

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Fulwood High School**  
Preston

LEA area : Lancashire

Unique Reference Number : 119742

Headteacher : Mrs J F Byrom

Reporting inspector : Rev. Mrs E. Milroy  
T12170

Dates of inspection : 30th November - 4th December 1998

Under OFSTED contract number: 700983

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Secondary
Type of control :	County
Age range of pupils :	11 - 16
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Black Bull Lane Fulwood Preston PR2 9YR
Telephone number :	01772 719060
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Appropriate authority :	Governing body
Name of chair of governors :	Dr C Squire
Date of previous inspection :	4th - 10th May 1994

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Rev. Mrs E Milroy, Registered Inspector		Attainment & Progress Teaching Pupils' spiritual, moral, social & cultural development Leadership & management
Mr R Esberger, Lay Inspector	Equal Opportunities	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Mr I Middlebrough	English	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources Efficiency of the school
Mrs S Nolan	Mathematics	Curriculum & assessment
Mr K Hounslow	Science	
Mrs S Innes	Design and Technology Information Technology	
Dr D Mackereth	Modern Foreign Languages	
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Mrs D Bell	Art	
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Pupils enter the school with just below average attainments but the number achieving 5 grades A\*-C at GCSE was better than the national average in 1998 and reached it in the previous two years.
- Sixty one percent of the teaching is good or better, and 18 per cent is very good, or better. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching.
- It provides a very wide curriculum, especially at Key Stage 4, which includes a variety of vocational elements relevant to pupils' needs.
- Teaching and curriculum development are monitored effectively.
- Teachers set targets for the improvement of attainment in their subjects, and for the success of individual pupils.
- Pupils behave well and have very good relationships with each other and their teachers.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is very good.
- Relationships between pupils of different ethnic heritages are very friendly, harmonious and cordial. Pupils value the rich diversity of cultures present in the school and voice their appreciation.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is outstanding.
- Links with the community, business partnerships and enterprise are very wide and effective.
- Service within the school, voluntary service to the community and giving to others are exceptionally good.
- The school is very well led and efficiently managed.
- On the whole the school overcomes the constraints placed upon it by the building effectively.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Sincere Acts of Collective Worship make very good contributions to pupils' spiritual development.
- The school has a very good ethos which surrounds pupils with an atmosphere where they feel valued and are expected to succeed.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- Some unsatisfactory timetabling and deployment of staff means that lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have more than one teacher for lessons in some subjects which restricts their progress.
- The individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are not sufficiently specific to their needs in the different subjects of the curriculum to help them make full progress.
- Information technology is still not used sufficiently widely across the curriculum.

**The school has very many more significant strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified in this inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has focused closely on the priorities set for it by the last inspection. Teaching has improved significantly. The curriculum has been widened successfully to include relevant vocational elements at Key Stage 4. An effective school development plan which identifies responsibilities and deadlines is in place. No costs are attached to the plan except where they are additional to normal staff and school expenses but departments now show greater consistency in the planning, provision and monitoring of their work.

Major improvements have taken place in information technology with the acquisition of two new networks. Fully accredited courses in religious education are now established for all pupils in Key Stage 4. The school implements the Local Agreed Syllabus well. The policy on assessment, recording and reporting has been significantly improved but its positive effects are not yet evident. A good policy on collective worship is generally implemented successfully. In year and school assemblies the acts of collective worship meet statutory requirements. In tutor groups, although practice varies, there are some very good examples of sensitive and quality acts of collective worship in form time.





## Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

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

By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain at the average when compared to the national picture in all three core subjects. Comparison with schools which have pupils from similar backgrounds shows that the school achieves well above average standards. Almost all pupils are entered for GCSE. Standards were above the national average in 1998 and reached the national standards in the previous two years. Results in most subjects reach the national average. They are above it in English language and literature, German, art, music, textiles, history and physical education; reach national standards in other subjects; and fall below it in electronics and design and technology (resistant materials).

The school has set in place suitable systems and procedures to sustain its improvement.

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Art, drama, geography, music, history	
Years 10-11	Good	Drama, music, German, design and technology (textiles), history	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Teaching is at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons (96%). In nearly one in five (18%) it is very good and better. A small proportion is outstanding. Most of the very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in a small number of lessons in mathematics and in modern foreign languages. The timetabling this year has produced classes which are split between two teachers. Low attaining pupils are particularly affected. Their progress is sometimes slowed because they are less well known to their teachers and find it difficult to make progress with different demands and changes of topic. There are no subjects where teaching is predominantly weak.

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

## Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good both within lessons and around the school. At break, in the lunch hour and in lessons pupils behave well.
Attendance	Satisfactory. It has improved since the last inspection. Procedures for monitoring and sustaining attendance levels are very good.
Ethos*	Very good. Pupils are surrounded with an atmosphere which supports and values them and generates relationships of respect and harmony.
Leadership and management	Good. Supportive governing body. Very good, forward looking systematic leadership from the headteacher and senior management team, with good monitoring and support for development. Some weaknesses exist in the management of science and design and technology. Staff united in common purposes and clear educational direction.
Curriculum	Good broad balanced provision at both key stages. Very good breadth of choice at Key Stage 4 including vocational elements. Religious education and personal and social education now have enough time at Key Stage 4. Improved since last inspection. Provision for extra-curricular activities is outstanding. Information technology provision has improved, but is still not sufficiently widely used in curriculum subjects.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Targets in the pupils' Individual Education Plans need to be more specific to subjects of the curriculum. Progress is good in history, art and design and technology but is slowed where pupils have more than one teacher for the same subject in some lessons.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good. Subjects make a very good contribution especially religious education, history, art and textile aspects of design and technology. Sincere acts of collective worship provide well for pupils. Music, drama, English and art provide very good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Very good links with the local community through voluntary service and links with Europe give pupils a wide perspective on issues.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Sufficient teachers with good balance of expertise to meet curricular needs. Some shortage of technical support in science and art. Parts of the accommodation in design and technology are unsatisfactory.
Value for money	Good value for money. Financial management and control good.

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

## The parents' views of the school

<b>What most parents like about the school</b>	<b>What some parents are not happy about</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents feel welcome and play an active part in the school.</li><li>• They receive good information about the progress of their children.</li><li>• They appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities.</li><li>• Pupils are happy in school and enjoy their work.</li><li>• Standards of behaviour and discipline and attitudes to work are good.</li></ul>	

Inspectors judgements accord with the positive comments made by parents. The school is friendly and welcomes visitors of all kinds. It provides very good support and guidance both to individuals and to the school community as a whole. Parents expressed strong appreciation of the ethos which the school has established and the efforts made by the school to provide a very broad education enriched by many extra-curricular activities to promote the progress of their children. Parents appreciate the suitable homework set to complement and extend the work pupils do in class.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:-

- 1 Improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs and those in lower sets by:
  - \* timetabling their classes so that the features which hinder their progress and attainment are removed (paragraphs 5, 37, 39, 66, 68)
  - \* ensuring that subject staff modify the targets in pupils' individual education plans to meet their differing needs in the specialist subjects (paragraphs 4, 8, 12, 27, 29)
  
- 2 Increase the use of information technology across the curriculum subjects by:
  - \* improving access to the most modern computer facilities (paragraph 134)
  - \* identifying in schemes of work points where information technology will be used to enhance learning
  - \* establishing a system to monitor provision within subjects (paragraphs 14, 17, 31, 39, 71)

## INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the school

- 1 Fulwood High School is a popular and over-subscribed school of average size, providing education for 952 boys and girls aged 11 - 16 years. Situated in the Fulwood area of Preston it draws its pupils from a wide catchment and a broad spread of socio-economic backgrounds. Cultural diversity is reflected in the 28% of pupils from ethnic minority heritages. Pupils have a wide range of attainment on entry to the school; overall attainment at the start of Year 7 is just below average. Twenty three per cent of pupils are on the special needs register, which includes 37 pupils with statements for special educational needs. These figures are above the national average. The school has more pupils with special educational needs than at the last inspection. Twenty one per cent are entitled to free school meals, a figure slightly above the national average.

#### **The School's main aims are:**

- **to value every member of the school community and to accord to all full equality of opportunity;**
- **to encourage all pupils to develop their full academic, physical and intellectual potential and to promote their personal and social development.**

#### **Its immediate priority is:**

- **to continue its pursuit of excellence for pupils of all levels of ability in their attainment and all aspects of their education.**

## Key Indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>1</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	101	91	192

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	50(25)	65(63)	49(57)
	Girls	66(40)	50(42)	45(45)
	Total	116(65)	115(105)	94(102)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	60(35)	59(56)	49(55)
	National	64(56)	60 (60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	28(12)	35(34)	19(28)
	National	34(23)	36(37)	27(29)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	49(47)	71(67)	57(53)
	Girls	70(51)	61(47)	62(43)
	Total	119(98)	132(114)	119(96)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	62(53)	69(61)	62(52)
	National	N/A(59)	N/A(63)	N/A(61)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	31(28)	42(42)	27(28)
	National	N/A(28)	N/A(37)	N/A(29)

National Teacher Assessments not yet available.

<sup>1</sup>

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

## Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>2</sup>

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	99	90	189

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	41	86	93
	Girls	48	82	85
	Total	89	168	178
Percentage achieving standard specified	School	47.1(44.2)	88.9(90.6)	94.2(94.5)
	National	46.1(45.1)	87.3(86.4)	94.8(94.0)

## Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	9.5
	National comparative data	8.1
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.5
	National comparative data	0.7

## Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	24
Permanent	0

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	18
Satisfactory or better	96
Less than satisfactory	4

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

- 2 On entry to the school pupils' attainments are just below average. Using nationally recognised tests the LEA and the school have maintained detailed records of the assessments they make of pupils entering Year 7. The Key Stage 2 results and these assessments provide substantial evidence that fewer pupils enter the school with above average attainment than below. The number of pupils with special educational needs has increased since the last inspection as has the proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language. Nevertheless the school has maintained its standards so that by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 overall attainment matches the national average. When the 1998 figures for Key Stage 3 are compared with those from similar schools pupils' attainments are above average in English and science and well above in mathematics.
- 3 The proportion of pupils who gained 5 or more A\* -C grades at GCSE (47%) was above the national average in 1998. When the results of the last three years are considered the school achieves close to and often above the national average as it did at its last inspection. The number achieving 5 A\*- G grades is also close to the national proportions. By comparison with similar schools the GCSE results indicate that the school's performance is well above average. By the time they leave school at 16 the school has added considerable value to pupils' education.

#### **English**

- 4 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in English meets the national average. Although pupils with special educational needs attain below average their achievements at both key stages are generally in line with their previous attainments. There is a need to shape pupils' individual education plans more closely to the specific language targets in English. Some of the units of work prepared by individual teachers are more suited to pupils in top sets and not easily adapted to the full span of attainment. Pupils of average or lower attainment make slower progress in these lessons. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4 where there is a close match between provision and pupils' needs. Pupils of ethnic minority heritage make good progress in line with their prior attainments and there is no evidence that they are held back by any lack of facility in English.
- 5 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils achieve the national average. GCSE results for pupils gaining A\*-C are average, but the numbers achieving grades A\* - G are consistently above the national average. Results in both English language and English literature examinations improved in 1998. Although girls perform better than boys at all levels in the subject boys at the school perform well in both English language and literature when compared with the performance of boys nationally.

#### **Mathematics**

- 6 In mathematics attainment in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 over the past two years has been at broadly at the national average. Results in the 1998 tests are better and when compared with similar schools the proportions achieving level 5 and the higher level 6 are well above average. Boys attain better than girls. Although pupils' results overall in mathematics are slightly below those achieved in other subjects in the school, boys achieve better results than they do in other curriculum areas. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' GCSE results are close to the national average. In lessons attainment reaches satisfactory or better levels. Practical activities and the good use of technical language raise attainment in the early part of Key Stage 3, clear explanations and well- paced teaching help to raise attainment by the end of Key Stage 4.



- 7 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 except where their classes are taught by different teachers in the subject. Progress occasionally slows and continuity is lost. When classes are taught by teachers who are not specialists in the subject the strategies used do not promote pupils' mathematical understanding sufficiently. Progress for pupils of average attainment is satisfactory at Key Stage 4: those of higher attainment and pupils with special educational needs often make good progress with the exceptions noted.

### **Science**

- 8 Attainment overall in science by the end of both Key Stages meets national averages. Results in Key Stage 3 tests although slightly lower in 1998, are broadly average. However when compared with similar schools the proportions achieving level 5 in this year were above average and those achieving the higher level 6 were well above average. In lessons pupils attain at levels appropriate for pupils of their age. Investigative skills are satisfactory, but at Key Stage 4 some pupils do not use the criteria which indicate grade levels sufficiently to attain highly in their course work which reduces their eventual success. Pupils always make satisfactory progress : it is often good in individual lessons at both key stages. Although the progress of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of low attaining sets the targets in their individual education plans are not sufficiently modified to their needs in the subject so that their progress is difficult to monitor. Sometimes the work they are set is not matched closely enough to their previous attainment to promote best progress.

