads of years for help and support. Good use is made of outside agencies to support pupils. Pupils are well prepared for adult life.
46. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. There is an electronic system of registration and clear procedures are followed rigorously. The use of registration time is variable, but most tutors use it effectively to establish good relationships with pupils to promote personal development. The school rightly emphasises the importance of good attendance and works hard with parents to improve the attendance of the small number of persistent absentees. Rewards for good attendance and recently introduced telephone calls to parents on the first day of absence have significantly improved attendance. The school does not yet analyse attendance figures sufficiently well to target further areas for improvement. Lesson registers are taken to check for internal truants. Support in the Learning Support Unit has encouraged the better attendance of a few disaffected pupils. Support from the Educational Welfare Service has been erratic but the school's attendance initiatives have a positive impact on learning. Good systems are in place to monitor pupils who arrive late and to help them improve their punctuality.

47. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The behaviour policy has recently been revised and although it and the prospectus detail sanctions rather than rewards, this emphasis is not extended to most classrooms. Staff received good training in behaviour management two years ago. They have very high expectations of good behaviour and pupils respond accordingly. Pupils feel that discipline is used fairly and very effectively. They appreciate the letters of commendation from senior teachers. There has been a decline in fixed term exclusions since the system was revised and very few pupils are excluded more than once. Very good records are kept of all incidents of poor behaviour, bullying and racism and those resulting in exclusions are properly recorded. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating bullying are very good. Awareness of gender issues, bullying and racism is promoted to younger students in PSHE lessons. Pupils are happy to report incidents openly or discretely using the forms that are freely available in tutor rooms. Pupils are confident that any reported incident will be resolved quickly and to their satisfaction.
48. The school takes good care of pupils' welfare. Procedures to ensure the health and safety of all pupils are good. A senior member of staff has responsibility for coordinating health and safety and the site manager takes an active interest. Teachers give good attention to following safe procedures in lessons. Appropriate risk assessments are in place for all activities, including trips out of school and for individual pupils. Evacuation drills are carried out properly and recorded appropriately. The school is aware of significant problems with evacuating pupils, especially the physically disabled, from the first floor and has good procedures, but there are health and safety concerns about the exit routes from the building in the event of a fire. The wooden ramps have a weight restriction, they are long and one passes over the wood storage area. Insufficient supervision of the girls' toilets at break times means that some younger girls avoid using them. A number of other health and safety problems have been brought to the attention of the school. First aid procedures are good and good care is taken of physically disabled pupils. There are good procedures for dealing with child protection issues and the school maintains good links with appropriate outside support agencies.
49. Overall the school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good, and they are generally well used by departments.
50. The school has a very good assessment policy, which derives directly from the Christian values underlying all its activities. It reflects care and concern for each individual pupil and provides a structure for departments to assess pupils' work in each subject area. It is a key element in strategies to raise expectations both through school action across Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 and also through target setting and review in each subject. There has been close co-operation with the local education authority.
51. All teachers have detailed assessment information about the pupils they teach which they use to plan their teaching and set targets for pupils. Information is managed effectively by a deputy headteacher using a mixture of computer and paper recording systems. Profiles are maintained on each pupils, recording his or her progress in each subject area. Such profiles are reviewed twice a year by the teachers in charge of Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, so that appropriate action can be taken in the case of pupils underperforming. A reference file of work indicating National Curriculum levels is kept centrally to support teachers assessing pupils' work. The school uses a combination of local authority and its own predictions and attendance records to produce GCSE targets for pupils.
52. Most departments have implemented these systems well, several of them very well, and mathematics and art are in the early stages. The whole school attempt to standardise marking across the curriculum is not fully implemented to best advantage, because in some subjects, notably history and geography, there is insufficient reference to examination criteria, and targets are not precise enough.

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

53. The school's links with parents are good. Parents who attended the meeting for parents and those who responded to the parental questionnaire are generally pleased with the school. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. Parents make a sound contribution to their children's learning at school and at home.

54. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about students' progress, is unsatisfactory. This is because pupils' reports do not give information on what pupils know, understand and can do, the targets for improvement in each subject are too vague, and there is no PSHE report. The school is currently designing a new system for pupils' annual reports. Other aspects of communications with parents are good. The school produces individual pupil profiles or interim progress reports on request from parents, and a small number are requested each week. Parents are invited to an academic consultation evening each year and there is satisfactory attendance, but the school is rightly considering new ways of attracting more parents. Newsletters and occasional letters are informative. The prospectus and governing body's annual report to parents provide parents with much very useful information. Pupils' planners are used well, particularly in Year 7, by parents and tutors to monitor personal development and homework. The inclusion of national curriculum levels and target GCSE grades is good practice.
55. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning at school and home is sound and the support they give to the school has a good impact on the work of the school. The school makes good efforts to include parents in their children's education and consults them well on some issues such as the timing of consultation evenings, new lunchtime arrangements and uniform. There is a low response rate, but parents accept consultation findings. For example, they supported the introduction of blazers as part of the uniform. A small number of parents attended a drugs awareness evening. All parents are members of the Friends of St Michael Association that contributes positively to the social life of the school and the personal development of pupils. There are a few committed parents, but activities are mostly staff driven. The parent governors have a good impact on the work of the school. Parents enjoy pupils' performances and Awards Evenings. Some parents attend the Sandwell Learning Plus initiative Saturday morning computer school and many provide Internet access at home to help their children develop study skills. The school has good support from the parents of individual pupils with behavioural problems.

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

56. The school is very well led and managed and the headteacher provides outstanding direction and enthusiasm for improvement. He is very effectively supported by a senior leadership team that is energetic and imaginative and that works closely with all teaching, administrative and support staff. There is a high level of commitment by almost everyone in the school and the consultative approach taken by the headteacher ensures that everyone is kept fully informed about development and can take an active part in planning improvements.
57. Responsibilities are clearly delegated and there is a good line management structure to monitor and support all staff. For the most part, responsibilities are carried out very well, with a high level of dedication and enthusiasm. Considering the difficulties experienced in recruiting and retaining staff, most departments are managed well. New appointments to key positions as heads of some departments and of special educational needs and the restructuring of the pastoral system are leading to a sharp focus on raising attainment and helping pupils to achieve well. These and other management initiatives are having a significant positive effect on the performance of pupils.
58. The co-ordination and management of the literacy strategy are excellent because all subjects are encouraged to work purposefully together to share ideas and resources. For example, mathematics and English work on diagrammatic approaches to presenting information, and drama, religious education and English collaborate on improving speaking and listening skills. Management of numeracy development is good, although development is a little behind developments in literacy, mainly because of staffing difficulties.
59. The management of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, although the day-to-day management of the subject is satisfactory. There is no effective monitoring of what ICT is taught in individual subjects and implementation of the ICT development plan has been slow. There has been considerable support for development from the leadership team, which is now, rightly, reorganising how ICT across the curriculum is being managed to ensure developments happen quickly.

60. The school's processes to monitor and evaluate its own work and take actions to improve performance are good overall. Monitoring and evaluation are extremely good and involve all departments effectively in the process. Action plans are sound, but specific issues that need to be addressed in order to raise standards are not always sufficiently clearly expressed to guide some heads of department in planning improvements. Nevertheless, the procedures are very good. Teaching is observed, there is formal feedback to teachers, targets for improvement are set and lessons are re-visited to monitor development. This is a very effective way to keep the pace of improvement going and it fits well with the formal process of performance management that the school carries out.
61. Governors' involvement in the school is good. They have a good grasp on how the school works and what the key issues are for improvement. They take an active part in planning improvements and ensuring that the school's priorities for improvement are implemented. Targets for improvements are always linked to raising standards and improving teaching and the curriculum, and governors are quite clearly focused on those priorities.
62. The school receives and spends more per pupil than three quarters of schools nationally and this includes funds spent on staff. The cost of supply teachers represents a surcharge of £102 per pupil, that is, about ten per cent of its remaining funds after teachers have been paid. Expenditure on special educational needs staff is very high, and under the supervision and guidance of the special educational needs coordinator, it is closely matched to pupils' needs. The school spends its money wisely and links it closely to raising standards and improving the quality of education. Other grants and funds are spent carefully and, as with other funds, with a focus on raising standards. The school explores ways effectively to get the best value for its available funds. Overall, the school gives good value for money.
63. Funding of learning resources across the school has been a priority and, as a result, provision is good overall. Each classroom is equipped with a television, overhead projector, video recorder and CD player, and has a good collection of fiction books for pupils' extra reading. The library is an attractive and well-used facility with good provision for ICT, but whilst the books are appropriate and in good condition, there are insufficient to adequately support all areas of the curriculum. There is a good range of newspapers and magazines available for pupils' use.
64. ICT provision across the school is good; there is a higher than average number of computers, some of which are available centrally and some of which are distributed amongst the departments. English, mathematics, science, design and technology, music and the special needs departments have dedicated collections and provision for ICT. Other ICT resources for teaching, however, are not as extensive; for example, there is only one small interactive whiteboard available in the school.
65. The unit for enhanced learning provision is well resourced for those pupils with special educational needs. There are appropriate books for reading and supporting learning, a suite of computers, and good recreational facilities for the disabled. The recently opened learning resources centre is building up good provision for those pupils who benefit from a short time out of mainstream education.
66. In almost all departments there are sufficient books and reading materials for pupils to use. Other learning resources across the different subject areas are at least satisfactory. They are good in mathematics, science, music, physical education and ICT, and are very good in English.
67. Staffing is satisfactory overall. Over the last two years, English, mathematics, science and religious education have had recruitment problems and long term absence of teachers which have affected the level of attainment and standards achieved within these departments. The school has worked hard to solve these problems and there is presently a full complement of specialist staff. A long term staffing structure was put into place three years ago and is now almost fully realised with management responsibility reflecting school needs. Teachers are well qualified and deployed effectively. The school is very well supported by the administrative staff and the structure has recently been strengthened by the appointment of a bursar and a clerical assistant to support improving attendance strategies.

