

INSPECTION REPORT

Brinsworth Comprehensive School

Brinsworth

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique Reference Number: 106960

Headteacher: Mr M Gray

Reporting inspector: Mr Michael Chapman
T11188

Dates of inspection: 23rd February – 27th February 1998

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Information about the school

Type of school	Comprehensive
Type of control	LEA Maintained
Age range of students	11 to 18
Gender of students	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Rotherham Borough Council
Name of chair of governors:	Mr F Pickering
Date of the previous inspection:	27 th September – 1 st October 1993

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Anthony Hill	Art	
Helen Morgan	Physical Education	
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Main findings

Brinsworth Comprehensive is an improving school. Teaching is consistently effective with only 3.7 per cent of lessons unsatisfactory. Relationships between students and teachers are good, as they are amongst the students themselves. Attainment levels are approaching national averages, although GCSE results are currently mostly below average. Students make satisfactory progress, except in information technology and religious education. Standards in the sixth form have improved since the last inspection report and are now in line with national rates.

Attainment and progress

Attainment of students at entry has varied from year to year. However, the evidence suggests it was below average for all current and recent age groups. Overall, students reach an average level of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are slightly below national averages. However, the attainment of entry of this group of students was lower than more recent cohorts. Their progress is therefore satisfactory overall, and the progress made by students in Key Stage 3 is good. Students with special educational needs make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4.

In English, attainment is generally in line with national standards in both key stages. Progress across the school is satisfactory, but the match of task to prior attainment needs closer attention. A whole-school approach to literacy is in development. Drama makes a particular contribution to students' speaking and listening skills.

In mathematics, standards achieved are in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 3 and below them at the end of Key Stage 4. Standards in science are generally in line with national averages, with some students achieving high standards at the end of Key Stage 4.

Art and music are significant strengths of the school. In art, high standards are achieved and good progress is made. Music has maintained high standards since the last inspection and is a real strength of the school.

The provision for information technology does not meet statutory requirements, and consequently attainment is well below average. Similarly, the provision of religious education for older students does not meet current legislative requirements. In all other subjects, the standards achieved are average overall and progress is satisfactory. However, attainment in GCSE business studies has declined dramatically over the last three years and urgent action is required to remedy the unsatisfactory progress made.

The relationships that have been established amongst students, as well as between students and teachers, are a powerful contribution to the positive learning environment that exists in classrooms. Attendance is good, although some procedural aspects require tightening up. The school has specifically targeted the raising of achievement and has made good use of assessment data to identify students in Key Stage 4 who would benefit from additional support.

Quality of Education

Teaching is consistently effective. Many lessons observed had particularly noteworthy features. Well over 50 per cent of lessons were considered good or very good, and only 3.6 per cent were judged unsatisfactory. Many teachers give time to provide a good quality range of extra-curricular activities and sporting activities. Particular strengths in the teaching are appropriate professional knowledge, the effective management of the students, and the overall quality of the planning. Homework is set in some subjects, but it is not set in all subjects on a basis of consistent regularity and quality. Further progress will involve higher expectations for the more able and a consistent setting of high quality homework. Assessment is used well by teachers to identify individual strengths of students.

The school has made imaginative efforts to broaden its curriculum offer, both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, through the development of the provision of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ). These efforts have largely been successful. However, students' information handling skills are held back by the poor provision for information technology and the failure to provide and use high quality library facilities during school hours.

The overall standard of accommodation is poor, and in a number of cases has an adverse effect on learning, for example in music and religious education.

The provision for students with special educational needs is of good quality, and all statutory arrangements are in place.

There is a strong and effective system of guidance which provides strong support to the learning of students and effectively promotes their personal development and future careers. Students are well behaved and biddable. Relationships between teachers and students are friendly within a firm structure of values and expectations which are understood and adhered to by students. Teachers are good role models for students in many aspects of their day-to-day work.

The school has made some useful links with industry, particularly in the context of curriculum development in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

Students' Social, Moral, Spiritual And Cultural Development

The school plays a major role in the social development of its students. Opportunities for responsibility are provided for both sixth formers and students from 11 to 16 years of age. Students assist reading in primary schools, and there is a mentoring system to support students new to the school. Moral values emphasising achievement, self-worth and co-operation are promoted well through the school code, assemblies, and the guidance system. The cultural development of students is well supported. There is some outstanding work carried out by the art department, although the quality of display varies dramatically in different parts of the school. Music, drama and other areas of the curriculum all contribute well to students' cultural development.