### **Other subjects**

- 9 In other subjects pupils attain at least at the national expectation and in some subjects above. In art attainment has risen by the end of Key Stage 4 over the last three years. In this subject it is average by the end of Key Stage 3 and by the end of Key Stage 4 is well above average. Pupils attain the national expectation by the end of each key stage in design and technology : in textiles attainment is above average, in food technology and graphics results match the national average, but in resistant materials and electronics attainment is below. In information technology attainment matches national expectations by the end of each key stage, however the use of information technology across the curriculum is insufficient to help pupils apply their skills and knowledge widely. Attainment in geography is at the national average by the end of each key stage. In history pupils achieve beyond national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 and well above them by the end of Key Stage 4. The LEA analysis of results shows that the value added to pupils' education in this subject is among the highest in the County.
- 10 In modern foreign languages far more pupils study the subjects at Key Stage 4 than at the last inspection and the range of attainment to be taught is much wider. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in French reaches national expectations. Attainment in German is well above average but only higher attaining linguists are given the choice of the second language, and attainment must be judged in this context. Pupils not taking German are offered performing arts including drama. Standards in music are above average by the end of each key stage and results at GCSE are well above average. In physical education pupils achieve the national average by the end of each key stage. For the small number of pupils who entered for physical education at GCSE in 1998 results were above national average. Religious education has improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils' attainments match the requirements of the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus at each key stage: there are no examination results on which to comment at Key Stage 4 until the present GCSE short course has been completed.
- 11 Progress is satisfactory in science, mathematics at Key Stage 4, design and technology, information technology and modern foreign languages. It is good in English, mathematics in Key Stage 3, drama, art, history and geography, physical education and religious education. Pupils have little opportunity to use and apply their information technology skills outside their lessons in the specific subject. As a result they make slower progress in using information technology to support their learning than in most schools. Pupils who have English as a second language are well integrated and make good progress.

- 12 Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress. They make particularly good progress in history when the materials which they use are carefully tailored to their needs and in art and aspects of design and technology. Progress in French is occasionally unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4 lessons, when pupils lack motivation or show a negative attitude. The severe staffing problems in the modern languages department meant that pupils did not have their regular teacher and had not had long enough to build productive relationships. In other Key Stage 4 lessons as in photography, these pupils make good gains in technical understanding of the processes and show great interest. In most subjects teachers rely on the setting system too much and have not modified pupils' individual education plans to give them targets specific to the different subjects against which their progress can be monitored.
- 13 Across the curriculum pupils speak confidently and listen attentively. They generally follow instructions carefully, answer the teachers' questions well and pose their own confidently. Very good work in drama improves pupils' skills in presentation. In English the teachers' good synthesis of pupils' oral responses helped them to raise the level of debate, for example, about experiments on animals. Occasionally lessons are over directed and less opportunity is offered for talk and discussion. In some mathematics lessons which focus on written text pupils with special educational needs do not have sufficient opportunity to clarify their thinking. Where French is not used for all or most of a lesson low attaining pupils cannot gain fluency or good listening skills. However, pupils develop good technical language in many subjects for example, in geography, which adds precision to their work.
- 14 Most pupils read with at least satisfactory accuracy and understanding and become fluent readers by the end of Key Stage 3. The majority can find information from books readily. Many undertake successful research projects in history but overall skill development is hampered by the lack of use of information and communication technology in most curriculum subjects.
- 15 Written work is of at least satisfactory standard. Grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting are well taught and maintain good standards. Some pieces of extended writing produced by high attaining pupils in English at Key Stage 4 are outstanding. Writing skills develop well in history especially at Key Stage 4 showing especially in GCSE course work in economic history. In religious education pupils present their work in a variety of ways: the presentation of their homework shows great care and commitment. However drafting is not used widely outside English to raise the standard of written work further.
- 16 Pupils' numeracy skills are used well across the curriculum. Number skills are improving in Key Stage 3. In science quantitative work is used well: high attaining pupils manipulate energy equations easily. Calculators are used sensibly. Pupils apply their skills particularly well in design and technology, for example, when weighing and measuring in food technology, positioning their designs accurately in textiles and tessellating some aspects. In graphics, measuring angles is significant, proportion and perspective are used successfully in art. Pupils in physical education calculate the heart rate before and after exercise and data are well presented in geography, both pictorially and by graphs. The absence of a policy for numeracy across the curriculum limits further development.
- 17 Pupils develop satisfactory skills in word processing. They know how to use spreadsheets and present information in the form of graphs and charts. Insufficient resources limit the progress pupils make in control technology. Apart from history and occasional applications in other subjects information technology is not used widely across the curriculum. Although many pupils have computers at home and use them for homework and projects, in most subjects they do not use information and communication technology sufficiently in school.

## **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

- 18 Pupils' attitudes towards learning are invariably positive. The response of pupils was never less than satisfactory in ninety five per cent of lessons observed, was good or better in three quarters and very good in one quarter. Pupils are attentive listeners who respond well to questioning and frequently make interesting and perceptive contributions to lessons. Their interest and concentration are well sustained and their enjoyment in learning is very evident. They work well on individual tasks and collaborate effectively when engaged in group work and listen carefully to the ideas and opinions of their peers and express their own ideas with confidence. Relationships within classes and groups are productive, good humoured and harmonious. There is, however, a very small minority of pupils whose behaviour in class is, at times, disruptive, usually when tasks are inappropriate or management strategies are inadequate.
- 19 The behaviour of pupils in and around the school is good. The great majority cheerfully observe the school's rules and regulations which are strictly but fairly implemented by staff. Behaviour is carefully supervised at all times. The system of rewards and sanctions which is central to the behaviour policy works effectively. It is aided greatly by the knowledge of their pupils acquired by form tutors and year heads over the three and two year periods they remain together in the lower and upper schools respectively. Pupils are naturally friendly and helpful. They are very open in manner, confident, courteous, and considerate. Movement around the school is orderly. Relationships with teachers and other adults are very good. An impressive sensitivity towards, and interest in the beliefs and views of others, is an important aspect of the very good relationships between pupils.
- 20 The number of exclusions in 1997-98 was twenty four, all of which were for fixed periods. The level of exclusions is falling. The procedures for the exclusion of pupils meet statutory requirements. Bullying is rare but when it occurs the school firmly and openly confronts it. Effective use is made of form time, PSE lessons and assemblies to create a climate in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable and is quickly exposed. Any incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively.
- 21 The school's provision to promote positive attitudes and foster the personal development of its pupils is very good. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities which develop particular interests and aptitudes, for example, in drama, music and sport. The school was awarded a Certificate of Distinction in 1997 and 1998 by 'Education Extra' for an outstanding scheme of after-school activities. Pupils have the opportunity to attend residential courses which foster self-confidence, initiative, independence, team working and social skills. The prefect system and the school council which has elected representatives from each year work effectively. There are opportunities for pupils to become involved in Young Enterprise, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, and a Technology Enhancement programme. All Year 10 pupils have periods of community service and work experience. A Young Carers Support Team currently comprises twelve Year 11 volunteers. A School Community Action Team of pupils from Years 9 and 11 meets on a regular basis with the liaison police officer to discuss accident and crime prevention. Regular visits are made to the theatre, art galleries and museums. Pupils are frequently involved in fund raising activities which they initiate and organise. Overall the opportunities provided for personal development outside the classroom are impressive.

## **Attendance**

- 22 Attendance at the school is very close to the national average and has been subject to gradual improvement over the last few years. At the time of the inspection, the overall attendance was 91.11 percent which is slightly above the national average. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average. There are a few long term absentees dealt with by the Education Welfare Service and a very small number of pupils on register who are taught elsewhere. Holidays taken during term time, some of which are long, also depress the attendance figures.

- 23 The school has developed an effective range of strategies which are assiduously implemented by its staff. The head of upper school collects and analyses weekly attendance data and works closely with an education welfare officer. A weekly bulletin, circulated to staff quotes year and overall attendance figures. Attendance is an important item on the agenda of all staff meetings. A "Hot Spot" sweep was recently made by several members of the education welfare service. Merit certificates are awarded for one hundred percent attendance and the name of the form with the best weekly attendance is prominently displayed in the school entrance foyer. Parents are kept well informed of their child's attendance.
- 24 Registration is carried out efficiently and promptly at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. The school meets all statutory requirements relating to the recording of attendance. Lessons begin and end on time allowing for the long treks necessary between some classes. A very small minority of pupils are not punctual.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

- 25 Teaching is satisfactory in almost all lessons. It is good and better in nearly two thirds, and very good or better in nearly a fifth. The proportions of good, very good and satisfactory teaching are broadly similar at both key stages. These figures represent a significant improvement in teaching since the last inspection. The most effective teaching is in drama, modern foreign languages (German), design and technology (textiles) and religious education but there is good teaching in all subjects.
- 26 Teaching is slightly better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4, but as Year 11 was preparing for trial examinations lessons were focused on review of earlier learning rather than stimulating introductions to new material. However, there is some very good teaching in Key Stage 4. For example, in history and geography with low sets in Year 11 teachers show excellent class management skills and expert subject knowledge which inspire confidence in the pupils as they prepare for their examinations. In German lessons, exemplary use of the foreign language, rigour and a good balance of speaking, listening, reading and writing activities stimulates very good progress. In all these very good lessons, teachers draw on their knowledge to extend pupils' thinking and develop their creative skills as in art. Very good relationships coupled with regular assessment of the progress which pupils make during the lesson maintains the momentum and leads pupils forward. Similarly, confident and seemingly effortless management of pupils in Key Stage 4, Year 10 lessons with low sets in history and the expert use of teacher - produced resources, stimulate good progress. Almost all lessons are very well planned and carefully matched to pupils' interests and levels of attainment with the exception of Key Stage 3 lessons in art. Good challenges support and extend pupils' progress in design and technology (textiles) and well planned homework complements and extends the work pupils do in lessons. Teachers are skilled at drawing out pupils' opinions as in religious education. High expectations and very good teaching of evaluation skills produce high standards in drama. Some teaching has very lively interactions and a real sparkle. In a lesson in art, for example, where Year 10 pupils were attempting their first piece of course work, the class was a hive of activity. The teacher's love of the subject shone through and probing and challenging questions and interventions extended the skills of pupils of all levels of attainment in their chosen projects. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 4 occurs mainly in lessons where there is insufficient use of the foreign language in French, or when low level tasks in design and technology reduce interest and slow progress in some lessons where pupils set their own pace. When the non-specialist teacher is insufficiently supported by appropriate resources to cover a lesson, as in mathematics, class management becomes difficult and progress slows.
- 27 In lessons at both key stages where subject teachers do not modify the targets set in the Individual Education Plans of pupils with special educational needs, their progress is hindered.

- 28 Teaching at Key Stage 3 has very many strengths. The knowledge and understanding of teachers is very secure and is used to enrich the detail of lessons. For example, in art, pupils are taught to understand how artists influenced each other and to use the techniques they developed to improve their own efforts. Very clear purposes are stated for the lessons and pupils understand clearly that high expectations are placed upon them. Several teachers create a real partnership in learning, for example, in English lessons teachers work with pupils orally to discover together the key points about the language they explore. Teachers use praise well to reward and motivate their pupils. Those pupils who lack confidence are given very good support. Teaching is calm and efficient: homework is related closely to the work in hand so that pupils are prepared well for the next lesson.
- 29 The very few unsatisfactory lessons at Key Stage 3 have a slow start and occasionally teachers show little understanding of the range of strategies needed to teach the subject. Sometimes tasks are presented too briskly so that pupils do not have enough time to grasp what is required. On occasion, a kindly and patient approach manages pupils well but does not develop the skills in the subject sufficiently and reduces the challenge offered. Where low attaining pupils have more than one teacher for the same subject their progress is sometimes slowed.
- 30 Overall, however, teaching at both key stages is good: strengths far outweigh weaknesses.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

- 31 The curriculum review since the last inspection has resulted in positive changes which have addressed the issues raised at that time. The pattern of the school day has been changed to give a more efficient structure of five hourly lessons and allows for a better use of lesson time in most subject areas. All statutory requirements are now fulfilled although the current arrangements for information technology (IT) do not ensure that it is used extensively across the curriculum.
- 32 At Key Stage 3, the curriculum is broad and balanced and it is accessible to all pupils including those with special educational needs. All subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education and personal and social education are provided. From year 8, pupils may study a second modern foreign language or further their performance arts interests in drama as well as enhancing their literacy skills. However, the opportunity to study a second modern foreign language is restricted to those with average or good linguistic attainment. Apart from the Year 7 module pupils studying the second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9 are unable to study drama within the timetable. Time allocation for subjects is generally appropriate although that allocated to religious education and physical education is slightly low. The introduction of dance has enhanced the physical education curriculum and the opportunities in the performing arts.
- 33 At Key Stage 4 National Curriculum requirements are also fully met. The curriculum continues to offer breadth for all, particularly since the introduction of the imaginative vocationally based courses into the options system. Effective alternative forms of accreditation exist along side GCSE courses. These include close and effective links with Preston College to provide National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) modules and credits in catering, construction, and hairdressing. As well as Certificates of Achievement in several areas, for example, Life Skills, the school provides short courses in information technology, religious education and modules which are a part of General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in health and social care. The art curriculum has been extended to include ceramics in spite of the decrease in time available for the subject in Key Stage 3.
- 34 Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and is good for pupils at Key Stage 4 where the introduction of vocational courses serves to enhance the quality and range of the curriculum available.

