

INSPECTION REPORT

St Joseph's RC High School
Workington

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique Reference Number: 112401

Head Teacher: Mark Condron

Reporting inspector: John Dixon
Inspector number: 13155

Dates of inspection: 11 to 15 October 1999

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Harrington Road Workington Cumbria CA14 3EE
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Peter Heywood
Date of previous inspection:	30 January to 3 February 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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David Wood (Lay Inspector)	-	Attendance Partnership with parents & the community
Elizabeth Collins	-	Attitudes, behaviour & personal development Curriculum & assessment Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development Support, guidance & pupils' welfare
John Hunt	Mathematics Business studies	-
Mike Lormor	Music	-
Howard Meredith	Science Information & communications technology	-
John Oxley	Physical education	-
Nick Padfield	English Drama	-
Ricky Ritherdon	Modern languages	Equal opportunities
Isabel Seddon	-	Special educational needs
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The school has strong leadership and a powerful ethos
- There is a high proportion of good teaching
- Relationships at all levels are very good
- Good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Provision for pupils' personal development is good
- Most subject teaching programmes are well planned
- Many pupils with special educational needs make good progress
- The school plans well for pupils' transition from one stage of their education to the next
- The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended
- The English curriculum is greatly enriched through involvement of parents
- Teachers, learning resources and accommodation are well deployed

Where the school has weaknesses

- Attainment in mathematics and in science is well below the national average
- Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs who have not already been identified before they enter the school are unsatisfactory
- Policies and reporting procedures on special educational needs do not satisfy statutory requirements

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. However, there are important weaknesses in key areas which must be addressed. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified will be tackled. All parents or guardians of pupils at the school will receive a copy of the action plan.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, governors took immediate action to close the sixth-form, but the action plan drawn up to address other weaknesses identified by the report was weak and tentative, and lacked relevant detail. However, the recent changes at senior management level have injected a new purposefulness into the school's determination to drive up standards. Whereas there has not as yet been a marked improvement in standards of attainment, inspectors are convinced that there are measures in place which will contribute to raising standards throughout the school.

In response to the findings of the last inspection:

Sixth-form provision ceased at the school from August 1997.

Arrangements have been reviewed in order to allow more flexible pupil groupings in the lower school. Whilst these have been effective in some areas, there are still areas where pupil groupings are too inflexible and do not operate to the best interests of

pupils.

The prime aim of the school for the medium term is to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and to share expertise and best practice. A number of subject departments are actively engaged in sharing what they do best, but some still have a way to go.

The provision which the school makes for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development continues to be good.

The school has worked hard to improve attendance and has been largely successful. Attendance so far in the current year has been above the average for schools of this type.

Overall, the school has responded well to the findings of the last inspection and has measures and strategies in place to continue its improvement.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	
			<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
Key Stage 3 tests	E	E	<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
GCSE examinations	D*	D*	<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
A/AS-levels	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

The attainment of 14 year-olds in the Key Stage 3 tests was well below average for the country as a whole and for schools with similar types of pupil in 1999. However, the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels of performance was in line with national figures and on a par with similar schools.

In GCSE examinations boys have performed better than girls in recent years, against the national trend. Although the school's results are below the national average, they are rising year on year at the same rate as results nationally.

*The comparative statistics for GCSE examination results above refer to the 1998 examinations, as no comparative data for 1999 were available at the time the report was written. However, GCSE results in the current year were very similar to those in 1998.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Design & technology, geography, music	Art, mathematics
Years 10-11	Good	Design & technology, history, geography, music	Mathematics, science

English	Good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 88% of the lessons seen during the inspection. Well over half of the teaching was good or very good. There were slightly more unsatisfactory lessons seen in the lower school, particularly in Year 9, where some classroom management was weak - particularly in art - and led to some disruptive behaviour. There was an unacceptable proportion of unsatisfactory lessons seen in mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour is good in the majority of classes and around school.
Attendance	Attendance is improving, and is above average so far this year. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average.
Ethos*	The school has a powerful ethos and a strong sense of purpose.
Leadership and management	The head teacher and his senior team provide strong and dynamic management.
Curriculum	The curriculum provided by the school is broad and balanced overall, but could offer more opportunities for older pupils.
Pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and the progress of statemented pupils is often good. There are some shortcomings in identifying pupils with special needs who have not been diagnosed before they enter the school.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	The arrangements for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	There are adequate staff and resources for the school's needs. Accommodation is mostly satisfactory, and some areas are being refurbished.
Value for money	The school provides satisfactory value for money.

*Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
• It is approachable, encourages their participation, and handles complaints well. • It keeps them well informed, enables children to achieve a good standard of work and encourages them to become involved in more than their daily lessons. • Its values and attitudes have a positive effect on children and it achieves high standards of good behaviour.	• 10% of parents believe they are not kept up to date on their child's progress. • A number of those attending the parents' evening have expressed a consistent approach to the setting of homework.

Inspectors found much evidence to support parents' positive views about the school. There is generally a good partnership between the school and parents, and the values which the school wishes to impart are clear from its work. Communications with parents about pupils' progress were found by inspectors to be clear and relevant, although the timing of some reports is unsatisfactory. Homework is generally well used to support learning in the majority of subjects. Where this is not the case, the problems seem to lie with pupils' completion of homework and the way in which it is marked, rather than whether it is set or not.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. However, there are important weaknesses in key areas. In order to raise standards and improve provision governors, head teacher and staff should:

Seek to improve attainment and progress in mathematics through:

- improving the strength and rigour of subject management (*paragraphs 53, 85*)
- improving the quality of teaching in both key stages (*paragraphs 18, 26, 27, 81, 83, 86*)
- regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and sharing best practice (*paragraphs 53, 85*)
- introducing more rigorous assessment procedures and using them to inform the development of teaching and learning (*paragraphs 27, 83, 84*)

Seek to improve attainment and progress in science, especially in Key Stage 4, by:

developing the strength of departmental leadership to ensure a more cohesive and consistent approach to science teaching across the school (*paragraphs 53, 94, 97*)

- improving schemes of work to support good teaching and the planning of lessons which foster and develop scientific thinking in pupils (*paragraphs 18, 27, 32, 92*)
- regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and sharing best practice (*paragraphs 53, 94, 97*)
- introducing more rigorous assessment procedures and using them to inform the development of teaching and learning (*paragraphs 27, 95, 96, 97*)

Improve provision for pupils with special educational needs by:

- expanding the special needs policy to include full details of provision under all the headings given by the code of practice and indicating how its implementation will be evaluated (*paragraph 34*)
- identifying modifications to the curriculum for pupils with statements of special educational need (*paragraph 31*)
- including in the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents all the required information about special educational needs (*paragraph 53*)
- implementing a system for identification and diagnosis of pupils with special educational needs who have not been identified before they enter the school (*paragraph 34*)
- ensuring curriculum time for learning support staff to review and monitor formally the progress of pupils with special needs (*paragraph 42*)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

St Joseph's RC High School is a mixed Roman Catholic 11 to 16 comprehensive school serving the Allerdale area of Cumbria. Pupils are drawn from Workington itself and from Maryport, and from a wide rural area. Significant proportions of pupils come from areas of social deprivation. There are currently 472 pupils on roll, of whom 35 have special educational needs, which is roughly average for schools of this type. There are 13 pupils with statements of special educational need; this represents 2.8% of the school population, which is slightly above the average. The proportion of pupils in the school who are eligible for free school meals is towards the upper end of the national average.

The attainment of pupils on entry has risen slowly over the past few years, but is below average overall. The cognitive ability tests administered to pupils on entry show that whilst there is a substantial majority of pupils clustered around the median line, there is a large proportion with below-average attainment and relatively small numbers of pupils whose attainment is above average. Few pupils attain very high scores. The current Year 7 cohort is the first year group in recent years to have achieved overall average levels of attainment in the curriculum tests which they take before leaving primary school.

The principal aim of the school is to educate pupils according to Christian values and to promote their development physically, socially, intellectually and spiritually. Its three-year development plan highlights the aim to improve teaching and learning, and to raise standards of achievement through careful monitoring and review of the quality of education it provides and through detailed tracking of pupils' progress.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	49	50	99

National Curriculum test results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	18	27	20
	Girls	30	27	23
	Total	48	54	43
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	48 (73)	54 (56)	43 (52)
	National	64 (65)	63 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	22 (34)	22 (29)	14 (24)
	National	23 (35)	35 (36)	20 (27)

Teacher assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	21	28	19
	Girls	31	34	25
	Total	52	62	44
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	52 (72)	62 (57)	44 (55)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	23 (33)	25 (35)	18 (28)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Attainment at Key Stage 4¹

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	49	35	84

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving standard specified	Boys	16	42	46
	Girls	9	28	31
	Total	25	70	77
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	30 (30)	83 (82)	92 (95)
	National	* (44.6)	* (89.8)	* (95.2)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

* National figures for 1999 not available at the time of publication

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	8.2
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.3
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	37
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	9.5
Satisfactory or better	87.9
Less than satisfactory	12.1

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

The average attainment of pupils on entry to the school, as seen from the standardised assessment tests (SATs) which children take in their primary schools and from the Cognitive Ability Tests which they take in their first term, is rising steadily. Slightly greater proportions of the pupils have below average attainment on entry, but this is offset by a small but significant proportion of higher attainers. The current Year 7 cohort is the first in recent years to be of broadly average attainment, quite markedly higher than the average attainment of pupils further up the school.