68. Staff training and professional development are very good overall. They are very well organised and well managed by a senior member of staff and there have been major improvements over the last year. Needs are largely although not exclusively linked to the school's and departments' improvement plans and the effective performance management and appraisal structure. The programme is fully inclusive of all members of the school and includes learning support and administrative staff who are positively encouraged to study further for higher qualifications. The one area for improvement, which the leadership team has started to address, is the lack of sharpness in identifying the specific ICT training needs of teachers. The school has recently been awarded 'Investors in People' status and was commended for its outstanding practice in supporting staff to meet their career aspirations. Newly qualified or appointed teachers are very well supported by a comprehensive induction programme, which can include training, by advanced skills teachers. There are also effective structures for the induction of non-teaching staff.
69. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and barely adequate for the number of pupils. It restricts the access of some pupils to the curriculum and has a negative impact on teaching and learning. Health and safety restrictions limit the use of second floor rooms, especially by physically disabled pupils. The accommodation for mathematics, information and communication technology, food technology and textiles is good. Accommodation for science, history, art and special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Accommodation for physical education is poor; the very restricted indoor and outdoor space adversely affect both the range of activities and the quality of learning. There is no large assembly hall and during examinations the gymnasium is used, severely reducing indoor accommodation for physical education. The acoustics in temporary classrooms make it difficult to teach. Social areas for pupils at break times are limited, creating difficulties during wet break times. There is a large and welcoming reception area that is attractively decorated with displays celebrating the very good personal development of pupils. Although there are many shortcomings, the school has done its best to improve the accommodation, albeit superficially, with a limited budget. Further improvements, which are long overdue, will require significantly more financial investment than the school alone can provide. The school is in negotiation with the local authority to improve its accommodation.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. The headteacher, staff and governors must now:
- (i) improve pupils' attainment, particularly in:
- mathematics by improving pupils' competence in basic computation skills;
  - science by providing challenging work for higher attaining pupils;
- and
- ensure that reports consistently include details of what pupils know, understand and can do and what they need to do to achieve more.
- (paragraphs: 8, 10, 26, 35)*
- (ii) improve pupils' literacy in Years 10 and 11 by continuing the work started in Years 7 to 9 so that pupils:
- have increased opportunities to read;
  - are given opportunities to improve their confidence to explain their understanding and knowledge in writing; and
  - know how to correct their mistakes.
- (paragraphs: 8, 26, 34, 76, 78)*
- (iii) improve provision for pupils with special educational needs by:
- developing detailed reports of pupils' progress and specific needs to aid production of individual education plans;
  - producing detailed individual education plans to guide teachers' lesson planning;
  - improving teachers' expectations of pupils with special educational needs; and

- identifying where teachers need specific support from learning assistants and producing a programme to meet those needs.

*(paragraphs: 12, 28, 36)*

- (iv) improve use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum by:
- auditing current provision of ICT in subjects;
  - identifying teachers' training needs;
  - training staff to meet their specific needs;
  - supporting departments to include planned opportunities for ICT in schemes of work and teaching;
  - ensuring there is access to computers for all subjects; and
  - providing more interactive whiteboards and other ICT resources.

*(paragraphs: 11, 27, 30, 59, 64, 68, 147)*

- (v) improve the accommodation by continuing to work with the local education authority to plan developments.

*(paragraph: 69)*

Minor issues the school should also consider are:

- improve the existing good procedures to evaluate the work of departments by providing sharp targets and priorities for development that are linked to improving pupils' attainment;
- increasing the length of lessons in physical education, art and design and history;
- provide a range of routes through ICT and business studies to develop ICT skills;
- ensure that pupils receive a report for PSHE; and
- address health and safety issues identified in the report.

*(paragraphs: 19, 30, 46, 48, 54)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed   | 173 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 58  |

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

|            | Excellent | Very Good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number     | 8         | 39        | 80   | 41           | 4              | 1    | 0         |
| Percentage | 5         | 23        | 46   | 24           | 2              | 1    | 0         |

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll                                 | 997 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 211 |

#### Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs       | 69  |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 234 |

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 1 |
|---|---|

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 29 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving           | 28 |

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

|                           | %   |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data               | 9.5 |
| National comparative data | 8.1 |

#### Unauthorised absence

|                           | %   |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data               | 0.8 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

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

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)**

|  |      |      |       |       |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|  | 2002 | 109  | 96    | 205   |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results       |          | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above   | Boys     | 66      | 64          | 71      |
|   | Girls    | 61      | 44          | 51      |
|   | Total    | 127     | 108         | 122     |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School   | 62 (49) | 53 (42)     | 60 (46) |
|   | National | 66 (64) | 67 (66)     | 66 (66) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School   | 32 (8)  | 31 (20)     | 19 (15) |
|   | National | 32 (31) | 45 (43)     | 33 (34) |

| Teachers' Assessments                       |          | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above   | Boys     | 68      | 65          | 69      |
|   | Girls    | 67      | 49          | 51      |
|   | Total    | 135     | 114         | 120     |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School   | 66 (57) | 56 (41)     | 59 (34) |
|   | National | 67 (65) | 70 (68)     | 67 (64) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School   | 33 (24) | 33 (19)     | 20 (7)  |
|   | National | 32 (31) | 44 (42)     | 34 (33) |

*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 |
|  | 2002 | 86   | 86    | 172   |

| GCSE results  |          | 5 or more grades<br>A* to C | 5 or more grades<br>A*-G | 1 or more grades<br>A*-G |
|---|----------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified    | Boys     | 18                          | 80                       | 83                       |
|   | Girls    | 35                          | 81                       | 82                       |
|   | Total    | 53                          | 161                      | 165                      |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School   | 31 (29)                     | 94 (90)                  | 96 (95)                  |
|   | National | 50 (48)                     | 91 (91)                  | 96 (96)                  |

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

| GCSE results                  |          | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School   | 39.1 (34.1)      |
|                               | National | 39.8 (39)        |

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

| Vocational qualifications  | Number   | % success rate |
|--|----------|----------------|
| Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School   | n/a            |
|  | National | 81             |

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

| <b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>  |
|---|
| White – British                                     |
| White – Irish                                       |
| White – any other White background                  |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean                   |
| Mixed – White and Black African                     |
| Mixed – White and Asian                             |
| Mixed – any other mixed background                  |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian                     |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani                  |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi                |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean                  |
| Black or Black British – African                    |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background |
| Chinese   |
| Any other ethnic group                              |
| No ethnic group recorded                            |

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

| <b>No of pupils on roll</b> | <b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b> | <b>Number of permanent exclusions</b> |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 881                         | 52                                       | 3                                     |
| 3                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 6                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 32                          | 7  | 1                                     |
| 0                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 7                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 3                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 23                          | 0  | 0                                     |
| 2                           | 2  | 0                                     |
| 3                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 2                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 24                          | 2  | 0                                     |
| 3                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 2                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 3                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 0                           | 0  | 0                                     |
| 3                           | 0  | 0                                     |

*The 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) | 57.6 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   | 17   |

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

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 26  |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 854 |

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

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 75.7 |
|---|------|

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

|             |      |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 23.4 |
| Key Stage 4 | 21.2 |

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 2001/2002 |
|----------------|-----------|

|  | £         |
|--|-----------|
| Total income                               | 3,143,283 |
| Total expenditure                          | 3,173,705 |
| Expenditure per pupil                      | 3,320     |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 107,486   |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | 77,064    |

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years   | 18.6 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years   | 21.0 |
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)  | 0    |
| 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 | 997 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 205 |

### Percentage of responses in each category

|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school.   | 46             | 46            | 5                | 2                 | 0          |
| My child is making good progress in school.  | 38             | 50            | 6                | 0                 | 5          |
| Behaviour in the school is good.   | 22             | 59            | 11               | 1                 | 7          |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.                              | 22             | 53            | 14               | 4                 | 7          |
| The teaching is good.  | 29             | 54            | 6                | 2                 | 9          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.                          | 24             | 36            | 22               | 7                 | 10         |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 51             | 43            | 3                | 1                 | 2          |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.              | 52             | 41            | 4                | 1                 | 1          |
| The school works closely with parents.   | 26             | 40            | 19               | 2                 | 12         |
| The school is well led and managed.  | 27             | 48            | 8                | 1                 | 15         |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.                      | 32             | 52            | 7                | 2                 | 7          |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.            | 32             | 50            | 5                | 4                 | 9          |

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents are pleased with the school, although at the meeting held with the registered inspector before the inspection, a small number expressed some concern about irregularity and quality of homework, and several expressed some concern about the quality of reporting on pupils' progress. Inspectors found that, generally, homework is set regularly and that it is of good quality. Parents are partly right about the quality of reports; they do not consistently contain details of what pupils know, understand and can do, and what they need to do to improve.

## 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

- The progress of pupils from Year 7 to Year 9 is very good.
- Boys' performance in writing in Years 9 and 10 is above average.
- A significant proportion of the teaching is very good.
- Assessment procedures and marking are very good, helping pupils to improve their writing.

#### Areas for development

- Strategies to support the writing of pupils with special educational needs are not used consistently.
- The endings of lessons are sometimes too rushed.
- A small minority of teachers find it difficult to plan lessons to ensure pupils are engaged in learning for the whole time.

71. Results in tests at the age of 14 were in line with the national average in 2002. They were well above those of similar schools and much better than the previous year which had been disappointing. Many pupils arrive at the school with very low literacy levels but by dint of lively and interesting teaching, standards are raised significantly, although literacy skills still remain below average overall. The trend has been of steady improvement over time. In 2002, the GCSE results were below the national average and similar to the results of 2001. Pupils achieved well compared with their earlier results at the age of 13. The trend at the age of 16 shows steady improvement throughout the school. Pupils perform better in English than in mathematics or science.
72. Pupils' achievement is very good from Year 7 to 9 and good from Year 10 to 11. Standards obtained by boys have improved and in 2002 they did as well as the girls in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 and in GCSE literature. There are significantly more boys than girls in the school. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieved well in tests at 14 but less well in GCSE, where there was a very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make sound progress up to Year 9 and in GCSE.
73. Standards seen during the inspection reflect this picture – the attainment of pupils in Year 9 is broadly average. Pupils achieve very well in Year 9 after making steady progress in the earlier years. They are able to hold sensible discussions in class. Teachers give them lots of chances to prepare for formal discussions and pupils write sensible assessments of how well they have done and what else could be improved. As a result, there are some very good examples of classes engaging in high-level debate, with the teacher only having to ensure that key points are introduced. In a discussion in Year 8, pupils described how a writer creates tension by varying the pace and by leaving a reader in suspense. Older pupils in an excellent lesson in Year 9 responded to the teacher's enthusiasm for literature by showing how much they had understood about the themes in their class novel.
74. Standards of speaking and listening in the older classes continue to be good. Pupils are particularly confident in their knowledge of Shakespeare. Boys and girls can see the wit in the nurse's speeches in 'Romeo and Juliet'. They react with genuine amusement to a video presentation of key scenes in the play and explain the nuances clearly. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in whole class discussions because teachers know what questions to ask them and their support assistants keep pupils up to the mark. Pupils from different ethnic groups take an equal part in all lessons.
75. Standards in reading are average overall throughout the school. Opportunities for reading occur daily for all classes in a special session of 15 minutes. This has resulted in improvements in Years 7 to 9 where most benefit derives. There is no consistent structure to develop pupils' skills in reading in Years 10 and 11 beyond simply looking at books. However, this is improving and

there are also useful opportunities to practise reading in lessons. Pupils read out their own work in clear and confident tones, and talk about the reasons for choosing particular words in sentences. An excellent example of pupils developing good strategies for reading occurred in a Year 9 lesson. Here pupils were building up a prose account of the countryside in different seasons based on a poem by Charles Causley. At regular intervals, the teacher gave them the chance to share their ideas aloud. This followed the advice in the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy to point out good practice in writing to pupils. They showed good skills in transferring poetic ideas such as, "Many an ache and pain had he," to "He was suffering from an arthritic hip." This was a good example of reading supporting the writing of pupils. A pupil with special educational needs in this class had made excellent progress since Year 7, raising his attainment by three levels. He was able to read his work aloud using such phrases as: "He was a man with a magnetic personality." He was helped to progress by sympathetic teaching with a clear plan to develop his reading and writing skills together. The reading programme is supported by a good range of books in each classroom and supplemented in the school library. This resource area is attractive and welcoming but very small.