- 35 A strength of the school is the detailed and comprehensive programme of personal and social education which incorporates health education, drugs awareness and sex education. The well planned units of study are appropriate to pupils' ages and stages of development. Throughout the school it is taught effectively by the co-ordinator with a team of other teachers. Their work is often enhanced by the visits of external agencies such as the police, medical professionals and representatives of organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Pupils are well prepared for option choices. The good, comprehensive careers guidance and education programme within the school is much valued by pupils. This programme benefits from the quality support of the independent careers service, college liaison and the strong links with industry which include work experience, the British Aerospace Partnership and membership of the Technology Enhancement Programme.
- 36 The school liaises well with the primary schools from which pupils come. Through the 'taster days' there is some opportunity for curriculum as well as pastoral liaison. Curriculum links, however, do not yet focus specifically on planning for continuity in learning. The links with local colleges are well established and ensure a smooth progression from Key Stage 4 to post-16 courses. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 37 Long term curriculum planning and schemes of work are good. The planning for three levels of attainment assists in ensuring continuity and progression within each subject area for pupils of all abilities, although it is not applied consistently in all subjects. Although short term planning is generally satisfactory the relatively high incidence of split classes at Key Stage 3 and in some cases in Key Stage 4 affects planning and progression particularly in lower sets where it mainly occurs.
- 38 Across the school, many staff work hard to provide a very full and varied programme of extra-curricular activities which enriches the pupils' school experiences. Activities and clubs are linked to subjects, and there is an extensive and well-balanced programme of sport which is open to all as well as a very wide range of music and drama. Participation rates are high and carefully monitored. Off-site visits include school journeys abroad, water sports and theatre visits. The Comenius Project involves the school in a valuable joint history study with schools in Germany and Belgium. The school has very strong community links and has a programme of involvement with special schools, Senior Citizens and other organisations.
- 39 Since the last inspection the school has made very good progress in improving its overall strategic planning. Curriculum policy is now well formulated and co-ordinated successfully through the school development board and actively promoted through the curriculum team leaders. Unresolved issues from the last report include the split classes which are a result of timetabling and the still underdeveloped cross-curricular aspect of information and communication technology.
- 40 The school now has a sound assessment policy, recently reviewed, with clear guidelines on assessment, marking, recording, reporting and homework. These whole school procedures assist departments positively in formulating and implementing their own policies. There are also efficient systems in place to collect data about pupils' attainment on entry and at the end of the key stages.
- 41 Pupils' academic and pastoral progress is monitored well through a variety of systems. Key mechanisms include annual examinations in all curriculum areas, end of subject unit tests, interim reports which include grades on attainment, and annual reports involving target setting. An effective system involves parents in oversight of pupils' progress through homework diaries which are a good means of informal communication between home and school. Additionally at Key Stage 4 pupils' progress is tracked consistently and those identified as underachieving are mentored regularly by teachers. Further tracking of pupils' progress across Key Stage 3 is identified for development in the school plan.
- 42 The clear and detailed framework for reviewing the progress of those pupils with special educational needs ensures that statutory requirements are met, however, targets for individual pupils need to be more specifically tailored to particular subject areas and individual progress against these targets carefully monitored.

- 43 Pupils' performance in both classwork and homework is assessed satisfactorily in all curriculum areas. The whole school marking policy is helpful in informing the work of the departments but there are some inconsistencies in relation to the quality and frequency of written comments. Consistent good practice occurs in history where pupils' work is monitored very regularly to identify good and poor progress. In music, assessment is carefully integrated into the well constructed units of work. Departments are making steady progress in relating their assessments to national curriculum and examination criteria and teachers' assessments are generally accurate. Pupils understand their performance well in relation to systems within the departments and across the school.
- 44 The reporting system to parents meets statutory requirements. The new annual reports to parents provide improved information although the comments on attainment in subjects are not specific enough. Comments are general rather than linked to progress in a particular subject. The short and effective interim reports give grades across all subjects.
- 45 Since the last inspection the school has made substantial improvement in reviewing its practice on assessment, recording and reporting. However, the effects of the whole school marking policy are not yet fully evident in a few curriculum areas such as, mathematics and modern foreign languages where day-to-day marking is not sufficiently detailed to improve progress.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- 46 The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual development. All subjects identify opportunities which they can offer to pupils. Parents testify to the breadth of education and support for pupils' personal development which the school offers. No pupils are withdrawn from religious education or collective worship. The Acts of Collective Worship provided for year groups or as tutor groups, provide very good opportunities for pupils to reflect on features of Christianity and world faiths, celebrations, festivals and seasons of the year. The week of the inspection was the first week of Advent. Teachers, supported by materials produced centrally, gave pupils opportunities to reflect on the phenomenon of waiting and the plight of the homeless. All pupils considered what real giving means and how to refute the pressure to adopt materialistic values. Many pupils were stimulated to imaginative enterprises. One group, who heard the true story of a terminally ill person who usually helped with 'Crisis at Christmas' suggested that they should raise funds to provide the homeless with a good meal in her stead.
- 47 Many subjects open pupils' eyes to spiritual and moral issues. For example, in art, pupils are encouraged to sense the spiritual in their own creative endeavours: a quotation in one room invites pupils to consider the arts as 'the gymnasium of the soul'. In history teachers are aware that religion is a major theme in the curriculum they teach. They present explicit ethical issues surrounding slavery, racism or war and its futility and aftermath, for example, when considering the Holocaust. The school participates in the European Comenius project which gives pupils opportunities to examine the perspectives of Belgian and German students on the Second World War and compare them with their own viewpoints. In and around the school, art displays and records of the pupils' work in the community lift and show the potentialities of the human spirit. Religious education allows pupils to encounter awe and wonder, for example, in considering the Muslim concept of Allah or the attributes of God in Christian scripture as One who loves, forgives and redeems. The spiritual quality of some drama teaching is impressive and captivates pupils.

- 48 Moral development is promoted well. Responsibility is emphasised. The school's Code of Conduct, prominently displayed in all classrooms, acts as a good practical support. Those pupils who keep the code well are rewarded by certificates. When other pupils find difficulty, their parents are informed and the school gives clear details of the subjects in which the pupil needs to work harder to fulfil the code. Pupils know right from wrong. In many lessons, they consider the impact of moral decisions. For example, in science they are made aware of the impact of genetic engineering on human society. In this subject, and in personal and social education, pupils are given good opportunities to develop personal values through lessons in sex education and drugs and health education. An outstanding range of sporting activities in the curriculum and beyond, provides good examples of fair play; how to play hard and when to lose graciously to better opponents. In musical activities, pupils have many opportunities to play as ensembles, appreciating the need to listen, to co-operate actively and to acquire the full discipline of performance. They share their musical skills with people in the community, for example, through major termly productions and concerts to entertain the elderly and others in the locality.
- 49 Pupils are given good opportunities to take responsible social roles in the school community and in wider society. They act effectively as prefects, supporting those younger than themselves well, for example, in marshalling the dinner queue or helping to supervise pupils around the building. Older pupils support younger ones in the paired reading scheme and in developing their spelling. Others, largely girls, take part in a Young Carers Initiative designed to give friendly support to those pupils who care for disabled relatives or friends. A well conceived personal and social education programme offers good teaching on social problems, such as bullying and drug awareness. Many activities help pupils to develop a strong sense of what it means to be a responsible citizen. Pupils in Year 10 are engaged in community service once a week. They give good service whether working with the elderly who live in sheltered housing or helping pupils from a nearby special school who visit once a week to share in meals and activities in the Fulwood school community. The school celebrates its wide and diverse community and the contributions of its various ethnic heritages and faiths. Very good music, drama and art provision opens the eyes of pupils to the world wide contributions of their own and other cultures and fosters aesthetic development strongly. Religious education makes good provision for pupils to appreciate and respect other world faiths and to value the cultural heritages from which they sprang. A strong feature of the provision is seen in the way each group accepts the strengths of its cultural identity and understands how to contribute to the wider good.
- 50 Overall, the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

- 51 Pastoral support and guidance is a strength of the school.
- 52 The procedures for monitoring the progress and development of pupils are very good. Good records for each pupil are kept which contain their annual interim progress reports and a detailed end of year report. A Record of Achievement is built up over the years and provides an impressive history of a pupil's school life and development containing merit awards, achievement certificates, action plans, work experience reports and other activities. Form tutors and year heads retain the same group for three years during the lower school and two years during the upper school. The form tutor is an integral part of the pastoral system and monitors behaviour, progress and personal development. The behaviour management procedures are soundly based on a range of rewards and sanctions which are clearly understood and accepted by pupils. The Code of Conduct is supported well. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good and meticulously observed by staff. A considerable amount of time is spent by staff in monitoring pupils' progress and attendance and pursuing absentees in accordance with the school's procedures.



- 53 The support provided for each year's new intake is very good. It begins when pupils are in Year 5 with a primary workshop day. Year 6 pupils take part in a curriculum enrichment day in the autumn and an induction day during the summer term. The new intake arrives one day before other pupils at the start of the academic session: a day devoted to induction and familiarisation with the school's routines. A well conceived and effectively delivered PSE programme offers sound support in key areas such as health, sex and drugs education, safety, self awareness and bullying. The school nurse offers good support through a drop-in centre over one lunch period and contributes effectively to the teaching programme. Careers education and guidance are very good: they are well organised and well resourced. They make a very valuable contribution to the options choice procedures during Year 9 and at sixteen plus. The tutor period on three mornings after registration is available for individual support and counselling. The school has well established systems for mentoring Year 11 pupils and is seeking to develop cross-phase mentoring, using former pupils now at college, as well as peer mentoring. Support in reading and spelling is provided for Year 7 and 8 pupils by Year 11. The support offered by the school to pupils with special educational needs is good. Effective use is made of a variety of support agencies.
- 54 Child protection procedures follow the LEA guidelines correctly. A designated member of staff is responsible for implementing those procedures. Careful records are maintained. Staff, including the school nurse, have received good in service training, know the procedures well and remain very alert. The school has very productive working relationships with social services and the education welfare service. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory overall except in aspects of science and design and technology. A health and safety committee meets each term and has representatives from most areas in the school. Annual risk assessments were not available for all aspects of work in science and physical education. Twelve members of staff hold current first aid certificates. Fire drills are held regularly each term. Electrical equipment, fire alarms, fire extinguishers and gymnasium equipment are maintained safely with the help of external experts.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

- 55 The school's links with the community are strong.
- 56 Information provided for parents is of a good standard. It is comprehensive and well presented. The school prospectus is colourful and attractive and meets statutory requirements. Each year parents receive an interim progress report and an end of year report recording a pupil's progress and achievements. Records of Achievement document the pupils' personal development and cover the whole range of activities in which they participate. Pupils and parents are kept well informed about choices at Years 9 and 11. The Governors present a comprehensive annual report to parents which meets statutory requirements. The majority of parents check homework diaries conscientiously and involve themselves with option choices in Years 9 and 11. They attend parents' evenings in substantial numbers and the active Parent Teachers Association raises funds very effectively to support pupil learning by enhancing school resources. Parents, as was made very clear at the meeting with the registered inspector, are highly supportive of the school.
- 57 There is an impressively wide range of valuable links with the local community which contribute very effectively to the school's curriculum and to the pupils' development. Pupils go out into the community providing concerts and carol services, collecting for charity, linking with a sheltered housing scheme and working in residential homes, primary and special schools. They enter many sports competitions and music festivals, some of which the school hosts. Regular visits are made to local and regional theatres. The school enters many community competitions such as those organised by diverse bodies such as the Fire Brigade, the Trading Standards Department and the Rotary Club.

