

INSPECTION REPORT

Park High School

Colne

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique Reference Number: 119719

Headteacher: Alan Chambers

Reporting inspector: David Morton
T12332

Dates of inspection: 23rd to 27th February 1998

Under OFSTED contract number: 0700649

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

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Information about the school

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| Type of control | County |
| Age range of pupils | 11yrs. - 16yrs. |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| School address | Venables Avenue COLNE Lancashire BB8 7DP |
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| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Roger Brown |
| Date of the previous inspection: | 6th -10th September 1993 |

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| Mr J.A. Dodridge | Mathematics | |
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| Mr G.G. Parry | | Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Efficiency Partnership with parents and the community |
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Main findings

1. Park High School has a number of significant strengths and is providing a sound education for its pupils. It is currently taking appropriate measures to ensure that it is a steadily improving school.

Strengths of the school include:

- the pastoral system;
- the progress of pupils during years 7 to 9;
- good financial control and prudent use of limited resources;
- the positive attitudes of pupils and their willingness to work;
- the commitment of teachers;
- good relationships;
- the range and take-up of extra-curricular activities

Key areas for improvement are:

- monitoring and evaluation;
- improving the use of assessment;
- whole-school planning and target-setting;
- use of a greater variety of learning and teaching styles.
- raising attainment, especially in information technology, music at Key Stage 3 and science and history at Key Stage 4.

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

2. Levels of attainment are at national averages and in keeping with expectations at the time pupils are 14 and when they leave school at 16. At the age of 14 levels of attainment are above average in art, geography and religious education, average in design & technology, English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science, but below average in information technology and music. At the age of 16 levels of attainment are well above average in art, above average in geography and physical education, average in business studies, English, mathematics, modern languages, music and religious education, below average in design & technology, information technology and science and well below average in history. There is, therefore, uneven attainment across subjects of the curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11.

3. The National Curriculum tests and assessment results at the age of 14 in 1996 generally matched national averages in English, mathematics and science at the expected Level 5. At the higher Level 6 English and mathematics remained generally in line with national averages but results in science were below national averages at this level. In 1997 there was some improvement over previous years, for results at Level 5 in English and mathematics were above the national average, whilst remaining in line in science. At Level 6 results matched national averages in mathematics and science but fell below the national average in English which was not as good a result as in 1996.

4. The results in GCSE examinations in recent years have been broadly in line with the national average. There has been an improving trend over the last four years at a rate which is faster than that found nationally, even though there was a slight dip in 1997. In 1997 the proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more passes at Grade A* to C (39 per cent), the higher grades, and grade A* to G (85 per cent) was not significantly different from the national average. The percentage

of pupils entered for English at GCSE has been less than for mathematics and science and below the national average.

5. The overall performance of boys and girls is much the same in GCSE examinations, but in tests at the age of 14 girls performed better than boys in English and mathematics, although results in science were similar. Girls make significantly better progress than boys in physical education in Years 10 and 11.

6. In individual subjects the number of pupils achieving A* to C grades in the 1997 GCSE examination was above the national average in art, craft, drama, English language, English literature, French, geography, mathematics, religious education and sports/physical education studies. Results matched national averages in business studies and were below national averages in German, history and home economics. Pupils did significantly better than the national averages in drama, English literature, geography and sports/physical education studies. Pupils were significantly below the national averages in science, history and home economics.

7. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are in line with expectations but not as developed as in many schools. They tend to speak briefly rather than expansively although when expressing views on matters about which they feel strongly their speaking is lively and they readily capture the interests of listeners. Pupils can generally use the spoken word appropriately in the social situations in which they find themselves.

8. Pupils' skills in reading are below average in many cases on entry to the school and this makes learning difficult for them in some subjects. However, during Years 7 - 9 they quickly respond to efforts made to improve their levels of competence. In Years 10 and 11 pupils enjoy a wide range of reading which they manage well.

9. Pupils' writing is often weak in the early stages of Years 7 and 8 but appropriate formal approaches result in continuing improvement as pupils move through the school. Although many pupils lack confidence in writing other than the simplest sentences, there are many examples of pupils in Years 10 and 11 writing accurately in extended pieces using a variety of styles. Most begin to write more complex sentences, use paragraphs and increase in accuracy of construction and spelling. Such writing is evident in a number of subjects requiring competent use of the written word.

10. Pupils' number skills are firmly established and they use calculators efficiently. In science most pupils are confident in calculating pressures and in measuring metric area. Charts to illustrate surveys are a particular strength in geography. Enlargement and perspective are effectively used in art which in turn assists pupils, for example when studying the design of churches in religious education. The wider application of numeracy across the curriculum is not sufficiently a part of schemes of work.

11. Levels of competency and use of information technology to support learning are inadequate and many pupils are not receiving the full entitlement of the National Curriculum.

12. In relation to their attainment on entry to the school progress is generally good during years 7 to 9, especially in art where progress is very good. In design & technology, English, geography, history and religious education rates of progress are good. In all other subjects progress is satisfactory during these years except for music, where progress is unsatisfactory. In years 10 and 11 progress is generally satisfactory except in art where it remains very good and in design

& technology, geography and physical education where progress is good. In Years 10 and 11 progress in information technology is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in a well-ordered learning environment. Individual education plans are used well to meet the learning needs of pupils.

13. The quality of relationships within the school are very good. There are high levels of mutual respect between pupils and all adults in the school. The school's aims are reflected in the day to day life of the school. Pupils have a positive attitude to school and to their work. They are welcoming and courteous to visitors. Pupils show pleasure and satisfaction when they are successful in their work and in their enjoyment of drama, music and sport after school. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Attendance is in line with national averages. Pupils enjoy coming to school, take pride in their appearance and in wearing the school uniform.

14. The school does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils' spiritual development in lessons and fails to meet the statutory requirement to provide a collective act of worship for every pupil each day. In some subject areas, for example, art, drama, music and religious education, the spiritual lives of pupils are being enhanced and pupils experience at first hand a sense of personal excitement and fulfilment. However, most other subjects miss opportunities to provide such experiences for pupils.

15. The school contributes very effectively to pupils' moral development, promoting it within its aims. There are good adult role models, clear expectations regarding behaviour and pupils know right from wrong. Moral issues form a part of the curriculum in a number of subjects.

16. Pupils' social development is encouraged through opportunities to take responsibility about the school and through extra-curricular activities. The community of the school and its place in the local community are central aspects of the school's ethos. Many opportunities are provided for social interaction.

17. The cultural development of pupils is also good. Pupils' own culture is respected and efforts are made to ensure that pupils become aware of other cultures and show respect for them based on increasing knowledge and understanding through lessons, especially in the arts, history, religious education and personal and social education.

Quality of education provided

18. The quality of teaching at both key stages is nearly always satisfactory and often good. During Years 7 to 9 teaching is usually good or better, being very good in nine per cent of lessons and in one per cent, excellent. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is a significant reason for the progress of pupils being good. At Years 10 and 11 teaching is good or better in about a third of lessons, being very good in ten per cent of lessons and in one and a half per cent, excellent. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is a significant reason for pupils' progress being sustained at satisfactory levels. Teaching was unsatisfactory in nearly ten per cent of lessons in Years 7 to 9 where more lessons were seen than in Years 10 and 11. In these years eight and a half per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory.

19. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is very good in art, good in English, geography, history and religious education. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is very good in art, good in drama, geography and physical education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects.

20. A particular feature of all teaching is the skilful classroom management of pupils and teachers' responses in many cases to the positive attitudes of pupils. Teachers show commitment to the well-being of pupils and in the best teaching have high expectations of pupils, setting challenging tasks. Teachers are mostly secure in their knowledge of their subjects. They plan schemes of work thoroughly and at best structure work to meet the different learning needs of pupils. Whilst nearly all teaching is satisfactory a significant proportion of lessons lack imagination in their presentation. The interests of pupils are not fully aroused and levels of engagement in activities are not as strong as they might be. This often results in pupils not achieving their fullest potential and their rates of progress not being as fast and secure as they might be. Higher attaining pupils are not always stretched and excuses are sometimes made for the levels of performance of lower attaining pupils. This is less often the case in Years 7 to 9 where teachers acknowledge that about half of all pupils enter the school with levels of attainment which are below national averages yet expect them to make progress which will lift them to levels in keeping with averages or better. In these instances teachers rarely settle for second best or make excuses on behalf of pupils' attainment. With older pupils similar approaches are not as widespread. Expectations are not always demanding of pupils, and staff do not always make the most of the positive attitudes of pupils by giving them enough opportunities to develop their own independent learning. Insufficient effort is made to share good practice in teaching and to seek ways of making attainment across subjects more comparable. In recent years, departments have had to manage with an inadequate level of learning and teaching resources in order to resolve the school's budget deficit. This has had some negative impact on the opportunities for imaginative teaching but there is little evidence that it has led to lower attainment by pupils.

21. Not all teachers set homework regularly. Those who do use it appropriately to reinforce and extend pupils' learning. Teachers usually mark work regularly but there are considerable variations in the quality of marking both across different subjects and within individual subjects. The best marking gives clear indications of what pupils need to do to improve their work, although almost no reference is made to levels of attainment of work in relation to the requirements of the National Curriculum or the GCSE examinations. Pupils and parents, therefore, do not always know how well the quality of their work matches these requirements. A small minority of marking is unhelpful and consists only of cursory ticks.

22. The curriculum generally has good breadth and balance. There is a broad 'core' curriculum studied by all pupils and the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in most respects. A few subjects make good use of information technology but this is an area that does not fully meet statutory requirements as a support for learning across the curriculum. Not all strands of the National Curriculum for information technology are being taught and in Years 7 to 9 some design & technology and physical education requirements are not being met. At present, the school has not fully put in place new statutory requirements for forms of formal assessment to be made in all subjects in addition to English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9. At present, the amount of time devoted to teaching in Years 10 and 11 is below that recommended. It is also possible for pupils in these years to follow a curriculum which does not include any of the arts subjects.

23. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Rapid improvement in the provision for these pupils is now being made. Their needs are being carefully assessed and they are beginning to receive more effective support from support teachers and those working in partnership with them. Across the curriculum individual education plans are used effectively to focus on specific targets, ensuring good access to the curriculum and positive learning experiences.

24. There is a wide and successful range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, drama, music and educational exchange visits. These are appreciated by parents and pupils and well supported, for participation rates are high. Achievements by pupils in some of these areas have been noteworthy.

25. Most departments make satisfactory arrangements for assessing pupils' work, although teachers need to relate more to National Curriculum requirements. In some subjects, portfolios of pupils' moderated work are beginning to be assembled and are proving useful in establishing the developmental needs of pupils. However, this is not yet widespread across all subjects. Records of diagnostic testing and results of tests in the last year of primary school are not held centrally so that whole-school planning cannot respond to issues such as the low levels of reading of half of pupils on entry, in setting priorities. At present no member of the senior management team has a specific responsibility for ensuring good assessment practices are in place. For example, not all teachers use effective day-to-day assessment to inform their teaching and the planning of ensuing lessons. Few share lesson objectives with pupils with the result that pupils are rarely partners in the assessment of their achievements.

26. The support and guidance provided for pupils is effective. The pastoral well-being of pupils is a strength and largely responsible for the school being a happy place. Pupils are confident that there is a sympathetic adult to whom they could turn if they have problems. Both parents and pupils are confident that on the rare occasions when bullying occurs the school deals with it quickly and effectively.

27. The school's arrangements for communicating with parents are good and valued by parents. There are clear and detailed annual reports and an appropriate series of consultation meetings. Parents' responses in the parents' meeting and in the questionnaires returned indicate their general appreciation of the school. They enjoy good relationships with the school and give it valued support. However, some would like to see a more consistent pattern for the setting of homework.

The efficiency of the school

28. The headteacher provides the school with effective leadership. He has a vision, shared with governors and senior management, of the future developmental needs of the school. Some of these link closely to areas identified in this and the previous inspection, especially in those areas connected with the quality and style of teaching and the range, value and character of the learning experiences of pupils. However, currently this vision is not fully shared with staff or parents.

29. Over the past four years management has faced up to the issues arising from a significant budget deficit inherited by the present headteacher. This has resulted in an austere period, especially in the provision of resources that would have enriched teaching and learning. Success has been achieved in overcoming financial constraints and a situation created where it is now possible to plan ahead with more confidence. However, the necessary emphasis on the budget has led to a fairly restricted approach in recent years with the result that there has been an insufficiently shared focus on implementation of other known necessary priorities. Planning has been short term and the need for the school to be fully conversant with the requirements of the National Curriculum has been overlooked. There has been insufficient monitoring of learning and teaching and of the quality of the experiences pupils are having in lessons. A number of whole school policies are not fully implemented into practice. Longer term planning, linked to priorities that in some cases take time to implement fully, is not in place with the result that phased

progress in achieving some goals is less effective.