76. Standards in writing in Year 9 are average and this represents very good achievement over time. Teachers provide clear models to help pupils see and hear good examples of different types of writing. There are good opportunities for pupils of higher ability to extend their writing for homework using alternative and more demanding tasks. More able pupils write very detailed essays, accurately spelt and punctuated, analysing characters and key themes from novels and using apt quotation to back up their ideas. There is some weaker spelling in the work of lower attaining pupils, and pupils with special educational needs struggle to keep up in some lessons because they do not have enough structured guidelines to help them progress in shorter and more manageable stages. Standards are below average in Year 11, although pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well, especially in their writing about literature. They do well because teachers give them such a clear idea how to set out their answers to examination questions. Pupils fall down in English (language) examinations often because they are less assured when setting out their own ideas without having had the chance to discuss them with their teachers and others in lessons. Pupils have very good attitudes to English in all year groups and this helps them to achieve well. They use their knowledge and enjoyment of information and communication technology to produce clear and accurate essays. There are some very imaginative applications of their numeracy skills too, for example, the effective use of a Venn diagram to show overlapping themes when comparing two different poems.
77. The quality of teaching is good. There is a substantial proportion of good and very good teaching from Year 9 onwards. It takes pupils the first two years to learn the routines and to gain the maturity to work hard in lessons. In a minority of lessons, some teachers struggle to maintain good order at times and this results from teaching that is not sharply focused on what individual pupils can do. The literacy strategy is successful because it has given most teachers a good structure to use when planning their lessons. There are still some weaknesses at the end of lessons because not all teachers give themselves and the class time to reflect on what has been achieved and to set out the follow-up stage. The setting of homework and the detailed, clear marking of pupils' writing compensate to a certain extent but some lessons are rushed. Teachers are very inventive in their ideas and set tasks for pupils which result in ideas such as "pop-up" books to illustrate the differences in homophones. Lessons are often lively, and involve nearly all pupils who find their teachers' enthusiasm, undoubted subject expertise and industry very motivating. This is why many pupils do so well in English.
78. Standards in literacy are close to the average by Year 9, although they are still below average by Year 11. The department has made good links with the nearby primary schools to ensure that the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy has a solid transition from Year 6 to Year 7. This includes regular visits, a summer school and a Saturday club to help pupils improve their reading and writing. The special educational needs department organises the teaching of "catch-up" classes in Year 7 and most pupils make satisfactory progress. Other departments in the school make useful contributions to the teaching of literacy skills and these are starting to have a positive impact on standards throughout the school, though most significantly in Years 7 to 9. There are good displays of key words in most rooms and teachers in subjects such as design and technology, French, science and religious education are particularly skilful in reminding pupils of what is expected in their reading and writing. More still needs to be done in geography and

history in the earlier years and generally in art and mathematics. Not all teachers are consistent in pointing out basic errors in pupils' writing or in suggesting ways to put them right.

79. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The very experienced teachers work well as a team and help those less experienced to develop their teaching. Assessment procedures are very good and involve the pupils, most of whom know how well they are doing. All teachers mark work thoroughly giving detailed suggestions for pupils to help them to improve their ideas. The department clearly analyses the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' attainment and uses the information to set realistic targets for them. Most teachers show a high level of understanding of the pupils' needs and care well for them. The subject makes a good contribution to their personal development.
80. There has been good improvement since the last inspection; standards have risen and there are better resources to help pupils improve their reading. The emphasis on literature remains strong and boys are making better progress than reported previously.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Teachers generally have high expectations of behaviour and effort.
- Overall relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- Management of the department and recognition of its strengths and weaknesses are good.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used sufficiently.
- Standards of numeracy are not high enough.
- Assessment and marking in Years 10 and 11 are not linked closely enough to GCSE target grades.

81. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests taken by Year 9 pupils, attainment in mathematics in terms of the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 or better was below average for both schools nationally and when compared to similar schools. However, in terms of the proportion of pupils reaching level 6 or better, the school was close to the national average but higher than average when compared with like schools. Mathematics results were better than those for science but below those for English. Girls performed slightly better than boys. In the 2001 GCSE examinations for pupils in Year 11, results were below the national average in terms of the proportion reaching grades A\*-C. Results for girls were closer to those for girls nationally than the corresponding comparison for boys. In the most recent GCSE examination, the school achieved a 100 per cent pass rate for grades A\*-G. The results in mathematics were better than those for science but below those for English. The results represent a significant improvement over the past few years. In view of the very low level of attainment on entry for those pupils assessed by 2002 national tests in Years 9 and 11, these results show that pupils make good progress overall. Results have also suffered because of disrupted staffing over the last two years.
82. Pupils' attainment is below average overall, but their achievement in Year 9 is good overall and never less than satisfactory. It is sometimes very good; attainment on entry to the school is well below average. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 quickly understand the method used to factorise second order algebraic equations of increasing complexity. Pupils of average attainment work with diligence on number sequences, calculating the value of the 10<sup>th</sup> term from information given. Lower attaining pupils work effectively on a new topic on number patterns. Pupils with special educational needs, including those in wheelchairs, although concentrated in lower sets, are present in most groups. They play a full part in most lessons and produce work of the same quality and quantity as the rest of the class. Those with severe learning limitations kept up with the class because of the help of learning support assistants. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls but the work of boys often tends to be less well organised and presented, limiting its usefulness for revision purposes.

83. Standards obtained by 16 year old pupils are below average overall but they achieve satisfactorily and often well, considering their attainment on entry to the school. Higher attaining pupils work well on vector algebra and quickly begin to use correct notation to solve problems. Pupils of average attainment work effectively on solutions to 1<sup>st</sup> order simultaneous equations. Lower attaining pupils work well on aspects of three dimensional shapes. In all lessons, pupils with special educational need receive appropriate help from learning support assistants and generally work and succeed as well as their peers. Again, there was no significant difference between the work of boys and girls. In many lessons, including those with higher attaining pupils, too many pupils have difficulty with basic computation or the use of algebraic rules; 3 to the power of 5 was written as 15 by some and in another class pupils used 'counting on' with fingers in order to subtract 8 from 23. In both key stages, achievement over time is satisfactory whilst that seen in lessons is generally good.
84. Overall the quality of teaching is good. Within this were examples of both excellent and of poor teaching. It was marginally better with pupils aged 15 and 16 than for younger ones. The best teaching is characterised by the teachers' high expectations of both behaviour and effort, well targeted interventions and good use of time. In these lessons, the teacher also makes regular checks to ensure that the pupils understand each step before moving on to the next. Teachers have good subject knowledge and so are able to use pupils' questions well by providing alternative ways of working. Relationships in these lessons are also good so that pupils have no hesitation in asking for help. When teaching is poor, material used does not engage the interest of pupils and the teacher lacks the strategies needed to maintain a normal working atmosphere. Teachers' plans are invariably followed rigorously so that learning is promoted effectively by good basic teaching skills and good subject knowledge. Relationships between teachers and pupils are predominantly good or very good. In the overwhelming majority of lessons, pupils concentrate well and display a lively interest in the subject material so that the pace of work is fast. Teachers regularly set appropriate homework. Teachers' marking is good, both of homework and classwork, and usefully suggests ways work could be improved. However, marking of older pupils' work does not link closely enough to the GCSE grade, which would be helpful to pupils. Reports to parents are too general to be helpful. Teachers' record books contain a range of detail but whilst indicating pupils' absences, do not indicate what subject material has been missed as a result. Monitoring of teaching and the subsequent sharing of good practice are unsatisfactory overall, although there is some effective work and the department is working on improving this aspect of its work.
85. The department is well led. It has just emerged from a long period of staff turbulence and disruption and now has a new sense of direction. Analysis of group- and pupil-specific data is good and is used to adjust teaching groups, the scheme of work and the way in which some topics are taught. The close location of rooms to each other and the delegation of tasks are helping to develop a good team. A recent, well-received whole school numeracy INSET day has not had the impact on the work of other departments that was planned. Dissemination of the Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy is complete but some staff do not manage the lesson starter activities very well and, more particularly, the plenary sessions. The National Literacy Strategy is beginning to impact on the work of the department in the use of key words and more effectively by asking pupils to explain their reasoning to the whole class. The department is developing some useful ideas which will assist in its contribution to the delivery of both spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship. The use of ICT in the department is unsatisfactory, although pupils employ ICT skills learnt elsewhere in, for example, the creation of their GCSE mathematics coursework. Reports to parents are not as helpful as they could be, but a pamphlet 'Counting on Success' sent to all parents of new entrants is a very good development.
86. Since the last inspection progress has been good. Evaluation of the work of pupils and teachers in now focused sufficiently well to identify areas for development. These now include appropriate steps to focus on the means to raise attainment. Attainment for pupils in Year 9 is now below rather than well below expected levels and the current attainment of girls is now above, rather than markedly below, that of boys. Whereas the previous report found that pupils developed basic number skills effectively, this is now no longer the case, with notable gaps in the competency of pupils, particularly the older ones.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- The subject is very well managed.
- The assessment of pupils' work and the monitoring of their progress are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 10 to 11 are not high enough.
- ICT is not used sufficiently in day-to-day teaching.
- The quality of homework set is not consistent.
- There is too little laboratory space.