- 58 The school's links with the local business community are also very extensive. Local businesses provide mentors for the Young Enterprise scheme and personnel for industry days and careers conventions. A School's Partnership Project enables pupils to attend an industrial training centre throughout the year. In the most recent project pupils helped to develop a device which had been commissioned by a local hospital for adding drugs to a saline drip. The two week work experience for Year 10 pupils relies upon the willing co-operation of local businesses and on the commitment of the local Education Business Partnership which organises the work placements. External speakers make important contributions to PSE lessons.
- 59 Liaison with primary schools is very well developed and effective. The process is directed by a dedicated and highly experienced head of lower school who visits the primary schools regularly and organises the transfer of information and a range of activities linking the two sectors. The school facilities are made readily available to primary schools and are used to promote curriculum enrichment days for Year 6 pupils in areas nominated by the primary school. The school is seeking actively to develop its information technology links with its contributory primary schools. The well developed links with a nearby college of further education which provides NVQ courses make a valuable contribution to careers education and choices. The college is assisting the school in the introduction of cross-phase mentoring.
- 60 A well produced and informative newsletter produced each half-term keeps parents and the wider community well informed about new developments.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

- 61 The headteacher's vision and commitment provide highly effective leadership. The school is very successful in its aims to accord to all full equality of opportunity and to encourage all pupils to develop their full academic, physical and intellectual potential. It is also highly successful in promoting the personal and social development of pupils.
- 62 At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher had been in post for only four months when, with the governing body, she faced the task of leading the formulation of the action plan. There was no development plan on which to build. The school focused closely on the priorities set for it as key issues for action in the last report, and the development plan created has directed school improvement successfully since 1994. Good systematic leadership from the governors, headteacher, her deputies and all staff have led the school forward. The school is very well led and managed efficiently.
- 63 The school's current development plan is succinct. Responsible personnel are listed and deadlines set. Costs are shown only where these are additional to the staff time deployed to complete developments, and the planning year is still separate from the financial year. It is therefore difficult to judge the full cost of developments precisely, even though the school monitors its progress assiduously and knows where development is needed and where it has been successful. Its spending is correctly directed to educational priorities.
- 64 In the period before the last inspection, many departments behaved autonomously and the implementation of whole school policies was erratic. Much more consistency is now present; departments and subjects now plan their work in line with school priorities. The establishment of curriculum team leaders provides better management of groups of subjects, more cohesion and better communication between the senior management team and the heads of subject and year. The cycle of management meetings is carefully planned to ensure that communication is rapid but bureaucracy is reduced to a minimum. Policy is generated through the School Development Board, consisting of the headteacher and the two deputy headteachers, a senior teacher, the five curriculum team leaders, heads of upper and lower school, the SENCO and the staff development co-ordinator. The board has proved very effective in monitoring and developing the curriculum and helping the school to focus closely on raising attainment.

- 65 There are good arrangements for the general monitoring and review. An established programme ensures that teaching is observed at regular intervals. A focus for observation is agreed between the teacher and the monitor and the records kept ensure that staff development needs can be identified and pursued. Using the information about attainments on entry, each department reviews its examination performance and sets targets for improvement which are monitored annually. The school manager has full oversight of administrative and support staff, and provides good quality induction and training as needs are identified. Management support for the evaluation of teaching and curriculum development has contributed significantly to the improvement in teaching and in maintaining standards of attainment.
- 66 The development of the programme for pupils with special educational needs lies principally with the co-ordinator, who has worked very hard to put in place detailed arrangements for review of pupils' needs. However, the roles and responsibilities of subject staff are not identified sufficiently clearly. There are no subject plans to indicate how the general targets in the pupils' individual education plans are modified to help them make best progress in a particular subject.
- 67 The school's aims and values are reflected in the remarkable calm, purposeful and optimistic ethos of the school. Days generally get off to a good start, with sincere acts of collective worship often linked to a celebration of achievement, and a consideration of the needs of others. Excellent links with the local and wider community greatly enrich the work of the school, and set it into the context of service to the everyday world. Very good, but unobtrusive pastoral support focuses closely on the needs and potential of individuals and successfully promotes high standards of attainment and behaviour. The outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities which is greatly appreciated by parents, pupils and the community is a further enrichment of school life. Relationships at all levels are very good. Pupils of all backgrounds and differing ethnic heritages enjoy a good quality of education and a breadth of experience of lasting value.

#### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

- 68 The school has sufficient well qualified and experienced staff to teach the curriculum. The match between teachers' qualifications and first subjects taught is good overall; where non-specialist teaching occurs teachers are generally well supported. The technology department is, however, in need of an additional teacher to teach textiles. Staff are deployed equitably across the age and ability ranges and the spread of non-contact time is carefully managed. The pupil-teacher ratio is relatively high at 17.9 and the contact ratio is a little higher than average but the school is committed to keeping middle and lower attaining sets small in order to strengthen the degree of support for these pupils. Since the last inspection, the school has sought to reduce the incidence of split classes. However, some split classes still operate, particularly at Key Stage 3. For the most part, split deployments are managed carefully although in some instances continuity in learning and progression are compromised. In art, the teaching commitments of the staff in other areas of the curriculum put some pressure on the head of department to maintain even rates of progress and continuity in learning. Overall, the school's complement of non-teaching staff provides valuable support for the curriculum. There is, however, no technician support for art and too little technician support time for science, technology and IT. Provision of special support assistants for SEN is satisfactory. The school's administrative and clerical staff provide the school with a balanced and efficient service although there is a need for increased administrative support for special educational needs.
- 69 Staff morale is good and responsibility allowances are allocated fairly and in accordance with the school's pay policy. Arrangements for staff development and INSET are thorough and represent an improvement since the previous inspection. Staff development planning takes into account both individual and whole school needs. The arrangements for the appraisal of teachers are good. Appraisal targets are linked firmly to staff and school development. The criteria for approving and allocating INSET are clear and well understood. Attention has been focused on such areas as raising standards, target-setting and benchmarking which are central to the realisation of whole-school targets. Staff development records are detailed and show careful monitoring of the effectiveness of provision in order to ensure that the school obtains value for money. Induction arrangements for teachers new to the school and for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are good. The school also has separate induction procedures for its non-teaching staff, in accordance with its policy on equal opportunities.
- 70 The school makes full use of its available accommodation which is well maintained by the site-management

team. Accommodation is fit for purpose overall and there is a good range of specialist facilities. The first phase of the design technology refurbishment and upgrade is now complete and has resulted in pleasantly enhanced provision for pupils. Departmental accommodation is satisfactory overall and the school has tried to allocate subject teaching rooms close together where possible in order to improve communication and efficiency. In some subjects there are problems which are not easy to overcome. In art, for example, the distance between rooms causes organisational difficulties and affects progress. The non-specialist room is too small for the kind of practical work carried out within it. The graphics room provides a poor learning environment and posed a number of health and safety hazards which the school began to address during the week of the inspection. The physical education changing rooms are in a poor condition but the school has this matter in hand. Since the last inspection much has been done to improve the quality of display which is now good in most areas. Teachers have worked hard to ensure that the learning environment is as bright and attractive for pupils as they can make it and there are stimulating and educative displays of work at every turn.

- 71 Since the previous inspection the school has introduced a formula-funded approach to the allocation of resources. This is effective and departments generally receive appropriate levels of capitation to service the curriculum. Departments may also bid for additional resources when funds are available and must ensure that their bids accord with priorities in their development plans or with whole school priorities. Overall, departments have sufficient resources to teach the National Curriculum although some of the mathematics resources and science equipment need upgrading. Across the subjects of the curriculum resources have been well chosen and the amount spent on books is appropriate. Text books are of good quality and are carefully matched to pupils' learning needs. The ratio of pupils to computers is satisfactory and the school has upgraded its IT facilities appreciably in recent years, including the installation in 1997 of a multi-media network. Better planned access for the school's IT provision is essential to increase the use of information and communication technology in all subjects.
- 72 Since the previous inspection much has been done to improve library provision. The library is small for the size of the school but it is very well maintained and efficiently run. Staff have worked hard to make it pleasant and welcoming. During the inspection the library was invariably working to capacity and providing pupils with a very good level of service. There is scope further to increase the range and quantity of the non-fiction stock but the fiction section is very comprehensive and includes a good range of titles for each age-group. Borrowing rates are monitored and, increasingly, the library is being used to promote such important initiatives as the 'National Year of Reading' and to host book-related events such as talks by authors. There are clear aims for the library and a good library development plan. It is open each lunchtime for borrowing and is also available for individual and class research. Each Tuesday, the library is open from 3.30 - 5.00 p.m. for borrowing and for the homework club. There are profitable links with the local school library service and pupils are able to exercise responsibility by becoming library monitors.

### **The efficiency of the school**

- 73 The school is efficiently managed. Strategic planning is clearly mapped within the school development plan which contains realistic targets, timescales and personnel responsible for over-seeing the items within it. Given that the plan has a three year time span, an increased use of performance indicators and stronger links with the budget are needed to improve it further as a management tool and to make the relationship between planning, financial outlay and subsequent outcomes more visible for staff and governors. Departmental development planning has improved since the previous inspection but some plans, for example in history, are currently more detailed and effective than others.

- 74 Governors receive regular financial updates and manage the school's financial affairs very systematically. The budget surplus at the end of the 1997-98 financial year was inflated by a number of factors including a major utilities refund, rate reductions and changes in the arrangements for funding supply costs. Money was also reserved to service matching bids in the event of the school being successful in attracting extra funding. Teaching staff costs are higher in the current financial year and include an increased element to cover long-term illness. Current estimates indicate that the budget surplus at the end of the current financial year should be between two and four per cent of the total. The school makes good use of grants to support its work; a £100,000 capital grant enabled the governors to complete the first phase in the refurbishment of the technology accommodation. The school makes effective use of funding available to enhance provision for pupils with special educational needs. Financial controls are strong and the most recent auditors' reports have been favourable with very few items for attention. Daily oversight of the school's finances and the effective application of the Local Education Authority's guidelines on purchasing and value for money are managed efficiently by the School Manager.
- 75 Generally, the school makes satisfactory use of its staff and of its available resources and accommodation. Since the previous inspection the length of lessons has been reviewed and increased to 60 minutes. However, the incidence of split classes is still too high, particularly at Key Stage 3. Capitation is used wisely and allocated by formula funding supplemented by a bidding process. The school is firmly committed to raising standards and has made attainment the central target in its planning for the next three years. Target-setting and monitoring of pupils' progress are proving to be very successful parts of the school's strategy to boost attainment for all pupils.
- 76 Pupils enter the school with below average attainments. By the time they leave the school their attainments are lifted to the national average. The school has maintained its standards with a population which includes more pupils with special educational needs than at the last inspection. Teaching is good. A good quality education is being provided at broadly average costs. When the use that the school makes of its finance and resources is considered against a background of moderate unit costs, and in the context of the standards achieved by pupils, the school is providing good value for money.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

- 77 The 1998 National Curriculum tests results in English, held at the end of Key Stage 3, were substantially better than those obtained in recent years and represent a marked improvement on the 1997 scores. The proportion of pupils achieving level 5 and above in the tests was a little below the national average, but was much closer to it than in the previous two years. When these results are compared with those obtained in similar schools, they are above average. The number of pupils who performed more highly in the tests, at level 6 and above, was also above average when compared with similar schools. GCSE results in 1998 in English and in English literature maintained a rising trend. In 1996, the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A\*-C in English language was below the national average. In 1997, results in this category surpassed the national average. The 1998 results in English language represented a further improvement and were high when compared with those obtained by similar schools. Results in GCSE English literature were below the national average at grades A\*-C in 1996, above it in 1997 and further improved in 1998. Results at A\*-G have been consistently above the national average in both subjects in recent years. In the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, and in GCSE English examinations, girls at Fulwood score more highly than boys, in line with the national trend. However, in the 1996 and 1997 GCSE examinations boys performed well in both subjects when compared with boys' performance nationally. In the 1998 examinations, boys continued to achieve results in excess of the national expectation but, in this most recent year, girls' performance was appreciably higher, a feature of the particular year group.
- 78 Standards on entry to the school are a little below average. During Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress and, by the end of the key stage, reach standards which are broadly in line with the national average. Higher attainers make good progress, a judgement which is reflected in the more recent National Curriculum test results. In Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and, by the end of the key stage, reach standards which are above the national expectation. Progress is better across the full ability range at Key Stage 4 because provision is matched very closely to the learning needs of all pupils. At Key Stage 3, the units of work are devised individually by teachers and there is some unevenness in the diet received by pupils in different classes. Some of the units are better suited to higher attainers and it is not always easy to adapt them to suit the full ability range. Although progress made in lessons at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and better, unevenness in the application of unit content results in slower progress over a longer period of time for pupils in some sets for middle and lower attainers. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall in both key stages. However, there is a need to develop pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) to include more subject specific language targets. Pupils of Asian heritage make good progress in terms of their prior attainment; they are fully integrated into the life of the school, and their placement in English sets (e.g. pupils grouped by ability) reflects the full spread of attainment. Grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting are well taught, although approaches to the drafting of written work lack consistency. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils have developed their fluency and confidence in reading and are accustomed to shaping their written work to meet the needs of different audiences and purposes.
- 79 Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons are very good and a strength of the department. Lessons are characterised by enthusiasm and levels of concentration are well maintained. Pupils are co-operative and hardworking and in many lessons there is a pleasant buzz of activity and very evident enjoyment of the tasks provided. The quality of relationships is also a strength with pupils showing sensitivity and tolerance in their dealings with one another.