Arrangements for spiritual development are unsatisfactory. There is no provision for corporate worship, and insufficient religious education for older students. There is a spiritual dimension to some aspects of the teaching, for example in art, but there is little planned provision for it. While major religious events do not go unnoticed, students from different ethnic backgrounds do not have the opportunity to express their religious values in assemblies.

Management and efficiency

A major achievement of the school is the consistency of effective teaching. The school is well led, and there is an appropriate focus on achievement and the quality of education. Governors provide effective support, and the school is largely successful in accomplishing its aims. A well-structured system of line management ensures that policies and procedures are clearly understood. The school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis with the support of an effective administrative team who help create a welcoming atmosphere. Financial control is well established, and purchasing takes into account value for money principles. Financial planning is secure, but the school will need to consider more specific plans and projections if it is to rise to the challenge of raising achievement, particularly in information technology. The success of plans and programmes is monitored and evaluated. However, direct systematic observation of actual teaching is not fully established. The low unit costs of the school, along with the below-average attainment levels on entry, indicate that the standards achieved by the school reflect good value for money.

School improvement

The school has responded to some but not all of the issues raised in the previous inspection report. The key issues identified there focused on independent learning and information technology. The remaining issues were confirmation and implementation of an equal opportunities policy, meeting requirements for collective worship, and publishing unauthorised absence figures in the annual report. The school still does not meet the requirements for collective worship. Other issues have been addressed, but with varied emphasis. This is in part due to the dramatic changes in the composition of the school's intake and a consequent reprioritisation of issues. Overall, the rate of improvement made by the school since the last inspection report has been above average. Good-quality strategies have been put in place to secure improvement - most notably, the close analysis of assessment data to identify areas for improvement. The school has the capacity to sustain improvement.

Areas for development identified by the school have included curriculum and assessment, and current priorities are literacy and boys' under-achievement.

Key issues for action

To further raise standards of attainment, the headteacher, staff and governors should:-

Raise attainment levels in all subjects, using national targets for schools and subject areas. As a matter of particular urgency, take the necessary steps to raise achievement in GCSE business studies and in information technology, where statutory requirements must also be met;

Raise skills of information handling, through improved provision in information and communication technology and through linked improvements in the provision, access, and use of the library. For this development, a strategic plan is needed which considers accommodation, resources, professional development, financing and leadership;

Ensure that homework is consistently set, and monitored for frequency and quality;

Ensure that the planned implementation of a whole-school literacy policy takes place without delay.

Establish an explicit monitoring policy for teaching quality, to enable the best practice to be observed and celebrated;

Ensure that statutory requirements for corporate worship are met.

Introduction

Characteristics of the school

The school is situated on the edge of Rotherham. The catchment area changed in 1993, following closure of a neighbouring school. This resulted in the school changing from a largely mono-ethnic school to one where currently about 12 per cent of students come from the Asian community.

The ability range of the catchment area has varied considerably from year to year. Although testing methods have differed, the overall picture is that students enter the school with below-average levels of attainment. The percentage of students with special educational needs is average at 3.4 per cent. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals has increased from 15 per cent to 19 per cent over the last four years but remains within national and local averages.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1997	126	125	251

National Curriculum	Test Results	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	43	62	70
	Girls	71	67	69
	Total	114	129	139
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	43	53	55
	National	56 (57)	59 (57)	60 (57)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	11	29	27
	National	22 (26)	36 (34)	29 (22)

Teacher Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science	
Number of students at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	53	62	71
	Girls	80	75	76
	Total	133	137	147
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	50	54	58
	National	60 (61)	64 (62)	61 (60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	26	27	27
	National	28 (30)	37 (35)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

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

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1997	121	117	238

GCSE Results		5 or more	5 or more	1 or more
Number of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	26	79	89
	Girls	45	82	97
	Total	71	161	186
Percentage standard specified	School	35 (37)	81 (83)	93 (93)
	National	43 (43)	88 (88)	94 (94)

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Year	M	F	Total
1997	36	35	71

Average A/AS points score per	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	M	F	All	M	F	All
School	17.1	15.0	15.9 (16.4)	2.4	2.1	2.3 (2.7)
National	-- (16.6)	-- (16.9)	17.1 (16.8)	-- (-2.5)	-- (2.8)	2.7 (2.7)

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

³ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	6.9
	National comparative data	8.6
Unauthorised absence	School	1.2
	National comparative data	1.1

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	45
Permanent	1

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	10.7
Satisfactory or better	96.3
Less than satisfactory	3.7

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by students at the school

Attainment and progress

The school has made significant progress since the last inspection report. Levels of attainment are in line with national averages in the sixth form. At the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, levels of attainment are close to the national average. The position at the end of Key Stage 3 is slightly better than at the end of Key Stage 4. In 75 per cent of the observed lessons, students demonstrated average or above average levels of attainment.