87. In the national tests taken in 2002, attainment in science, by the age of 14, was below average. The proportion of pupils achieving the average level 5 or better was below average when compared with all schools. The proportion achieving the higher level 6 was average. When compared with similar schools, their results, overall, were average. Since the last report, results have fluctuated when compared with the national trend, but have seen a significant improvement in the most recent tests. With the exception of year 2000, the boys have consistently performed better than the girls. In the 2001 GCSE examination for dual award science, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-G was in line with the national average for all schools, whilst the proportion gaining the higher grades A\*-C was well below. Results were average when compared with similar schools. There is no significant difference between the boys' and girls' performance. Results have shown a falling trend over the past four years and have continued to fall slightly in the more recent 2002 examinations. In the latest examinations, they were poorer than the results for the other core subjects. Results have been considerably restricted by significant changes in staffing in recent years.
88. From inspection evidence, standards in Year 9 are broadly average. The most able pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics; they explain changes in state of materials, understand the roles of chromosomes and genes in human inheritance and can do appropriate calculations on leverage. They show a sense of critical enquiry when dealing with new topics and use their previous knowledge of science very effectively to extend their understanding. Middle ability pupils have less detailed knowledge and although their written answers to questions are often simplistic, verbally, they do show understanding. For example, they explain how the skin helps to maintain the body temperature and have good recall of the structure and functioning of the human joints. Pupils with lower prior attainment recall previous work with less accuracy. They learn simple scientific facts satisfactorily but lack depth of understanding and skills of application. Their literacy skills are weak. Across the ability range, investigative skills are developing appropriately.
89. Standards in Year 11 are well below average. The highest attaining pupils have average knowledge and understanding for GCSE. For example, they can do a range of calculations in physics and in chemistry, and understand the process of food manufacture in plants. However, their recall of some of the more fundamental aspects of chemistry, such as the balancing of equations, is insecure. Some of their work lacks the necessary detail to gain the highest grades in the examination. Investigative work is satisfactory, but planning and evaluation of practical work often lack sufficient reference to scientific theory. Middle ability and lower ability groups, taking dual award GCSE, have weak literacy skills. Their answers to questions are often accurate but lack explanation and depth. Many find it difficult to recall previous work. For instance, they confuse mixtures with compounds in chemistry, and cannot accurately explain the concept of speed in physics, until prompted. The lowest ability pupils gain certification in science by building up good portfolios of work and completing a series of test papers.
90. Pupils' achievement over Years 7 to 9 is good. Attainment on entry is well below the national average and by the time they reach the end of Year 9, most pupils achieve higher standards than might have been predicted. Review of the curriculum and improved assessment and monitoring procedures are having a positive effect, and gifted and talented pupils benefit from

regrouping early in Year 7. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is, generally, satisfactory. Over the past four years, however, the progress of a significant number of pupils has been hindered by staffing difficulties. Although staffing has now stabilised, these problems have affected examination results and are largely responsible for falling trends. Unsatisfactory achievement by small numbers of pupils in the higher ability sets of Year 11 reflects their poorer attitudes to work. Throughout all the year groups, pupils with special educational needs make good progress over time. Although classes are large and extra support is very limited, their attitudes and behaviour are very good, and impact very positively on their achievement. More detailed target setting, recently introduced into Year 7, is improving monitoring of their progress.

91. Teaching is good and results in good learning. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Most is good or better, some is very good and a small proportion is excellent. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject material and this helps pupils' progress. Almost all use questions skilfully, ensuring pupils think and contribute to the development of lessons. For instance, in one excellent Year 9 lesson, the teacher used simple demonstrations with searching questions, often rephrased, to securely build up the concept of pressure and its mathematical relationships with force and surface area. Lessons are well planned and structured, and generally involve a variety of activities that keep pupils motivated and interested. In just a few instances, starter activities are a little too lengthy and reduce the time available for new work. Management of pupils is good and, as a result, relationships are good and good discipline is maintained. Expectations are overall satisfactory and, for lower attaining groups, often high. In some lessons, however, activities are insufficiently challenging for the gifted and talented and this limits their overall achievement. This is an issue teachers are aware of and they are working hard to improve the situation. Homework is set regularly but too often is not sufficiently demanding. Marking is generally helpful and constructive. Pupils respond well to the good teaching; their attitudes are positive and they learn well. Only once during the inspection, in a Year 10 lesson, was good teaching disrupted by the impolite attitudes of a small group of pupils.
92. Literacy skills are taught very effectively and pupils have many opportunities, in science, to apply their skills of numeracy. ICT, however, is not yet fully developed within the classroom, and some teachers are not sufficiently knowledgeable about science-based applications of ICT. Whilst pupils are using computers effectively for research, they have insufficient opportunity to use ICT to measure and record data. Technical support, within the department, is particularly good; the three technicians make a very positive contribution to lessons and are very much valued by teachers.
93. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of department has a very clear vision of the way forward and is highly focused on raising standards and ensuring consistency. The subject performance has been analysed well and good plans are in place to act on the results of that analysis. Staffing instability, that has hindered development over the past few years, has been resolved and the department has the capacity to move on with a team that has a good balance of young and experienced teachers. Teaching is monitored thoroughly, and very good systems for monitoring pupils' progress are in place. Assessment is very good and targets are set; pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9, based on a newly purchased commercial programme, are not fully developed into a scheme of work tailored to the needs of all pupils, but staff are working on them. Schemes of work for Years 10 to 11 also require some upgrading to a structured programme that prepares pupils for examinations. Resources are good, but a shortage of laboratories results in large classes and some lessons taking place in classrooms away from the science facilities. However, the department is well organised and teachers work hard to ensure that pupils do not miss out on important experimental work. Refurbishment has improved provision and further improvements are planned.
94. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department has moved forwards on a number of fronts since the last inspection. The departmental development plan now focuses on raising standards, and test results and achievement, by Year 9, have improved. The monitoring of pupils' progress, target setting and feedback of information to pupils are now more rigorous and the marking of pupils' work is becoming more consistent. Almost all the laboratories have been refurbished.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is predominantly good. Teachers make good use of the short time available.
- Pupils learn well.
- Pupils respond positively to art lessons and their attitudes and behaviour are good.
- The achievement of pupils is good in Years 7 to 9.

### Areas for improvement

- Too few pupils, particularly boys, gain the higher grades in GCSE.
- Pupils' understanding of research techniques is underdeveloped.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- Time is too short for examination classes.
- The provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.

95. Results in the 2002 teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were below those reported nationally, with boys and girls performing at similar levels. The percentage of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades at GCSE in 2002 was well below the national average, but similar to the results of 2001, and those results were better than in recent years. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade A\*-G was below average. Far more boys than girls studied for the examination in 2001 and the entry of girls was too small for national comparisons. In 2002 there was a more balanced entry. The boys' attainment has stayed consistently low and girls are currently outperforming them. Pupils do slightly better in art and design than in most other subjects within the school.
96. Inspection evidence shows that, by Year 9, attainment is below average. Standards of work cover a very wide range with only a small proportion of pupils working at above average levels. However, this represents a good level of achievement, given the well below average level of attainment on entry to the school. For example, pupils in Year 9 working on a cartoon project, based on the abuse of alcohol, demonstrated a growing understanding of Pop Art when discussing the work of Lichtenstein, but their level of drawing skills limited the standard they could achieve. Sketchbooks are well used and show an improving ability to research and investigate ideas, but very few pupils apply the style of the artists' work to their own. Gifted and talented pupils produce work of a higher standard than the rest of the pupils but overall it is only in line with the national average. Key words are displayed in rooms and teachers encourage the use of appropriate vocabulary which pupils use confidently in discussion, but poor written literacy skills limit their analysis of work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, except where support is not provided for pupils with physical disability.
97. By Year 11, attainment is well below the national average. A high proportion of lower attaining pupils choose to study art at this level. Pupils interpret whole class themes and develop their own style. The poor level of analytical and observational skills combined with a lack of technical skill in the use of media, such as in painting and drawing projects, limits the level of achievement of many pupils. Results when working in three dimension are more encouraging, with lower attaining pupils producing interesting and imaginative models of figures. Higher attainers show the ability to research and investigate. For example, one pupil had explored the work of Monet as an inspiration for developing a landscape painting arising from a visit to Turkey. However, in coursework, many pupils show a lack of understanding of how to develop a project and fail to consider artists' styles or techniques. This was particularly evident in the boys' projects where work showed an over-reliance on imagination. Overall, the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory in relation to their prior ability. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their knowledge and understanding when investigating specific themes. For example, one pupil's sketchbook showed sound standards reflecting research into different forms of pattern in Spanish architecture. ICT skills are undeveloped and, other than the occasional use of the Internet, ICT is not used enough.
98. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils are lively and enthusiastic and there is a pleasant working atmosphere in most lessons. Pupils respond well to their teachers and most are keen to

learn. They share equipment co-operatively and respect each other's work. Girls in the upper school work harder than the boys, whose organisational skills are weaker and whose projects are not always completed.

99. The quality of teaching is predominantly good. In the lessons observed, just under half were satisfactory, half were good and one lesson was very good. Within the department, the teachers positively encourage good behaviour and have developed clear procedures for managing pupils that result in good use being made of the limited time available. In the best lessons, staff give clear explanations and encourage pupils with careful support, sound advice and timely prompts. They use a variety of techniques to involve pupils and maintain a good pace. For example, in one lesson, the teacher demonstrated a process from the previous week and encouraged the class to talk her through it and tell her what to do. Through this, all pupils but particularly the lower attaining made good progress in their understanding of how to linoprint and improved on their previous work. Where lessons have weakness, it is generally because the aims are too broad and insufficiently focused on specific skills. The quality of individual attention and knowledgeable advice plays an important role in raising standards. Teachers put a lot of emphasis on personal encouragement and there is plenty of dialogue on evaluation during lessons. However, pupils are not always clear of the level they are working at as effort and attainment are not marked separately.
100. The department is very small and the management of it is satisfactory. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection but the length of lessons is still limiting the opportunities for three dimensional work and textiles in Year 7 to 9. As no double lessons are timetabled for GCSE classes, the delivery of the curriculum is also restricted and impacts on continuity and standards. Although lessons are well planned, the long term planning for projects is not sufficiently focused on the progressive acquisition of skills and understanding. Assessment systems are at an early stage and need to be built on. Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory; the lack of computers and access to them within the school has resulted in a lack of planning for their use and it is not meeting statutory requirements. Teachers use display to support learning and improve the environment but furniture is old with few storage units. Accommodation is in poor repair. One room has a large amount of wasted space due to a defunct kiln area that does not meet health and safety regulations. This restricts its use and limits movement of pupils in wheelchairs around the room.

## CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision for citizenship is **good**.

### Strengths

- Planning for the introduction of citizenship is very good.
- Planning by subject departments to include aspects of citizenship is good.
- The review of personal and social education in order to include aspects of citizenship is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching of the subject is not observed and evaluated.