In 1998 attainment in the SATs taken by 14 year-olds was average in mathematics and science and above average in English. Pupils' performance in English was above average when compared with that of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, and average in mathematics and science. In 1999 attainment was well below the national average in all three subjects, although the proportion of pupils attaining higher grades in English was average for the country as a whole. Compared with schools with similar types of intake, attainment was well below average in all three subjects, but again, the proportion of higher attainers in English was average for similar schools.

There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls in mathematics and science, although girls have achieved on average slightly higher results in English. Taken over the past four years there is a slightly rising trend in the attainment of 14 year-olds.

The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 1998 was 30%, below the national average. The proportion was again 30% in 1999. Over the past five years the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* to C has remained roughly level, although there was a high spot in 1997.

Over the past four years, boys have performed better in GCSE examinations than girls. In 1999, 33% of boys achieved five or more grades A* to C, compared with 26% of girls.

In 1998 82% of pupils gained five or more A* to G grades, well below the national average. Boys' results were close to the national average, whilst girls were well below. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more grades A* to G was 83% in 1999.

The proportion of pupils achieving one or more A* to G grades in 1998 was 95%, in line with the national average. Again, the pattern was for boys to achieve closer to the national average than girls. 92% of pupils gained at least one grade A* to G in 1999; this figure has shown a decline over the past three years, although the proportion of pupils leaving school without any qualification at all is getting smaller.

The average total points score gained by pupils in the school has shown a steady rise over the past five years, and, although below the national average by four points, is rising at the same rate as results nationally. The overall average total points score for 1999 was 32, slightly above the 1998 level. The school has set itself targets to improve its GCSE results substantially in the year 2000.

Compared with similar schools, the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more A* to C and five or more A* to G grades in 1998 is well below average and the proportion achieving one or more grades A* to G was on a par. The average total points score gained by pupils at St Joseph's was below the average for similar schools.

In English, pupils' attainment in GCSE was below the national average in 1998, when 46% of pupils gained A* to C grades, compared with 52% in comprehensive schools nationally. In 1999 52% of pupils achieved higher grades. In science 26% of pupils achieved grades A* to C in the current year compared with 22% in 1998, which was well below the national average. Results in mathematics were well below the national average at 28% A* to C grades in 1998, and have declined further in the current year, when 22% of pupils achieved higher grades.

In the 1998 examinations in English girls were close to the national average, but boys were well below. In mathematics and science both boys and girls were well below the national average, but boys performed markedly better than girls. This pattern was repeated in the current year, but the gender gap in English closed considerably in 1999, with girls achieving only slightly better results than boys, and boys' results showing a marked improvement on those of the previous year. In mathematics and science the performance of both boys and girls in 1999 was markedly below the 1998 national average.

In other subjects of the curriculum the performance of pupils in the school in GCSE examinations shows quite marked fluctuations year on year. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in French and geography fell markedly between 1999 compared with the previous year, whereas in design and technology, business studies and history results showed substantial improvements. Apart from noting detail changes in schemes of work and teaching strategies, inspectors could not account for these inconsistencies.

Taking into account the whole range of evidence collected during the inspection, the attainment of the majority of pupils in Year 9 is in line with the national expectation in most subjects, but below in mathematics, information and communications technology (ICT), art, geography, history and in the writing element of modern foreign languages. The majority of 15 year-olds attain below the national expectation in science. In mathematics in Year 11 attainment is well below the national expectation. The attainment of most pupils in Year 11 is in line with the national expectation in English, design and technology, geography, history and business studies and above average in music.

The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are making at least satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment in all subjects of the curriculum, and older pupils continue to make progress in all subjects except mathematics and science, where progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 in history, music and business studies. Pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress, and some make good progress against the objectives set out in their individual education plans.

The quality of pupils' progress was related to the quality of the teaching and the suitability of the work provided for pupils. Where the teacher had high expectations and provided work which engaged pupils' interest, progress was almost invariably good. In

lessons where the teaching was not satisfactorily planned and delivered and where expectations were low, progress was unsatisfactory. Behaviour was poor and progress was not made in a small minority of lessons where classroom management was unsatisfactory and where the lesson content failed to capture the pupils' attention.

Some lower attaining pupils make less progress than they should in English, and progress for significant numbers of older pupils in mathematics and science is unsatisfactory.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

Most pupils take a keen interest in their work and enjoy being involved with their learning.

In English, design and technology, physical education and music there is a positive desire to discuss, explore and contribute in an active way to lessons. Pupils are seen queuing at the door to continue their work in ICT and business studies at break, lunch-time and the end of the day. When given the opportunity most pupils respond positively to the chance to work independently, although in mathematics there is a reluctance on the part of a significant number of pupils to complete and hand in homework. Behaviour in classrooms is usually good or very good and there is little excessive noise in either classrooms or other main areas of the school. In a small minority of lessons pupils' behaviour is unsatisfactory. In the classroom they find it difficult to settle and disrupt the learning of others, shouting out and being rude to each other. Movement around the school is orderly, although descent of the main staircases at the end of the morning session is tackled in a robust fashion by many and can be quite threatening for younger, smaller pupils.

Relationships in the school are good. No instances of bullying were reported by pupils and collaborative working - across all age groups - is a hallmark of the school. The 'Buddy' system, where pupils from Year 9 take responsibility for newcomers into Year 7, is very effective in helping younger pupils to find their feet quickly. Pupils from Year 9 onwards are found working on whole school projects such as Amnesty International fund raising with confidence. Interaction with adults is positive and appropriate to any given setting and pupils are able to co-operate and support each other in a range of classroom settings.

The ability to identify with the feelings and needs of others is clearly seen in curriculum areas where opportunity is offered and in the response to activities offered outside the curriculum: involvement with Amnesty International, CAFOD and local charities. Most pupils listen to each others' opinions with respect and are prepared to evaluate and consider ideas which may be contrary to their own. There is a willingness to discuss feelings and personal experiences and to support those who are most vulnerable in their own community. A wide range of pupils in all year groups are happy to take on the mantle of responsibility as form representatives, prefects, bankers and 'buddies', where Year 9 pupils support the new intake into year 7, even where they have to apply for the post and be interviewed. A large number volunteer for the school's sports teams, perform in choirs and other musical ensembles, or play in inter-form teams. Many also contribute to raising money for charity collections, organising discos for younger pupils and the more mundane tasks of collecting litter around the school.

Attendance

Attendance in the current term is 91.8%. This is a 1.5% increase over the 1997/8 figure and a little above the latest figure for similar schools nationally. The recently

introduced system of computerised registration allows efficient monitoring of attendance and a prompt response to truancy. Unauthorised absence for the last reporting year was well below the national average. Pupils are clearly motivated by the school's termly and year-end awards systems, and more than 80% of parents say that their children like school. However, arrangements for ensuring the attendance of older pupils at West Cumbria College and for monitoring and recording their attendance are unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

During the week of the inspection, almost nine out of ten of the lessons observed were taught at least satisfactorily, and in well over half of the lessons observed the teaching was good or very good. Good teaching was to be found in all year groups, although there was a slightly higher proportion of unsatisfactory lessons in the lower school.

In most subjects teachers have good subject knowledge, plan their lessons well and ensure that lessons are conducted with variety, pace and challenge. Class work and homework is set and marked in a way which is helpful to pupils and geared to the raising of standards of attainment. Teaching materials are judiciously selected for maximum impact and adult helpers and support staff are used to good effect.

An excellent example of good lesson planning and effective use of adult helpers can be seen in the reading enrichment programme set up by the English department in Years 7 and 8, where pupils develop confidence and reading skills through a well-structured collaboration between the teacher and parent volunteers. Teaching in design and technology is characterised by the quality of its planning and productive use of lesson time. In modern languages lessons have pace and variety and are conducted entirely in French or German. In geography and history lessons have clear aims and effective challenge for pupils, and in music lively lessons ensure pupil enjoyment of the subject.

Unsatisfactory teaching fails to capture pupils' imagination by failing to provide lively, interesting and challenging work. Pupils are not helped to overcome their difficulties or to make progress because the lessons are not planned to suit their needs and the marking of their work does not show them how they might improve. Classroom management is sometimes unsatisfactory. In a minority of mathematics, art and English lessons poor behaviour in class reduces the impact of the teaching and stands in the way of pupils' progress.

In a number of lessons observed in mathematics and science, lesson planning was not geared to lively, spirited learning, and expectations of pupils were low. Homework set was not systematically followed up in mathematics and the marking and assessment of work in both subjects was unsatisfactory.

The curriculum and assessment

The school's curriculum meets statutory requirements. Within the context of a small school and the deliberate policy adopted this year to put curriculum change 'on hold' in anticipation of the national revision of school curriculum requirements, St Joseph's provides a broad and balanced curriculum for its pupils. Issues raised by the last inspection concerning modern foreign languages and personal and social education

have been addressed satisfactorily. Although good numbers of pupils opt to study music and art in the upper school and extra-curricular music is very well attended, some older pupils still do not study an aesthetic subject. This was also a concern in the last inspection report.