In a number of subjects, levels of achievement at GCSE are predicted by the school to be in line with national averages, and better than them in art. However, the overall results at GCSE are still below national averages. The number of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A to C has not improved significantly over the last three years, while nationally most schools have improved. However, when initial attainment is taken into account to create a value-added analysis of GCSE results, a significant improvement is seen over the last three years.

Levels of attainment on entry to the school are below average, though they are not markedly so in terms of National Curriculum levels. However, the below-average levels are more pronounced in National Federation for Educational Research (NFER) tests of reading and numeracy administered by the local education authority (LEA). Tests of non-verbal reasoning indicate an intake level closer to the national average. The inspection team's judgement, based on scrutiny of students' work and other sources, was that entry level attainment was below average, but not to the full extent indicated by the NFER Tests. The school needs to build on the achievement indicated in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, and set targets in line with these levels.

The school's entry level data covers only the last two years, but governors, management team and teachers are strongly of the opinion that levels of attainment on entry have fallen significantly since the last inspection report, where they were judged below average. The inspection team's analysis of the available data and observation of students does not support this view, insofar as current Key Stage 3 students are concerned. However, the view that attainment on entry has fallen has more credibility as regards the current cohort of students in Key Stage 4. This judgement is supported by the tests the school undertakes in Year 10 for the YELLIS project. YELLIS (Year Eleven Examination Information System) compares students' actual results at GCSE against predicted scores. The predictions are derived from the tests of ability undertaken in Year 10.

When the GCSE results are correlated against the results of the YELLIS tests, a clear pattern of improvement is discernible: the school results are significantly higher than would be expected from the results of the YELLIS tests. Over the last three years, similar analysis of individual departments in the school indicates that most are now adding value rather than having an adverse effect on levels of achievement at GCSE level.

In the previous inspection report, attainment in the sixth form was considered to be below average. The GCE A level point score was well below the national average, though classroom attainment was considered satisfactory. Since that report, the school has made

steady improvement in its sixth form attainment; the GCE A level points score is now broadly in line with the national average, with students gaining 16 points compared to 17 nationally.

In the last four years, the school has also developed GNVQ at both Intermediate and Advanced levels. Over the last two years, the school has maintained a 100 per cent successful completion rate compared to the national average of around 70 per cent, with a high number of merits and distinctions in health and social care.

The previous report expressed concerns about students' progress in the sixth form, in terms of their being able to work on their own, discuss, evaluate and be creative. Most subjects have made considerable progress in these areas, with students actively involved in lessons and demonstrating confident speaking and discussion skills in English, geography, history, and sociology. In art, students work independently with an increasing range of creative skills. In GNVQ courses, students steadily improve their process skills activities requiring assignment planning, research and evaluation in a variety of contexts. These include the students' work placements as well as links with a range of employers in the business, leisure and care sectors.

Most students with special educational needs make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. Those receiving additional teacher support with word building, reading and writing make particularly good progress. The amount of progress made within lessons is linked to the quality of the support received.

Gender differences in attainment are broadly in line with the national picture.

In English, attainment is generally in line with national standards in both key stages. Progress across the school is satisfactory, but the match of task to prior attainment needs closer attention. Standards of reading and writing are average, but there are a minority of poor readers who need additional assistance. A whole-school approach to literacy is in development that will have to take into account these needs. Drama and work in guidance sessions make a particular contribution to students' speaking and listening skills.

In mathematics, standards achieved are in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 3 and below them at the end of Key Stage 4. There is evidence of steady improvement in standards. Students make satisfactory progress with higher attainers making good progress in Key Stage 3.

In science, attainment is in line with national averages. Students are able to support their ideas from useful appropriate evidence, and make useful records; older students are beginning to use research techniques across all branches of science. Progress is sound, with many students taking responsibility for their own rate of progress.

Art is a real strength in the school. High standards are achieved and good progress is made. Music has maintained high standards since the last inspection and is a significant strength in the school. The provision for information technology does not meet statutory requirements, and consequently attainment is well below average.

Similarly, the provision of religious education for older students does not meet current legislative requirements. In design technology, standards achieved at the end of each key

stage are below average. Steady progress is made overall, although it is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3. In all other subjects, the standards achieved are generally average or slightly below, but satisfactory progress is made. However, attainment in business studies has steadily declined and urgent action is required to remedy the unsatisfactory progress made over the last three years.