- 80 The quality of teaching in English is good and represents an improvement since the previous inspection. In lessons seen it is never less than satisfactory. Approximately half of the lessons are good and just over one in ten is very good. Lessons are prepared thoroughly, with well organised learning objectives which are almost always shared with pupils. In very good lessons there is a high level of challenge. In one Year 9 lesson, the teacher's effective synthesis of pupils' oral responses on animal experimentation enabled them to become extremely persuasive in their arguments and to extend the quality of debate very markedly. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it appropriately to extend learning. In one lesson, the teacher drew on examples from Urdu, German and Latin to illuminate a point that she was making about language. In some lessons, there is scope to make better use of the full repertoire of activities for speaking and listening. In such instances, teachers tend to control the learning process too closely and constrain the range of pupils' oral responses, thereby reducing the level of challenge. In a few lessons, pupils need to be more independent and do more for themselves. The department's practice of monitoring teaching is good and enables teachers both to develop new competencies and share effective practice. Homework tasks are of good quality and are set regularly.
- 81 Since the previous inspection, the Key Stage 3 schemes of work have been comprehensively revised. They now provide very broad and balanced coverage of the National Curriculum Attainment Targets and reflect the requirements of the Programmes of Study effectively. However, the number of teaching units derived termly from these schemes is too great and makes for some unevenness in the diet received by some pupils. The constant re-working of the units leads to duplication of effort and reduces the scope for evaluating the effectiveness of content and method. There is a need to reduce the number of units and to include more common assignments so that effective comparisons between different classes within each year group can be made. This process will also enable the department to match work more closely to the learning needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. The Key Stage 3 units do, however, have many strengths. Some of the material within them is of very good quality and has led to outstanding work on language variation, media and biographical writing. Some of the extended writing drawn from the highest attainers in Key Stage 4 is outstanding. Curricular provision at Key Stage 4 is a strength. However, the teaching of information technology is under-represented in the work of the department at both key stages. Arrangements for assessment and for the reporting of achievement are good, although there is scope further to extend the use of assessment to inform curricular planning at Key Stage 3. Marking is thorough; it is carried out regularly and is largely constructive in nature. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. The department is making particularly good use of benchmarking and performance data to help monitor pupils' attainment and progress and to enable them to assess value-added factors.
- 82 This is a good department which is well led. Staff work together in good spirit and with considerable enthusiasm. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced and are deployed equitably across the age and ability ranges. There are still a few split classes in English; one class in Year 10 has three different teachers, a factor which works against the department's commitment to secure continuity in learning. Resources are managed effectively and fine displays of pupils' work lift the spirits and provide a showcase for the department's work. Clear aims, policies and careful planning help to ensure that the department maintains momentum in its drive to raise standards. Statutory requirements are met and most of the key areas mentioned in the previous inspection have been improved successfully.
- 83 Literacy is promoted satisfactorily through the subjects of the curriculum. There is scope to increase the use of drafting, although a number of subjects make good use of study-skills to help pupils organise their work. Writing is generally accurate and well extended and in some subjects, such as history. Pupils use a variety of styles to suit specific purposes, for example, when they produce their own 'guidebooks' to Rome. Reading resources are generally adequate and well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils' standards of reading are good, and a paired reading scheme helps to lift the standard of lower attainers. The English department uses book-boxes well to encourage pupils to read more widely and for pleasure. Library staff work hard to ensure that the library is both attractive and accessible, and that it services the full range of reading needs.

## **Drama**

- 84 GCSE results in drama have maintained a rising trend since 1996. In 1997, the percentage of pupils gaining passes at grades A\*-C was above the national average. Results improved in 1998. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades between A\*-B is relatively high with some 40% of pupils achieving these grades in 1997. In lessons in both key stages, pupils' attain standards appropriate for their age and often higher. Pupils make good progress in drama in both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are a little above the national expectation. The department uses benchmarked data and test results to set targets for pupils and to measure the degree of value added to pupils' attainments. Scrutiny of pupils' GCSE point scores indicate that results in drama are among the best in the school. Pupils' files and working notebooks provide evidence of work of good quality in which continuity in learning and progression through the various components of the GCSE drama course are very well sustained. Some of the GCSE improvisations seen in lessons were of a very high quality. A strong evaluative dimension is built into the department's work at both key stages. The way in which pupils are encouraged from the outset to make rigorous evaluations of their work helps to promote the good progress which is made in this subject.
- 85 Pupils' responses in lessons and their attitude to learning represent real strengths of the department. Standards of behaviour are always very good, high levels of concentration are well sustained and pupils are attentive and respectful when others perform. In Key Stage 4, pupils show that they can work independently to a high standard with minimal supervision.
- 86 The standard of teaching is satisfactory and better in all cases. A very high proportion of the teaching is good and very good and a fifth is excellent. Lessons are characterised by very strong subject knowledge and high levels of teacher expectation. Lesson objectives are made explicit for pupils and tasks are carefully organised and well focused. In the best lessons, the level of challenge was most marked. In one lesson, a group of Year 7 pupils were totally engrossed in what they were doing and strengthened a whole range of drama skills in the space of a single period. Pupils handled a small imaginary animal with compassion and sensitivity. This activity was sustained throughout by the teacher-in-role of exceptional quality; his use of voice was captivating and the pupils were held in the drama by the excellence of the teaching. There was a real sense of awe and wonder in this session and a spiritual quality to the experience.
- 87 The drama curriculum is well managed. Schemes of work are carefully conceived and ensure that provision is balanced and effective for all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs. There is scope further to open out the range of possible outcomes in the Key Stage 3 schemes to provide more guidance to those English teachers who are developing their skills in drama teaching. Simple research exercises might profitably be included for homework at Key Stage 3. Arrangements for the assessment, recording and reporting of achievement are good. There are productive links between drama and other subjects of the curriculum, including English, history, music and PSE. Drama adds significantly to pupils' personal and social development. In addition, it makes a very strong contribution to their spiritual, moral and cultural development, not least through the range of extra-curricular activities provided. The department has staged some 33 major productions since 1979 and has helped to strengthen community links through its involvement of parents and friends of the school. This is a successful and enterprising department which is committed to the pursuit of high standards for its pupils.

## **Mathematics**

- 88 Attainment is satisfactory in mathematics overall. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment over several years has been close to the national average. Results in the 1998 tests show further improvement. Pupils' attainment in the tests is well above average at level 5 for pupils in similar schools and also well above average at level 6 for pupils in similar schools. Teachers' assessments in mathematics at Key Stage 3 are slightly generous for pupils of all levels of attainment. The 1998 results show boys attaining better than girls at both level 5 and level 6. When compared with other curriculum areas, results in mathematics are just below the average for the school, although for boys, results are better than the average. At Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE mathematics is consistently just above the national average for mathematics. The 1998 results again show a slight improvement.



- 89 Attainment, as observed in lessons at Key Stage 3, is satisfactory and sometimes better. It is appropriate and generally well matched to the prior attainment of the pupils. In a Year 9 lesson on solids, for example, the crisp discussion on cross-sections and prisms related to everyday objects, extended pupils of higher attainment very well. In a Year 7 lesson on congruency and tessellation, the practical activities and good use of language enhanced the attainment of average and lower attaining pupils. Where attainment in lessons is satisfactory and better at Key Stage 4, lessons include clear exposition and good pace to focus pupils' attention as in a Year 10 lesson on histograms and in a Year 11 revision lesson on trigonometry and similar triangles. Attainment as observed in written work and lessons is above average in number work and shape and space in Key Stage 3 and good in algebraic skills in Key Stage 4. The present very good leadership and team work within the mathematics department are major contributory factors to the improving standards observed in many lessons.
- 90 On entry to the school the attainment of pupils in mathematics is broadly average as measured by Key Stage 2 data and nationally recognised tests. Pupils of just below average, average and above average attainment make good progress while those with special educational needs make mainly satisfactory progress across Key Stage 3. However, where classes are split between teachers, particularly involving non-specialist mathematics staff, progress is slower. This slower progress is related to a lack of appropriate strategies to enhance the pupils' learning or to a lack of continuity in the presentation of a topic. Overall, at Key Stage 4, progress is satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory and better progress in mathematics as do those with special educational needs. Most pupils of average attainment make satisfactory progress.
- 91 At each key stage, pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. They vary according to teachers' expectations, planning and the pace of lessons. Pupils work co-operatively with each other and with their teachers as in the Year 8 lesson on reflections. Here, pupils of lower attainment were actively involved in recalling work from previous topics and keen to relate this knowledge to the new work. Some take responsibility for their own learning well as in a cover lesson involving Year 11. Most boys but also a few of the girls worked steadily throughout. Pupils respond well to the careful presentation of work and many are keen to talk about their mathematics.
- 92 Except for one in ten lessons teaching is satisfactory. In almost half of the lessons it is good and occasionally very good. All specialist mathematics teachers are well qualified and show good subject knowledge. However, in the case of the non-specialist teachers of mathematics there is less understanding of pupils' needs and especially of their misconceptions in learning mathematics. The best teaching within mathematics is characterised by careful planning, enthusiastic presentation and a variety of strategies for learning as in a Year 8 lesson on rotations where pupils consolidated their learning well through a practical activity. In other lessons, however, there is a lack of tasks matched closely to the needs of some pupils which is not compensated for by the setting arrangements. The attainments of pupils with special educational needs are particularly affected. Much work is based on the text book and pupils spend long periods listening and writing. Key mechanisms for assessing pupils' work include homework, end of unit tests, annual exams and some target setting. However, within lessons the assessment of what pupils learn is often not sufficiently explicit or developed across the department. Work is marked regularly but marking is not always consistent with departmental and school policy nor does it always guide pupils sufficiently on how to make progress. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and show respect and understanding for those in their charge. This is a strength of the department.
- 93 The department is now well co-ordinated and has begun to consider afresh the issues raised in the last inspection and is reflecting on further developments which it has identified. The following issues still merit further attention. Marking is still too variable in quality. Work is not always closely matched to pupils' attainments, particularly for those who have special educational needs. Consideration still needs to be given to ensuring that strategies for learning are more varied and challenging.

94 Pupils use their mathematics in other curriculum areas when they are required to do so. Although many in Key Stage 4 still rely heavily on calculators, most use them sensibly. Number skills are improving in Key Stage 3. In science high attaining pupils are at ease with calculations and algebraic manipulation involving energy equations. Measuring skills are enhanced in design and technology, for example weighing, particularly in food technology, accuracy and tessellations in textiles and angle work in graphics. Year 7 pupils enjoy addition operations involving musical notes. In art pupils work with facial measurements and proportions. In physical education they are able to calculate their heart rates and in geography they represent data pictorially and by graph. However, there is as yet no whole school policy for numeracy across the curriculum.

## Science

95 Attainment in science in both key stages is satisfactory. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 for the last two years were close to the national average. The 1998 results are slightly lower. However, when compared with similar schools results at level 5 and above, and level 6 and beyond were also above the national average. Written work is presented satisfactorily using a variety of methods. Pupils are confident and competent in their use of practical equipment. When taking measurements pupils record their results satisfactorily in tabular form to a suitable degree of accuracy. Pupils know and understand well the main characteristics of mammals, and the difference between elements and compounds. More able pupils describe how particles are arranged in substances of different density. GCSE results for the last three years are also close to the national average. At Key Stage 4 investigative skills are satisfactory. Some pupils do not pay enough attention to the grade criteria which describe how high marks can be achieved. Consequently they underachieve in their coursework which lowers their final GCSE grade. Pupils show a good understanding of energy and chemical reaction rates but average attaining pupils have insufficient understanding of electric circuits.

96 Progress is satisfactory in both key stages. In lessons progress is good at Key Stage 3, always satisfactory and sometimes good at Key Stage 4. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 whether learning about absorption of light, chemical formulae, or classification of animals. At Key Stage 4 they make good progress when investigating the properties of exhaled air, and when revising energy topics. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at least as good as the progress of others in low attaining groups. Their progress is difficult to monitor because their individual education plans do not show how the targets set relate to their work in science. Work suitably modified for pupils with special educational needs is not used sufficiently.

97 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They show interest and often enjoyment in their work. A particular strength is their good behaviour, which gives all pupils good opportunities to learn. They are courteous and form good relationships with each other, and with the teachers. Pupils work well together when carrying out experiments, generally following instructions. Occasionally pupils fail to respond to requests to wear safety goggles. When moving around the laboratory to collect materials and equipment, pupils act responsibly. Opportunities for pupils to show initiative are generally limited to coursework investigations because of the direct approach to teaching.

98 The quality of teaching is a strength of the department. It is never less than satisfactory and is good in seven out of ten lessons. Teaching is slightly better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. All teachers teach their specialist subject and their knowledge and understanding are thorough. Standards of discipline are high. Pupils are managed very well. The expectations of pupils are generally appropriate except when teachers do not make pupils sufficiently aware of the approach required to obtain the highest levels in their coursework. The quality of marking, however, has not improved since the last inspection. Marking often amounts to superficial ticking with very few comments to help pupils improve. Lessons are carefully planned, sometimes using a range of resources and methods. However, teachers rely too heavily on the setting system and work on the same topic needs to be modified to meet the needs of pupils of different attainment.