The tentative move taken to establish a vocational element in the curriculum for older pupils is not successful. Only Year 10 pupils will gain full accreditation, attendance at the West Cumbria College has been unsatisfactory and the option was not open to all pupils. This should be rectified with the new curriculum initiatives next year. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to provide impartial careers advice, but its inclusion in tutor time restricts the opportunities for careers education to be presented in extended, quality time.

Equality of access underpins the thinking behind the new structure for organising the teaching groups in school since the previous inspection. This has not, however, fully addressed the issue of easy movement between lower and upper teaching groups for pupils in Years 8 and 9. This was raised as a concern by parents. The two lower classes in Year 9 contain a number of pupils who have behavioural problems and this does have an impact on the quality of the learning for all pupils in those groups.

Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans (IEPs) which are well matched to pupils' learning needs. Pupils with statements of educational need are well catered for and offered a suitable curriculum with appropriate support, although modifications to the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs are not clearly identified. IEPs for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are not sufficient in themselves on a day-to-day basis: in order to be more effective, they require more structure and should make clear appropriate support strategies for teachers to follow.

Planning is satisfactory overall and good in some curriculum areas, where helpful schemes of work effectively promote sharply focused teaching and clear continuity and progression for pupils. In science, art and physical education, subject planning for specific pupil groups through well-constructed schemes of work is unsatisfactory. Records of pupils' attainment from primary school are used well to plan teaching groups on entry, and there is a developing dialogue with feeder primary schools to ensure smooth transition and curriculum continuity. There are good curriculum links with the West Cumbria Roman Catholic Sixth-Form Centre which serves the area.

Effective structures for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment have been established. The school is beginning to use data well to set targets for individual pupils and to keep track of their progress through the school. The involvement of heads of year in the more consistent monitoring of pupils' progress has had a positive impact on the clarity of curriculum planning and target setting. Most departments are sharing criteria for marking and targets are set with pupils and parents. The school has produced clear guidance for teachers to help in writing more informative and accurate reports for parents.

The school policy for special educational needs has a number of important weaknesses and does not meet statutory requirements. There is no satisfactory system to identify and diagnose pupils with learning difficulties which have not been identified prior to the pupils' entry to the school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a clear strength of the school. Statutory requirements for worship are fulfilled. The ethos and aims for spiritual development are set within the context of the school's foundation and permeate all aspects of the school's life. The extra-curricular programme offered by the religious education department offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to be engaged in activities which challenge them to consider their own beliefs and responses to fundamental questions of life. Other departments through the given curriculum recognise the opportunities to allow pupils to discuss pertinent issues and reflect on personal beliefs and responses. However, the school needs to clarify in its thinking the distinction between pupils' spiritual development and their spirituality, so that this distinction can be reflected in the planning of all subjects.

The school's code of practice presents a clear framework for moral development. The fact that the expectations set out in the code of practice are for staff as well as pupils contributes well to the school's sense of community. The majority of curriculum areas plan appropriately for pupils to recognise and discuss moral and ethical issues when they arise in their subject and encourage them to explore the wider aspects of moral decision making.

The philosophy of responsibility, belonging and opportunity clearly supports pupils' social development. Pupils are invited to elect their peers to represent them in various aspects of school life. Good relationships are encouraged by the structures and systems the school has in place. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to become involved in cultural and sporting activities and in community groups, and there is the opportunity to serve within the school and the wider community. Social involvement and commitment is celebrated all round the school.

The opportunity for cultural experiences is well developed in a number of areas: the provision in the English and music departments being particularly strong across the whole of the school. Art, however, does not press home its natural advantage to develop cultural appreciation and awareness, and the library is under-developed as a cultural centre by its lack of use. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to encounter a wider cultural view: positive images of the developing world are not in evidence around the school and the response to non-European aspects of some subjects is limited.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

Procedures for monitoring all aspects of pupils' well-being are good overall and considerable care is given to ensure no youngster falls through the net. Pupils recognise this themselves and both they and their parents feel very positive about the pastoral and academic guidance offered and the systems in place to support them.

The newly established pastoral team has considerable strengths: form staff and heads of year have clear responsibilities to monitor pupils' personal and academic progress. The programme for target setting being gradually introduced to all year groups is understood by pupils, many of whom appreciate the responsibility it offers them to take charge of their own learning. There is a clear culture of celebrating good behaviour and rewarding positive attitudes in all aspects of school life, including attendance. Requirements for recording and reporting attendance are met and there is good liaison with the support agencies.

Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and all make at least satisfactory progress. Most subject departments make effective arrangements for pupils with special needs, although they are not effective in science, art or music. Arrangements for pupil support are particularly effective in modern foreign languages, where specialist teachers from within the department support pupils in lessons. Pupils at assessment stage 3 are well catered for but the procedures through which staff refer pupils about whom they have concern are only effective in cases where problems are behavioural, and not effective where pupils have learning difficulties.

Good monitoring processes have been established by learning support staff, but no time provision is made for them to assess formally and review. Individual education plans written for pupils with behavioural problems serve little purpose on a day-to-day basis. When staff are faced with challenging behaviour from these pupils the school does not as yet have in place satisfactory procedures for consistent intervention and support.

Sound child protection procedures are in place and subject staff in practical areas promote appropriate awareness of health and safety issues. The teaching of personal, social and health education across the curriculum enables pupils to be aware of their own personal well-being in a variety of settings. A number of minor health and safety issues identified during the inspection in relation to alterations to the premises and the use of equipment and the sports field were reported and dealt with by the head teacher.

Partnership with parents and the community

Parents are strongly supportive of the school which they describe as having a family atmosphere. The great majority believe the school encourages them to play an active part in school life, and a number of parents give highly effective support to the school's reading enrichment scheme. The head teacher sought the views of all parents and pupils before drawing up his plans for the development of the school.

Written communications to parents are clear and relevant. They receive a homework journal at the beginning of each school year, and there is an effective home to school agreement in place. Annual reports provide a detailed picture of pupils' progress, and parents also receive a supplementary report each year where interim progress is recorded. Some parents felt that the sending of reports at the end of the summer term rather than immediately before meetings with parents reduces their potential impact. A significant proportion of the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire considered that they are not kept sufficiently informed of their children's progress. A number of those attending the parents' meeting with inspectors believed that some teachers have an inconsistent approach to the setting of homework.

Parents are given useful advice by the school about how they can support their child's education, and there is satisfactory guidance about examination options and possible careers.

The head teacher has worked hard to develop close and constructive relationships with primary schools and to help ensure a sensitively managed and trouble-free transition to secondary education. There are also very positive and helpful links with the West Cumbria Roman Catholic Sixth-Form Centre to which pupils from St Joseph's transfer

at age 16. The school has some well-developed links with local industry and commerce, and a number of local companies are happy to accept St Joseph's pupils on work experience.

Pupils in the school are active in the community: they have helped at play schemes and at old people's homes during holidays, and they are enthusiastic and successful supporters of charities, prominent among which are CAFOD and Amnesty International.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

The governing body and its committees provide firm and committed leadership for the whole school community. They have a clear view of where the school is going and play a strong role in the strategic planning of the school's future development. Governors exercise determined oversight of its progress on all fronts. There is a clear understanding and good working relationships between the head teacher and all members of the governing body, who provide strong support for the school's commitment to raising standards and improving the quality of education which it provides. The school is ably and dynamically led by the head teacher and his senior team, who, in the year that they have been together, have instituted numerous changes which are beginning to have an impact upon the school's progress towards the realisation of its aims.

There is evidence in many subject departments that there is a shared view of the way forward through effective tracking of pupils' performance and the sharing of good teaching strategies. Good relationships between all members of staff, and between the staff and the governing body, add to the climate of cohesion and shared aims and values which is a strength of the school. All members of the school community - parents, staff and pupils - were invited to play a part in the wholesale review of the school's strengths and weaknesses on which the strategies for development have been based.

As a result of the evaluation procedure, governors and head teacher have produced a three-year development plan which is clear, comprehensive and centred upon the raising of standards and quality across the board. The aims for the current year are extracted from the plan and set out with clear methodologies, responsibilities and evaluative procedures. There are effective procedures for the monitoring and review of school developments through senior staff, who are linked to groups of subject departments and monitor teaching and learning. The monitoring of teaching and learning by heads of department has begun in some departments, but is not as yet an integral part of whole-school monitoring procedures.

Most subject departments are capably led by dedicated staff, and there is a developing commitment in the majority of departments to raising standards. Schemes of work are helpful and detailed in the majority of cases, although in mathematics, science, physical education and art curriculum planning is not sufficiently detailed and does not contribute well to the quality of teaching or to the raising of standards. In both mathematics and science departmental leadership lacks clarity and decisiveness. There is a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and other aspects of performance, and neither department has a clear or cohesive view of the way forward.