30. On the other hand, the headteacher has managed the need for change with some good effect and led the school through a number of significant improvements. These include accelerating rates of progress in Years 7 to 9 with the outcome that results in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 have steadily improved and the GCSE results at the age of 16 have improved over the last four years at a rate faster than that found nationally. Although there remains a need to have a sharper definition of roles within senior management, including more rigorous management, the present system is becoming effective in establishing a more collegiate style of management which is valued and responded to by staff. Amongst most staff there is now an emerging feeling that Park High School is an improving school with clearer objectives for the future.

31. The governing body is committed to the well-being of the school and its pupils. Its expertise allows it to have a special focus on the future needs of older pupils. It fulfils most of its responsibilities and works in critical collaboration with the headteacher and senior management. It is now well informed and has played a significant part in overcoming a budget deficit of which it was previously unaware. This realisation has heightened governors' awareness of the extent of their responsibilities. Governors are beginning to appreciate the need for longer-term planning which is linked in its cost implications to educational priorities. The governors' annual report to parents has not been meeting all the statutory requirements, especially those introduced in July 1996.

32. The day-to-day administration of the school is efficient. The school is well served by its budgetary and administrative staff. The site supervisor and his staff ensure that the school is a secure, clean and pleasant environment for pupils. Very good display of pupils' work is a strong and positive feature of the school.

33. Given the socio-economic background of its pupils, their levels of attainment on entry to the school, the progress made by pupils and their very positive attitudes to school, the quality of the teaching overall and the relatively low income per pupil, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

School improvement

34. After the last inspection in September 1993 the school produced an action plan which addressed the key issues identified in the report and departments devised development plans to focus on shortcomings found in individual subjects. The school has implemented these plans with some success in most areas found to be of concern at that time. The circumstances of the school are not significantly different from those found in 1993, although the school roll has increased from 889 to 941 pupils. For most of the period since the last inspection the school has taken steps to overcome a large budget deficit and this has meant the level of resourcing has had to be achieved within a standstill budget.

Key issue 1 *improving planning procedures, including the school development plan*

- some improvement has been made but more is needed in respect of long-term planning and the setting of targets.

Key issue 2 *review procedures for constructing and monitoring the budget, linking it more closely to planning*

- constructing and monitoring has needed to be more rigorous than the previous inspectors anticipated, but there remains a need to link more closely to development planning.

Key issue 3 *examine the management and pastoral structure*

- management structure has been strengthened but requires further refinement. The pastoral structure and its application are now a strength of the school.

Key issue 4 *produce a strategy to improve attendance, especially of older pupils*

- this is now in place and there has been a little improvement and the school is in line with national averages. However not all teachers persistently apply the policy.

Key issue 5 *review special educational needs, especially monitoring and management*

- this has been achieved and provision and practice for pupils with special needs is becoming a strength of the school.

Key issue 6 *support staff through professional development linked to appraisal and school development planning*

- some improvement has been made, but there is a need to bring all teaching to the quality of that of the best.

Key issue 7 *ensure that the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is met*

- this statutory requirement is still not met and the school has felt unable to address it.

The fire alarm system throughout the school is now secure and there are wash basins in the boys' changing rooms.

Pupils' levels of attainment were generally in keeping with national averages or better and have remained so. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more grades A* to C and A* to G have improved slightly on 1992 figures and improvement over the years 1994 to 1997 has been at a faster rate than that found nationally. Although there were no National Curriculum results for tests taken by pupils aged 14, those results of tests taken in more recent years have improved steadily.

There has been some overall improvement since the last inspection, for the staff are beginning to develop an ethos of the school as an improving one. Most teachers show more commitment to meet the demands made of them by the National Curriculum and the management structure has more coherence. The school now has a more positive attitude.

Key issues for action

35. In order to implement further the school's programme of improvement, the governors, headteacher and staff should focus on :

- * improving the extent and quality of monitoring and evaluating by :
 - defining more clearly the roles of senior management and heads of department to ensure the best possible teaching and use of assessment,
 - being more rigorous in ensuring the successful implementation of school policies for improvement;
- * improving all teaching to that of the best by :
 - raising the expectations teachers have of all pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11,
 - allowing pupils to be more independent learners by responding more to their positive attitudes and providing more opportunities for investigation and interpretation,
 - presenting lessons with more flair and using greater varieties of teaching and learning styles,
 - ensuring that good teaching can be spread to all lessons;
- * improving assessment and its effective use by :
 - introducing central records of pupils' attainment in tests and examinations so that planning responds to identified trends,
 - using day-to-day assessment to inform the daily planning of learning and teaching activities,
 - using marking to give direction to aspects of the work of individual pupils which require improvement,
 - sharing lesson objectives with pupils,
 - monitoring more carefully the relative performance of boys and girls and taking any necessary steps to improve levels of attainment,
 - increasing some teachers' familiarity with National Curriculum levels and using them more frequently in moderated assessments of pupils' work;
- * improving long-term planning and target-setting by :
 - ensuring that the vision of governors and senior management for the school's development and improvement is known and shared by parents and all staff,
 - insisting that priorities are followed by all staff,
 - ensuring that future financial planning relates closely to the education targets set by the school;
- * increasing pupils' competence in information technology by :
 - accelerating measures to give all staff knowledge, skills and confidence in using computers,
 - improving the coordination of information technology as a means of supporting learning across the curriculum;
- * fulfilling those statutory requirements which are not being met in areas indicated in this report.

Introduction

Characteristics of the school

36. Park High School, Colne is a mixed comprehensive school with 941 pupils on roll. It serves the towns of Colne and Nelson and the surrounding rural areas. Pupils come from a variety of housing, including Victorian terraces, semi-detached houses built in the forties, fifties and in recent times, some large old and modern detached houses and local authority housing. About one fifth of the school's pupils come from local villages. This mixture leads to a school population which is largely in the comprehensive tradition, although there is a skew to the below average side of the spectrum. 18.7 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals which is broadly in line with national averages. There are 193 pupils on the special needs register, of whom 33 have statements of special educational need.

37. Park High School is committed to its mission heading : 'Promoting Achievement, Respect and Knowledge'. The learning, personal and social needs of each individual pupil are central to the school's aims. The school has developed a pastoral system which has the individual happiness and welfare of the pupils at its centre. All pupils have the same rights of access to all aspects of the school's provision and they are encouraged to contribute as members of the school community in a variety of ways. It is important to the school that all members of its community should feel valued. Many changes have occurred to the staffing structure, policies and procedures of the school since the last inspection, all of which have been designed to provide the best possible and most efficient education for all pupils. The school sees itself as a constantly improving organisation, one outcome of which is steadily improving results in national tests and examinations.

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 |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1997 | 87 | 103 | 190 |

| National Curriculum Test Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above | Boys | 37 | 53 | 55 |
| | Girls | 76 | 69 | 66 |
| | Total | 113 | 122 | 121 |
| Percentage at NC Level 5 or above | School | 61(50) | 65(59) | 64(54) |
| | National | 56(57) | 59 (57) | 60(57) |
| Percentage at NC Level 6 or above | School | 18(25) | 40(37) | 30(17) |
| | National | 22(26) | 36(34) | 29(22) |

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to 1996

| Teacher Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above | Boys | 48 | 62 | 62 |
| | Girls | 92 | 87 | 79 |
| | Total | 140 | 147 | 141 |
| Percentage at NC Level 5 or above | School | 74(62) | 79(76) | 75(84) |
| | National | 60(61) | 64(62) | 61(60) |
| Percentage at NC Level 6 or above | School | 32(31) | 54(39) | 39(46) |
| | National | 28(30) | 37(35) | 29(28) |

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

| Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1997 | 81 | 95 | 176 |

| 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 | 31 | 68 | 76 |
| | Girls | 37 | 81 | 87 |
| | Total | 68 | 149 | 163 |
| Percentage achieving standard specified | School | 38.6(39) | 84.7(85) | 92.6(93) |
| | National | 43(43) | 88(88) | 94(94) |

Attendance

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

| | | % |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| Authorised absence | School | 7.9 |
| | National comparative data | 8.6 |
| Unauthorised absence | School | 1.2 |
| | National comparative data | 1.1 |

Exclusions

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

| | Number |
|--------------|--------|
| Fixed period | 64 |
| Permanent | 5 |

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

| | % |
|------------------------|------|
| Very good or better | 10.5 |
| Satisfactory or better | 90.7 |
| Less than satisfactory | 9.3 |

² Percentages in parentheses refer to 1996

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress

38. Pupils levels of attainment are generally in line with national averages at the end of both key stages. Many parents indicate their satisfaction that pupils are achieving results which are generally in keeping with their expectations.

39. At the end of Key Stage 3 levels of attainment are above average in art, geography and religious education, and average in design & technology, English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. At the end of this key stage attainment is below average in information technology and music.

40. At the end of Key Stage 4 levels of attainment are well above average in art and above average in geography and physical education. At the end of this key stage attainment is in line with national averages and what is expected at the age of 16 in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and religious education, but below average in design & technology, information technology and science. This indicates an uneven pattern of attainment across the key stage, the reasons for which have not been fully investigated by the school. One reason, however, is that although almost all teaching is satisfactory, better teaching is leading to higher attainment by pupils. Another difficulty in science has been a period of changing temporary staffing due to long-term illness.

41. National Curriculum tests and assessment results in 1997 were above the national average at Level 5 or above in English and mathematics and not significantly different to the national average in science. At the higher Level 6 and above, results were below the national average in English but not significantly different to the national average in mathematics and science. These results showed a considerable improvement compared to those of previous years in science, a small improvement in mathematics, but at Level 6 and above results in English were not as good in 1997 as in 1996. In the 1997 tests girls performed better than boys in English and mathematics but there was no significant difference in results in science. The school does not yet meet the requirement to make a formal assessment of pupils in the other National Curriculum subjects at the end of Key Stage 3.

42. Results in A* - C and A* - G grades in the GCSE examinations in 1997 were not significantly different from the national average and despite a slight dip maintained an overall improving trend over the last four years which has been at a faster rate than that found nationally. Numbers of pupils gaining A* - C grades in 1997, the higher grades, were above the national average in art, craft, drama, English language, English literature, French, geography, mathematics, religious education and sport/physical education studies. Boys' performance in business studies and geography was above average and girls performed better than boys in sport/physical education studies. Performances were below the national average at A* - C in business studies (girls), combined science, German, history and home economics. Overall, however, the performance of boys and girls was similar in most subjects in 1997 but over the last four years girls' performance has been better than boys and broadly in line with the higher attainment of girls found nationally. The percentage of pupils in Year 11 in 1997 entered for the GCSE examinations in English and mathematics was below the national average.