- 99 Effective procedures are in place for assessing pupils' attainment. These procedures are effective and there is good agreement between teacher assessments and results in National Tests at Key Stage 3. The use of this information to raise attainment by target setting for pupils, and the monitoring of teaching requires further development. Pupils in Key Stage 4 taking Modular Science need to be more aware of the targets for their coursework and final examination. In Key Stage 3 pupils study some important topics such as electricity only once, in Year 7, which is insufficient. Lack of equipment such as computers and measuring sensors limit the use of information technology by pupils to collect data directly from experiments. The planning for pupils' moral and social development is insufficient: the many opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of moral and social issues in science are not always exploited.
- 100 At the time of the inspection the subject was without a head of department. Insufficient technician time, a poorly organised preparation area and a lack of risk assessments for some experiments were hampering the smooth running of the department. The storage of concentrated acids and gas cylinders did not meet health and safety requirements. Accommodation is satisfactory, although some lessons have to be taught out of laboratories.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Art**

- 101 The 1998 GCSE results indicate that attainment was well above the national average for pupils gaining grades A\* to C. This was a significant improvement over the 1997 results and continues the upward trend over the last three years. The attainment of the majority of pupils currently approaching the end of their GCSE course is also higher than the national average. All pupils make good progress over all areas of art in this key stage, and pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. This because teachers have a good awareness of their individual learning needs and match activities to these both in the general art lessons and in the photography course.
- 102 At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment matches the national expectation, and progress is satisfactory. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in practical activities but gain only a limited knowledge of other artists' work. Practical skills and artistic knowledge vary within year groups because what pupils do is too dependent upon how individual teachers interpret the scheme of work. In two Year 9 classes, for example, pupils showed a clear understanding of the process of working from their detailed observational drawings of bicycles and parts of bicycles through to making a screen print of selected, enlarged sections of these. They used colour imaginatively to show shape and pattern. In another three Year 9 classes, however, pupils simply copied the pictures and lettering given to them and followed an inappropriate worksheet. Their drawings were reasonably accurate, but showed little creativity or imaginative use of resources. Their progress was slower than it should have been, and they found difficulty discussing how they might improve their work. As in the last report, pupils make better progress in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. This is too often the result of the lack of effective teacher intervention and planning in Key Stage 3.
- 103 Occasionally, progress is very good. In one Year 8 class, initial observational drawings of insects showed increasing attention to detail as pupils explored the techniques used by other artists when working from natural forms. They used colour, line, pattern and pointillist technique imaginatively to produce designs for wrapping paper and gift tags. Their knowledge of the work of Seurat and of how artists influenced each other was impressive, and they made effective links with their work in music. The teacher skilfully fed in new information continually during the lesson, questioning pupils about why they had chosen particular shapes or colours, and showing them different ways of achieving their intended effects, for example, making the body of a butterfly look furry. Attainment was raised.
- 104 In the majority of lessons, behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to do well. They have very positive attitudes, sharing resources, taking pride in their work, and eagerly discussing what they have learned. Occasionally, when the work they have to do is uninspiring, they lose motivation and noise levels become unacceptable. Pupils gain good spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills and knowledge in art.
- 105 Teaching is satisfactory and better in over nine out of ten lessons. In nearly half it is good and better and in

just over one quarter, it is very good. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, Year 11 pupils were doing their trial examinations, and were managing their own work. The teachers concerned were supervising this appropriately. A feature of the very good lessons in both key stages is the way in which teachers draw on their own considerable knowledge and expertise to extend pupils' thinking and their creative skills. In most Key Stage 3 lessons, however, the planning is insufficiently detailed and lacks clarity as to the purposes of each lesson. There is no agreed approach as to how the scheme of work will be taught and this results in uneven attainment and progress, particularly across Year 9. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, there is an over-reliance on limiting worksheets, resources are insufficient and occasionally classroom management is poor. These lessons lack the sparkle present in better teaching to motivate pupils to do well.

- 106 The curriculum is appropriately planned to ensure continuous learning across both key stages. The schemes also include ceramics on a regular basis. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. However, although all teachers are now working to the agreed themes, insufficient attention has been given to bringing individual planning together to ensure that all classes in a year group have the same quality experiences. This weakness was recognised in the recent monitoring of teaching in the department. The department recognises that insufficient attention is given to learning about other artists and their styles, and to the use of information technology, and has taken appropriate steps to improve these areas. Key Stage 4 pupils visit different art galleries and Key Stage 3 pupils benefit from artists' workshops in school. Assessment procedures are sound in both key stages. Pupils are appropriately involved in setting targets for improvement. Portfolios of pupils' work are being collated, but as yet the work is not labelled to indicate what was expected of pupils, and therefore its use as a moderating tool is limited.
- 107 There are several staffing and accommodation difficulties, which are contributing to the uneven attainment and progress observed. The department has no technician. All teachers teach more than one subject. The head of department teaches very little art because of major work in another subject. Another teacher has major whole-school management responsibilities. There is too much reliance upon an inappropriate worksheet approach. The three art rooms are all some distance from each other making it difficult for teachers to access all resources easily, or to share good practice as they work. The occasional use of a fourth classroom inappropriately limits pupils' work because it lacks basic art facilities. Nevertheless, the department is led by a committed and talented teacher who is leading the department as effectively as she can, providing help and support for the staff whenever possible. The department is fully aware of what needs to be done and has now articulated most of it in the departmental development plan.

### **Design and technology**

- 108 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 matches national expectations except in textiles where it is above. At GCSE in 1998 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* - C was above average in textiles, matched the national average in food technology and graphics and was below it in resistant materials and electronics. During refurbishment in resistant materials, pupils did not have access to workshop facilities for a significant period of time which has restricted opportunities for learning. With the good workshop facilities now in use pupils are making better progress and attaining satisfactory standards.
- 109 Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and good progress in textiles. They learn to use a wide range of hand and machine tools safely and accurately and develop a sound awareness of the design process. At the end of the key stage, pupils understand and follow a design brief to produce work of a quality which is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good.

- 110 In textiles, pupils demonstrate flair and imagination when they are designing products. They have a good sense of colour and texture and make artefacts such as cushions, using quilting and embroidery techniques, often to exceptionally high standards. In food technology, pupils are able to prepare simple dishes. They are aware of basic nutritional needs and how to combine the use of convenience foods and traditional methods of food preparation to accord with modern lifestyles. In resistant materials pupils have a sound understanding of the materials, tools and processes they use, shown for example, when they design and make mechanical toys from wood.
- 111 In most aspects of the subject, pupils continue to make sound progress in Key Stage 4. In textiles they make good progress in designing and making soft furnishing items and clothing, building on their experience from Key Stage 3 to produce high standards of work. They are confident in using machine and hand tools and select appropriate materials and techniques to create the best possible effects. Their understanding and use of surface decoration is of a high order and most pupils design their work with a good degree of independence, having already developed confidence in their abilities to combine skill and creativity. In food technology, pupils become increasingly confident in planning meals to meet the needs and wants of a wide range of consumers, including, for example, food for vegetarians and in the style of a range of other cultures. In resistant materials, pupils build on the skills acquired in Key Stage 3 to produce work of a sound standard in wood, plastics and metals. They know which tools to select and use them safely and accurately. Design skills improve and pupils evaluate their work regularly to identify and implement possible improvements. In graphics lessons, pupils are making satisfactory progress despite starting at a low level because of insufficient experience in Key Stage 3. Technical knowledge and presentation, including use of colour, are improving but fluency in drawing is inadequately developed. In electronics, pupils are making satisfactory progress in learning about components and circuit design. They have a sound understanding of the use of electronic products and can design and construct simple products such as alarm systems. By the end of the key stage, pupils communicate their ideas clearly for coursework projects and present them appropriately. Higher attainers have well developed research skills and demonstrate flair and imagination, especially in textiles.
- 112 Pupils have positive attitudes in lessons. They concentrate well and clearly enjoy their work. They express ideas and opinions confidently and appreciate the opportunities to work creatively on work of their own designs. Most are well behaved in lessons and treat equipment carefully. They have good relationships with each other and with staff and work collaboratively to support each other's progress.
- 113 The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in almost all lessons. In one quarter, it is good and occasionally excellent. A very small proportion of lessons are unsatisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and communicate their knowledge and enjoyment to pupils. They plan lessons well to match the needs and interests of pupils. Although pupils with special educational needs are well supported they are not always provided with work appropriate to their needs. Homework is set regularly to extend learning or to prepare for lessons and teachers give generously of their time to support pupils after school and during lunchtimes. In practical lessons, in food technology particularly, time is managed well to ensure pupils have appropriate experiences in sufficient depth to enable them to make progress. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations and lessons are well structured to build skills and knowledge. Occasionally, pupils are not challenged appropriately and behaviour is not well managed which restricts the progress they make. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and generally pupils are provided with a good range of experience. However, at Key Stage 3, pupils do not have sufficient experience of graphics to prepare them adequately for Key Stage 4 courses or to support their work in other aspects of the subject at both key stages. More time is allocated to the study of resistant materials in Key Stage 3 than to food and textiles technology which restricts progress in these subjects.
- 114 Accommodation for the subject is good except for the graphics room which is unsuitable for the needs of the subject and provides a poor environment for learning. The department has a good range of resources, including newly refurbished workshops for food technology and resistant materials. There are stimulating displays of pupils' work of outstanding quality in the textiles room.

115 Since the last report, there have been significant improvements in the department, particularly in the approach to teaching design aspects of the subject and in the accommodation. The quality of teaching has improved at Key Stage 3 and pupils are now provided with appropriate challenge and work, except in graphics. Effective procedures for monitoring the experience and progress of pupils are now in place and good schemes of work help pupils make continuous progress. Work is assessed relevantly against National Curriculum criteria. However, although the department works co-operatively there is still not a coherent, corporate approach to the subject or its management. Some common strands are evident, for example in the methods of recording pupils' experience and progress, but the subjects still function as separate units. There is a need for greater integration including the introduction of a common departmental development plan so that shared learning aims can be developed to raise standards.

## Geography

116 Attainment overall, at the end of both key stages, is in line with the national average with many pupils in the higher attaining groups achieving above the national expectation. In Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate their good knowledge of the technical language of the subject, for example, through investigation of farming patterns in Britain and show their understanding of the earth's structure by linking regions with volcanic activity to earthquake zones.

117 In the GCSE examinations in 1998, the results at grades A\*-C were slightly below the national average and very similar to the figures for 1997. When all results are considered, however, the figures show an improvement, with all candidates achieving a grade and an increase in the average score of half a grade.

118 Pupils generally make good progress in both key stages. In the majority of lessons, pupil progress is directly linked to the quality of teaching. This is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs, who make satisfactory progress overall. For example, in a lesson with a low attaining set in Year 8, the teachers' high expectations and effective use of questions and resources helped pupils to make very good progress. They consolidated their knowledge of relief and climate and their effects on farming patterns very well.

119 Pupils' attitudes to the work are usually good. They respond well to challenging tasks and take a pride in achieving success in their work. Standards of presentation are good, particularly in mapwork and diagrammatic representations of geographical concepts.

120 Teaching is always of at least satisfactory quality. In nearly three out of five lessons it is good and better and in nearly a fifth, very good, particularly in Key Stage 4. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, give good support to individuals who experience difficulties and make good use of homework to reinforce lessons learned in the classroom. The range of teaching styles, though, is limited and most lessons follow the same basic format with strong teacher direction and limited opportunities for pupil initiative or discussion.

121 The curriculum meets requirements and schemes of work are detailed but flexible, and there is a strong commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but have yet to be fully implemented to involve pupils in assessing their own work, and in setting targets for the future.

122 The department is ably led and is committed to raising standards through a process of steady change and development. Numbers choosing geography at Key Stage 4 are rising again after a period of decline. Development planning needs to be more rigorous and detailed with clear costings and success criteria. Monitoring and moderating procedures are good.

123 The department is well provided with resources, both material and human. All teachers are experienced subject specialists but their deployment is unsatisfactory with a quarter of Key Stage 3 classes taught by more than one teacher, though staff work well together to try to minimise the negative effects of these arrangements.