The governors' annual report to parents does not comply with statutory requirements because it does not report on how the school's policy for special educational needs (SEN) is being implemented or how the resources for SEN have been apportioned over the last reporting year. Additionally, governors do not comply with statutory requirements in the school prospectus because it does not contain a summary of the school's SEN policy.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

54. There have been considerable changes to the deployment of staff since the last inspection, when the requirements of the sixth-form were placing intolerable demands on the teaching capacity of the school. The staffing establishment of the school is now broadly average for schools of this type, and provides for average class sizes of 24 for 11 to 14 year-olds and 22 for older pupils.
55. Teaching staff are in the main appropriately qualified for the subjects which they teach, and in the very small number of instances where staff are teaching subjects in which they have no formal qualification there is no perceptible impact on the quality of their teaching or on the standards achieved by their pupils. Marking and preparation time is average for secondary schools, although heads of department and other middle managers have insufficient non-teaching time in which to carry out their monitoring and administrative duties. Through the use of the training budget, the school seeks to provide time to release heads of department so that they can monitor the teaching in their departments. This is an efficient solution in the short term to satisfy the school's current objectives, but will need to be revised in the longer term in order to facilitate more consistent and cohesive subject management.
56. The school has an appropriate number of support staff, in line with that provided in similar schools nationally, but the availability of technical support for ICT is unsatisfactory. The principal teacher of ICT, who has a number of middle management duties, is also called upon to service hardware, which takes up an intolerable amount of his time. The number of clerical and administrative staff in the school is well below the national average, although there is nothing to suggest that the school is not efficiently run.
57. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are good. In-service training for teaching staff is suitably linked to the school development plan and to the school's current priorities. The largest item on the staff development budget is linked to the school's commitment to raising standards and to improving the quality of teaching. There is no staff appraisal scheme in operation at present. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified staff are on the whole satisfactory, although the school does not comply with the requirement to provide supplementary training time for newly qualified teachers.
58. Teaching accommodation is undergoing substantial review at present. Science areas, currently unsatisfactory, are being re-designed and refurbished under a £265,000 government grant, and the teaching areas for English, humanities and art, at present barely satisfactory, are to be re-located and refurbished. Outdoor facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory: whilst there are adequate hard-play areas on the school site, pupils have a ten-minute walk to the playing fields used by the school. This

reduces considerably the amount of teaching time available. Teaching accommodation elsewhere is satisfactory, and in music, modern languages and mathematics it is good. In many teaching and circulation areas of the school the environment is improved by displays of pupils' work and celebrations of their success.

59. Most subjects of the curriculum have sufficient up-to-date learning resources and books, although in science, music and physical education there are some learning resources which are now well out of date, and there is a shortage of books in history. The school has recently invested £33,000 in new computers, but in some subjects of the curriculum there is no evidence of ICT being used as a matter of course to support learning. In English computers are used mainly for word-processing, the mathematics department uses out-of-date computers and programs, and there is no systematic or planned use of ICT in science. Only in music and design and technology is there consistent use of ICT to support pupils' learning.
60. The school library is currently under-used as a resource for learning, and has insufficient stocks of non-fiction and other reference material. Outside its use for the highly-successful reading enrichment programme, for which a good range of teenage fiction is available, inspectors saw little use of the library area either in lesson time or at break or lunch time. However, the school's plans to create a flexible learning area as part of the next phase of refurbishment may well have an impact upon library use.

The efficiency of the school

61. The school clearly has a determined commitment to high achievement and to raising the expectations of all members of the school community. All professional development is geared to the promotion of the school's aims and to improving staff confidence and performance in line with the objectives set out in the school development plan. Spending on resources is carefully monitored and its effectiveness evaluated. Major expenditure has taken place in recent months in order to improve the range and quality of ICT resources available to support learning across the curriculum, although the effectiveness of their use is not yet generally secured.
62. Staff are effectively deployed and there is judicious and efficient use of the resources available. The accommodation is generally well presented and effectively used, although the availability of the library to support pupils' learning across all subjects is unsatisfactory at present.
63. Governors and senior staff are active in seeking to improve the effectiveness of the school's learning environment, and have been able to secure grants to design and develop learning facilities which will be more effective and promote higher standards. In the current year grants have been secured to refurbish the science laboratories, to relocate accommodation in English and art and to create a flexible learning centre.
64. The school is well run: administrative procedures are sound and there is a clear allocation of responsibilities. Finances are efficiently managed and there are effective procedures for obtaining best value. The recommendations of the latest auditor's report have been complied with, and the planning of the school's financial priorities for the medium and long-term is based upon sound and achievable principles.
65. Given the educational standards achieved by the pupils relative to their attainment on entry, the overall quality of the education provided and the management of its

priorities for the future, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

66. GCSE results in 1999, with 52% of pupils entered gaining A* to C grades in English, show an improvement on 1998 when 46% of pupils gained A* to C grades compared with a national average of 53%. There is a similar pattern in English literature: in 1999 54% of pupils gained A* to C grades compared with 46% in 1998 when the national average was 58%. The proportion of boys gaining A* to C grades increased significantly in 1999 with 47% in English compared with 31% in 1998 when the national average was 47%, and 53% in English literature compared with 23% in 1998 when the national average was 50%. In the four years since the last inspection there have been considerable variations in results from one year to another.
67. In the Key Stage 3 SATs in 1998 73% of pupils achieved at least level 5 and 34% of pupils reached level 6 or higher - above the average nationally and for similar schools. Again, the average National Curriculum level of the boys was above the national average. Results were lower in 1999 when 56% of pupils achieved at least level 5, and level 6 or higher was reached by 26% of pupils.
68. During the inspection most of the pupils approaching the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 were achieving the national standard.
69. Pupils achieve the expected standards in speaking and listening activities of a more informal kind such as discussion in pairs or small groups. They can successfully offer more extended oral responses when prompted to do so by the skilful questioning of the teacher or the provision of a wider audience. Year 7 pupils gave some well organised and coherent accounts in a drama lesson and some Year 10 pupils, working on 'Lord of the Flies', presented some effective prepared speeches. However, overall, pupils were given too few opportunities to work on more formal speaking activities.
70. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 read enthusiastically and with developing confidence in the reading enrichment programme. Even less competent readers are being enabled to deal with unfamiliar words and texts through the support of effectively deployed and well trained adult volunteers. This is a strength of the department's work. In Key Stage 4 older, higher attaining pupils show mature insights into the texts being studied and a growing capacity to analyse how writers achieve their effects.
71. The writing abilities of 11 to 14 year-olds are less well developed than their reading, reflecting the picture nationally. In Year 9 there are good examples of pupils writing to achieve specific effects in the unit of work on the 'Gothic' genre where their writing has been stimulated and supported by their reading of a range of good quality texts. There are good examples of sustained writing for different purposes in Key Stage 4 course work. However, lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 still find writing difficult and their work lacks fluency and accuracy.
72. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. There are examples of pupils at all levels of attainment making good progress in their reading development in Years 7 to 9 and most higher and average attaining pupils make satisfactory

progress through the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. There are examples of some lower attaining pupils making good progress through the Certificate of Achievement course. Progress is unsatisfactory in some lower attaining sets where poor attitudes and behaviour are not successfully overcome by the teaching and, more occasionally, when poor lesson design leads to too much teacher input and insufficient opportunity for pupils to practise their skills and language abilities.

73. The majority of pupils are keen, well-behaved and attentive in English lessons, taking pride in their presentation and often showing commitment and perseverance in carrying out appropriately challenging tasks. Relationships are good and pupils work well together in pair and group work both in English and in drama. Pupils' capacity to show initiative and work independently is less in evidence although there are some notable examples of effective private study in the GCSE course work of some higher attaining pupils. A minority of pupils in some of the lower attaining sets are poorly motivated, inattentive, show little interest and are poorly behaved.
74. Teaching in most lessons is good or very good. The strengths of the teaching include secure specialist knowledge and confidence, a varied repertoire of teaching techniques, highly effective use of time and resources and the effective deployment and training of adult helpers. In a small minority of lessons the teaching was unsatisfactory. In these cases, the work was sometimes insufficiently challenging, there was too much commentary and anecdote from the teacher, and sometimes a failure to overcome poor attitudes and engage the attention and interest of the pupils. A weakness in some otherwise good drama lessons was the lack of opportunity for pupils to discuss and evaluate their work.
75. The English curriculum provides a balanced coverage of statutory requirements including an appropriate emphasis on drama and media study, but only limited use is made of ICT. There is effective curriculum planning. The scheme of work and its consistent implementation across the department effectively promotes continuity and progression. Detailed units of work are provided term by term and year by year. There are specific references to teaching methods, learning activities, matching of work to groups of pupils, and assessment. The activities should be more closely defined in terms of the reading, writing, speaking and listening that pupils are going to be required to do. There is a detailed assessment policy which is consistently applied in practice. The department is concerned to provide equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum for all pupils, including the opportunity to be entered for GCSE examinations in both English and English literature.
76. A wide range of extra-curricular activities organised by the department contributes effectively to pupils' social and cultural development. These include trips to theatres and television studios, a five-day literary residential visit for Year 7 which produced an anthology of the pupils' writing and visits to the school by theatre companies and writers in residence.
77. The department is well led by a hard working head of department and there is a shared commitment to high standards in the department. Departmental meetings are well focused and documented. The department development plan identifies highly relevant areas for development but lacks detailed points for action. Examination and test results are carefully analysed and changes made as a result. A start has been made on monitoring the quality of teaching. There are sufficient qualified staff and recent courses attended on boys' attainment and Key Stage 3 literacy have had a

clear impact on the work of the department. Accommodation is currently adequate. The imminent relocation of the department to a suite of rooms around the library and drama studio will allow very good accommodation for the teaching of the subject. There is an adequate supply of books and other resources.

78. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There have been notable improvements in provision for drama which is now a regular feature of the Key Stage 3 English programme, and in the teaching and monitoring of reading which is now a strength.

Mathematics

79. Over the last three years a declining proportion of the candidates entered for GCSE mathematics has achieved grades A* to C. In 1998 28% of pupils entered obtained grades A* to C compared with 44% nationally. In the current year only 22% of those entered achieved these grades. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to G was also below the national average in 1998. In 1999 boys' GCSE results were better than those for girls.
80. In the standardised assessment tests which pupils take at the end of Year 9 56% of pupils achieved level 5 or above in 1998. This figure fell to 54% in 1999, which was below the national average of 63%. The attainment of the majority of Year 9 pupils in mathematics is below the national expectation and well below this level for the majority of pupils in Year 11. In only a third of classes in Years 7 to 9 was attainment at nationally expected levels, and pupils' attainment was below or well below average in two-thirds of lessons. None of the classes seen in Years 10 and 11 was judged to be operating at nationally expected levels. Attainment in each case was below or well below average.
81. The progress of most 11 to 14 year-old pupils is in line with their previous attainment. Older pupils, however, are making unsatisfactory progress. The progress made by all pupils is being adversely affected by poor responses to homework that is set. Although during many lessons appropriate mathematical skills are developed, opportunities for consolidation are not being taken. The progress of lower attaining pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is also being impeded by unsatisfactory class management which leads to poor standards of behaviour.
82. Younger pupils have mainly satisfactory attitudes to mathematics. This is not the case in Years 10 and 11, however, where attitudes are sometimes unsatisfactory. Although the majority of pupils behave well in class, there are instances of poor behaviour in a significant proportion of lessons. Most pupils are able to sustain concentration, show an interest in their work and are able to complete successfully the set tasks, but some pupils are easily distracted. Many pupils in the lower sets lack confidence and are unable to progress without constant support from the teacher.
83. Teaching was less than satisfactory in a third of the lessons seen during the inspection. Only a limited amount of good teaching was seen and no teaching was judged to be very good or outstanding. In the better lessons pupils are fully engaged in a good range of activities and make good progress with the tasks set. The pace is appropriate and the pupils are interested and challenged. However, in a significant proportion of lessons pupils spend too long on one type of activity and in others they do not engage themselves sufficiently in the group work. Teachers often have low

expectations of pupils. Although homework is regularly set, teachers do not rigorously follow up reasons for non-completion. Some marked work contains limited feedback to pupils on where errors have been made and how the work can be improved. In a number of classes, particularly in Years 10 and 11, the management of pupils and standards of discipline are unsatisfactory.

84. Statutory requirements are met. Shared schemes of work have been developed and these provide continuity and progression. There are regular assessments of pupils' progress but these are not consistently used to develop and inform lesson planning. The Certificate of Achievement has recently been introduced as a more appropriate alternative to the GCSE for lower attaining pupils. However, opportunities to motivate these pupils by undertaking work in a real-life context are not being fully exploited. There is only limited evidence of the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in mathematics.
85. Clear and decisive leadership is required if standards in the department are to be raised. There is currently a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of the department's work. Reviews where these have been undertaken are superficial. Although a limited number of observations of teaching in the department have been undertaken by members of the school's senior management these have yet to be extended and used fully as part of quality assurance. Staff in the department meet on a regular basis, but much of the discussion centres on basic administrative matters rather than sharing good practice or raising standards. As part of a whole-school initiative to raise attainment the department has recently introduced a system of target setting for individual pupils.
86. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified. All have been associated with the school for long periods. There is a need to ensure that staff keep abreast of new developments and initiatives in mathematics over and beyond simple adjustments to the examination syllabuses. The teaching accommodation for mathematics is satisfactory. It is well decorated and furnished. The suite of rooms provides a physical focus for the subject in the school, although some rooms become cramped when being used by larger classes. Currently the department only has access to out-of-date computer hardware and software, and this adversely affects the range of ICT work which can be undertaken.
87. Elsewhere in the school appropriate use is made of numeracy in a number of subjects. In design and technology, science, geography, history, and modern foreign languages basic use is made of tables, charts or graphs. In science, however, there is some evidence that poor skills in numeracy and basic mathematics adversely affect pupils' work.

Science

88. In 1998 22% of pupils gained A* to C grades in the GCSE examination, well below the national average. In the current year, 26% of pupils were awarded A* to C grades. Results at A* to G have been closer to the average in recent years. In general, boys have achieved better results than girls, contrary to the national trend, but there are now signs that the department is beginning to tackle girls' under-achievement.
89. Since the last inspection the results of the standardised assessment tests have varied significantly but have risen towards the national average. In 1999 girls' results were

close to the national average and were better than those of boys. Overall, the standard at the end of Year 9 has been comparable with schools of a similar type.

90. About half of the pupils in Year 9 are achieving the national standard across three of the attainment targets, but their attainment in experimental planning and investigation is below what might be expected for their age. Attainment by most boys and girls is broadly similar. In Year 11 less than half of the pupils are achieving the national standard but about one fifth are reaching a high standard.
91. Most 11 to 14 year-olds make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment, the best progress being in Years 7 and 8 where there is real enthusiasm for science. Lower attaining pupils generally make satisfactory progress, but this is not so in Year 9. The progress made by higher attaining pupils is unsatisfactory because lessons do not contain sufficient challenge. In Years 10 and 11 about half of the pupils fail to make satisfactory progress. Some of these pupils, particularly girls, were high attainers in the lower school. Most pupils do not progress fast enough in experimental planning and investigation. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good.
92. Standards of written description in science are generally satisfactory but the standards of scientific reasoning, both written and oral, are often poor. There is a particular weakness in using scientific words to support answers. Most pupils do not use numeracy skills sufficiently to make estimates or to improve the precision of their experiments. Some good quality displays of work on the walls of laboratories do help younger pupils to see what standard is expected, but there are insufficient models further up the school.

Almost all the teaching observed in the lower school was at least satisfactory, but in nearly a third of the lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 teaching was unsatisfactory. Minor disruption was caused by the noise and room disturbance imposed by the major building programme but the best lessons rose above this and were brisk and demanding, engaging pupils in interesting work which included links with real life. Good teaching usually involved a balance of practical and theoretical work, followed up with relevant homework and high quality marking. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, there was a slow pace, the teacher talked for too long and tolerated idle chatter when pupils should have been concentrating. In some lessons the teacher showed little enthusiasm for the subject and sometimes used the scientific facts inaccurately. Pupils had less chance to use their initiative and there was little or no extension work for the faster ones.

The department has a satisfactory marking policy and it uses homework and test marks to judge the progress of every pupil. Teachers take great care in deciding the most suitable teaching set in which to place pupils and there is good co-operation with the learning support department. However, much of the marking of pupils' work is not of a satisfactory standard: it does not show pupils how to improve their work, or what new targets to aim for. Too much of the marking seen in the inspection week failed to meet the school's stated policy on the marking of work.

The science curriculum and its assessment meet the statutory requirements but there is little use of computers with science experiments. There are schemes of work in Years 10 and 11 but they are still incomplete - there is still no scheme of work for biology - and do not give sufficient guidance for individual lesson planning. The department's

reliance on a published scheme of work for the lower school is unsatisfactory because the content of the scheme does not relate to lesson planning specifically for pupils at St Joseph's. The teaching materials which have been developed by the staff are generally good but there are insufficient stimulating examples of science in business and industry and a lack of quality extension work for the faster pupils.

Although many aspects of departmental management are satisfactory, there are significant weaknesses in ensuring that the quality of teaching, lesson planning and day-to-day assessment is consistently meeting the good standards which the head of department has laid down. Insufficient effort is made to ensure that good practice is spread to all staff. This is a key factor in the future success of the department. Staff in the department have not sufficiently engaged themselves in professional development since the last inspection in order to meet the developing needs of science teaching, especially in terms of teaching methods.

There is a satisfactory range of up-to-date science textbooks to which all pupils can have access during lessons, but there are not enough textbooks for the pupils to take home. The range of practical equipment is generally satisfactory but some power supplies and other small items are nearing the end of their useful life. Health and safety aspects are well managed. Science accommodation is in the process of a major refurbishment which will provide very good and up-to-date facilities.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

The attainment of 11 to 14 year-olds varies from just above national averages to well below. By Year 9 pupils can observe with some accuracy and record this observation satisfactorily. They have developed a number of key skills, predominantly in two-dimensional work. There are some opportunities to do three-dimensional work and pupils are developing basic construction skills. The attainment levels of older pupils are in line with the national average. In Year 11, around half are working at about the C grade GCSE level. In the last two years GCSE results for art have been in line with or above the national average, although the number of candidates entered has been small.