101. One discrete lesson in citizenship was observed during the inspection, and aspects were seen in personal and social education lessons, and within subjects.
102. Overall, pupils are working at average standards in Years 9 and 11. Teachers have made a good start to delivering citizenship, and are teaching aspects well. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes. They see the relevance of the subject to the way they live, and take an interest in their work. Most achieve satisfactorily in lessons.
103. Year 9 pupils are well informed about religious, racial and social matters in the local and global community. They talk freely and authoritatively about political issues such as refugee problems, the role of women in Muslim societies, the importance of contraception and the influence of the church and media. They are all at ease with each other's values, despite the diversity of their individual backgrounds. At a more personal level, Year 9 pupils have firm views about their own rights and responsibilities. In one lesson observed, pupils strongly presented their opinions about

school toilets, lunches and lunchtime arrangements in the school. Teachers regularly give additional attention to lower attaining pupils; this helps them to understand concepts, and aids their learning. Pupils become very involved when they debate hypotheses in small groups. They often talk noisily, but are enthusiastic and well focused.

104. Year 10 pupils demonstrate a mature attitude towards sexual responsibility. Most have a secure general knowledge of factual information and social issues and ask sensible questions. Pupils work effectively in groups, and debate theories very thoroughly. Year 11 pupils are currently preparing their personal statements for work and further education applications, and are soon to start work experience. They are being well prepared to have fulfilling experiences. One pupil, for example, will work in a magistrate's court and in the town council offices, which will give her a first-hand insight into local legal and community affairs.
105. Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9, and is good overall in Years 10 and 11. There is generally a good balance between teacher input and class activity, and pupils are given good individual attention. Lessons are always well prepared, and attention has been given to making subject material attractive and relevant, in order to raise and maintain the interest of the pupils. Occasionally, there are problems when classes are moved between whole-class and group activities, and the movement takes too long. Where teaching is particularly successful, teachers use a variety of approaches to maintain pupils' interest.
106. Planning for the introduction of citizenship has been very good. A thorough trawl of existing practice has been made, and plans have been put into effect for the subject to be delivered through all curriculum subjects, through personal and social education programmes, through cross-curriculum projects, through pastoral support and through extra-curricular activities. A full manifesto, "St Michael's Citizenship Policy", has been published, which, among other things, demonstrates exactly which aspects of citizenship each subject will deliver, and how they will be assessed. Pupils have already started to collate a record of all their citizenship experiences, both through the curriculum and through other opportunities.
107. The citizenship co-ordinator has led reviews about systems for teaching the subject well, and has spearheaded its implementation very successfully. The school has made very good use of work already taught in the existing personal and social education programmes. Staff have been well prepared through school based in-service training, and have entered enthusiastically into teaching the new subject. Resources have been carefully allocated. The school intends to evaluate its provision for citizenship during the first year. The school has set targets for the year, which will be reviewed by the key stage co-ordinators, members of the senior management team and the citizenship co-ordinator.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The great majority of pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Teaching is consistently good; lessons are planned well and proceed at a good pace.

### Areas for improvement

- Attainment in end of Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations is not high enough.
- Departmental development plans do not have clear enough targets for improvement.
- The quality of the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

108. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002, attainment was below the national average. Currently, standards of work seen in classes and in the scrutiny of pupils' work and projects are above average in Year 9 and higher than those indicated by teachers' assessments in recent years, because the quality of teaching and learning has improved. The standards represent very good achievement based on pupils' prior attainment when they joined the school. Standards were good in resistant materials and food technology. Attainment is much higher than at the time of the previous inspection. The good leadership and improved resources have had a very positive effect on standards. Inspection evidence indicates that progress over time, as well

as in lessons, is good. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including pupils with special educational needs and the pupils who are gifted and talented, achieve well. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is above nationally expected standards.

109. By the end of Year 9, pupils use a wide range of tools and materials with increasing confidence to make good quality products. They apply good graphical skills to design and make items using food, acrylic, wood, metal and electronics. Pupils use their skills and knowledge well to design packaging for a food product and to design electronic circuits. They improved their knowledge and skills of working with electronic components and their understanding of factors of quality control. Graphical skills are good because pupils experience two- and three-dimensional drawing and practise their skills. Work on theory is presented well. The teaching of literacy is effective, for example, through good use of technical language to expand pupils' knowledge and understanding.
110. Pupils' results in the GCSE and GNVQ examinations over the last three years have been below the national averages at grades A\*-C, but show a gradual upward trend of improvement. Results vary considerably across subjects within the department. Pupils have achieved particularly well in textiles and child development, but results have been below average in food technology, resistant materials and graphics products. Overall pupil results in 2001 were higher than those in other subjects. Girls achieved grades higher than the national average in design and technology, whilst boys' results were well below.
111. Current groups in Year 11 are achieving broadly average standards overall. The quality of their practical work is above average and their folder work is at a satisfactory stage of completion for this time in the year. Pupils have satisfactorily mastered a range of skills in making products and their knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials are generally good. Higher attaining pupils are attempting a good range of products and are using drawing skills well to develop their ideas. Their research is thorough and helps to shape designs such as a design for a vehicle prototype as part of a project in the Year 11 GNVQ manufacturing class. Designs are based on students' sketches and have been developed to suit the materials and skills available. There is good use of ICT in the presentation of design folders, and coverage of computer-aided design and machining. Pupils can also use the Internet for research and investigation. Although standards could be higher and examination results for 16 year olds could be better, the quality of teaching and learning has been effective in promoting good achievement. Pupils are rightly proud of what they achieve. In a Year 10 food technology lesson, they were keen to share their success when preparing different types of dishes. The higher attaining pupils are on course to achieve the higher grades at GCSE. This is because staff ensure that they are challenged by providing work to extend their knowledge and understanding.
112. Teaching in all aspects of the subject is good overall. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are mostly good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and this is effectively transmitted to pupils. The best teaching is well planned and leads to a coherent learning programme that is well supported with lesson notes and work sheets which are retained to build up a good picture of individual progress. There is good practice of individual mentoring and target setting. Each day's progress is reviewed effectively in the plenary session at the end of the lesson. In lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engages pupils. Teachers' demonstration of skilful handling of materials and equipment enable pupils to be successful. Relationships with classes are generally good. The lessons are well structured and teachers' questioning is good. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning. In the best lessons, there is a collaborative approach to the learning that encourages pupils to become curious and ask questions. The planning and purpose of lessons are good and the objectives are shared with the students. Teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their vocabulary. The differing needs of pupils are well met and their designing and making skills are well developed. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs, and are aware of targets in individual education plans. Special educational needs pupils make good progress and the teachers provide extra support for learning. Pupils in wheelchairs have access to practical activities and are very well supported by extra staff. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words and provide writing frames and design frames. There is a suitable emphasis on health and safety during lessons.

113. There is a very good level of display of pupils' work in classrooms, the open areas around the department and the school. This contributes considerably to encouraging pupils' interest and the development of ideas. The lessons are characterised by the quality of teachers' focus on the progress and needs of individual pupils. The effective challenging, but supportive, relationships between the teacher and the pupils, coupled with ongoing individual feedback and support, ensure that all pupils make good progress.
114. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed and is fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils throughout the school in the form of monitoring and assessment of attainment and progress. At present, assessment information is not being used sufficiently to set targets for pupils to improve standards and there is no effective means to ensure that teachers assess pupils' work in a consistent way. Currently, available assessment information is not used extensively enough to guide curriculum planning and teaching. However, marking is good and pupils are given feedback telling them what they need to do to improve and make progress. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed is good. The self-review process is thorough, but targets for improvement are not clearly focused in a way that can direct improvements towards raising standards.
115. The number of rooms available is adequate but the quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory. The technician provides a good level of support and makes an effective contribution to the smooth running of the department. The development plan is satisfactory and provides a long-term strategic plan. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Child development (GCSE)**

116. The GCSE results in child development at grades A\*-C were well above the national average and well above the average achieved for the school. The high level results at GCSE are reflected in the very good quality of work seen during lessons and the review of pupils' projects.
117. Pupils' individual practical projects are of a very good standard and include research and observational studies. Pupils take care with the presentation of their work and take pride in the quality of their project work. They are keen to discuss their work and do so with a level of confidence. They show a good knowledge of necessary healthy eating required during pregnancy. They achieve well, largely due to the range of resources they use and to the encouragement and support they receive from teachers. Pupils enjoyed the work which provided stimulus and challenge, and endeavour to succeed through patience and determination. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to learning is always very good. Pupils show an interest in their work and maintain very good levels of concentration to work to their best standards. They take responsibility for organising their tasks and there is much independent work.
118. The teaching is very good. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and thorough planning ensures that lessons proceed at a good pace. Lessons are effective, having clear, short-term objectives and are very well planned, with careful attention paid to the sequence of activities, which contributes to good learning. Activities are well organised and include appropriate interventions to support and sustain individuals pupils' learning. Work is well linked to the requirements of the examination syllabus. The teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour are high. Learning objectives are clearly stated and work is flexibly planned to provide for pupils' different levels of attainment and interests. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the teacher gives very helpful oral and written comments. Homework is used effectively to reinforce the content of lessons.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Results at GCSE are good compared with other subjects.
- Teaching is good and has high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils show a high level of commitment to the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not evaluate each other's work enough in lessons.
- The numbers of boys taking drama GCSE is too small.

119. Drama is taught in Years 7 and 8 but not in Year 9. It is an option in Year 10 that is taken up by many more girls than boys. This leads to some imbalance in the groups and occasionally restricts the range of discussion in lessons, although the standards achieved are good overall. Standards in GCSE are above most other subjects in the school but fall below the national average. They are average in the current Year 10. Pupils make good progress over time, considering the break in provision in Year 9. There is more attention to drama than reported in the last inspection.
120. Drama lessons support pupils' developing literacy skills. They are given regular writing to do for homework and this is then discussed in class. In Year 7, they take part in role-play in a press conference and are asked to imagine themselves as experts giving evidence. In Year 8, they read extracts with the teacher's guidance such as source material about the plague in the village of Eyam. The work is quite challenging but pupils achieve well in developing performance skills. They collaborate well in groups and listen to each other attentively. The teachers are very structured in their approach to planning lessons and ensure that higher attaining pupils are in roles which will encourage and support others in the class. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in the practical work.
121. There was an excellent example of inclusion in a Year 10 class where girls from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds show confidence in devising improvisations about the dangers facing those who are famous. There were some very good performances from all groups based on the research they had done for homework and the discussion in class, sensitively managed by the teacher.
122. The quality of the teaching is good. Pupils respond well to the written demands set for homework and they evaluate clearly the strengths and weaknesses of productions they have seen. In lessons, most of the evaluation was by teachers but this did help pupils to reconsider their ideas. Pupils show a high degree of enjoyment of the subject and this shows both in their written work and in the very good relationships in the lessons.
123. The management and leadership of the subject are good. The joint co-ordinators work well together and have completed a clear analysis of what needs to be done to raise standards even higher. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development and is starting to feature in the teaching of citizenship through the study of democracy in China during the Tiananmen Square disturbances. The accommodation is satisfactory. It provides a climate that is conducive to good drama although the space is very limited. Resources are adequate but storage space is cramped.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Relationships are very good and enable learning.
- There is good access to information and communication technology (ICT) and this is well used in lessons.
- Accommodation, resources and staffing are all good.