43. The school has set challenging yet realistic targets for further improvement in the 1998 tests and examinations and this reflects the emerging ethos in the school for continuing improvement.
44. The weak reading of many Key Stage 3 pupils affects pupils' learning in all subjects. English has introduced a reading programme which improves these pupils' reading competence, and there are some extra-curricular activities which also assist pupils to read accurately and widely. A good example of helping reading confidence occurs in science when pupils read aloud from textbooks. Other subjects must also take some responsibility for reading improvement.
45. The accuracy of pupils' writing on entry is generally weak, but improves in Key Stage 3 because of strong attention to spelling and punctuation in English lessons. In subjects too much of the writing is structured in short sentences, which prevents pupils from becoming independent thinkers and writers. However, there are good examples of extended writing in English, geography and history, which improves pupils' powers of expression. A lack of books in many subjects is restricting pupils' access to a wide range of adult writing styles.
46. In most lessons, pupils speak clearly but briefly. This is mainly in response to teachers' questions seeking factual answers. In this school, pupils develop their thinking more through their writing than speaking, which does not encourage them to have courage with their first ideas. When asked their personal opinions, most pupils speak with an engaging liveliness but with appropriate formality. This strength is not used sufficiently in lessons to allow them to explain their ideas and explore their feelings through speaking.
47. Standards of numeracy are generally at average levels in relation to the ages of pupils. There is some evidence of skills of numeracy being used in design & technology, geography and science through the use of graphs and measurement.
48. Pupils' use of information technology is under-developed and is used to support learning across the curriculum in a limited number of subjects. In addition to a shortage of computers and suitable software, there is a lack of training, also identified in the last inspection, to extend the competence and confidence of some teachers in the use and practice of information technology skills.
49. Rates of progress are good overall at Key Stage 3 in relation to the level of attainment of pupils on entry to the school, which is below average. Almost half of pupils have reading ages two or more years below their chronological age when they begin at the school. Rates of progress in relation to levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are satisfactory during Key Stage 4. This is against the national trend where progress generally quickens during Years 10 and 11. At the time of the last inspection attendance rates at Key Stage 4 were below the expected average. At present, Year 11 pupils are struggling to maintain this average. Occasional absence is having a negative effect on rates of progress during the final year at school.
50. At Key Stage 3 in relation to their attainment on entry to the school pupils make very good progress in art and good progress in design & technology, English, geography, history and religious education. In all other subjects progress is satisfactory during Key Stage 3 except in music where it is unsatisfactory. This broadly follows the national pattern for progress in particular subjects at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory in all subjects except art, where progress continues to be very good and geography and physical education where rates of progress are good. However, at this key stage progress in information technology and science is unsatisfactory. This is not as typical of the national pattern for progress at Key Stage 4, where

progress is best in English. Many of the good features seen amongst higher attaining pupils in English in the school do, however, mirror the national picture. The patterns of progress reflect the quality of teaching at both key stages. Pupils are making satisfactory or good longer term progress from their starting point on entry to the school. The generally improving trend in National Curriculum tests and assessments and the faster than national improvement in results in GCSE examinations bears evidence of this progress. Nonetheless, progress amongst higher attainers at Key Stage 4 could be at a more rapid pace.

51. In relation to their prior attainment on entry to the school levels of attainment of pupils with special educational needs are in line with expectations and they are making good progress in a well ordered learning environment. Good supportive work in reading leads to increased competence and confidence amongst pupils. There is some successful help given in reading during two lunchtimes each week. Parents are fully informed on a regular basis regarding individual education plans' targets and some take an active role in encouraging improvement in reading.

52. By Key Stage 4 in English, average and higher attaining pupils are beginning to write accurately in extended writing and imaginatively in poetic form. They are also beginning to make sound judgements about how language is used for particular purposes in the media. Pupils make good progress in science when demands are made on their thinking and interpreting, and in mathematics progress is good when pupils are given the opportunity to investigate. In modern languages pupils are developing competence in the use of the foreign language, especially German. Pupils in geography show graphical skills and use extended writing and written explanations of geographical models, for example when studying town development. Whilst less successful in history, pupils nonetheless move from being able to use evidence and understand the reasons behind historical events to being able to empathise with people in the past and convey this in simple written form. In drama, pupils at Key Stage 4 are showing an understanding of the dramatic medium and they can prepare pieces based on improvisation which make good use of dramatic tension and character. By Key Stage 4 much of the work in physical education is outstanding.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

53. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils generally respond well in class, showing a willingness to work and to concentrate on the task in hand. Most listen attentively in lessons and cooperate with each other and the teacher. Pupils are sensible in the use of resources available. Pupil interest wanes only in a small number of lessons when pace and variety are limited or resources are in short supply.

54. Behaviour in lessons is mostly good and in some cases, very good. Unsatisfactory conduct is infrequent. A school initiative involving a special tutor group for disruptive pupils at Key Stage 3 is showing success in improving behaviour.

55. Pupils and parents support the codes of conduct and sanctions applied for misbehaviour. The number of permanent exclusions is broadly in line with the national average. Fixed period exclusions, whilst higher than the national average, reflect the school's commitment to avoid pupils' work being disrupted in the classroom. Very little re-offending is evident.

56. Pupils respect school property. The absence of graffiti and vandalism reflects a mature attitude. A particular feature is the orderly and patient movement along narrow corridors at lesson change-over and the responsible use of year group areas at break times. Outside areas are also used responsibly.

57. Relationships with staff, other pupils and visitors are very good. Bullying is rare. Respect is shown for other pupils' views, and pupils are supportive and helpful in collaborative work. Work experience employers have endorsed the reliability of pupils.

58. There is a variety of opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility, for example in drama, music and sports performances. Pupils are involved in individual work action planning, setting targets and building up records of achievement throughout school. They do not themselves undertake the final word processing. Year 11 prefects act as mentors to Year 7 pupils at registration and form period times. Some pupils arrange their own work experience placements. Pupils participate in a school council.

59. Overall, pupils' attitudes, behaviour and the quality of relationships are strengths of the school.

Attendance

60. Attendance and unauthorised absence figures over the last two years are broadly in line with the national averages for similar schools. Figures for the first half of the current school year are similar. Unauthorised absence for the third week of the 1997 Autumn term, analysed by year group, is below the national average.

61. Attendance statistics over recent years show that improved monitoring procedures introduced since the last inspection have been successful. The great majority of pupils like school. The few non-attending pupils are mostly from Year 11. Unauthorised absence for the current year is not excessive, although the variation across year groups highlights the lack of a shared understanding between pupils and parents of the importance of attendance.

62. Morning and afternoon registration is efficiently carried out and meets statutory requirements. Publication of absence data in the governors' annual report and the school prospectus folder also complies with requirements.

63. Subject teachers take the register in lessons. Attendance during the week of the inspection was generally satisfactory. There is no evidence of internal truancy. Pupils absent from lessons at which attendance was less than 90% were also absent at form registration. Attendance is generally better in the higher attaining groups. A number of teachers stress the need for good attendance in relation to attainment and progress and the effect of absence on aggregation of course work.

64. Pupils are mostly punctual. There are clear procedures for monitoring lateness.

Quality of education provided

Teaching

65. The quality of teaching is consistently satisfactory. It is especially good or better at Key Stage 3. This does not follow the national pattern which indicates that teaching is best in Year 11. The changing patterns of attendance in Key Stage 4, whilst an improvement from the time of the previous inspection, is one explanation for the difficulties some teachers face in maintaining rates of progress similar to those seen at Key Stage 3. However, the majority of teaching is satisfactory or better and is only unsatisfactory in 16 (9.3 per cent) out of 172 lessons. The quality of teaching in one in ten lessons is very good or excellent. Teaching is similar in quality to that seen at the time of the last inspection : teaching in nine out of ten lessons overall being satisfactory or better. However at the present time teaching is better at Key Stage 3 than in 1993. This teaching is an important factor in maintaining good progress at Key Stage 3, although satisfactory progress is made at Key Stage 4. However, all teaching at Key Stage 4 is not as good as the best teaching at Key Stage 3. There is more teaching that is better than satisfactory during Years 7 to 9.

66. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is very good in art and good in English, geography, history and religious education. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory.

67. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is very good in art and good in drama, geography and physical education. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects.

68. Since the last inspection teachers are more successful in extending the higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 3, but those at Key Stage 4 still require more challenging tasks, for example, through extension work. The mentoring system is helping pupils of average attainment, but has less impact upon those capable of above or well above average attainment. Some teachers are continuing to offer some extra lessons after school and these have a positive effect. A significant improvement since 1993, that is beginning to be felt after a very short time, is in the quality of teaching and in rates of progress of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers supporting pupils in class work closely with the class teacher, are well informed about the aims of the lesson and well prepared. They provide positive help and are fully a part of the teaching programme as they focus on the learning needs of individuals or groups. This teaching is good and has clear objectives which are shared with pupils and approached using a variety of methods. Teachers of pupils with special needs succeed in promoting high levels of concentration and expectation, challenging the pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning.

69. Resources were felt not to be used effectively by teachers in 1993. For almost the whole period since that time resources have been very limited as the school has taken severe steps to reduce its deficit budget. However, teachers have used these limited resources prudently and effectively, clearly improving on what was previously thought to be a concern. The use of information technology to support learning, however, is infrequently used and fails to meet National Curriculum requirements. Some teachers do not always feel comfortable and staff development has not been sufficient to overcome this lack of confidence.

70. When teaching is good, classroom management is sound and relevant to the learning needs of the lesson. Pupils are aware of the lesson's objectives and play a part at the ends of lessons in evaluating whether they have been realised. Time is used effectively and lessons start briskly and purposefully and an energetic momentum is sustained throughout the lesson. This is

especially true in physical education and leads to sporting activities being a strength of the school. It is also true of much of the drama and geography teaching being an enriching presence in the daily life of the school. In such cases relationships are especially good and teachers, as well as pupils, regard themselves as learners. On one occasion, for example, a teacher and pupils successfully used dramatic hot-seating as citizens of Verona to determine who was responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. A wide range of artistic styles and activities in art lessons are seen in excellent displays of work around the school. This is achieved despite limiting accommodation for the subject. Art teaching has high expectations in a wide variety of work including drawing, painting, sculpture, screen and fabric printing and relief panel ceramics.

71. The management of behaviour avoids confrontation. Resources are well managed and a variety of steps are taken to ensure that the differing learning needs of pupils are met, often through good use of stimulus material and the engaging of interest. In modern languages this is sometimes achieved through teachers' confident use of French or German as the means of communication during lessons. There is good use of illustrative material and well chosen tapes for oral work. Good teaching in subjects uses praise effectively and is enthusiastic and energetic. The good teaching uses questioning skilfully, at a good pace whilst imparting information and using real, first-hand illustrations such as rock samples in science. In design & technology, especially in food technology, teaching gives careful consideration to the special educational needs of pupils and prepares tasks that meet these needs within the common curriculum enjoyed by all pupils. The phases of lessons are clearly identified and challenges relate closely to specific tasks. Teachers are making good use of questioning, recapitulation and revision in the best lessons. Pupils expect to be required to find answers that go beyond the shallow response and short-phrased reply that sometimes occurs. In English, the best teaching encourages detailed thinking, for example about the use of images in complex poems, sometimes from non-European cultures. It also shows that teachers know when to leave pupils to reflect on what they know and when to apply their learning to written or oral tasks, individually or in groups. Good teachers are learning from each other and willingly sharing successful approaches through taking opportunities to visit each other's classrooms. They share successful ways of motivating pupils and helping them with particular skills such as note-making. These teachers make good use of day-to-day assessment and observation of pupils' responses when planning the lessons which follow.

72. Less successful teaching lacks some of the flair and energy evident in the best teaching. There is inconsistency of expectation. Teachers do not always recognise the weak skills in literacy of pupils when setting tasks and fail to take responsibility to help with key words and approaches to overcome some of the shortcomings of pupils. Although a start has been made, there is currently insufficient realisation of the value in setting targets over an extended period based on the diagnostic testing undertaken by the school. When such approaches are taken they can be seen to raise the expectations of pupils. Teachers do not always insist that work is finished and fail to involve pupils enough in their own learning. Some lessons, for example in mathematics, are conducted in complete silence and it is therefore impossible for pupils to demonstrate real understanding of concepts and processes. Some teachers feel too great a need to dominate learning in ways which lead pupils to be too reliant on a constant lead by the teacher. Well chosen materials, for example a video in support of learning in history, are not made the most of because of pedestrian teaching in which the pace of the lesson is not rigorously controlled. Some teaching of information technology lacks variety, a balance of activities and clear planning with well-judged learning objectives. Insufficient thought is given to the lay-out of the classroom. Some music teaching remains too technical and pupils are not given enough opportunity to use their imagination in composition and improvisation. Time on assessment takes

a disproportionate amount of lesson time. In design & technology too little time is given to the acquisition of formal drawing skills. Pupils are generally not extended and the capabilities of higher attainers to effectively use the design process are underestimated.

73. Homework is not consistently used to enhance classroom learning or to encourage independence. At its best it is effective, well-marked and often shared with parents through the use of homework diaries. Pupils can achieve high levels of self-esteem and satisfaction with course work largely undertaken independently at home when it is given the fullest attention by teachers in their marking. Such examples are seen in art and design & technology. However, it is rare that National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades are given in order to indicate occasionally to pupils their levels of attainment in relation to national criteria. A minority of marking is unhelpful, giving no indication of attainment or how work might be improved. A tick is sometimes considered sufficient.

The curriculum and assessment

74. The school provides a generally broad and balanced curriculum at Key Stage 3. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. In addition, all pupils follow a course in personal, health and social education. This contributes to their moral and social development and meets statutory requirements for health education. Careers education is introduced as a separate subject for two periods each week in Year 9, although this results in no information technology being taught discretely in this year. In Years 8 and 9 a second foreign language is taken by higher attaining pupils. However, this is at the expense of some time for physical education in Year 8 and in Year 9 these pupils do not get access to any of the careers education programme. These conflicts of provision are unsatisfactory, for not all pupils have full access to their curricular entitlement.