Progress varies from good to very poor. In more than three-quarters of lessons it is satisfactory or good. Higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 build effectively on their Key Stage 2 experience. In some cases pupils are able to express themselves on a larger scale for the first time. They are also developing their understanding of the work of established artists. Pupils were seen building and developing their direct observation skills drawing an arrangement in the classroom of a seascape. However, lower attaining pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, often fail to make satisfactory progress. In Year 10 there are situations where boys are not progressing as successfully as girls: a significant minority show little interest in their art work at this stage.

Higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 show interest in the artwork presented and collaborate well in lessons. However, a minority of pupils whose attainment is not so high display some very negative characteristics. Their levels of concentration are very limited, they behave very poorly, and some show very little respect for property or each other. They fail to develop constructive working relationships and they have not

developed the capacity to co-operate effectively or collaborate well. In Years 10 and 11 also there is occasionally a lack of co-operation and respect for the work of others.

Teaching is at least satisfactory in more than three quarters of lessons but is occasionally poor. Subject knowledge is satisfactory but the expectations of pupils, particularly for lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9, are low. Short-term planning is satisfactory but the documented medium and long-term planning is limited. However, most work is clearly part of a planned sequence of activities: a Year 10 group visited the local swimming pool, where photographs were taken and direct observation drawings completed before being translated into larger pieces of work. The management of higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 is generally successful but lower attaining pupils are much less successfully dealt with. This leads to bouts of highly disruptive behaviour in some cases. With older pupils too some disruptive behaviour was seen, particularly from boys. Time is for the most part used well but occasionally lessons are brought to a close early, leaving pupils standing around waiting for the bell. Pupils' work is assessed during the lessons and recorded towards the end but there is little evidence of using assessments to inform the planning of future work.

Art meets the statutory National Curriculum requirements but there are too few opportunities to use ICT to support art work. The subject occasionally makes a contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development, as was seen in a lesson where there was reference to the human condition as reflected in art from India.

There is one full-time teacher of art. Some formal monitoring of the work of the art department has been carried out by members of the senior management team but the GCSE examination result analysis is underdeveloped. Development planning is weak and there is little evidence of targets being set.

Accommodation is limited and what is available is not used effectively. The single room is divided by a temporary partition that doubles as a display facility. This provides adequate room for painting and drawing where the classes are no more than 20 or so. There is inadequate space for ceramics work and printing, and learning resources are limited.

Business studies

Attainment in business studies of the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is at the nationally expected level. Although the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C over the last three years in the GCSE has been below the national average, levels of attainment are rising. In 1999 37% of the pupils entered gained grades in the range A* to C compared with the 1998 national average of 49%. Work seen for the pupils in the current Years 10 and 11 was of a satisfactory standard. Some of the course work seen was of a good standard. More pupils including those of higher ability are now opting for business studies. Over the last two years boys have performed better than the girls in the GCSE. Progress of pupils in classes is always at least satisfactory and frequently good.

Most pupils have positive attitudes towards business studies. They are able to sustain concentration and able to complete the tasks they undertake. Many are confident users of ICT equipment. The majority of pupils show an interest in the work and are

able to make progress without significant support from the teacher.

Teaching is frequently of good quality. There is detailed planning and lessons contain a good range of learning activities. During group work pupils are encouraged to make contributions to the development of topics. Good quality support materials including prepared overhead projector transparencies are used. The curriculum is appropriate and the provision is managed effectively. Computers are used extensively to support aspects of the programme, particularly in the development of course work. Although the equipment is modern it is unreliable and because there are no technical staff the teacher frequently has to provide the necessary technical support. Printing facilities are currently unsatisfactory. Pupils are encouraged and able to use the computer resources during lunch-times and after school.

Design and technology

The standards of designing and making throughout the school are at least in line with national averages and often above what is expected nationally. Pupils using resistant materials work systematically through their designing and manufacture, closely following their design decisions. In food technology pupils produce work of high quality. Graphics work completed by 14 year-olds is in line with national averages but some older pupils have not fully developed their drawing skills; in some cases precision, accuracy and fluency are lacking. GCSE results in the last two years have improved from below to above the national average.

Progress is at least satisfactory and is often good. Pupils of all ages and at all levels of attainment are seen to progress and develop their skills, their knowledge and understanding effectively. Pupils are developing their designing skills throughout the department by using a very systematic, consistent and structured approach to problem solving. The whole process from research to design specification links together clearly and well. Making skills are similarly being effectively developed in a range of materials and media.

All pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards design and technology. In Years 7 to 9 pupils are developing the capacity to work independently and by the time they reach Year 10 pupils can sustain their concentration and are developing their personal study skills and ability to work very efficiently throughout lessons. Pupils are particularly courteous when discussing the outcomes of the lesson showing appreciation of the work of others. Peer group relationships and those between pupil and teacher are excellent. Co-operation is very good: pupils work together and share both space and equipment well.

Teaching is at least satisfactory and was good or very good in three-quarters of the lessons seen. All the staff in the department have a secure understanding of the subject content, the requirements of the National Curriculum and the chosen examination courses. All have appropriate expectations of the pupils they teach. The quality of the planning is excellent. Individual lesson planning is clear with references back to previous lessons and predictions for the future. It includes homework which is linked to class work and takes account of the ongoing assessment. Pupil and classroom management strategies are very effective; there is no evidence of disruptive behaviour. Time is used well with all lessons very well managed, running from bell to bell with very little slippage.

The design and technology curriculum meets all statutory requirements; it has breadth and balance in terms of what is offered, lacking only work using textiles. ICT is beginning to play a significant role in pupils' learning in design and technology but control technology work is still under-developed. The planned curriculum provides access and opportunity for all and caters effectively for pupils at all levels of attainment including those with special educational needs. The assessment of pupil attainment is comprehensive and very well documented; the information this provides is used to monitor pupil progress and evaluate department effectiveness. There is a single departmental file of pupil attainment levels, which comprehensively highlights strengths and weaknesses. This is then used to inform project planning and department development.

There is very strong departmental management, particularly in the monitoring of its effectiveness. Presently monitoring focuses on data analysis, which leads to reflection and evaluation. There is no direct classroom observation of teaching as yet by departmental staff, although this is undertaken by members of the school's senior management team. The department works very effectively as a team, supporting and challenging each other. The supportive relationships ensure that the department can continue to develop. There is a strong ethos and a real sense of purpose, matching closely the aims and objectives of the school. Throughout the department there is a real commitment to high achievement.

Teachers in design and technology are appropriately qualified and have sufficient experience to provide good teaching. In addition the two technicians working in the department are very effective, providing good classroom support during lessons and enabling successful teaching. The accommodation for design and technology is variable in quality. All is very tidy and very well organised. Store areas are immaculate, very well planned and reflect good practice in terms of health and safety. The home economics and graphics areas were completely refurbished two years ago following the previous inspection. The area for resistant materials is planned for the next cycle of improvements. The teaching resources are adequate including those for ICT, which are well used.

Geography

In 1998 38% of pupils gained A* to C grades in the GCSE examination - below the national average - and in the current year, from a much larger entry, 31% of pupils achieved higher grades. Teacher assessments for the pupils reaching the end of Year 9 in 1999 indicated that the attainment of the majority of pupils was below the national average.

The attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 is slightly below the national standard overall, and pupils in Year 11 show levels of attainment consistent with average performance around GCSE grade D. Considering their prior attainment, most pupils in the school are making satisfactory progress, and in the case of some pupils progress is good. Pupils in Year 7 were seen to make good progress in understanding of environmental issues while working on a project in the school grounds, and older pupils developed their skills well when testing their hypotheses following a field study of Keswick. Geographical skills and techniques were being developed through comparing an Ordnance Survey map with satellite imagery of the same area.

Most pupils have good attitudes towards geography. They respond well in lessons, asking

as well as answering questions, and have good levels of concentration. Older pupils particularly are developing independent self-supported work, especially through their geography course work, and all pupils benefit from the first-hand experiences they gain through fieldwork.

Teaching is mainly good, and sometimes very good. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and use a range of teaching strategies which help pupils to enjoy their work and make progress. Lessons have clear aims and present appropriate challenge for pupils at all levels. Expectations are high, and pupils are encouraged to take a pride in their work. Time is used effectively, and homework is used well to reinforce learning. Pupils' work is regularly marked, and assessment data is used to inform the department's planning. However, the use of ICT to support learning in geography is at present unsatisfactory.

The geography department is ably led by the head of faculty who also has responsibility for the history department. There is a departmental handbook which provides guidance for staff through appropriate policies and schemes of work. However, insufficient attention is given in the schemes of work to the range of cross-curricular themes which need to be incorporated, nor is there sufficient detail of opportunities for the subject to make its contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social or cultural development. The department's development plan lacks detail and appropriate targets for the future. Although resources are overall adequate, some of the text and reference materials are in poor condition and need to be replaced.

History

The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations in history was below the national average in 1998, but in 1999 over two-thirds of the 19 pupils entered for the examination achieved the higher grades. The teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 showed attainment to be overall in line with the national standard.

The attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 is as yet slightly below the national standard, but pupils in Year 11 are meeting the requirements of the GCSE examination course. There is no perceptible difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

Most pupils throughout the school are making satisfactory progress, and a significant proportion of pupils make good progress. They are able to gather information from a range of sources and apply their historical skills to interpret it. There are good examples of the evaluation of available evidence, as, for example, where a Year 10 class was commenting on how different countries viewed the Treaty of Versailles. Pupils are developing their understanding of periods, events, and peoples and their ability to place them accurately within a chronological framework.

Throughout the school, pupils have positive attitudes towards history. Behaviour is good, they concentrate well in lessons, remain on task and are willing to ask and answer questions. Their work is well presented. Pupils are being encouraged to develop independent learning techniques - especially in Years 10 and 11 - and they are beginning to show good levels of self-motivation.

The teaching of history is always at least satisfactory and is often good. Lessons are well-planned and teachers' explanations are clear. In the best lessons the teacher's own

enthusiasm for the subject engages the interest of pupils and helps them progress. Relationships are good. The marking of pupils' work is constructive and offers positive comments.

The department is effectively organised. Schemes of work in history meet statutory requirements and offer continuity and progression. The departmental handbook shows links with geography and presents suitable work plans for younger pupils and for examination classes as well as providing useful subject information and guidance. However, there is not sufficient reference in the schemes of work to cross-curricular themes and aspects of the work which contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a departmental development plan, which at present contains insufficient detail on how the subject is to progress over the medium term.

Departmental accommodation and resources are adequate, but many of the textbooks which pupils use are in poor condition and there needs to be a rolling programme of replacement. The use of ICT to support learning in history is currently unsatisfactory.

Information and communications technology

In Year 9 the attainment of most pupils is just below the national standard but the standards are quickly rising. In the communication and handling information aspects standards are mainly in line with expectations but in the modelling, control and measurement aspects they are below the national standard. The attainment of boys and girls is broadly similar.

There is no timetabled GCSE course in ICT but over half of the pupils opt to follow a business studies course, which uses ICT extensively. Their achievement is close to the national standard. The attainment of girls is comparable with that of boys. Too few of the pupils who do not choose the business studies option are reaching the higher levels of skill and knowledge expected in the national standard because they are not using ICT sufficiently in other subjects.

Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils who follow the business studies course make good progress in ICT. Most of the other pupils in Key Stage 4 consolidate their skills by practising them in some other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils of all ages with special educational needs generally make good progress and for some progress is very good.

In this first year of adjusting to a new computer network, all pupils in the lower school are following a similar curriculum, but at a different pace. They are developing their knowledge of computer hardware and the skills to use word processors, spreadsheets and databases. Pupils are not yet benefiting from the National Grid for Learning because there have been technical problems in connecting to the Internet. Some pupils are more knowledgeable and skilful because they are using these services through their home computer. This equips them to be effective with the use of ICT in other subjects.

Pupils' attitudes to ICT are generally positive in the early stages of the KeyBytes program, but they become markedly more enthusiastic when they can branch out into small projects. Here there is more opportunity to use their initiative and to be challenged to use more than one piece of software. Pupils using ICT as part of the business studies course or in other subjects of the curriculum are also well motivated. There is pride in

the school's new ICT facilities, though some pupils become frustrated by the inadequate printing facilities and by the frequent malfunctioning of the network system. About 20 pupils per day use their lunch-time to advance their skills or to do course work. The arrival of the new computer network has had a significant impact on enthusiasm and confidence.

Teaching is at least satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and is often good. In business studies, teaching was good in all the lessons observed. Good lessons were brisk, stretching most pupils, and finishing with a link to the next lesson. Practical and theoretical work were in good balance and discipline was good. In a Year 9 class which was preparing an encyclopaedia package, the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm was infectious. Where the quality of teaching had shortcomings, it was usually because the most able pupils were insufficiently challenged owing to the teacher's lack of familiarity with the new equipment.

Assessment of ICT in the lower school is good: teachers build up a continuous record of each pupil's attainment in every task, and an assessment is made at the end of Year 9. As each unit is completed, pupils know in detail how they are progressing through the levels of the National Curriculum. There is good co-operation with the learning support department, and the progress of pupils with special educational needs is regularly monitored.

The ICT curriculum meets statutory requirements but there are gaps in the experience of some pupils; in Key Stage 3 very few pupils have been taught the measurement aspects of the attainment target and have not developed capability in it. The coverage of control aspects is better but it is not sufficiently developed to allow pupils to reach the national standard by the end of Key Stage 3. There are plans to remedy this through links with the science and the design and technology departments. In other regards the schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are thorough and the teaching materials which have been developed by staff are good. However, this is not so in the upper school, where the development of ICT in the curriculum is patchy across subjects. There is insufficient identification of ICT opportunities in most subject schemes of work.

The department is well managed and efficiently run. Many of the priorities which arose from the last inspection have now been satisfactorily addressed. There is an appropriate balance of teaching expertise and there are effective plans to train a range of subject staff to contribute to the teaching of ICT in Years 10 and 11. However, there is no technician support and this affects the pace of progress of ICT in the school. The accommodation and furniture are very good. There are good materials to support learning in the lower school. The new network arrangement is unsatisfactory because of the unreliability of the linked-unit system. The proposed extension of ICT facilities to a new second suite would be more manageable if conventional PC workstations were used.

Modern foreign languages

In the three years including 1998 there was a rising trend in GCSE results in French and in 1998 around a third of those entered for French attained A* to C grades. This was below the national average. In 1999 only one quarter of those entered attained A* to C grades. All the small number of pupils entered for the GCSE examination in German in 1998, and five of the nine pupils entered in 1999, attained A* to C grades.

In the end of Year 9 teacher assessments in French about three-quarters of the pupils attained the national standard in 1998, and somewhat fewer in 1999. The majority of pupils currently in Year 9 are on course to attain national standards in listening and speaking, but not yet in writing. Just over a third of pupils in Year 11 are on course to attain A* to C grades in French.

Relative to their prior attainment most pupils in both key stages make satisfactory progress or better. Younger pupils' listening skills develop well because lessons are conducted almost entirely in the target language, in many cases at a challenging level. Progress in speaking is not quite as good because pupils have too few opportunities for more extended dialogues. Writing skills are underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9 because written work is largely restricted to the recording of vocabulary and rehearsal of phrases rather than the creative use of independent writing.

In Years 10 and 11 writing skills progress better, but nevertheless the use of extended writing for a variety of purposes starts too late and is too irregular to enable many pupils to develop the confidence and expertise to produce pieces of higher order writing.

Where progress is good pupils are secure in their use of prior knowledge, enabling them to assimilate and apply new knowledge and skills easily. In lessons where progress is unsatisfactory, although the activities are generally well planned and show progression, the pace is sometimes misjudged and some pupils' concentration is allowed to lapse for too long. Many low attaining pupils and pupils with special needs make satisfactory or good progress in lessons where the pace is lively, activities stimulating and where pupils are all attentive and involved.

Pupils generally have a positive attitude to language learning. The majority take an active part in lessons and respond confidently to teachers' consistent use of the target language. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with their teachers, but, although they work well together, they are sometimes slow to start pair work and are sometimes inattentive when they should be listening carefully. On such occasions progress is slower.

All teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. In Years 7 to 9 the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in over four-fifths of lessons observed. It was good in a quarter of lessons. In Years 10 and 11 teaching was satisfactory in four-fifths of lessons. Teachers use the target language consistently and effectively throughout the school. Most lessons are well planned, well structured and lively. Activities are varied and show progression, and in many lessons good questioning techniques are used. However, pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to communicate meaningfully with each other and the teacher in the target language or to write independently and extensively. Teachers' expectations of pupils' attentiveness are also not always high enough. Where this is the case, pupils under-achieve. Pupils with special educational needs are involved actively and sensitively in lessons by all teachers.

The school provides appropriate language learning opportunities and satisfies statutory requirements. There is currently insufficient opportunity for the use of ICT to support language learning, but there are plans for expansion as soon as suitable resources are available.

Most lessons are of 74 minutes' duration. Lower attaining pupils especially find it difficult to concentrate on language learning throughout the lesson and curriculum time would be more effectively used if lessons were shorter and more frequent.

The department is well led, has a positive ethos and a shared sense of purpose. Teachers are reflective and work hard to plan effectively and to improve standards of attainment. There is a detailed and thorough scheme of work. In practice, however, the balance between the four language skills is not satisfactory. In order to achieve balance and improved attainment additional emphasis should be placed on the acquisition of more advanced writing skills, especially for higher attaining pupils and more structured use should be made of reading materials available. Pupils' work is systematically assessed and realistic targets are set for progress.

Resources for the subject are just adequate, but there are still insufficient textbooks for all pupils to have their own for homework. Expertise is growing amongst the staff in the use of ICT in readiness for improved availability of ICT resources.

Music

Most pupils reaching Year 9 attain standards at least in line with the national expectation. They can play simple melodies on keyboards with some accuracy and about one third of pupils have progressed beyond this. They make good use of computers in composing and this aspect has improved since the last inspection. Most pupils have some understanding of the musical elements and are beginning to use and understand musical notation. The number of older pupils following an examination course in music varies from year to year. In 1998, sixteen pupils entered for the GCSE examination, attaining results above the national average. Pupils currently preparing for the GCSE examination are exceeding the course expectation. Pupils have a good understanding of musical terminology and can compose with an understanding of structures and devices such as ground bass. They use a variety of computers and music technology to explore sounds, and to revise, develop and enhance their work. In addition to keyboards, most play instruments such as saxophone, guitar and trumpet to a proficient level.