## History

- 124 History is a very successful department. Its work results in good standards throughout the school. From levels of attainment which are just below the national average on entry, most pupils progress well. Their attainment is already above national expectations by the age of fourteen and this picture is continued at sixteen with GCSE results above the national average for the past four years. Both boys and girls progress well, and the gap between their attainment levels is much less than is usual. In fact, boys did better than girls in GCSE in 1998. The results overall were higher than in 1997, and all gained grades at A\*-G.
- 125 A county survey shows that the rate of progress in history is one of the best in the Local Education Authority in terms of 'added value' from entry. Good progress for most pupils includes those with special educational needs. They are well cared for with many appropriate materials designed for their needs. In their first three years, pupils acquire a sound chronological framework of British history. Most are able to evaluate successfully from a variety of sources and understand the difference between primary and secondary evidence. They construct coherent and extended explanations of historical events at a standard that is good for their age. They support their work with relevant detail and a range of appropriate vocabulary. Written skills advance well during Year 10 and 11. There were some very good examples of extended historical writing to be seen among the examination coursework on economic history. Their fieldwork on Quarry Bank Mill elicits a lively response.
- 126 Generally, pupils enjoy the subject and orally they are confident. Many choose to study GCSE history, and about a third of these each year go on to study A level history at local colleges. Pupils work independently and research skills develop well. Some limitations to their skills arise from the lack of Dewey classification in the library; familiarity with this system is needed when they progress to advanced work, and from poor opportunities to use information technology. However, pupils learn well from the many varied opportunities to consider the ethical aspects of historical topics, such as war and slavery and Victorian factory conditions. They also learn well from educational visits and special occasions such as Holocaust Day and Civil War presentations by a member of the Sealed Knot Society. They work in set groups after their first half term in Year 7, this enables teaching to challenge them well, and their progress is reviewed regularly and carefully monitored.
- 127 The standards achieved in history reflect the quality of teaching received by the pupils. All the teaching is satisfactory, seven out of ten lessons are good and a fifth are very good. Management of classes is always firm and effective with good relationships and a positive approach with plenty of praise and encouragement. The teachers are hard working and committed. Lessons are well planned, generally with a variety of activities to sustain interest. The teachers work hard to prepare appropriate resources for each lesson to supplement the books available. Homework is set regularly with tasks that build on the work in lessons. Marking is usually carefully done so that students know how well they are doing, and what needs to be done to improve. Most of the teaching takes place in specialist rooms with stimulating displays.
- 128 The use of 'project' style work in a few classes does not always use time and the expertise of the teachers as well as possible, but all such occasions are carefully structured and the pupils enjoy them very much. Some very effective strategies to begin and end lessons were seen. At the opening of lessons, previous work was actively reviewed, and at the end some historical anecdote or mystery was used to intrigue students and keep their interest for the next lesson. The best lessons share aims with the students and have a clear focus on skills, so that the pupils are clear about what is expected and how it is to be achieved.
- 129 The department is very well led with raising achievement at the heart of management strategies, and a good vision for the future. The National Curriculum is in place with a chronological development through all the required units. The schemes of work are of good quality, with three editions of each one to meet different levels of attainment. All the expected policies are present, including ones for equal opportunities, and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. Assessment schemes are well organised to track progress and to use the data to inform teaching. Much of this reflects substantial progress in management since the last inspection and this in turn has brought about sustained high standards for the pupils.

## Information Technology

- 130 Attainment at the end of both Key Stages matches national expectations. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the half courses in GCSE matches national averages.
- 131 At Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress in separate information technology lessons. They develop satisfactory keyboard skills and through effectively structured lessons are learning to use computers to word process their work and present it accurately and attractively. For example they write stories which they then illustrate with pictures which they design themselves. Through relevant projects, they learn to use spreadsheets and present information in the form of graphs and charts. They are making satisfactory progress with entering information onto a database linked to work in science for example, and they are learning to carry out simple sorting and searching exercises. Although some basic control technology work is undertaken, pupils make less progress in this aspect due to insufficient resources. By the end of the key stage, pupils use computers confidently. They have competent word processing skills and use a good range of computer applications. They make satisfactory use of graphics, databases and spreadsheets and they have a sound understanding of the wider uses of information technology in society. Knowledge of measurement and control is less well developed. They are beginning to use information technology to support learning in other subjects such as history, for example, when they produce newspaper pages about 'Tudor Times' However, the limited access to computers for most subjects means that such possibilities are not exploited fully.
- 132 Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 during their information technology lessons. They continue to extend their skills and knowledge of most aspects of the subject. As in Key Stage 3, pupils make less progress in control technology due to insufficient resources, although they gain some experience of using interfaces and controlling external devices. By the end of the key stage, pupils have developed the skills and knowledge needed to use computers for a range of purposes to model and present information appropriately. They understand the uses of information technology and select and use appropriate applications for their work in information technology lessons and occasionally in other subjects.
- 133 Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They demonstrate patience and often persevere to solve problems. They take good care of equipment and behave well in lessons. They demonstrate good levels of concentration and enjoy the work, often showing pride in their achievements.
- 134 The quality of teaching is good in half the lessons and satisfactory in the others. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare lessons well to interest and motivate pupils. Pupils are well supported in lessons although not all work is appropriately matched to their different needs, particularly for lower attaining pupils. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and very good class control. Lessons are well managed and teachers expect good standards of work and behaviour. Teachers have a very good understanding of the standards pupils are achieving in relation to National Curriculum and GCSE levels and use this well to improve standards in lessons. The knowledge and experience of information technology of teachers of other subjects varies but many are growing in confidence and have positive attitudes to its use. Currently there is insufficient access to appropriate equipment to support effectively all colleagues who want to develop information technology as a learning tool in their subjects.
- 135 The curriculum meets statutory requirements and basic skills and knowledge of information technology are taught in separate lessons at both key stages. However, as reported in the last inspection, the use of information technology is inadequately developed in cross curricular provision and pupils have too few opportunities to support and extend their learning in other subjects by using it effectively. This is partly because of insufficient appropriate equipment being available to fully meet cross curricular needs and partly because systems have not been designed or developed for subjects to make a planned contribution to the delivery of information technology. The information technology department has begun to develop links with some subjects but there is no fully considered development plan to establish comprehensive cross curricular coverage of the subject. Assessment is well developed and good systems have recently been introduced to monitor the experience and progress of pupils and to link assessment of work to National Curriculum criteria.
- 136 Resources have improved in quantity since the last inspection but some older equipment is becoming out of



date and inadequate to cope with demands. Resources for measurement and control are insufficient to cope with the demands of the curriculum which restricts pupils' progress in this aspect. The recently acquired digital camera is effectively and efficiently used as a means of recording coursework at various stages for assessment and monitoring, particularly for consumables such as food products.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

- 137 Recent results in GCSE French at A\*-C have been at about the national average: a little above in 1996, slightly below in 1997, and improved again in 1998. Pupils generally attain grades in line with their other subjects although boys did less well than in 1997. GCSE French is now taken by a much broader range of pupils than at the time of the 1994 inspection when results were well above the national average. Value-added analysis from the LEA indicates that at the age of 16 pupils now achieve in line with expectations in French, but better than the national average in German. These data were well supported by observation at Key Stage 4 of lessons and other work. Teacher assessment scores at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that in 1997 both boys and girls generally attained levels at or above the national average and that scores improved in 1998; the inspection found attainment in French at Key Stage 3 to be in line with the national standards.
- 138 By the end of and within both key stages, attainment and progress in German are consistently good or very good. In French, they are at the level expected. Progress was seen to be good at Key Stage 3 in almost a third of lessons and poor in one Year 8 group only. Lower attaining pupils in French, some with special educational needs, make variable progress to 14 with good progress noted in one Year 7 and one Year 9 group. Their progress as observed at Key Stage 4 is less satisfactory and hampered by some negative attitudes. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher sets in French make good progress and are on track to achieve well at GCSE higher levels. Girls on the whole achieve better than boys but the difference is no greater than in the majority of schools and often rather less. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils cope very well with understanding and responding to long extracts of largely familiar language spoken at near normal speed. Although pupils in lower groups sometimes find difficulty in going beyond simple instructions, pupils in one Year 9 class, many with difficulties in literacy, concentrated well and managed to grasp quite long sequences of the foreign language.
- 139 Progress in listening is heavily dependent upon the skills and expectations of the teacher in terms of using the foreign language in the classroom. Pupils' accents are generally acceptable but fluency is less well developed. Higher attaining groups mainly achieve well at both key stages. When speaking, they begin to use grammar well and to operate with growing independence. One Year 8 class in French showed good confidence and skills when talking and asking about progress in school subjects. Year 11 classes were mainly involved in revising for imminent GCSE speaking tests and in many cases showed themselves to be very well prepared. By the end of Key Stage 3, a minority of lower attainers in French are able to volunteer phrases from memory, but others have become heavily reliant upon the support of English. Very little further oral progress was observed from classes at this level of attainment during Key Stage 4. Reading is generally a little more developed than as reported in the previous inspection. Pupils usually read at least satisfactorily at both key stages with good use of dictionaries. Some lower set pupils are loaned dictionaries but make little effort to use them. Writing at Key Stage 3 is overall a little above national standards. Reasonable short descriptions are soon apparent in French and there was good work on pets and families by German beginners. By the end of the next key stage, many higher attaining pupils have started to use a range of past tenses in French, with very good course work in German on the theme of holidays, showing good understanding and use of past and future tenses. Knowledge and application of vocabulary and grammar is variable at both key stages: consistently good in German but largely below average in French outside the higher sets.

- 140 As at the last inspection, most pupils at both key stages work hard and behave well. Positive attitudes are shown in the substantial majority of lessons with good levels of attention, pupils always on task, and responsible behaviour and respect when working together on activities. Good work was often observed even when the supervision was kept to minimal levels. Many pupils use reference sources sensibly and comfortably. Some pupils in higher sets are rather restrained in their enjoyment but respond to encouragement. Lower sets show variable interest and in two lessons there were examples of very negative attitudes and reluctance to participate. Very little actual work was completed during those lessons. Most pupils, however, are beginning to show a growing sense of responsibility by the end of Key Stage 3, and much maturity by the time Year 11 is reached.
- 141 Teaching is at least satisfactory in over four fifths of lessons, and good or very good in over half. Lessons at Key Stage 4 are a little more successful than those at Key Stage 3. All the German lessons were good or very good. Those in French were mainly satisfactory, but with significant shortcomings in about half of those involving average and below average attaining pupils, some with special educational needs. In the more successful lessons, there was sometimes almost exemplary use of the foreign language pitched at a level which gave access yet challenged; good pace and variety; clear objectives carefully planned to meet different needs and to ensure progress. Such lessons show high but realistic expectations; a clear grasp of National Curriculum requirements and very good questioning techniques which encourage active contributions. In a small but significant minority of lessons, however, teachers show poor understanding of the Programmes of Study, and especially of how to use the foreign language, with heavy reliance upon English and low expectations leading to undemanding speaking and writing tasks. Classroom management is generally very good, although there is sometimes a need to ensure that all pupils contribute orally. In the occasional lesson, inattention is allowed to go unchecked. Relationships with pupils vary, but teachers are always patient and constructive. Homework is generally appropriate but the marking of work at Key Stage 3 is sometimes insufficiently detailed to encourage progress. There is good use of display and occasional samples of word processing. There is, however, as yet little development of the use of Information Technology, although it was identified as a priority in 1994.
- 142 All pupils at the school have studied a modern foreign language at Key Stage 4 since well before it became a statutory requirement. New courses have recently been introduced at that stage in an attempt to cater for the wide range of attainment at the school. Over half of the pupils also take German in Years 8 and 9. Whilst currently few pupils take two languages at Key Stage 4, many now take advantage of the opportunity to choose between French and German. Many more pupils now take a second language than was reported in 1994.
- 143 The departmental leader praised in the last inspection report was unavailable for this inspection but when the staffing situation settles down there is a need to ensure that the good practice described above extends throughout the team. Long term planning has improved since 1994, but needs to concentrate on developing more clearly its link with assessment, so as to ensure progress at Key Stage 3, particularly by average and below average attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs. For several weeks the staffing provision in French has been severely affected by the absence through illness of two experienced teachers; a third was also away ill during the inspection. The department and the supply teachers coped as well as possible with a very difficult situation which it is hoped will soon be eased. With normalisation of staffing and attention to points raised above, there is every prospect of further departmental improvement.

## **Music**

- 144 This is a very good department.
- 145 Standards of attainment and progress are above average by the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and recent GCSE results were well above the national average. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

- 146 At Key Stage 3, pupils follow a wide ranging curriculum and the majority are familiar with the elements of music including treble clef notation, leading to elementary composition. Purposeful listening to a range of musical styles is frequently undertaken and singing is practised throughout the three years, with a good choice of songs designed to involve boys as well as girls in this important activity.
- 147 At Key Stage 4, the pupils taking the GCSE course show promise for the future. Individual standards range up to grade 6 of the Associated Board examinations. A good standard and quantity of composition work was observed; however, the lack of a computer in the department, with related software, scanner and printer, impedes both progress and presentation.
- 148 Pupils in both key stages show self-discipline, they look forward to their lessons, their attitudes are good and the vast majority work with sustained concentration.
- 149 The County's instrumental teachers provide an invaluable service and eight per cent of the pupils take advantage of this provision, studying a very wide range of instruments. The school and parents invest well in such tuition; the dividend is clearly evident. A wind band plays to an above average standard and its members, plus those having string tuition, also have the opportunity to play with pupils from local primary and secondary schools via the Regional Music Centre ensembles, which rehearse one evening a week in the school's music department.
- 150 A very good school choir was heard preparing for a Christmas concert. This is a large group comprising girls, boys and members of staff singing in three parts. There are many opportunities to perform to the public at both in and out of school venues.
- 151 The school is rightly proud of both the quality and frequency of its productions in which the music and drama departments work so very well together. In this year alone, there have been two such undertakings: "Hello Dolly" and "Blood Brothers". Rehearsals for "The Wizard of Oz", to be performed in February 1999, were observed and this is already at a high standard. All the above musical activity adds greatly to the positive ethos of the school and is well above the quality and quantity of extra-curricular activity usually found in schools.
- 152 The standard of teaching is always good, and in nearly two thirds of lessons it is very good. Two hard-working teachers, who devote a great deal of their own time to their work, demonstrate contagious enthusiasm and their musical expertise is constantly on display. They succeed in maintaining the pupils' interest throughout both stages, in no small measure, due to the excellent pupils' work books that they have devised for each year of Key Stage 3. These are constantly being evaluated and revised. As a result, the imbalance in subject content perceived at the last inspection has been corrected. The teachers have created a pleasant working environment in the good accommodation.