75. Whilst the majority of subjects meet statutory requirements and ensure breadth and balance for pupils, a number do not cover fully the requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. In design & technology and physical education not all of the required syllabus elements are taught. In girls' physical education insufficient time is given to cover the requirements for dance. The time allocation for music does not meet recommendations and is inadequate to fulfil National Curriculum expectations and give the appropriate depth of experience. Information technology is taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 and 8, but not in Year 9. This lack of continuity, together with insufficient opportunities for the use of information technology to support learning in all subjects, results in provision which does not meet statutory requirements.

76. The total teaching time at Key Stage 4 is below recommendations. The current structure of predominantly GCSE courses is to be extended following a recent review by the senior management team. From next September, NVQ and GNVQ foundation courses will be available as options in collaboration with the local further education college. This will provide a valuable extension to vocational education which is currently limited. Key Stage 4 provision is otherwise generally sound but does not ensure a balanced curricular experience for all pupils. All pupils take English, mathematics, double-award science, a modern foreign language, physical education, religious education, personal, health, social education and careers education. There is a further choice from three option lists: design & technology, humanities and a third enrichment option which requires a single choice from thirteen subjects. It is possible for pupils to choose from this third option in such a way that their curriculum overall lacks balance. For example, a pupil might not take any arts subject beyond the end of Year 9. This curriculum organisation is unsatisfactory

and does not meet recommendations. However, statutory requirements are met at Key Stage 4, except in information technology since departments are unable to use it to enhance learning.

77. In Years 7 and 8 pupils are placed in two parallel bands within which departments can choose to set on the basis of primary school recommendations and the school's use of diagnostic testing early in Year 7. In Year 9 and at Key Stage 4 pupils are placed in two bands according to their levels of attainment, and this can cause inequality of access to the curriculum for pupils in both bands. For example, only the highest attainers have access to a second foreign language and other pupils cannot choose a language to study for the timetable is such that they must carry on with that language studied at Key Stage 3; lower attaining pupils do not follow the separate course in English literature taken by other pupils. Such constraints are unsatisfactory.

78. The school, through the allocation of pupils to different groups according to their level of attainment, attempts to meet their specific needs. In many subjects, however, planning is not meeting such needs, especially in groups containing pupils in the average range of capabilities. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is generally good and improving at a fast rate. Teachers provide special materials where appropriate and are helpfully assisted by skilled support staff, especially in Years 7 and 8.

79. Careers education is a strength of the school. It begins in Year 9 and supports most pupils well when they come to make their curricular option choices for Key Stage 4. Careers education is coherent and well-planned in Key Stage 4, including links with the local careers service and a period of work experience. A substantial range of computer-based guidance is available to all pupils and profitable links are developing with local industry and further education colleges in developing the vocational education opportunities within the curriculum. The personal, health and social education programme for both key stages is well planned and provides a valuable experience for pupils. Sex education, drugs awareness and other health issues are covered during this course and within the science and physical education courses.

80. Curricular links with feeder primary school are limited in ensuring progression between the schools. With the exception of English, subjects do not always build on the knowledge, understanding and skills gained by pupils during their primary education and opportunities for more rapid progress are lost. Pastoral links between the schools are strong and the transition from primary to secondary school in this context is well managed.

81. Pupils' sense of belonging and commitment to the school are considerably enhanced by the varied and good extra-curricular activities provided by staff. Many teachers give generously of their time to organise clubs linked to subjects, leisure pursuits, overseas educational visits, music, drama, team games and other sporting activities. Participation rates of pupils are good and they appreciate the opportunities available to them.

82. Whilst statements about the curriculum are clear in documentation for parents and in governors' policies, monitoring and evaluation procedures lack rigour and do not ensure compliance with requirements.

83. Assessment is generally unsatisfactory yet has some good features. The assessment, recording and reporting policy contains clear guidelines on profiling, records of achievement and reporting. However, it makes little reference to assessment and marking procedures. The policy is reviewed annually but there is no monitoring of the quality and implementation of assessment and marking. The procedures for profiling and records of achievement are managed proficiently.

Some departmental policies provide guidelines on how to assess and mark work, but these are not implemented consistently and require monitoring by heads of department. Assessment is rarely used to inform curriculum planning except in technology and geography.

84. The methods used for arriving at teacher assessment in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 are inconsistent. National guidelines and advice are not always followed in each subject. The quality and effectiveness of these assessments are unsatisfactory. They take insufficient account of National Curriculum levels of attainment within attainment targets. National Curriculum levels are rarely used in marking during Key Stage 3 and pupils, therefore, are unfamiliar with them. This lack of attention to requirements is an issue for most subjects since the school has not yet implemented formal assessment in them at the end of Key Stage 3.

85. At Key Stage 3 pupils' work is assessed and marked using A to E grades with insufficient guidance given to staff on their precise meaning. All work is assessed and marked within sets, but assessment is not related to the National Curriculum levels of attainment. At Key Stage 4 GCSE grades are used to record attainment. This leads to some misunderstanding and demotivation when low attainers consistently obtain lower grades than they did in Key Stage 3. Marking is generally regular and follows school policy, however, the imprecise meaning of grades leads to a lack of consistency within and between departments. Self evaluation is only evident in technology and marking rarely informs pupils how to improve. Target setting within subjects is not a formal part of teachers' day to day assessment of pupils' attainment.

86. The school follows the requirements of the Code of Practice for students with special educational needs. Individual education plans are based on prior attainment and diagnostic tests. These are monitored and reviewed. They are used by teachers to guide curriculum planning for these pupils.

87. The school is aware that at present there is no co-ordination of base line tests nor of Key Stage 2 test results to provide a clear view of prior attainment. There is no formal check of pupils' academic progress through the school. Results of tests are not kept centrally and used to monitor progress and inform planning to meet pupils' learning needs. The school is aware of these shortcomings and is taking steps to put appropriate procedures in place.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

88. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good, but insufficient account is taken of the importance of pupils' spiritual development. Improvements have been made in all the areas found in need of development during the last inspection in 1993, except for the spiritual dimension of the curriculum.

89. Pupils regularly attend assemblies which carefully reflect a weekly theme. There is a good standard of presentation and pupils are regularly involved. During the inspection, they contributed music and role-play on the theme of 'Image'. There is strong moral and social content but there is usually no period of reflection or a Christian message. Neither assemblies nor tutor periods provide pupils with a daily collective act of worship and the school is in breach of its statutory duty in this respect. A small but enthusiastic Christian Union of pupils presents assemblies to Years 7 and 8 from time to time. Spiritual matters are considered in religious education but there has been no review of the curriculum to encourage the development of spiritual insights elsewhere, although some were observed in history and art.

90. The school adopts a 'firm but fair' approach to discipline and expects high moral standards from pupils. They are encouraged to distinguish between right wrong and the code of conduct contains rules which are positive and reasonable. Pupils' acceptance of these is reflected in high standards of behaviour and the respect they show for maintaining the quality of the school. Excellent murals of ceramic work, for example, are valued by pupils. The staff, by their commitment to teaching, extra-curricular provision and the pupils' general welfare, set a good example as role models. Important moral topics are explored in religious education, English, and physical education, where topics such as racism and the use of drugs are considered.

91. Opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility have increased considerably from the narrow provision noted in the last report. Collaborative working in class is practised in most subjects, but there are as yet few opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility for their own learning. A notable exception is in physical education. A system of prefects has been established recently and they fulfil duties around school and act as stewards at school events. Some older pupils take part in a paired reading scheme and others are library monitors. There are year councils and a school council, which have been influential in such matters as the provision of lockers and vending machines. There is regular and enthusiastic fund-raising for charities, often through sponsored events, such as line dancing or a talent competition. Drama students in Year 11 perform in primary schools at Christmas and musical ensembles maintain good local contacts by playing for the elderly and at local events throughout the year. Opportunities for learning about citizenship are few, but there are good links with the local police liaison officer, and pupils from Year 11 have recently begun to represent the school at a local councillors' information-gathering forum.

92. Cultural development is fostered through a wide range of activities. Amongst these, athletics is outstanding. There is varied provision of extra-curricular music and drama, which is of a high standard. Clubs include chess, calligraphy and modern languages. Pupils attend the theatre, and make visits in connection with geography, art and history. The study of cultural development in history includes that of north east Lancashire in the nineteenth century. Pupils are made aware of visits and activities by the high standard of display of work and photographs of events. There is an annual school camp for pupils in Years 7 and 8, and there are regular German, Belgian and French visits and exchanges. Pupils' awareness of other world cultures than their own is promoted through literature, some aspects of food technology and, particularly strongly, through religious education.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

93. The last inspection criticised the school's pastoral system, in that its purpose at that time did not sufficiently extend beyond matters of administration and discipline. The school now provides strong pastoral support through the tutors across the year groups and the heads of year, and through to senior management. It is now a strength of the school.

94. The school's pastoral work benefits from being well planned. Under the leadership of the deputy head, working parties draw up annual development plans which they evaluate each year. The pastoral teams meet regularly and establish good communication lines.

95. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are monitored by completion of a pastoral profile which they fill in twice a year. This acts as a focus for target setting and a record of their achievement in and out of the classroom. However, attainment is not monitored frequently

enough in relation to National Curriculum levels. The school has recently received national recognition for its record of achievement system. Year 11 pupils who are seen to be at risk of underachieving are invited to take part in a mentoring system, and volunteer teachers give their time to help them. There is consistent and thorough monitoring of the progress of pupils with special educational needs, including special careers guidance.

96. Good care is taken that pupils transferring from primary school do so as easily as possible, and this year for the first time a prefect system has been set up which appoints Year 11 pupils to help look after Year 7 in their first weeks at the school.

97. An appropriate course of personal, social and health education is delivered to all pupils by their form tutors, replacing the general studies lessons which the previous inspection found to be unsatisfactory. Careers education is well structured during Years 9 to 11, although the higher attaining group studying a second language in Year 9 is at present not receiving careers education during this year. Work experience in Year 11 is very well planned and coordinated, and the benefits gained from it by pupils are extended by a good evaluation process. The school has recently been awarded East Lancashire Careers Service's quality assurance award for careers education and guidance.

98. Attendance has improved a little since the last inspection. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good with an efficient computerised system, and subject teachers also check attendance at the start of lessons. Registers close promptly, and late detentions are held for any who come late twice in one week. Attendance coordinators from the tutor teams work with the educational welfare officer in monitoring, counselling, and contacting parents. Attendance issues are part of the personal, social and health education course in Year 7 which underlines effectively the importance of good attendance. Prizes are given for good attendance.

99. Pupils are given full and clear rules to govern their behaviour, and a handbook provides staff with comprehensive policies for promoting good discipline. Good behaviour is systematically rewarded and celebrated each year on Prize Night when awards covering a wide range of achievement and effort are presented by an eminent guest. Any bad behaviour is closely and effectively monitored by a series of report books and recorded sanctions. Pupils may be assigned to a special guidance tutor group if they have persistent behavioural difficulties, or removed from class for a fixed period to an isolation unit if their behaviour disrupts other pupils' learning. There are strict rules for dealing with incidents involving drugs or alcohol and for handling incidents of bullying. Teachers work in a close relationship with their pupils and together they maintain an orderly and productive working environment in accord with the school's main rule, that "everyone will react with respect and consideration to others at all times".

100. The arrangements for child protection meet statutory requirements. Teachers have received training, proper records are kept, and the school links effectively with local services. There are some first aiders and more in training at present, and the school nurse attends for three days each week. The school has regular fire drills and safety audits, but needs to record them more effectively so that the severity of risk can be clearly identified and the action taken recorded. Safety issues identified during the last inspection have been dealt with, but there are several concerns around the school. These have been communicated to the school and are being addressed.

Partnership with parents and the community

101. The quality of information provided to parents is good. Newsletters are frequent and informative. The prospectus folder provides clear guidance on curricular subjects and methods of teaching. Parents receive a detailed annual report on their children's progress, graded for attainment, effort and homework in all subjects. Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and assessment results are provided to parents in a separate mailing. The full report each year is supplemented in Years 7, 8 and 10 with an interim report. Reporting is timed to link with annual examinations and parents' consultation evenings. The statutory requirements for reporting to parents are met in both key stages.

102. In addition to the consultation evenings, regular meetings are held with parents to consult on pupils' options for Years 10 and 11, and GCSE examination guidance. Supporting booklets are issued. Parents of special educational needs pupils are involved in annual reviews and there is a good attendance at target setting and review sessions. Portfolios of evidence are developed through profiling to support the National Record of Achievement. This process is good and highly valued by pupils, parents, employers and local further education colleges. The summative document is endorsed by a local consortium.