### Areas for improvement

- Work for the highest attainers is not consistently challenging.
- Pupils' capacity to analyse information is underdeveloped.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

124. Teachers' assessments in 2002 showed attainment to be well below the national average. Taking into account pupils' low level of attainment on entry to the school, progress over time is satisfactory. Inspection evidence matches teachers' assessments and shows that progress between the ages of 11 and 14 is accelerating and is good in most lessons. Those pupils of higher prior attainment make only satisfactory progress because they are not regularly exposed to the demands of the higher levels of the National Curriculum. Those of average and below average prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress, especially when they are well supported by additional teachers and classroom assistants.

125. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2002, attainment was well below the national average and lower than in 2001. There were no higher grades – higher attaining pupils were not stretched far enough. However, in 2002, pupils attained as well as in their other subjects and this was an improvement on the results of 2001. Pupils made satisfactory progress overall. Boys attained better than girls and when their attainment on entry to the course is compared to their examination grades, then pupils make broadly satisfactory progress. Evidence from the inspection indicates that progress is accelerating in class and that pupils achieve better in Year 10 than in Year 11. The improvement of coursework marks is a good early target for raising examination grades. Numeracy skills are basic; the quality of analysis and interpretation of detailed information do not match the high levels of presentation and commitment by pupils. Teachers do not analyse carefully enough the detailed information given by the examination board to find ways of improving performance in the written papers.

126. Teaching is good overall. It is good in more than half of lessons and very good in a quarter of lessons. It is satisfactory in the rest. Teachers work hard, occasionally harder than their pupils, of whom they sometimes do not expect enough. Relationships are very good and contribute to effective learning. Pupils work closely with each other, share their knowledge and understanding well and readily support their classmates in wheelchairs. The focus of lessons is always on learning and pupils always know what they have to do because they are told their tasks as they enter the lesson. Attendance is always checked at a convenient point. Teachers' management of pupils' classroom behaviour is skilful and consequently pupils respond well. For example, they behave maturely and with respect for each other and resources when they move around the room to use computers and other resources. Homework is set and marked and higher attaining pupils voluntarily attempt harder homework tasks. Some pupils, particularly those with computers at home, do extra homework.

127. Computers are used well, although there are not enough. Nevertheless, use of computers makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning. In one Year 7 lesson on developing mapping skills, pupils' work was above average, whereas those working on other aspects of the topic were performing at the national average. Literacy and numeracy skills develop well, although some opportunities are missed to develop them further. For example, very good use is made of number in teaching map skills in Year 7, although this is not exploited well enough in course work for GCSE or in accurate drawing of graphs. Although there is good practice in

teaching literacy skills, insufficient work has been done in Years 7 to 9, especially in tasks to show pupils how to write in detail, to take notes from videos and to develop their thinking skills.

128. Teachers use fieldwork well overall, except in Year 8, ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to experience a good variety of environments. GCSE pupils benefit from the experience of residential field work in North Wales; the level of presentation and commitment shown in their finished course work is very good. Teachers use resources effectively. For example, a video on the Kobe earthquake was well used as an aid to learning, and pupils responded very well to this.
129. Teachers are learning to use well the powerful baseline data about each pupil. Pupils know their target grades and targets for improvement are being set. These are not yet sharp enough to help pupils improve their work because they are generally too vague and the school marking policy does not link grades with examination standards on the GCSE course. Marking does not target literacy or numeracy.
130. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and have procedures in place to monitor and evaluate performance. The subject is taught by a team of five teachers, most of whom have other responsibilities as well. However, they are sensibly deployed to make best use of their very good teaching skills. The use of classroom support varies; on occasion, there is no support for some classes with high numbers of pupils with special educational needs. Sometimes pupils are given too much information by support assistants, but in most cases the level of support is good or better and leads to good learning. The department makes good contributions to the development of citizenship skills. Accommodation and resources for learning are good and the department has made good progress in many directions since the last inspection, but problems about the progress of those with higher prior attainment remain so that progress overall is satisfactory. The department is in a strong position to raise standards.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision for history is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- Teaching and learning at GCSE level are good.

### Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching and learning styles does not challenge higher attaining pupils.
- Targets for improvement in the department's development plan are not clear enough.
- Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory.

131. The attainment of pupils in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was well below the national average and has been in over recent years. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils reaching the average level has risen and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment fell in 2002. The attainment of pupils in terms of grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2001 was well below the national average, although there was some rise in the proportion of candidates obtaining those grades in 2002. All candidates succeeded in gaining grades A\*-G in the two most recent years.
132. At the time of the inspection, the attainment of pupils in Year 9 is below the national average, although attainment is rising. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 in the acquisition of a range of historical knowledge and skills. They have a sound knowledge of what iron was used for in the eighteenth century, but not of the mining process. Some lower attaining pupils have some difficulty grasping how long ago the iron industry developed. There is great variation in the standards of written English, with frequent errors restricting the communication skills of some lower attaining pupils. Although source handling skills are beginning to improve, pupils do not routinely question the nature of sources before evaluating their usefulness and reliability. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of carefully chosen resources and the specialist support available in some lessons. Lower attaining pupils' grasp of chronology is not always secure.

133. Although standards of work seen in Year 11 are still below the national average, they are rising and pupils achieve well, as their attainment on entry was well below the national average. Pupils analyse and evaluate sources well and are developing their skills in writing in detail and at length. The highest attainers have a sound knowledge of the factors involved in Arab-Israeli tensions and how they have led to conflict. The technical accuracy of written English is quite good, although errors in spelling still occur and are not always addressed in day-to-day marking. In coursework on local canals pupils undertake independent enquiry and research, and organise and present their findings clearly, sometimes making use of ICT to do so. In all years, pupils respond positively to each other, their staff and the opportunities open to them.
134. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. In a Year 10 lesson on the development of medicine, pupils learned very well in comparing the contributions of Vesalius, Pare and Harvey as a result of high expectations, detailed planning and careful consolidation of pupils' understanding and use of technical language such as 'physiology' and 'ligature'. Where there is occasional unsatisfactory teaching, lack of pace, insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils and an over reliance on teacher directed learning result in unsatisfactory progress. A temporary constraint on the quality of teaching is the poor accommodation for the subject which is currently housed in rooms with poor acoustics, limited opportunities for display and the lack of secure storage. Accommodation limits the development of ICT skills. However, plans are advanced to improve the buildings, and the accommodation for the subject will then improve.
135. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. Considerable work has gone into improving assessment procedures which were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection and there is now an emphasis on teaching pupils to develop their research skills in Years 7 to 9. However, the schemes of work for these years have not yet all been rewritten to a common format, which would have assisted all teachers in Year 7 to maintain a consistent pace. The overall direction for development is sound and there is a high level of commitment to improve. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are good but targets for improvement are not clearly expressed so that it is not apparent what the department needs to do to raise standards. Some issues from the last inspection remain, such as the limited opportunities for independent learning and a narrow range of resources, but overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Pupils have a sound grasp of concepts and overall achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils work well together.
- The range of learning resources is good and improving.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their ICT skills through other subjects.
- The use of assessment to set targets for improvement, particularly in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
- The management and coordination of ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory.

136. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that the attainment of pupils in 2002 was below the national average, although there has been improvement over recent years. The GCSE examinations results for the full course in information technology at the end of Year 11 are above the national average; all pupils obtained an A\*-C grade. Results were better than in 2001. Results for pupils taking the short course were below expectations.
137. Inspection evidence shows that in Year 9 attainment is broadly average. Pupils demonstrate sound skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information and the simple use of formulae to make

calculations. They can use desktop publishing to a good level of competence. Pupils' computer skills in all strands of the programmes of study are in line with those expected for pupils of a similar age. They have sufficient opportunity to develop these aspects apart from control technology. Pupils have access to the Internet and use this to download images and data. They can create and retrieve information from a database.

138. In Year 11, pupils' attainment in the ICT option course is in line with the expected standard for 16 year olds. In GCSE lessons and the GNVQ option, pupils are confident and work well independently using a range of software, including desktop publishing, use of database and using spreadsheets to simulate business practice; they can also design web pages. Good use is made of computers to promote individual learning. Computers are also used in other subjects, particularly in English, mathematics, music, design and technology, geography and business studies. These subjects extend pupils' skills in the use of computers. They have opportunities to apply their skills to solve more complex problems particularly in handling information and data. The higher attaining pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality. They discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete.
139. Pupils of all ages know how to use the Internet to research topics. Their keyboard skills are sound and pupils use spreadsheets and databases to model costs and store and retrieve information. There are no significant differences between the standards achieved by girls and those of the boys. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are adequate for the needs of the courses being offered. Pupils have sound opportunities to develop these further through activities such as extended writing for coursework projects and calculations, for which they use spreadsheets.
140. Pupils' achievement is good. Currently, pupils are reaching higher standards at this stage of the course than they were previously. Coursework folders are organised well in Year 11, as is the work in Year 10. Pupils enter Year 10 with a wide range of skills and experience. They make satisfactory, often good progress because the quality of teaching is good and the number of computers has improved, as has access to them. Pupils with special needs make similar progress in ICT to others because they are provided with appropriately challenging work. Their targets in education plans are well-known to teachers and the help they provide is specific.
141. All pupils are entered for short GCSE courses. They achieved lower standards in ICT than in other subjects for which they are entered. The attainment in the GNVQ course is in line with the expected standard for 16 year olds. Pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software including desktop publishing, a database and spreadsheets to simulate business practice.
142. Pupils have positive attitudes and make a sustained effort to improve their skills. They respond well to the regular and structured teaching being provided. Behaviour is good overall. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. Pupils turn up promptly for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them.
143. The quality of teaching is good and contributes to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. Lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenge. The management of pupils is good. Clear targets are set for pupils that are matched to their attainment and this plays a significant part in motivating and maintaining pupils' interest. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. Relationships are very good and the skilled support given to pupils in their work quickly builds their confidence.
144. The school has responded to the last inspection unsatisfactorily. Improvements made include an increased challenge in work set for pupils and improvement in access. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 are assessed and fully recognised. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network, but the ICT skills of

individual teachers have not been used effectively to deliver the curriculum. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of ICT are not always sufficiently planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. Technical support is very good. There are opportunities for pupils to use computers during the lunchtime and at other times.