### **Physical Education**

- 153 In 1998, 14 pupils took physical education as a GCSE examination subject. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* - C was well above the national average and all pupils achieved grades A\* - G. There has been a notable improvement in GCSE results since the last inspection. Numbers taking the examination are small, and comparisons with other subjects are inappropriate. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls.

- 154 As a practical subject for all pupils, standards of attainment are in line with the national expectation by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Overall, standards of attainment are similar to those observed in the last inspection in Key Stage 3, and show improvement in Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils achieve satisfactory and better standards in games. Many pupils of all levels of attainment, perform skilfully and show understanding of the principles of games, particularly in soccer and netball. Skills develop within the context of strategic play, and pupils have good opportunities to plan for performance. They learn to anticipate play, to move to the ball and to intercept effectively. Most Year 7 pupils make a sound beginning in a range of skills. In dance for example, they show a developing sense of rhythm as they perform the steps of a jazz dance, and in swimming, low attainers make marked improvement in confidence and skill in the water. Although pupils' planning and performing skills develop satisfactorily in many lessons, their skills in evaluating their own and others' performance are under-developed. The majority of pupils understand the need to prepare their bodies for exercise, and have the knowledge to warm themselves up effectively at the beginning of lessons. A limited number of lessons was observed at Key Stage 4, where standards are always satisfactory and, sometimes, good. Many pupils are competent swimmers and demonstrate a range of life-saving skills in preparation for the Royal Life-Saving Society's Bronze Medallion award. Last year, 22 pupils gained the Bronze Medallion at the end of their course, and the school regularly wins the Royal Life Saving Society Lancashire branch trophy for the number of pupils gaining this award. In hockey, pupils consolidate their skills and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics effectively in the game. By the end of the key stage pupils show a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, can calculate their maximum heart rate, and maintain this through exercise with appropriate accuracy in their health related fitness course. GCSE coursework is well presented and reflects a generally good understanding of theoretical aspects.
- 155 Standards in extra-curricular sport are good. School teams enjoy regular success at district sports' meetings, and individual pupils gain representative honours at district, county and, occasionally, national level. The under 13 and under 14 netball teams won the Preston Schools' Netball League, while the under 14 soccer team was joint winner of the Preston Schools' Soccer Championships. Individual pupils are currently representing Lancashire in the regional swimming, soccer and orienteering championships.
- 156 Pupils' progress in relation to their prior attainment is generally good in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Discernible progress by pupils of all abilities is evident in many lessons, as pupils consolidate their knowledge and skills through repetition and practice, such as in soccer, where pupils successfully master the ability to pass and move in readiness for the next pass. Very good progress occurred in a netball lesson, as pupils practised a 'feint' dodge. In dance, low attainers make less progress than high attainers, when pupils are given the opportunity to work independently in groups. Good progress in team games is made in Key Stage 3, and continues into Key Stage 4. In hockey, for example, there is progression in pupils' abilities to sustain skills under pressure, make good use of space and pass accurately. There is, however, no evident progress in the pupils' skills of observation, analysis of skills and evaluation. Pupils with special educational needs are successfully integrated into the physical education programme, and generally make sound progress. Many opportunities are provided for pupils of all abilities to take part in extra-curricular sport. These activities are well supported by pupils, who make good progress in their chosen sports.
- 157 Attitudes to learning are good in both key stages. Pupils are well-motivated, keen to participate and come well prepared for lessons. Behaviour is almost always good, and pupils invariably respond well to the enthusiasm of the teachers. On the whole, pupils concentrate well, work hard and, in some lessons, they take a real pride in their performance.
- 158 Pupils work co-operatively in groups of different sizes, and teamwork develops well in games. They take responsibility readily when given the opportunity, for example, in leading the warm up for their peers in lessons. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, and independent learning skills are slower to develop.

- 159 The quality of teaching is good overall. In two thirds of the lessons it is good, and it is satisfactory in the rest. The standard of teaching has improved since the last inspection. There is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and this contributes to a supportive learning environment in lessons. The teachers have a good, or very good, subject knowledge, which they use effectively to help pupils improve their work. Teaching strengths include good pupil management and organisation, the skilful use of questions to consolidate knowledge and understanding, and encouraging feedback, which promotes high standards. Expectations of pupils are generally high, and lessons have a lively motivating pace, which challenges pupils physically. Whilst teaching is sound overall, there are some significant areas for further development. The National Curriculum requirement for pupils to be involved in evaluation of their own and others' work is not fully integrated into planning and teaching. Pupils rarely have the opportunity to observe, evaluate and comment on each others' performance. A limited range of teaching strategies is used and pupils are insufficiently enabled to take responsibility or to become independent learners. The department's policy to match tasks to pupils' attainments is not implemented fully.
- 160 The department has made good progress towards improving the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and has the capacity to continue this improvement. The improvement in standards and teaching has already been noted. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is now well balanced, and documentation, including schemes of work for both key stages, has been revised and updated. Policies are in place, although there is insufficient monitoring of their implementation. A sound assessment system has been devised but it does not yet inform curriculum planning fully. The departmental development plan focuses on raising standards of attainment, and prioritises the curriculum and assessment improves the quality of teaching. The work of the department has been recognised by the English Sports' Council's "Sportsmark" award. Extra-curricular activities are a strength and many staff give generously of their own time to provide a successful programme of clubs and inter-school competition.

### **Religious Education**

- 161 Religious education has improved considerably since the last inspection and there is the capacity for this to continue. Pupils' attainment meets the requirements of the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus and national expectations at the ages of fourteen and at sixteen. There are no examination data to consider at the moment. Pupils make good progress across both key stages of education in the school. The satisfactory attainment and good progress for most pupils is achieved in a context of a lower share of curriculum time than that given to subjects such as history and geography. In their first three years, pupils acquire a sound knowledge of Christianity and an overview of the other major world faiths. They learn from religion, as well as about it, and make good progress in understanding the importance of respecting the beliefs of others, and developing mutual understanding. This was seen particularly in a Year 9 lesson on Sikhism.
- 162 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is a strong aspect of pupils' progress in religious education throughout the school. They learn, for example, that loving service and generosity are key features of religious faith. Year 7, for example, were engaged in interesting activities including reflection on the work of Christian Aid. Pupils learn about the discipline required in being a member of a faith community, such as the need for prayer and following a moral code, and they are able to apply these insights to their own lives and values. Year 9 pupils listened with interest to examples of Christian worship music from around the world in a stimulating session which offered much cultural diversity. In Year 10 and 11, in keeping with their greater maturity, pupils give much consideration to some of the 'ultimate questions' of life and their ethical implications. Year 10 were studying evil and suffering, and how religions deal with these and understand them. They were able to show philosophical insights and the ability to handle abstract concepts with skill. Written skills are satisfactory and often better in all years. Pupils describe, explain and communicate their ideas in a variety of ways, and often the presentation of their homework shows great care and interest.

- 163 Generally, pupils enjoy the subject. No pupils are withdrawn, most are well motivated, behave well in lessons and make good contributions. Orally, pupils are confident and they are encouraged to express their ideas. Good progress is achieved across all levels of attainment, as teaching takes account of special needs and makes appropriate provision for them. This is done in the mixed ability classes in lower school, and also in the set groups in the upper school. Classes in Year 10 and 11, however, are set by their abilities in mathematics, which do not necessarily match their skills in religious education. Pupils' attainment and progress, and also their positive attitudes, reflect a high quality of teaching that is sensitive to the needs of all. It is sensitive too, to the diverse cultural and faith backgrounds of the pupils, and values the contributions that each individual makes.
- 164 Implementing the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus, and the new religious education courses that are part of the core curriculum in Key Stage 4, are all new developments since the last inspection, and since the appointment of the current head of department. They ensure that statutory requirements are now met. The new Key Stage 4 course offers accreditation to all pupils for their work, either through the short course GCSE, or through accredited units for the pupils' record of achievement folders. There has been no full GCSE religious studies group for several years and so there are no recent results. The new 'short courses' are too recent for any results as yet. It is part of the vision of the department to revive the full GCSE course in the near future. The satisfactory attainment seen in lessons and in pupils' work in Year 10 and 11 is achieved from a time allowance that is a little less than the 5% recommended for a short course. The delivery of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in Key Stage 3 is also to some extent affected by shortage of time, although well planned and imaginative teaching compensates for this as much as possible.
- 165 The teachers are hard working and committed. The expertise of the specialist teachers is very good. All the teaching is satisfactory and better. The teaching is mainly good and better; half of the teaching is very good and excellent. Good quality teaching is found in all years. This strong profile of skilled teaching is characterised by imaginative flair in providing a great variety of activities and stimuli within lessons. These include role play and drama, music and brief video excerpts used judiciously to amplify the lesson. Always the lesson aim is shared with pupils at the beginning so that they are clear about the focus of the lesson and what is expected of them. Class management is very effective, lessons are suitably challenging and make good use of time. The well chosen text books are supplemented by good quality resources produced by the teachers. Homework is set regularly to extend learning and it is marked thoroughly. There is no integration of information technology into the religious education curriculum yet, but the teachers have the necessary expertise, and it is part of their development plan.
- 166 The department is well led and the team works together very effectively. The department has shown energy in initiating improvements. New schemes of work have been written recently to implement a programme of study that is now faithfully based on the requirements of the Lancashire Agreed Syllabus in both key stages. The Local Agreed Syllabus does not include any assessment guidance or targets, nevertheless, the department has been developing its own assessment schemes. There are good procedures now for assessing progress, but there are no data yet to track progress well. An appropriate range of policies is in place, including documents for pupils with special educational needs and equal opportunities. A thorough policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is implemented very successfully. Teachers are good role models for the pupils.

## PART C: INSPECTION DATA

### SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Total
Lessons	121	71	192
Time	89	64	153 hours

- 167 The school was inspected by a team of 13 inspectors who spent the equivalent of 51 inspector days in the school. In addition to the lessons visited, assemblies, form tutor periods and registration sessions in all years, several extra curricular activities were observed. All teachers were observed teaching at least once and many, several times. A representative sample of pupils' work from years 7, 9 and 11 was scrutinised thoroughly and inspectors examined pupils' written and other work in lessons. In addition whole class sets of work were scrutinised to judge pupils' attainment and progress over time. Discussions were held with a group of 6 pupils from years 7, 9 and 11 about their work and response to school life in general. Inspectors spoke less formally to many more pupils at appropriate points during lessons, in their many activities, at break and in the lunch hours during the week.
- 168 Before the inspection the registered inspector visited the school, toured the site and met the staff and governing body to explain the purposes of the inspection, discuss arrangements and answer questions. The documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. The registered inspector, with the lay inspector met a group of 16 parents and considered any matters raised with others presented in the 175 questionnaire returns. Where significant, reference is made to these comments in the report. During the inspection the registered inspector interviewed the chair of governors, and a team member and the registered inspector interviewed the chair of the finance committee. Planned interviews were held with the headteacher and members of the senior management team, curriculum team leaders, all heads of department and some heads of year and a form tutor. Support staff were also interviewed, including the school manager, technicians and those involved in the support of pupils with special educational needs.
- 169 The lay inspector visited a linked primary school and a group of inspectors shared a community lunch with representatives of local schools and colleges, businesses, organisations, and community initiatives.
- 170 In all, the amount of time spent observing pupils in lessons and in other activities and in scrutinising their work amounted to 197 hours.

## 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	952	37	252	198

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (Y7 - Y11)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)

53.1

Number of pupils per qualified teacher

17.9

#### Education support staff (Y7 - Y11)

Total number of education support staff

14

Total aggregate hours worked each week

208.8

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:

78.4

Average teaching group size:

KS2

N/A

KS3

24

KS4

21



## Financial data

Financial year:

1997/98

	£
Total Income	2,022,293
Total Expenditure	1,981,138
Expenditure per pupil	2,083
Balance brought forward from previous year	83,132
Balance carried forward to next year	124,287

**PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:

952

Number of questionnaires returned:

175

**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	23	56	17	3	2
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	36	53	5	6	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	20	49	21	7	3
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	20	59	11	9	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30	55	6	6	3
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	33	57	8	2	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	34	55	7	2	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	29	58	6	3	4
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	23	55	16	4	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	21	52	17	9	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	33	50	10	5	2

NB: Percentages of responses are rounded to nearest integer, sum may not = 100%  
 Percentages given are in relation to total number of returns, EXCLUDING nil replies.