103. Other links with parents include a parent-teacher support group and a parents' forum. Parents are offered advice on how time can usefully be allocated if homework has not been set. A number of parents have expressed concern, with some validity, about the variations of practice in setting homework.

104. Parental involvement in their children's learning is sound. They feel encouraged to play an active part and are happy to consult staff. A small but enthusiastic number assist at functions and with extra-curricular activities. Attendance at meetings varies. The governors' annual meeting is not well attended..

105. Lower school staff visit the feeder primary schools in the year before pupil transfer. Visits such as taster days and open evenings for pupils and parents take place in the high school. The activities ease the primary-secondary transition for pupils. The transfer of information about pupils does not include their primary portfolios of moderated work. Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are good as they transfer from primary schools.

106. Pupils' learning and development are enriched by the school's links with the community. Community service includes collections for the elderly and charity concert performances. Year 11 work experience placements cover a wide area of the community, ranging from primary schools/nurseries to retail outlets and industry. Curricular activities include theatre group visits, writer workshops, local library links, the Colne Project and overseas visits. There are good links with further education. Local businesses sponsor achievement awards, and representatives from industry, commerce and outside agencies take part in activities at the school. The lottery bid for a new gymnasium and tennis centre involves community support. The school is considering starting a computer-learning course.

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management

107. The headteacher provides unassuming, supportive and effective leadership. He has a vision, a sense of the direction and of the priorities the school should hold. In the four years he has been in post he has led the school through a difficult period of adjustment to the demands of local management of schools and the requirements of the National Curriculum. He has forged significant improvement through working closely with his senior management team and staff. Following the previous inspection the pastoral pattern of the school has been refashioned and is now a key strength of the school. Its success is appreciated by parents and reflected in the very positive attitudes pupils bring to school life. The school is a secure, orderly and happy community. It has a clear set of aims and values which are reflected in daily practice. The headteacher took the first opportunity to significantly improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs and this, too, is becoming effective in ensuring that all pupils have full access to learning and teaching in the school. He is aware of the need to raise attainment further and to establish a greater variety of approaches to learning and teaching. However, although governors have a clear understanding of the headteacher's priorities and vision, these are not yet fully part of the thinking of heads of department and class teachers. Communications lack the rigour that can lead to a whole school focus on an important area of development.

108. The governing body fulfils most of its responsibilities and provides the school with good support. It is active and holds regular meetings of its committees and plays a significant role of collaborative criticism in partnership with senior management. This is valued by the headteacher and staff. The governing body is more influential than it was deemed to be at the previous inspection.

109. The management of the headteacher and senior management has strengths and weaknesses. Senior management works well together as a team, supports staff, plays a small monitoring role, is approachable and has successfully moved the school closer to the requirements of the present day. The school is to review senior management roles again to create a more appropriate balance between time spent teaching and that needed to pursue priorities of management. Although sensitive to individual and personal needs the approach of the headteacher and his colleagues is one which clearly seeks higher attainment and is moving the school to a culture of success and achievement. However, there is a small percentage of staff, having given long service to the school, who do not respond easily to change. Management does not always set sufficiently rigorous targets and ensure that agreed policies are fully implemented. The school has better development planning than it had at the time of the last inspection. It plays a strong part in the push for school improvement. However, it is for one year only and the school does not plan over the longer term. The headteacher can see further into the future in his priorities for the school, but members of staff are not always aware of this vision. Annual plans have resulted in some areas failing to develop successfully since the time frame has been too short and the need too great. Little having happened, issues are put in the next annual plan, rather than being a part of an achievable phased programme over a number of years. This remains a significant shortcoming in development planning of which the senior management is aware.

110. However, in this school a central spine in the fabric of management is the need to maintain good progress through good teaching so that levels of attainment rise. For example, there is a plan to introduce and manage effectively a programme of monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning over the next few years involving senior management and heads of department. A range

of diagnostic testing has been established and management realises there remains a need to use what is learned from these assessments more effectively to raise standards. Although valuable mentoring has been introduced in Year 11, it is only with the recent appointment of a new special needs coordinator that steps are being taken to tackle the problem of poor literacy amongst nearly half of pupils on entry to the school. There has been no attempt to maintain a central record system in order that trends in attainment across classes, sets and year groups can be tracked and acted upon.

111. Management of departments is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Departments meet regularly and are beginning to focus on major initiatives to raise attainment and make more effective use of assessment. However, some aspects of job descriptions are not rigorously applied at present. Such developments are planned for the future but little is happening at present. There are exceptions, however, and significant improvements have been made in the design & technology and special needs departments as a result of effective leadership. Department development plans also need to be longer term but most departments are using annual plans which are beginning to focus more on raising attainment and less on acquiring further resources.

112. Routine administration and organisation are effective. School procedures are understood by pupils and staff and followed almost without exception.

113. There is a significant number of areas where statutory requirements are not met. The governors' annual report to parents does not include an account of special educational needs provision, comparisons of GCSE results with national averages or of the improvements being made as a result of action in response to concerns raised by the last inspection. The statutory requirements for design & technology and physical education at Key Stage 3 and information technology at both key stages are not being met; not all pupils are being entered for the GCSE examination in English although the school intends to ensure that this happens next year; formal assessment of all subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 is not in place; the school does not meet the requirement for a daily corporate act of worship.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

114. **Staffing :** Teachers' qualifications and experiences are matched to the subjects they teach, physical education being an exception. There is no help for the teacher-librarian during lessons, which means that pupils cannot easily gain access to the books and other resources while the librarian is teaching. Associate staff in laboratories give strong and effective assistance to the quality of pupils' learning, while those in the offices make a valuable contribution to the school's smooth day-to-day organisation.

115. Professional development of staff is planned so that it is increasingly directed towards improving pupils' learning. It is efficiently measured for cost-effectiveness. Teaching and associate staff take part in an appraisal system. However, the job descriptions do not clearly define management responsibilities for improving further the effectiveness of staff teamwork. An induction programme is in place for teachers who are either new to the school or to teaching and gives them sound guidance.

116. Since the previous inspection, special educational needs support staff now provides effective help to enable pupils to make good progress in Key Stage 3. The school has reviewed the time it allocates to teachers with management responsibilities and plans some redistribution in the

allocation of teaching periods. Information technology remains without technical support.

117. **Accommodation** : The accommodation is satisfactory for the teaching of most subjects. However, in art and music it is inadequate. Many subjects are taught in adjoining rooms, which promotes the efficient use of practical resources and teachers' time. Not all subjects, however, use their occupation of adjoining rooms to spread good teaching or to let low attainers occasionally work with higher attainers to enhance learning. Art and information technology do not have rooms which are next to each other, which inhibits teachers' teamwork. The library is not sufficiently accessible to pupils during lessons which is preventing them from developing their independence as learners. The school buildings are clean and in good repair and have a welcoming atmosphere. The wall ceramics facing the school entrance gates, and those in the stair wells, proclaim the high standard of display which is a feature of this school. They enrich the quality of pupils' learning.

118. Since the previous inspection, lettings of school facilities to outside organisations produces a small income.

119. **Resources** : The school's harsh standstill budgets of recent years mean that, overall, learning resources are barely adequate. Since the previous inspection, the school has not been able to improve provision and this is beginning to threaten standards. There is a shortage of textbooks in science in Key Stage 3, religious education in Key Stage 4, and in modern foreign languages. There is a shortage of equipment in science in Key Stage 3. Resources are inadequate in art, and are not sufficient overall to meet statutory requirements for information technology to be taught in all subjects. No subject has sufficient access to computers for teachers to adapt their schemes of work to take these requirements into account. From April 1998, the school should be in a better position to spend more on books and equipment. It has produced a new way of allocating resources to subjects when funding allows.

120. Not all lessons have enough books to go round, and pupils are unable to take books home, which is affecting the quality of homework. As a result of this shortage, many subjects use a lot of photocopied materials in lessons which prevents pupils learning from books already in the school. However, access to information technology is improving.

121. In the previous inspection, the library was identified as being insufficiently used by subjects, and there has been little progress since then, despite the librarian's efforts to improve the range of resources available. Book numbers for a school of this size are very low, though the quality of the stock is good. The growing lists of material for computers and research, talk-books and videos, deserve greater use by subjects. Though relatively small in size, the library's stock of fiction covers a good range, is suitable for most pupils, but needs increasing to meet the needs of pupils with developing reading skills. The library has a positive relationship with local public libraries and has made good use of their expertise to enhance pupils' learning through access to good quality reference materials. The school is not part of the local authority's school library scheme and cannot therefore benefit from its services.

The efficiency of the school

122. The school operates at a low level of funding per pupil compared with similar schools nationally. The school staff and governors have been effective in reducing a significant budget deficit, inherited four years ago, to nil by the financial year end. The austerity measures on

staffing and resources have not been without hardship. Capitation levels have not changed since 1993/94. Next year's budget is predicted to be a balanced one and includes a significant increase in department capitation, together with increased outlay on improvement to premises.

123. The school development plan has a time scale ending this year with regard to action plans, resource costings, personnel and success criteria. The school and its governors do not at present translate a forward vision into a rolling three-year development plan and include the expenditure on improving educational outcomes and capitation priorities into budget plans.

124. The use of teaching staff is generally efficient, including the deployment of support staff for pupils with special educational needs. Despite the financial stringencies over recent years, the majority of departments use available learning resources and accommodation in an efficient manner. There is concern that the use of the library as a regular teaching area limits its use as a library and study area.

125. Financial control is efficient. Computerised systems enable expenditure and commitments to be monitored against departmental budgets. Procedures for approval of orders and invoices are in place. The governing body, through the finance and staffing committee, has had a key role in financial management, particularly over the last four years. Regular reports on the financial position are received. The school fund is separately maintained and independently audited. Recommendations of the 1997 audit report have been addressed. School administration is effective and unobtrusive.

126. Taking into account the socio-economic background of the pupils, their levels of attainment on entry to the school, the progress they make, the generally satisfactory teaching and the low unit costs, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science

English

127. Levels of attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 3 are average. In national tests in 1997 results were also average. In the school's own tests of pupils on entry to the school, results show that half of the boys have reading difficulties, though results for girls are much better. These results and the Key Stage 2 test results in English at the end of the primary school of the current Year 7 intake of pupils indicate that just over half of pupils have levels of attainment on entry which are below average.

128. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are average. Results at the higher grades in GCSE English in 1997 were just above the national average, and were much better than in 1996. Boys' results at the higher grades also improved in 1997, but remain significantly below results for girls. However, an improvement in boys' attainment in the 1997 examination raised achievement overall. Not all pupils have been prepared for the GCSE English Literature examination, but those who were in 1997 gained results well above national average, with boys doing almost as well as girls.

129. All pupils in Key Stage 4 English are not given sufficient opportunity to learn through speaking about their work and their understanding of the world. They are rarely able to give independent judgements and are too reliant on their teachers. Statutory requirements for information technology in English in Key Stage 4 are not being met. Access to computers is poor and hinders standards of presentation. However, the time allowance for English in Year 11 is unsatisfactory because pupils are not given sufficient time to make good progress in both English and literature syllabuses. The school does not currently enter all pupils in Year 11 for the GCSE examination although plans to do so in future. It does not manage to insist on the completion of necessary coursework by a number of pupils.

130. Rates of progress in English of pupils in Key Stage 3 are good in relation to their levels of attainment on entry, including those of pupils with special educational needs. In their English lessons all pupils are given a rigorous programme of reading which ensures rapid improvement in competence. They read books together as a class and on their own from personal preference from small class libraries. This programme is effective in its use of the small range of books available in English lessons. A good range of extra-curricular activities assists reading improvement for pupils of all attainment levels. At present, the range of books available in both key stages is inadequate and does not serve to encourage pupils to enjoy their reading and improve the quality of their writing.

131. Spelling, punctuation and grammar receive concentrated attention which allows pupils to improve their written accuracy. All pupils are given opportunities for extended writing, to write poetry, write for real purposes and take notes to help them become more independent writers. Writing and speaking work of a more challenging nature could be demanded of pupils of all attainment levels in both key stages. On entry to the school, not all pupils speak fluently. They are not given enough opportunity to improve their writing as a result of speaking about their reading and personal experiences.