Overall, most pupils make broadly satisfactory progress in developing performance skills and in composing. Although pupils sing enthusiastically, their progress in singing is less good because the teaching strategies employed do not focus sufficiently on the development of vocal technique. The progress of some lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, is unsatisfactory in developing musical knowledge and understanding because the photocopiable worksheets from the published scheme which forms the mainstay of the school's curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently matched to their needs. Higher attaining pupils are well supported and given extension work in practical sessions. Most older pupils make very good progress in composing and in using computers and technology to develop their work. The provision of a structured homework enables them to make good progress in understanding musical knowledge and music theory.

Across the school, pupils enjoy their music lessons. In the first three years, pupils are generally attentive and show interest in the practical aspects of music. Relationships with each other and the teacher are good. Most work with concentration when directly supported by the teacher but some find it difficult to sustain concentration without this

help. In some classes there are examples of immature behaviour from a small number of pupils, but this is counter-balanced by pupils who are able to work collaboratively and who show initiative in helping others who are less confident. The attitudes of older pupils are very good. They understand the class routines and settle to work very quickly. They show their commitment to the subject by attending additional GCSE sessions after school. Pupils are confident and can articulate what help they need. They concentrate on composition work for long periods of time, working both collaboratively and independently. Written homework is generally completed on time. Some Year 11 pupils are providing tuition and support for instrumentalists in Year 8, largely at their own initiative.

Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good in Years 7 to 9. Classes are well managed and the pace of lessons is lively. Where teaching is good, clear teaching points are made and there is good use of questions to consolidate previous work. However, there are some teaching strategies which are not wholly successful in ensuring that pupils of all abilities make the progress they should in all aspects of the curriculum. Learning objectives are not always made clear and insufficient attention is paid to the development of singing. Pupils are given good oral feedback on their progress in practical lessons but the marking of written work is not sufficiently detailed. Teaching is at least good and sometimes very good in Years 10 and 11. The teacher has good subject knowledge and good musical skills. He knows his pupils well and provides appropriate and challenging support. He uses an appropriate balance of questions and advice to enable them to develop compositions and gives unstintingly of his time after school to support their work.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Overall, it provides a balance of practical and listening activities. Pupils are able to develop performance skills using electronic keyboards and opportunities to use computers and other music technology for composing are very good. Although they listen to a range of music, the range of music from other cultures and the depth to which they study it is limited. There are some structures in place for assessing pupils' progress. The clearest chart pupils' progress in developing keyboard skills. However, attainment grades given for the rest of the curriculum do not make sufficiently clear what pupils can or cannot do in music. The grading system has not been adapted to match the school's revised assessment policy and systems for enabling pupils to set targets for improvement are not fully in place.

The single teacher of music is an experienced and able musician. He has a commitment to high attainment, particularly for pupils at Key Stage 4. He gives freely of his time before, during and after the school day, ensuring that interested and able pupils have the support that they need.

The curriculum is extended by a wide range of extra-curricular activities including a large choir, wind band and jazz band. The school involves itself with the local community and recently pupils from the school have been involved workshops with jazz musicians.

Overall, resources are satisfactory. There are sufficient keyboards for practical work and the number of computers is very high. Other instrumental resources are adequate, but the provision of books is unsatisfactory in range, quality and number. The accommodation is generous. It is used flexibly and efficiently and this contributes to the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make.

Physical education

In 1999 three of the six pupils entered for the GCSE examination in physical education gained grades A* to C.

Most pupils' attainment by the age of 14 in physical education is in line with national expectations. A minority of pupils in Year 9 experience difficulties in concentration and this affects their performance, especially in gymnastics. Similarly, a minority group in netball have difficulty in positional play which affects the continuity of the game. From the evidence of earlier years many pupils achieve above national expectations in girls' gymnastics where floor sequence work is of high quality. Rugby skills in passing and receiving in small group games show awareness and understanding but tackling skills have not reached the same level. The abundance of inter-form and inter-school activities available after school improves many pupils' performance by the end of Key Stage 3.

The present GCSE Year 11 group of 20 pupils shows clarity in writing but falls below national expectations in oral skills. There is some collaborative working but discussion is brief and under-developed. The GCSE group is eager to show expertise in response to questions but a minority of pupils fail to take responsibility for their own learning. Non-examination groups in Key Stage 4 show skill in football, particularly in five-a-side strategies, in the basics of badminton doubles play and to a greater extent in weight training where confidence and understanding in technique is in line with national expectations.

In Years 7 to 9 pupils make good progress in netball, particularly in passing and receiving during small group games. Satisfactory progress is made in rugby where the basics have been achieved and strategies are beginning to develop. Girls progress well in gymnastics particularly in sequencing building but a minority of boys do not progress as well because of poor concentration and control of movements. In Year 11 the GCSE group in physical education is making satisfactory progress in written work but oral skills are below the expected level. The use of the off-site sports centre provides soccer, weight training, squash and badminton where pupils make good progress. The travelling time to the off-site facilities does curtail the time spent on activities and the balance between progress and variety of choice needs careful monitoring.

Generally there is a positive attitude towards the subject and the number of pupils choosing to study GCSE physical education in Key Stage 4 is encouraging. Behaviour during lessons is generally good and many pupils' talk freely and courteously about their work. There is some effective co-operative working in girls' gymnastics and boys' rugby, which improves learning skills. Relationships are positive in most lessons but, in a few, concentration spans are short and this affects progress in boys' gymnastics and the Year 11 GCSE group.

Teaching in physical education is overall satisfactory and often good. Knowledge and understanding of the subject areas is very good and expectations are generally high. Gymnastics teaching is very good in a Year 7 girls class planning and evaluation as well as performance made an impact on attainment. Lack of time and the absence of feedback did not help progress in a Year 8 rugby session. When more time was available, as in a Year 7 rugby lesson, demonstrations and feedback enabled good progress to be made. Planning with clear objectives is effective and the appropriate

matching of work, including modified tasks, assists pupils with special educational needs. There are examples of pupils working collaboratively and taking responsibility for their own learning especially shown in gymnastic sequences, netball and rugby practices. Pupils are well managed during lessons and relationships between teachers and pupils are positive.

The curriculum meets the statutory requirements and there is equal access to all activities. Assessment is over-elaborate but effective for pupil recording and reporting. The extra facilities at the off-site sports centre provide more choice for older pupils. The time taken by some classes in walking to the school's off-site playing fields limits the progress which pupils can make. About one third of the school population takes part in the varied extra-curricular activities programme. The department has no policy statement and its curriculum planning lacks detailed units of work to aid continuity and progression. The development plan sets targets but does not clearly state how it is going to achieve them. Resources are overall satisfactory, but provision for gymnastics and the GCSE course is unsatisfactory.

The physical education department has made some progress since the last inspection: teaching has improved, examination work has been introduced and assessment data is now used to inform the department's planning.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

163. The inspection was carried out by a team of 14 inspectors. During the inspection 123 lessons or parts of lessons and a substantial number of registration sessions and assemblies were inspected, as well as a range of extra-curricular activities. All full-time and part-time teachers in the school during the week of the inspection were seen teaching at least once, and many teachers several times. Over 50 planned discussions were held with members of the teaching and non-teaching staff. The written work of a large number of pupils was looked at by inspectors in the course of their lesson observations, and a representative sample of the work of pupils from Years 7 to 11 was formally inspected. Inspectors held discussions with these pupils about their work and other aspects of school life, and visited two of the main contributory primary schools. A substantial amount of documentation provided by the school and the governing body was analysed before and during the inspection. Prior to the inspection, the registered inspector met with the chairman of the school governors and chairs of governors' committees. Parents of pupils in the school were consulted through a questionnaire, to which 149 responses were received, representing 32% of the school population. Prior to the inspection the registered inspector held a meeting at which the 29 parents who attended were able to express their views about the school.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
472	13	62	82

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	27.55
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.13

Education support staff

Total number of education support staff:	4
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	72.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	75.8
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	23
	KS4	22

Financial data

Financial year:

1998-9

	£
Total income	1,079,035
Total expenditure	1,106,169
Expenditure per pupil	2,309
Balance brought forward from previous year	51,154
Balance carried forward to next year	24,020

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

472

Number of questionnaires returned:

149

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	28.2	57.0	6.0	5.4	0.7
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	38.9	52.4	2.7	3.4	0.7
The school handles complaints from parents well	22.8	44.3	13.4	7.4	3.4
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	24.2	56.4	11.4	3.4	2.0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	26.2	55.7	4.0	8.7	2.7
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	35.6	54.4	4.0	2.0	0.7
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	32.2	51.0	6.7	6.7	0.7
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	26.2	57.7	6.7	6.0	0.7
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	32.9	50.3	11.4	3.4	<i>nil</i>
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	34.2	47.0	10.1	4.0	1.3
My child(ren) like(s) school	36.9	49.7	4.0	6.0	2.0