145. Overall management is satisfactory on a day-to day basis. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities. The development plan, produced in collaboration with the school leadership team, is comprehensive and has clearly identified priorities designed to improve provision across the curriculum. However, the department has not got to grips with this plan, in particular in establishing effective strategies to implement curricular improvements and develop the use of ICT across the curriculum. The leadership team is aware of the slow pace of development and is planning alternative ways to accelerate improvements.
146. Accommodation is satisfactory and the size and number of rooms are appropriate for the number of pupils being taught. The level of resources and equipment available in the department is in line with what might be expected for a school of this size. There is a lack of resources for newer technologies for teaching information and communication technology, for example, interactive whiteboard and LCD projectors.
147. Overall, provision for ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory, largely due to the efforts of individual teachers and departments. Computers are used to satisfactory effect in English, design and technology, modern foreign languages, business studies and geography. There is planned use of graphic calculators in mathematics and these lessons are successful. There is limited use in other subjects. Pupils' achievements across the curriculum are not assessed or fully recognised.

### **Business studies - GCSE**

148. Results in the GCSE examinations were below average overall in 2002, and below the previous year's results. Standards in the current Year 11 are broadly average and show that standards have risen again to be similar to those in 2001. The pupils have appropriate levels of skills and confidence when discussing concepts involved in their work. For example, Year 10 pupils speak confidently about how to manage and organise a business meeting, providing agendas and minutes. Year 11 pupils take part in a business simulation task establishing a manufacturing company. They work in teams making decisions about manufacturing costs and profit margins. Pupils have good skills in ICT and have a good understanding of their use in business. Pupils cover the key skills adequately. Pupils are now developing the technique of writing evaluations; this continues to be a strength of their skills. The standard of pupils' portfolios is good. They are well organised, well structured and well presented.
149. Learning is good. In the course the pupils achieve well. High standards of work are produced. Pupils develop their analytical thinking very well and have good opportunities to explore the abstract concepts of the subject. Progress in lessons and through modules and projects is good overall and lower attaining pupils are actively supported to maintain these standards. Pupils' progress is especially good where they are actively involved in learning which encourages them to explore themes and make decisions for themselves.
150. Pupils' attitudes towards their work are good. They are attentive, respond well to questions, maintain their concentration and take pride in their finished work. Generally, pupils listen attentively and take an active part in lessons and this enhances their progress.
151. Teaching is always good. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subjects they teach, and they plan their lessons effectively. They use time and other resources effectively and set clear targets. Teachers use a range of teaching strategies and are sufficiently adept at intervening with additional supportive teaching points whilst allowing and encouraging pupils to learn independently.

152. The department has clear marking and assessment policies which involve identifying areas for development for pupils and setting them targets. Teachers use the assessment of pupils' work well to inform future planning and teaching. The department uses its own internal system to verify its assessments effectively.
153. This is a good department with many strong features. The department takes part in the Young Enterprise Scheme and is very successful at both local and regional levels. Business and enterprise is part of the PSHE programme in Years 7 to 9. There are a number of very good business and enterprise initiatives organised in collaboration with local companies. These schemes offer very good opportunities for pupils to be involved in business and enterprise projects and the activities extend their knowledge and understanding of business.
154. The department is very efficiently and effectively managed and this has a commitment to high achievement. The qualifications and experience of the staff match the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils. The department has continued to build on the good features outlined in the last inspection report and has made good progress. Pupils make good use of the computers in the department to extend their capabilities in using information technology.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good, leading to good learning.
- Leadership and management are strong.

### Area for improvement

- The use of ICT to support learning is unsatisfactory.

## French and German

155. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the attainment of pupils was below the average national and results were similar to recent years. In the GCSE examination of 2002, results were well below average in French and German, although almost all candidates obtained at least a pass grade. Results were worse than in 2001 because of staffing problems in the department. Girls did better than boys by a wider margin than girls nationally.
156. At present, in Years 7 to 9, half the pupils take French and the other half German. There is little difference between the languages. Overall standards are below average. This indicates that pupils' achievement in the first three years is good in relation to their standards of literacy on entry to the school, which were well below average. Higher attaining pupils are working at average national standards in French and German. They are becoming familiar with reading about what has happened in the past and are learning how to write such structures themselves. Lower attaining pupils have met similar expressions but are not yet secure with them. Pupils' writing is a continuing weakness, reflecting weak literacy skills, but they do well with listening and speaking. Reading is satisfactory, and pupils have good opportunities to read independently. In German they can work at home more effectively than in French because of new work books which are now in use.
157. In Years 10 and 11, numbers of pupils taking French and German are broadly equal. Standards overall are below average in both French and German, but all pupils are entered for GCSE, the lowest attainers, who take French, taking the Certificate of Achievement in addition. In general, higher attainers do better than expected whilst average and low attaining pupils do not meet the targets set for them. Some good work takes place in both languages. Amongst higher attaining pupils, writing skills develop well and are strong enough for some to write an email letter in German to their partner school in Germany. Others read Internet reports written for French people about the recent earthquake in Italy. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work with computers. Overall pupils' achievement is good.

158. Pupils' attitudes are very good and because of this they work well independently and co-operate well with partners and with teachers. No unsatisfactory behaviour was seen. Parents support the school's trips to France and Germany as well as exchange visits with a partner school near Frankfurt.
159. Teaching is good overall. Almost all lessons seen in both languages were satisfactory or better and most of them were good. Teachers use French or German well in lessons, with the result that pupils gain confidence in speaking and listening. Management of pupils is very good, leading to good relationships and purposeful lessons. There is indeed a sense of purpose shared by teachers and pupils. Pupils' involvement in their own learning has been well developed in German, but it is not yet as good in French. Teachers' expectations of all pupils are high, and the school has made an effort to support learning by providing a second specialist teacher in a number of lessons. Pupils with special needs learn as well as others do. Those who are talented linguists are identified and provided for through a special Modern Languages Club, separately from the gifted and talented group. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have had the opportunity to take two languages and the department is working on what can be done to extend opportunities for the present Year 9. Grouping by prior attainment promotes good learning, especially by higher attaining pupils, but where pupils' subject choices produce mixed ability groups of older pupils, they too learn well because of the extra support given. There is a high level of computer expertise in the department but insufficient technical resources mean that the impact is limited.
160. Leadership and management are good. They were good at the time of the previous inspection and this has been maintained by the two staff currently responsible, who have further developed monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in French and German. Assessment is well used and pupils know what is expected of them through the setting and review of targets. This information is widely used to group pupils so that tasks can be matched to prior learning. Accommodation and teaching have improved and staffing is now stable. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision for music is **very good**.

### Strengths

- The leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- Teaching is very good.
- GCSE examination results are good.
- Assessment procedures are very good.
- The provision for gifted and talented pupils is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Strategies for introducing keyboard work.
- The main teaching area in the music suite is too small.

161. The end of Year 9 teachers' assessments in 2002 showed pupils to have standards well below the national average. Most pupils enter the school with standards well below average, and this particular cohort had had a change of teacher, and a change of direction at the end of Year 8, which affected standards. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Years 7 to 9 are rising. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the 12 pupils gained results overall well above the national average, and this high rate of success has been maintained by the 11 pupils in the most recent examinations.
162. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average, with talented pupils performing very well. This improvement in standards is a result of improved teaching and better resources. Pupils in Year 7 are quickly learning elements of musical notation and literacy, and most are being introduced to these elements for the first time. A few pupils name instruments of the families of the orchestra, and one very talented boy accurately sight read a two part arrangement of "The Tide is High" on the keyboard, and played his own outstanding original composition which had a

jazz idiom. Pupils make very good progress across Years 7 to 9, despite the fact that the allocation of time is the bare minimum. Pupils achieve well because music teachers successfully deliver the curriculum at a very fast pace, although they do not have time to adequately revise and review work covered. Performance skills are developed well across the three years. Pupils stylishly perform reggae melodies, adding three chords underneath, and using appropriate Caribbean textures. They thoroughly understand theme and variation form, and improvise effectively, using the form. Exceptionally good provision is made for talented pupils to develop their skills, by playing their instruments in class ensemble. Less able pupils perform confidently as they have appropriate targets enabling them to perform at an equal level of importance as the rest.

163. Standards are above average in Year 10 and broadly average in Year 11. All are performing in a way that is likely to lead to some examination success, and about one third of the pupils are achieving above average standards. The majority of pupils in Year 11 have modest standards of practical performance. They have been well taught in compositional styles and can write effectively, using minimalist techniques. Some pupils have not sufficiently well developed knowledge of theory or aural awareness.
164. The overall quality of learning is very good, with pupils achieving well and making good progress within lessons, and across each year. This is largely due to the very good preparation of lessons in which exceptionally good provision is made for pupils of all abilities to work at their own levels, and develop from their current standard of attainment. The systematic method of recording all performances, on disk and tape, enables pupils to analyse how they have performed. Carefully worded comments by the teachers demonstrate to pupils what they must do to improve.
165. Overall, attitudes are very good, and are excellent in Year 10. Attitudes to the subject are reflected in the fact that many boys study the subject to GCSE level and enjoy the progress they make, despite not being predicted to gain the highest results.
166. Teaching is very good, and is the principal reason why pupils achieve well, and why the GCSE results are so good. Lessons are very well prepared and tasks are expertly tailored to meet the requirements of individual pupils and ensure that all pupils are equally included in practical work. Choices of music to be analysed and worked on, in practical terms, are very appropriate and appeal to the pupils. There is a high degree of challenge in all lessons. Musical skills are taught progressively and systematically, enabling pupils to have the facilities to compose and perform. However, the way fingering is taught with keyboards needs some improvement. Assessment procedures are very good and pupils are aware at what levels they are working, and what they must do to progress. Informative worksheets have been produced, and are used effectively. There is a very good use of computers and appropriate software, especially in Years 10 and 11. Plans have been formulated for aspects of citizenship to be noted, particularly through a focus upon world music and how the conventions and cultures of different countries have influenced different styles of music. The music teachers are working extremely hard in lessons to get through what they must in the relatively short lessons, in order to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
167. The department is managed and led very well. The head of department has been in position for just over a year, and has made substantial moves to improve provision in the subject. As a result, improvement has been good since the last inspection. The provision of instrumental tuition has almost doubled; music technology has been upgraded and is used very effectively; exceptionally good systems have been set up for extending the skills of talented young musicians, including the introduction of GCSE courses in Years 7, 8 and 9; and programmes of study have been completely reviewed. While the main music suite is good, the principal teaching room is very small and is overcrowded when large classes are taught in it.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- The quality of much of the teaching, especially in GCSE dance, is very good.
- The relationships between staff and pupils are very good.
- A very good range of after school activities.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is totally inadequate and has an adverse effect on learning in practical lessons.
- The amount of time in lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is too little.
- Extending the most able pupils
- The use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