132. Rates of progress in Key Stage 4 in relation to attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are satisfactory. Pupils consolidate what they learned in Key Stage 3 by polishing their literacy skills and studying examination texts thoroughly. Many pupils make satisfactory gains in knowledge about novels, plays and poems. A particular feature in their progress is the good understanding of how media shape our impressions of the world through emotive reporting of crime and punishment, as seen in a very successful Year 10 lesson. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress in English in Key Stage 4. They receive focused help with literacy skills and study some of the same work as other pupils, and this year will be entered for GCSE English.

133. Pupils' attitudes in English are always good. Pupils like most of their English lessons. They show a willingness to learn, which not all teachers fully exploit to make the work more challenging. Their social skills are improved by the frequent opportunities in English to learn in groups, and good learning of other cultures occurs in lessons, such as in Year 11 when a group of pupils explored a British view of arranged marriages.

134. Teaching in Key Stage 3 in English is generally good. No lessons were unsatisfactory, and occasionally some were very good. In Key Stage 4, teaching is usually satisfactory but is good and sometimes very good in a significant minority of lessons. The best lessons in English ensure that learning activities exactly match pupils' needs. They offer the pupils challenges without directing their thinking. In the better lessons, pupils are told what they should be learning, which targets their attention. Discipline and relationships are good in all lessons, providing an effective basis for sound learning and progress.

135. Assessment of pupils' progress during the key stages does not always take account of National Curriculum criteria. This means that teachers do not have a clear picture of how pupils are learning in relation to other schools. Teachers at present do not map pupils' progress according to gender, despite the significant variation between boys' and girls' levels of attainment. Teachers, therefore, are not always aware of when the differences inherited from the primary schools are narrowed. At present, these differences are repeated through the key stages. English teachers mark pupils' work regularly and with consistency, showing pupils where they have done well and where they might improve their writing. This practice is a good foundation for allowing pupils to chart their progress according to national standards.

136. The teachers of English work well as a team, offering support and time freely to pupils. Resources are chosen wisely, to stretch the austere budget constraints. Their efficient use is an important feature of the good organisation in the subject. The high quality of displays in English classrooms shows a pride in work which teachers obtain from pupils. Teachers also run extra-curricular activities such as book clubs and an advanced literature group.

137. Since the previous inspection, there has been improvement in levels of attainment in English. Written work is corrected satisfactorily, reading records are maintained consistently, and programmes of study are followed in all teaching groups. However, access to the library remains limited.

Mathematics

138. The levels of attainment in mathematics at the end of both key stages are average. Levels on entry to the school are close to national averages. The results for the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in the last two years match the national average. Since 1994 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C has been consistent and close to the national average and in 1997 were just above average. There are indications that this could be maintained in 1998.

139. Pupils are competent in all areas of the National Curriculum including algebra, geometry and the handling of data. Some pupils use computers in Year 8 but information technology capability since 1993 remains restricted. Lower attainers at Key Stage 3 gain good probability and handling data skills particularly where there is additional classroom assistance. High attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are good at higher algebra. Some under achievement occurs, for example, where average pupils do not understand underlying patterns in sequences or the language of algebra. Pupils' understanding is greatly enhanced where opportunities to communicate are regularly given.

140. Rates of progress of pupils are satisfactory at both key stages. Within lessons progress is more often good at Key Stage 3. Higher attaining pupils make very good progress in both key stages. Pride in presentation is combined with well illustrated exercises but there are instances where time devoted to presentation reduces opportunity to absorb the mathematics involved. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is good where they use practical material, for example to calculate fractions. Progress of pupils is less where they are denied the excitement of discovery.

141. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and concentration is often sustained for long periods. Pupils are hard working and produce large quantities of work. Classroom displays are variable and examples of a wider view of the subject are not readily shared. For example through exploring links with other subjects or recognising potential interest in the work of famous mathematicians. Pupils rarely make whole class contributions towards the development of a topic and this solitary view discourages the language of mathematics.

142. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and standards have been maintained since 1993. Teaching in two fifths of lessons is good and in a small minority, very good, with the proportion of good lessons higher at Key Stage 3. Management of classes is firm and the marking of work is thorough. Work-sheets are frequently used but need acknowledgements from the many source books available. Practical approaches such as drawing of pie charts and work on bearings link with geography but would benefit from the use of circular protractors. Good collections of examples of pupils work are kept throughout the key stages. However insufficient effort is made to monitor pupils' progress through the National Curriculum programmes of study and to coordinate the work of different sets of pupils.

143. This very experienced and hard working department is soundly managed. Since the last inspection there has been a new member of staff and others are successfully developing their teaching skills. Pupils' progress from entry is not adequately monitored in order to maintain standards particularly those of average attaining pupils. The area of special needs has recently been greatly strengthened and text materials mentioned in the last report can now be rapidly developed. A successful chess club is run twice a week.

Science

144. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are average and in keeping with expectations of pupils aged 14. In the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1997 the percentage of the year group achieving levels 5 and 6 of the National Curriculum attainment targets almost exactly matched the national average. At GCSE in 1997 the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C was below the national average. Recent difficulties caused by the necessary use of a number of temporary teachers has led to some difficulty in achieving appropriate levels of attainment and expected examination results. In the two previous years, however, GCSE results had been at the national average.

145. At the end of Key Stage 3, average attainers relate well to such concepts as gravity and the measurement of weight in newtons. They can make the connection between pressure, force, area and the numeracy skills necessary to complete calculations. They exhibit a general competence at around Level 5 of the National Curriculum.

146. At the end of Key Stage 4 the profile of attainment is below the national average. Higher attaining pupils have fairly quick recall and good understanding of induced currents produced by wires cutting magnetic force fields; this is consistent with GCSE performance in the higher range. Lower attainers understand the effect of the pressures caused by freezing water in rocks and can relate samples to descriptions of type. However, in the middle attainment range a significant number of pupils are currently attaining levels which are below average nationally.

147. The progress made by pupils is sound. At Key Stage 3 progress is sound or better in nearly all lessons and good in half. At Key Stage 4 progress is unsatisfactory. However, for a significant minority of pupils rates of progress are satisfactory at this key stage. Special educational needs pupils make sound progress towards the targets set for them often as a result of some class teaching and individual assistance in the classroom.

148. Pupils' attitudes are good. In most lessons they are punctual, well-behaved, attentive and thoroughly co-operative. They answer oral questions confidently and written work is well-presented and extensive. There is no waste of time and sensible approaches with equipment are evident. In the few instances where class conduct is unsatisfactory pupils are restless, call out, waste time and are prone to making immature comments. There is a significant minority of pupils who do not complete written work when it is set.

149. The quality of teaching of science at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. In many lessons teaching is good, but on occasion is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 it is also satisfactory overall and on occasions good or very good, yet unsatisfactory lessons also occur. In the better lessons management of pupils, time and resources are all good. The subject matter is put over in an interesting and energetic fashion and teachers check to ensure that the understanding of the class is adequate before proceeding. There are good explanations and board work is clear. Organisation of practical lessons in science is good. There are good relationships and a natural and unobtrusive control. In the unsatisfactory lessons there are examples of incorrect and loose terminology being used, a lack of correction of poor practical skills, inadequate control of pupils and insufficiently regular and rigorous marking.

150. The curriculum is well-planned and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in all respects except for the information technology component. There is good coverage of all the attainment targets but more emphasis needs to be placed on extended writing to explain

phenomena and experimental results in a sequenced and accurately reasoned manner. Preparation for the GCSE examination is not as well managed as in many schools and consequently the usual sense of urgency, practice and relating of work to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades is under-developed. Marking of writing, diagrams, tables and graphs is normally of a good standard but there is poor practice in this aspect of the work of some teachers who as a result do not expect high enough standards from the pupils. Pupils themselves are aware of this variation and know the lessons in which work is unlikely to be checked for completeness and quality.

151. The teaching team is generally quite strong and provides the pupils with a well-designed course in an atmosphere which is generally good for learning. Excellent support is given by the very hard-working and active technical support staff whose contribution to the quality of the curriculum is considerable. Many of the laboratories have displays which are of a very high standard and this helps to provide an interesting learning environment for the pupils. There are considerable shortages of both essential equipment and books and this seriously affects the pupils' opportunity to develop practical skills in pairs and to revise and prepare from a textbook at home.

Other subjects or courses

Design & technology

152. The levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are average. This is often linked to the quality of teaching. For example, where teachers' expectations are low, pupils' achievements are generally low. In work with resistant materials, pupils' design skills are not as good as their manufacturing skills. Research is often superficial with too frequent reliance on catalogues as a source of information. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of electronics meets the national expectation but there are no facilities for pupils to develop skills in computer-aided design and manufacture. Pupils have a clear understanding of the production line and learn about materials and processes through disassembly in food and textile technology but not in resistant materials where much of the work remains craft-based and fails to meet current requirements.

153. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are below average. The majority of food technology projects are well presented, indicate thorough research and a clear understanding of the design process, including evaluation. In all other areas research and evaluation skills are weak. Pupils generally come up with good ideas but do not develop their final idea sufficiently. 1997 GCSE examination results of boys reflect the national average with the majority of boys taking the traditional craft examination. In the two years prior to Key Stage 4 the majority of teaching time until recently has been given to construction. Home economics examination results therefore have been significantly lower.

154. Rates of progress of pupils at Key Stage 3 are good and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Progression between the two key stages has been addressed in response to criticism made in the 1993 inspection through the application of identical criteria to each material area. Procedures are now in place with checklists and assessment criteria but monitoring and refining are not yet established to ensure that, for example, greater demands are made of Year 9 in graphics drawing than in Year 7 and 8. Insufficient feedback and target setting at Key Stage 4, particularly in work with resistant materials hinders progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through individual support and the use of paired and group work.

155. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. Most pupils enjoy their technology lessons, listen to each other and contribute to class discussion when invited to do so. They generally concentrate in their lessons and persevere when in difficulty.

156. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers mostly have a good command of their subject and generally set clear objectives but not all are familiar with National Curriculum orders, nor with levels of attainment, despite the supportive management, guidance and leadership that is given. Some teachers give insufficient written comments to indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve nor do they use assessment sufficiently to inform their planning. Although most current teaching is satisfactory there are significant sections of the National Curriculum in design & technology which are not being addressed, especially at Key Stage 3. The lack of up-to-date facilities and resources also impact upon the quality of teaching and learning and are presenting health and safety issues of which staff are aware but unable to resolve. Extension work planned for high attaining pupils is a positive step taken since the last inspection.

157. Computing facilities in the department are inadequate, particularly for food and textile technology though better use could be made of the computers in the area between the two workshops. Text books and a variety of reference materials to support learning and teaching for pupils of differing levels of attainment are in short supply.

Expressive arts

158. The quality of the arts provision and practice overall is good and in the visual arts is usually very good. Attainment in music at Key Stage 3 is less good and progress correspondingly less than it might be. However, together, all the arts play an important and valued part in the life of the school and many pupils engage in a wide range of extra-curricular activities in the visual arts, dance, drama and music.

Art

159. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. Girls' attainment is higher than that of boys. Pupils' skills in art making and their knowledge of the work of artists are good. They can draw from observation analytically and skilfully and can use a variety of mark making media to achieve a desired effect. Good visual research skills are developed which gives pupils an opportunity to show autonomy and pride in their work. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are comprehensively met at Key Stage 3 and very good quality work is produced. At the end of Key Stage 4 levels of attainment and the standard of art work produced are well above average. Each year the results in GCSE examinations are significantly higher than the national average. The standard of art-work displayed around the school is of a very good quality.

160. Rates of progress of pupils at both key stages, including those with special educational needs, are very good. Good teaching and a progressive scheme of work at Key Stage 3, which continues as a way of working into Key Stage 4, ensure good progress. By Year 10, visual research skills, sketchbook work and a willingness to experiment have generally developed into a very mature and sophisticated way of working. Because of the good standard of art displayed around the school, younger pupils can see the attainments of the older examination course students and can envisage the next stage of their own progression. There is good evidence which relates pupils' progression to the rigorous way of art-working encouraged and expected by the teachers.

161. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and in some lessons are excellent. There is a climate of good relationships both between pupils and between pupils and teachers. Pupils are very well motivated and can speak about their work well, using specialist language. They show an enjoyment of the subject. They have a good ability to choose appropriate source material from secondary sources. A strong sense of self worth is experienced by the pupils through their abilities to produce work of high quality.

162. The quality of teaching at both key stages is very good with teachers' enthusiasm for art often resulting in motivating, inspired lessons. A rigour is expected and achieved in the way art is produced in the school. Teachers frequently use praise and often thank the pupils for working well. They share their objectives with the pupils and this forms the basis for the good system of assessment which is developing. Teachers set clear goals and give good supportive instructions and advice. They prepare well for their lessons and demonstrate a very good range of teaching skills; often necessary with class sizes of over 30. Good stimulus material is employed including the use of poetry as a trigger to feelings and as a starting point for visualisation. High teacher-expectation is very noticeable.

163. The school provides an imaginative art curriculum which is well taught and with which pupils feel secure and make rapid gains and progression. There is a good range of extra curricular activities with the art studios being open to pupils every lunch time. Good leadership is a strong feature of the department. Art learning is well managed and is led with vision. The department makes good use of the local environment as a visual resource, of galleries and museums. Accommodation and resources are poor and the department is unable to use computers to extend pupils' graphic skills.

164. Since the last inspection improvement has been made in a number of identified areas of work. However, the use of the work of artists remains mainly imitative and has not developed into the wider area of understanding that would relate the work of artists to their time, and make connections with other subjects, for example history or mathematics. Equipment and facilities are still inadequate and the department's development planning still lacks detail.

Drama

165. Levels of attainment in drama at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. Because separate drama provision is additional to that in English lessons, statutory requirements are enhanced. On entry to the school, pupils adapt quickly, lose their self-consciousness and make good progress. They take part in plays and improvisations, and by the end of the key stage they sustain their performance effectively in role. They would benefit from a wider range of learning activities in drama, and from more opportunities to think for themselves. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is good in all lessons. Lessons are controlled well, and concentrate fully on learning objectives.

166. Levels of attainment in drama at the end of Key Stage 4 are well above average. Results in GCSE drama examinations in 1997 were well above the national average, and were better than in 1996. Pupils are committed to their studies, and make good progress and learn thoroughly according to examination requirements. Teaching in drama in Key Stage 4 is good in half of all lessons and satisfactory in the other half. In those lessons that are satisfactory there is less challenge to pupils' imagination and independence as learners than in the good lessons. Extra-curricular drama is a strong feature of the school and considerably enriches the whole school curriculum.

Music

167. The levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national averages. On occasions levels of attainment are well below that expected. Pupils have a good knowledge of note values but an insecure knowledge of other basic elements of music. Composing is mostly mechanical and not aided by fluent improvising. Pupils compose according to fixed rules and therefore develop inadequate aural discrimination. At the end of Key Stage 4, levels of attainment are average. The small size of GCSE groups means that results fluctuate. In 1997 they were well below the national average, with only two of ten candidates achieving grades A* to C, but well above average in 1996 when ten of 13 candidates achieved higher grades. In lessons, pupils show good instrumental and stylistic recognition in listening tests but their composing revealed a limited knowledge of technicalities such as sequences and formal cadences.

168. Progress is better within lessons but generally unsatisfactory and sometimes poor over the key stage. Pupils receive only half of the recommended amount of time for the subject and this is not provided continuously. Progress is therefore spasmodic. At Key Stage 4, rates of progress are satisfactory and the small size of groups enables much individual help to be given. At both key stages pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

169. In Key Stage 3, pupils attitudes to learning are generally good. They are attentive and use equipment carefully. Pupils are enthusiastic when activities spark their imagination. In Key Stage 4, pupils are well motivated and industrious.

170. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. Resources are carefully organised, instructions are clear. However, the planning takes too little account of the varied levels of capability within a group. Pupils are closely channelled and allowed little independence. Expectations, particularly of higher attaining pupils, are too low. Opportunities are not taken to develop pupils' powers of observation, factual understanding and appreciation of the potency of music. For instance, a task on Stravinsky's 'The Rite of Spring' in Year 8, became a mere clapping exercise. There is concise and authoritative advice in all aspects of the course at Key Stage 4, but too little use is made of homework.

171. The scheme of work in Key Stage 3 is largely based on a commercial publication. Neither the practical tasks nor the procedures for assessment adequately stimulate or reflect pupils' creativity. The course, therefore, does not take sufficient account of the requirements of the National Curriculum. Statutory assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 has not taken place. Progress, therefore, is not adequately monitored. The department has inadequate opportunities for professional development and works largely in isolation. Resources are generally satisfactory but accommodation is limited in size and does not enable pupils to disperse to work in small groups. Day-to-day administration is carefully carried out.

172. Visiting instrumental teachers provide a high standard of tuition and there is a good range of extra-curricular musical provision. The choral and instrumental ensembles are ably directed and attain high standards. They provide participants with worthwhile opportunities for social and cultural development through concerts in school and in the community. Ensembles participate with great success in local competitive music festivals. Extra-curricular music is generally of a high standard.

Geography

173. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys. This is in line with the national pattern. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in the 1997 GCSE examination are above the national average. The attainment of boys is significantly higher than that of girls and well above the national average. This is against both the national and school trend. At both key stages pupils are competent at using atlases to locate places and as a resource to identify geographical relationships and patterns.

174. Rates of progress at both key stages are good. Pupils consolidate, develop and extend their knowledge, understanding, mapping and graphical skills. There is a marked improvement by the end of Key Stage 3 in the written standards and presentation of the work of low attaining pupils. During Key Stage 4 progress leads to fieldwork of good quality which demonstrates that pupils can collect, illustrate, analyse and interpret a variety of data and make appropriate conclusions in their own writing. Good use of specially prepared materials ensures that pupils with special educational need make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

175. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently good. This positive response reinforces their progress in geography. Behaviour is very good. The quality of relationships is good and in all lessons there is an atmosphere of mutual respect and support. Pupils show interest in their lessons, sustain concentration and the majority take a pride in the presentation of their work.

176. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Lessons are carefully planned and all teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Discipline is very good and homework is set consistently throughout the year. Good use is made of worksheets designed to meet the differing needs of pupils. Teaching is a strength of the department, yet currently there is insufficient use of visual aids and a lack of modern information technology equipment to enhance the learning experience of all pupils. Progress is being made to provide more adequate fieldwork experiences for pupils at Key Stage 3. Work is marked regularly but rarely is comment used to help pupils improve. Procedures for assessing pupils' work at the end of Key Stage 3 do not accurately take account of National Curriculum levels.

177. Staff are professional, enthusiastic and committed to maintaining high attainment. The scheme of work is a good working document. There is some classroom support which is effectively used to support statemented pupils. The department makes a significant contribution to numeracy through geographical work in measurement and the use of diagrams and graphs. A development plan is in use but it lacks sufficient detail particularly in respect of the resource implications for textbook replacement and information technology provision. There are no procedures for monitoring classroom practice. Most issues of the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Teaching resources are used very effectively and efficiently to maintain high standards.

History

178. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are average, though some groups reach well above average levels in some areas of their everyday work. There are inconsistencies because teachers approach the schemes of work in different ways, and because some of the skills defined by the National Curriculum are not clearly targeted. At Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment relative to the standards expected of GCSE candidates has remained well below average since the last

inspection, and fell well below the national average in 1997. However, history has been a more popular option this year and there is a wide range of attainment represented in the work being done, showing some high levels of knowledge and understanding being reached.

179. Rates of progress at Key Stages 3 are good, but are unequal across classes. Although all pupils increase their understanding during lessons through discussion with their teachers and each other, in some classes pupils do not spend enough time consolidating their knowledge by writing about it and this has considerable impact on their progress. At Key Stage 4 progress is satisfactory but some pupils are not getting a rigorous enough preparation for the GCSE examination. Key Stage 3 schemes of work still do not identify all aspects of the National Curriculum programme of study, and the extent to which it is covered varies from one class to another. Teaching time and resourcing is barely sufficient, and the department needs to plan their use more carefully in order to ensure that all pupils have progressed sufficiently through the proper programme of study by the end of Key Stage 3. The department has begun to buy suitable text books for low attaining pupils and is building an increasing supply of appropriate worksheet materials for those with special educational needs, and these measures have brought a considerable improvement in the progress pupils make now compared with what was being achieved in 1993.

180. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, in keeping with the school's high expectations, and were well characterised in one large Year 7 class where pupils studying the Black Death were purposefully engaged in several different activities. These included group work at some computers, desk top publishing at others, and individual study of documents, needing only the lightest supervision from their teacher who was therefore free to help those needing him.

181. The majority of teaching is good, and sometimes very good at Key Stage 3 and generally satisfactory at Key Stage 4. All teachers are well informed and enthusiastic, and relationships between them and their pupils are good. They use an interesting variety of approaches which adds to the quality of education pupils receive. For example, a Year 8 class brought to life an old description of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots with a carefully controlled role play exercise which explored difficult details of the text in a meaningful and memorable way. The head of department has developed several stimulating enterprises which are making a positive impact on Key Stage 3 teaching, notably the investigation done in Year 9 of nineteenth century tea plantations and the Colne Project run in collaboration with the local library, and makes good use of their collections of old maps and records. Another teacher has developed assignments using information technology which have been successfully introduced into his teaching. However, there is insufficient teamwork in the management of the department so that good practice is shared and all pupils in the department can benefit from it. Particularly at Key Stage 4 there is a considerable discrepancy in the range of materials and teaching approach. Marking is erratic and does not always credit pupils for the effort they have made or recognise the targets being achieved. While the present assessment system in Key Stage 3 tests pupils' knowledge regularly and effectively, there is no agreed core of assignments with common mark schemes to chart progress in the level of National Curriculum skills reached. Management of the department does not include a regular audit of all the strands from which the National Curriculum is made, and a means of monitoring their effective delivery. There is no guidance given regarding opportunities afforded for teaching the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of history. The members of the teaching team are not agreed on approaches to their practice which have not been clarified in a statement in the department handbook.

182. The department's accommodation has improved since the last inspection and most lessons are now taught in a suite of large, pleasant rooms with attractive display areas and storage close by. However, some classes are taught off base which puts a strain on the department's very slender resources. Some new text books have been bought since the last inspection, but the department has operated on a very small budget and improvements to their delivery of the curriculum are correspondingly constrained. Good use is made of links with other departments, for example in art pupils made the ceramic Bayeux Tapestry which is an historic focus at the entrance to the history department. The modern language department is to include a visit to the First World War trenches for pupils on the Belgian trip, and the local history work done in Year 9 studies buildings in conjunction with work done on building materials in science lessons.

Information technology

183. The levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are well below average. There is no discrete information technology offered in Year 9 and therefore the attainment ceiling for the key stage is at the end of Year 8. Pupils' experience is limited by teaching which is concerned only with the communication of information and information handling. Some pupils with reading difficulties, are making satisfactory improvements in their literacy and spelling skills through their use of computers. Measurement, control and modelling are not included at Key Stage 3. In this respect the school fails to deliver the full statutory requirement.

184. The levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are similarly restricted by lack of breadth and opportunity for pupils to apply information technology in subject contexts. The only pupils at Key Stage 4 who achieve average levels of attainment are those who elect to study to GCSE examination level. The only other experience of discrete use of information technology is that of pupils who choose to do business studies. Results in this examination are in line with national averages and reflect successful work in information technology within the business studies department, focusing on word-processing and desk-top publishing skills. At Key Stage 4 there is a failure to deliver the statutory requirements of information technology for all pupils.

185. Rates of progress of pupils at both key stages are satisfactory in the two strands of the subject that are offered although progress overall at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. Pupils' capability on intake from primary school is varied and some catching up is done through the discrete course in Years 7 and 8. A few subjects do use some elements of information technology in their teaching. Business education is the main contributor but it is also used in English, history, mathematics and modern foreign languages. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils will not have had experience of sufficient elements of information technology in any planned, meaningful and continuous way. For pupils in lessons, progress is often limited by the need to share an inadequate provision of computers, especially when the classes are large. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory, pupils finding computers an encouraging means of learning.

186. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally satisfactory at both key stages. They show an interest in the work and are capable of a range of basic skills. They build on previous knowledge and often make a breakthrough in their study habits by and through their interest in computers, often volunteering to do their homework for other subjects on computers at home. Some disruptive behaviour occurs when the lesson or the level of work are not interesting or challenging.

187. The quality of teaching at both key stages is satisfactory. However, teachers have yet to discover ways of maximising interest in their lessons. Too many lessons rely on the teacher giving a series of sequential instructions. Tasks set are not always challenging and lack variety. Praise is used well on occasions. Teachers have a good subject knowledge but are insufficiently aware of a variety of teaching and learning strategies. Expectations are limited. With twice as many pupils in the class to the number of computers, the need to employ group-work and to focus on two activities simultaneously is well understood.