168. In the end of Year 9 teachers' assessments in 2002, attainment was below average and similar to previous years. This is supported by evidence from lesson observations. GCSE results for physical education for 2002 were below the national average for A\*-C grades but were above the average grades for the rest of the school. GCSE results for dance were significantly above the national average and pupils achieve significantly better at dance than in their other subjects.
169. The attainment of the majority of pupils conforms to the national average in most areas of the physical education curriculum with the exception of dance, where it is above the national average. Improving teaching is leading to rising standards. Although most pupils apply the techniques, skills and, where applicable, the competition rules to several aspects of the curriculum, including football, basketball, rugby and dance, performance skills are generally below the national average. A significant minority of pupils perform at levels well above the national average in all activities. In basketball, pupils who are of average ability display sound accuracy and control but little shooting ability. In football, boys have passing and control skills that are below average but pupils in dance have a good range of movement skills and employ movement in an imaginative way. A significant minority of more able pupils are not given the opportunity to extend their skills in several lessons. The ability of pupils in Year 9 to observe and analyse performance is good and is contributing to their improvement in performance.
170. Evidence from coursework of pupils in the Year 10 GCSE physical education group indicates a very good understanding of many aspects of the physiology and anatomy units. Pupils in a Year 10 theory lesson on the circulatory system had a good understanding of the components of blood and a good general understanding of the skeletal system. GCSE dance pupils and those taking dance in core physical education have an excellent range of movement skills and are able to communicate both feelings and ideas through dance, although all pupils are girls.
171. Overall, the achievement of pupils in lessons observed in Years 7 to 9 was sound. In a good lesson on health related fitness, Year 9 boys made sound progress in their knowledge and understanding of the importance of regular exercise in the context of designing their own fitness programme. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall but in dance it is excellent. In a GCSE dance lesson, Year 11 girls all develop an understanding of how to express comedy through movement and add this to their existing repertoire of movement. They were then able to integrate this into existing choreography. GCSE pupils make excellent progress in a theory lesson on the circulatory system where they develop a very detailed understanding of the various components and functions of blood. In some lessons in most years, the progress of higher attaining pupils is restricted because they are not extended. Progress in several practical lessons is restricted because both indoor and outdoor facilities are inadequate. There is very little use of information and communication technology even in the GCSE course. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and fixtures with other schools, where there are opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills. Many pupils achieve representative honours in a range of sports and there are several opportunities for pupils with an interest in dance to perform in a wide range of productions at the school where the quality of their performance is very good.

172. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good during Years 7 to 9 and very good during Years 10 and 11. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are generally attentive and are able to sustain concentration throughout the lesson. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are usually very positive and this is a significant factor in the progress made in many lessons. There are very many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility during their lessons, although opportunities to undertake different roles such as coach or official are still developing.
173. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. It is never unsatisfactory. Three lessons in Years 10 and 11 were excellent, two of these being dance lessons. In the excellent and very good lessons, a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and very good teacher-directed question and answer sessions which in several instances are inspirational. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning, is also a feature of these lessons and discipline and class management are very good. In lessons that were not so good, management of the pupils was unsatisfactory, planning was not specific or detailed enough, and the range and type of activities were not appropriate, particularly with respect to extending the most able pupils. Assessment of performance by teachers is regularly used to enhance teaching. Observation and evaluation by pupils to help improve performance are still developing but where they are applied they have a positive impact on progress. Assessment procedures are very thorough, are beginning to involve pupils and are a factor in the good progress made. Staff have very good information on pupils' achievement and potential and are just beginning to use this to set individual targets in some activities. The assessment of GCSE theory work is providing useful information to help pupils to improve.
174. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides opportunities for all pupils to develop skills, understanding and knowledge. There is a good range of activities for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and coaches from outside the school are used where necessary. The time allocated for core physical education for pupils aged 14 to 16 is not sufficient to cover the curriculum in appropriate depth or breadth. Inconsistencies in timetabling in several year groups which result in groups of significantly differing size are also factors in limiting progress. Schemes of work for teaching pupils in Years 7 to 9 are very good but are still developing for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
175. Management of the subject is very good. The head of department provides a clear educational direction for development. All teachers, including newly-qualified teachers, are involved in planning improvements and priorities for the future development. Day-to-day organisation is very good. The departmental handbook clearly identifies all policies and procedures and is a very good working document. The head of department monitors teaching and learning and extra staffing in several lessons provides very good opportunities for the teachers to share good practice and for this to affect the overall quality of teaching in different activities.
176. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory, although accommodation is still inadequate and despite very good teaching is having a negative effect on progress in some lessons. It is also restricting the range of activities for pupils of 14 to 16. Time in lessons for pupils in this age group is also still inadequate to provide appropriate coverage of the curriculum.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision for religious education is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils achieve well.
- There is excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' evaluative skills are underdeveloped.
- Opportunities for ICT are inadequate.
- Opportunities for independent learning are inadequate.

177. In the 2001 GCSE Full Course examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grade A\*-C passes was well below the national average for the subject. However, the small number of candidates makes such comparisons insecure. Most pupils achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. In the 2001 GCSE Short Course examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grade A\*-C passes was below the national average. Overall, however, their performance was significantly higher than in their other subjects. Standards in the Short Course examination have been maintained over time despite the adverse impact of long term staffing problems on provision.
178. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils in Year 9 was broadly in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country, and of their origins and distinctive features. They have a sound grasp of religious language, concepts and ideas. Their understanding of how the lives of practising members of faith communities are shaped by their beliefs is less secure. Pupils make thoughtful personal responses to religious issues. However, their skills in comparing and evaluating different religious and secular responses to questions of belief and morality are underdeveloped.
179. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils in Year 11 was broadly in line with the expectations of both the Agreed Syllabus and the GCSE Full and Short Course examination syllabuses. They have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the central tenets of Christianity and of contemporary ethical issues, such as those surrounding the concept of the sanctity of life. However, their evaluative skills are still underdeveloped. Standards of work seen during the inspection were higher than those evidenced in the 2000 examinations, because the Short Course syllabus is now well established, and staffing problems have recently been resolved.
180. Both boys and girls achieve well at ages 14 and 16. This is because they are taught well, and most come to lessons keen to learn. Pupils are challenged with work of increasing depth and complexity as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs, and from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve well because teachers create a secure ethos in the classroom in which they feel valued as individuals, and able to take risks in their learning. They know that their teachers and peers will receive their contributions with respect. Higher attaining pupils achieve well because they are stretched by extension work. However, despite good teaching and good attitudes, a "glass ceiling" is placed on how well GCSE Short Course examination candidates can achieve by the low time allocation for the course, which hinders their skills development.
181. Teaching is good overall. It was very good in nearly half of lessons. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a very good grasp of their subject, know clearly what they wish their pupils to learn, routinely share their aims with them, and evaluate with them how far they have been achieved. They have very high expectations of pupils. They plan their lessons very well to achieve their aims, and catch and hold pupils' interest through a variety of stimulating and challenging activities and tasks that are well matched to their individual needs. For example, powerful photographic images were used to challenge Year 10 pupils with the human realities of war, and to enable them to explore and identify with the experiences and feelings of both the victims and the aggressors.
182. Teaching is enriched by very good use of visitors to the classroom, as was instanced when young people from the Christian group *PAIS* led Year 9 pupils in an exploration of Biblical teaching on punishment and forgiveness. Teaching makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all years. Thus teachers used the beauty and mystery of the natural world to lead Year 7 pupils to explore ideas of creation and their personal responsibility for the environment. The example of Martin Luther King was used to confront pupils with issues of prejudice and discrimination, and the Dot and Ethel scene from *EastEnders* to challenge Year 11 pupils with the ethics of euthanasia. Teachers are constantly attentive to developing pupils' literacy skills. Meaningful homework that extends the learning in class is set regularly. Conscientious and supportive marking helps pupils understand how to raise the level of their attainment. This good teaching is underpinned by the very good relationships that teachers engender in the classroom, based on caring and mutual respect.

183. Where teaching is less secure, it is because the low time allocation for the GCSE Short Course has an adverse impact on learning. Teachers are hard pressed just to cover the factual content of the syllabus, and cannot pay sufficient attention to developing pupils' evaluative, ICT, and numeracy skills, or those of independent learning, research and enquiry.
184. The subject is very well led and managed. The head of department has a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take if standards are to be further raised. She has done much to move the subject on in a short space of time. For example, she has significantly improved the quality of schemes of work and assessment procedures. She has developed innovative links with other subject areas, especially citizenship, which have increased the relevance and raised the status of religious education. She supports non-specialist staff very well. The enthusiasm and commitment that characterise the department make a positive contribution to standards.
185. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has been significantly raised. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been very significantly improved. The very successful introduction of the GCSE Short Course for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 has led to significantly higher attainment and achievement at age 16.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

### Leisure and tourism

Overall, provision for leisure and tourism is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Lessons are well taught.
- Pupils enjoy the course and are developing good social skills.
- The package prepares pupils for future college courses.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards are too low.

186. Pupils are being entered for this course for the first time. Some are entered for the GCSE course and others for the pre-vocational certificate. It is taught as part of a package of vocational preparation to pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 who are chosen as having a combination of very low prior attainment and the potential for future disaffection. Inclusion on the course follows a careful consultation process between parents, teachers and pupils. Pupils drop modern foreign languages, take single science and follow a double option which includes two periods at college following a package of pre-vocational practical courses whilst having four periods of this subject per week in school.
187. Standards are low but pupils achieve well and make good progress. They improve their social skills, working together in pairs and groups to make a presentation about the characteristics of a package tour. They understand how costs are kept low and can explain block bookings and the organisation of buffet meals. They understand the importance of the climate and the quality of facilities in resorts as factors that attract tourists. Pupils benefit from the freedom to move about the room to choose resources and to gather materials because they do not abuse the privilege.
188. Teaching is good because lessons and materials are well prepared in advance and freely available. Pupils are well managed and carefully supported to maintain motivation and to stay focused on learning and to develop their key skills.
189. Pupils prepare materials carefully for their ASDAN (Award for Development and Accreditation Network) files and value particularly their college experience because it develops in advance good attitudes for the college environment and gives them certification towards future courses.