188. The curriculum lacks breadth. Information technology is not planned, mapped and tracked effectively to ensure good progression and continuity. No assessment schemes have been devised. There is some willingness on the part of subject staff to become involved in the use of computers but more needs to be done. There is no technician support and the number of computers and provision of equipment are inadequate.

189. The school has not addressed the issues raised at the last inspection. Achievements continue to be hampered by limitations of hard-ware, soft-ware and the uneven quality of the teaching, even though considerable capital investment has been made.

Modern foreign languages

190. Levels of attainment in both German and French are average at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils achieve levels above expectations in German and French, being able to respond to the language being learned appropriately, with little hesitation, write accurately and identify detail from texts. However, some pupils who are average and below average, particularly in French, are too dependent upon written models and set phrases to communicate effectively. By the end of Key Stage 4 higher attaining pupils achieve standards in line with national averages in all four skills in French and German: they are confident in speaking and listening, identify detail from a variety of texts, write accurately for a variety of purposes and have a good understanding of the way the languages work. Many pupils deal effectively with written texts and write accurately to a model but are hesitant in their response to the spoken languages and are dependent upon written prompts to take part in dialogues. Grades achieved in the GCSE examination in French were above national averages in 1997 and are an improvement on previous years. Grades achieved in the GCSE German examination are in line with national averages for A*- G grades but below national averages for A*-C although numbers entered are high compared to national figures.

191. Rates of progress are satisfactory during both key stages. Higher attaining pupils in both German and French make good progress increasing their understanding and developing skills. All pupils make good progress in reading and writing but for many progress in speaking is slow. In some French classes containing pupils who are average and below average in foreign languages, emphasis is sometimes placed inappropriately on the skills of reading and writing to the detriment of speaking and listening. For example, pupils first meet new vocabulary in written form before they are confident in recognising sounds or reproducing them accurately. This hampers their progress and for many pupils compounds difficulties encountered elsewhere. Progress is slow in some classes where teacher-led activities dominate and where activities and resources are not sufficiently matched to pupils' capabilities. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

192. Most pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning, listen attentively and when the language being learned is used as the main means of communication, pupils rise to the challenge. When given the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups they concentrate on tasks set and work productively and with enthusiasm. They are able to use reference materials to find and check meaning and take pride in their achievements. They are concerned to do well but in some classes where activities and resources are not matched sufficiently to their capabilities or needs some pupils are reluctant to volunteer, become restless, lose concentration and some become disruptive or do not attempt to complete tasks.

193. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. Classroom discipline is good and teachers have a good command of the languages they teach. In the more effective lessons the language being learned is used effectively and often exclusively. Resources and activities are well planned to ensure continuity and progression and match the capabilities of the pupils, and there are opportunities for pupils to practise informally in pairs and small groups. In the best lessons they are encouraged to put their speaking and listening skills to the test in real situations and to adapt the language to suit their own needs, use reference materials to extend their vocabulary and to experiment with the language using a variety of structures. In the less effective lessons resources and activities are not always sufficiently matched to the needs of the pupils, particularly in classes containing pupils with wide ranges of attainment. In some lessons pupils are given too little opportunity to practise and increase their confidence in using the languages for themselves or to put their skills to the test in real situations. Presentations and activities are not always sufficiently focused especially for less able pupils.

194. Arrangements for assessment and reporting through Key Stage 3 are good but would be better if pupils themselves were given a clear indication of their progress in developing skills or next steps in learning. Good progress has been made in establishing outlines for schemes of work but as yet they lack detail of how desired outcomes are to be achieved and evaluated, or how materials are to be approached for groups with differing learning needs. Since the department has moved to its own suite of rooms it has made good progress towards working effectively as a team to spread good practice, share ideas and develop a consistent approach. Resources are limited: there are insufficient course books and appropriate materials; equipment is inadequate for the provision of effective groupwork and to meet the full range of learning experiences recommended by the National Curriculum. The provision of a second language early in Key Stage 3 puts further strain on these resources.

Physical education

195. Levels of attainment are average at the end of Key Stage 3 and above average at the end of Key Stage 4 for both boys and girls. Levels of skill are developing well at this stage and pupils are given a sure foundation for future work. At the end of Key Stage 4 where attainment is consistently above average, skill levels are very secure with some good individual performances. The overall standards achieved by girls at this key stage are notably above average. Grades in GCSE examinations have been exceptionally high for the past five years, with the proportion of pupils achieving A* - C grades more than double the national average. In 1997 all candidates achieved these higher grades, with a third of them achieving the highest, A* grade, better than nine times the proportion obtaining this grade nationally.

196. Rates of progress are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 a significant number of pupils are acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a rate

which exceeds expectation. For a similar number, however, who have reduced time for physical education in Year 8, progress is unsatisfactory and the attainment of these pupils is below average. This can be attributed to timetable inconsistencies. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress.

197. Pupils' attitudes are good. They are cooperative and well behaved. Levels of interest and motivation are high at both key stages with generally good attendance and participation. This contributes strongly to the continuity and progression in learning. Pupils join in activities fully and with good levels of commitment. They work hard physically and show energy and enthusiasm in sustaining their activities. Both boys and girls listen well to advice from teachers and use it effectively to improve their skills.

198. The quality of teaching is consistently satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and work is effectively planned and structured. On occasions, however, teaching and learning styles lack flexibility. Insufficient opportunity is provided for engaging pupils in planning, and, especially, evaluating their work and progress. Problem-solving approaches are not developed sufficiently in games activities. Work is generally matched well to developing the skills and capabilities of the majority of pupils; however, tasks and resources required for the more gifted and least gifted pupils to be challenged further are not always clearly defined. Work is generally well-planned and progressive schemes of work are in place. Assessment procedures are well matched to National Curriculum criteria but do not always reflect whole school policy. Statutory formal assessment and reporting requirements at the end of Key Stage 3 are not met. Relationships are good and standards of discipline high. Most lessons are purposeful and busy, although on occasions boys' work is slow to get underway.

199. Curricular planning is sound but under-developed. For boys, the Key Stage 3 programme does not meet statutory requirements, covering only three of the required four programmes of study. Within the current programme of games, athletics and gymnastics pupils' experience is dominated by games and the overall programme therefore lacks balance. For girls, the requirements of the National Curriculum are covered at Key Stage 3 through work in games, athletics, dance and gymnastics. However, there is insufficient depth in learning in dance and gymnastics to fulfil completely the intentions of the National Curriculum. Insufficient time is allocated to gymnastics and dance at Key Stage 3. This was a concern at the time of the previous inspection in 1993. Limitations of curricular time in Year 8 for a third of pupils diminishes their rates of progress. At Key Stage 4 there are opportunities for pupils to choose and specialise, although the degree of choice of boys and girls is unequal. Girls are able to make effective use of off-site facilities.

200. Leadership of the subject is very positive with good day to day administration. Cohesion between the differing arrangements for boys and girls in order to strengthen experiences and equality of opportunity is insufficiently rigorous. Support for non-specialist teaching is too demanding to be effective due to inadequate timetabling flexibility. There is insufficient long-term departmental development planning. Facilities are limited but adequate. Storage provision is poor. There is no dedicated teaching base and this has a detrimental effect on theoretical aspects of the GCSE courses. There are poor facilities for storing resources and records. The current bid for improved facilities, if successful, would bring much needed improvement to the well-used teaching accommodation. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for boys and girls and these are popular, enabling some pupils to attain high standards.

Religious education

201. The levels of attainment in religious education at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average. Pupils have a good knowledge of varied aspects of Christianity, including beliefs, major festivals and ceremonies, and they are familiar with the design and symbolism of church buildings. They acquire a sound knowledge of the principal aspects of other world religions, and in particular of Islamic history and customs. Written work is often substantial, and carefully researched and illustrated. Lower attaining pupils find difficulty in recalling previous work but show a satisfactory understanding of current topics, such as the miracles of Jesus. At the end of Key Stage 4 levels of attainment are average. GCSE results have matched the national average for the last two years. In class, pupils generally show a good understanding of moral and social issues, such as reasons for crime, and, in Year 10, they express brief but responsible views for and against euthanasia. Lower attaining pupils show satisfactory understanding of social issues but their knowledge of historical and religious events is often insecure.

202. Rates of progress of pupils at Key Stage 3 are good and are satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Good planning ensures that time is well used. The demands of the work throughout both key stages are well calculated to develop pupils' thinking from a purely factual level to a reasoned understanding of spiritual, moral and social topics. Lower attaining pupils make only slow progress but are assisted by the provision of carefully adapted materials.

203. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. They generally listen well, respond readily in discussions, and are courteous when disagreeing. Independent work is tackled conscientiously, and in paired work there is a good standard of collaboration. Some lower attaining boys are not naturally compliant but respond well to good classroom management.

204. The quality of teaching is good and occasionally excellent at Key Stage 3, while it is satisfactory and sometimes good at Key Stage 4. Teachers plan carefully and have high expectations of pupils. Lessons have clear objectives and are carefully structured to ensure a good pace of work. Resources are carefully chosen. Video material is carefully presented to gain maximum educational benefit. Discussion and questioning are very effectively used with lower attaining pupils to prompt factual recall and to develop their speaking, but are not always used as productively elsewhere. Work is carefully marked but assessment procedures are inconsistently applied and are currently a focus for development. Where religious education is taught by non-specialists, they are well supported.

205. Many imaginative tasks are included in the scheme of work to reinforce knowledge, develop research skills and to extend pupils' understanding. The curriculum has been extensively and effectively modified recently. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are now fully incorporated within both key stages. The subject offers pupils many opportunities to gain insights into spiritual matters and to acquire an understanding of cultures other than their own. Several factors, however, continue to impinge adversely on standards of attainment. They are: some inappropriate arrangements for the setting of pupils, a shortage of text books, artefacts and resources for information technology, and cramped accommodation for larger classes. Other matters noted during the last inspection have been satisfactorily resolved.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

206. The inspection team consisted of 13 inspectors. During the five days of the inspection over 133 hours were spent inspecting 172 lessons. There were also observations of assemblies, registration and tutor periods and a range of extra-curricular activities. All teachers who were present were seen teaching at least once and most several times. A wide and fully representative range of meetings was held with members of staff and there was a meeting with members of the governing body. Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils. Over twenty hours was spent inspecting all the available written and other work of a representative sample of pupils from each year in detail. Planned discussions were held with groups of pupils from each year group and informal discussions were held with many more.

207. A large amount of documentation from the school was analysed both before and during the inspection. The registered inspector held a meeting attended by a total of 45 parents prior to the inspection and 218 (23.2%) parents completed a questionnaire indicating their views of the school. Meetings were held with a group of headteachers from feeder primary schools and the education welfare officer.

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 |
|----------|---|---|--|---|
| Y7 - Y11 | 941 | 33 | 193 | 176 |

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y11)

| | |
|---|-------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent) | 52.80 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 17.82 |

Education support staff (Y7 - Y11)

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 3 |
| Total aggregate hours worked each week | 104 |

| | |
|--|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes: | 78.4 |
|--|------|

| | |
|-----|------|
| KS3 | 26.2 |
| KS4 | 19.9 |

FINANCIAL DATA

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Financial year: | 1996/1997 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 1,855,555 |
| Total expenditure | 1,786,388 |
| Expenditure per pupils | 1,894.37 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -111,694 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | - 42,527 |

PARENTAL SURVEY

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out: | 941 |
| Number of questionnaires returned: | 218 |
| Percentage return rate: | 23 |

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 | 16.8 | 72.7 | 5.5 | 4.5 | 0.5 |
| I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren) | 29.2 | 60.3 | 8.2 | 2.3 | 0.0 |
| The school handles complaints from parents well | 11.3 | 62.4 | 21.7 | 1.5 | 3.1 |
| The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught | 12.2 | 63.3 | 16.1 | 7.0 | 1.4 |
| The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress | 19.3 | 61.0 | 10.1 | 7.8 | 1.8 |
| The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work | 18.6 | 68.8 | 6.3 | 5.4 | 0.9 |
| The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons | 24.0 | 65.9 | 6.9 | 3.2 | 0.0 |
| I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home | 15.1 | 63.8 | 7.4 | 8.7 | 5.0 |
| The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren) | 18.0 | 59.4 | 17.1 | 5.5 | 0.0 |
| The school achieves high standards of good behaviour | 17.5 | 58.5 | 15.5 | 7.1 | 1.4 |
| My child(ren) like(s) school | 26.1 | 61.5 | 6.4 | 4.6 | 1.4 |