The relationships that have been established amongst students, as well as between students and teachers, are a powerful contribution to the positive learning environment that exists in classrooms. Attendance is good, although some procedural aspects require tightening up. The school has specifically targeted the raising of achievement, and has made good use of assessment data to identify students in Key Stage 4 who would benefit from additional support.

Targets are set for students on the basis of assessment data. There are detailed pro formas for departmental reviews of examination performance and the setting of targets on the basis of these reviews. Explicit targets linked to national data need to be derived for individual departments. These targets for raising achievement should be established at both departmental and whole-school level, and monitored by governors.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

The students' attitude to their work is good. They are keen to learn, show interest, persevere with tasks, concentrate, and have a desire to improve. They take a pride in their work, some of which is well displayed around the school. A small minority of students, mainly boys, are disaffected and have a passive attitude to learning; and some are overconfident and have a laid-back approach to their work. The school has responded to this by offering guidance, extra support, and in some cases a modified curriculum pattern.

Opportunities are offered for students to take responsibility for their own work and personal study, but these need to be further developed and encouraged.

The quality of students' behaviour is generally good, and this makes a good contribution to their learning. In some classes, there is some challenging and disruptive behaviour by a minority of students. The teachers, using the sanctions adopted by the school, usually deal with this well and effectively. There is evidence of a small amount of bullying. This is taken very seriously by the school, and dealt with appropriately.

The level of exclusions from the school has risen substantially since the last inspection but is currently at a static level, year on year, and in line with national averages.

The quality of relationships in the school, between students and between students and staff, is good. The school is a caring community where students and adults work together well. Students usually treat the school's property with respect, but there is some evidence of damage to furniture and graffiti.

In recent years, there has been a growth in the number of ethnic minority students in the school. An atmosphere of racial harmony has been successfully created. Although a few problems still arise, these are generally dealt with well. Incidents of a racial nature should be

recorded together, so that the extent of any problem can be monitored. This would assist the school in becoming an even more caring and harmonious community.

The personal development of the students is good. They show respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. They are given a wide range of opportunities to take responsibility: Year 8 students receive visitors, students in Years 10 and 11 help with hearing readers in local primary schools, students assist with parent and open evenings, and there is a paired reading scheme between older and younger students.

Students are also keen to initiate fund-raising activities to raise money for a number of local and national charities.

Students take opportunities to contribute to the life of their community by participating in drama productions and playing sport against other schools; and Year 10 students participate locally in work experience.

The school needs to build upon and expand the good opportunities already provided for the personal development of students.

Attendance

Students enjoy coming to the school, and this is reflected in the good attendance figures of 91.9 per cent in 1996/7, above the national average. The attendance levels are broadly similar to those prevailing in 1993 at the last inspection. The good level of attendance makes a strong contribution to students' attainment and progress.

Most students are punctual, but a small minority arrive late and a few are persistently late.

Because many students have to travel a long distance between classes and no movement time is allowed between lessons, a prompt start is not always possible in all lessons.

Quality of education provided

Teaching

Teaching is satisfactory in 96.3 per cent of lessons observed and good in over 50 per cent of lessons. Effective teaching has been consistently established across the school.

The predominant feature of the teaching is secure subject knowledge which enables teachers to plan their lessons well and manage students effectively. The feature that generally distinguished the good lessons from those that were judged satisfactory was the nature of the teachers' expectation for the students. In the good lessons, more thought was given to their prior attainment and there was a closer match of tasks to the differing levels of the students in the class.

Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects is good. In a good Year 8 history session on seventeenth century marriage, the teacher's secure subject knowledge enabled objectives to be readily shared with the students. It led also to effective variation of teaching strategies and a good use of both open and closed questions. The variety of techniques employed allowed students to derive soundly based conclusions with a good underpinning of historical knowledge. In a Year 9 session, students were observed registering in German. They replied by greeting the teacher using a complimentary or critical adjective. The teacher's use of humour and good familiarity with the language encouraged and motivated students, increasing their skills in oral communication. In a withdrawal lesson in English in Year 8, a good knowledge of students and their language level was combined with skilled encouragement to develop reading and sentence-building. In sixth form sessions, good subject knowledge and awareness of students' prior attainment enabled the teacher to draw on their thinking, consolidate and move forward.

Expectations of students are appropriate across the school, and in the sixth form often good. An example of high expectations was in geography, where a teacher employing a clear direct style demanded high level thinking, and created a good working and busy atmosphere. In art, high expectations of students' work were often linked to an industrious ethos supported by thorough lesson assessment. These students working on issues of economic development, in geography, were intellectually challenged in their work. In mathematics, Year 9 students were exposed to rigorous questioning to test recall and probe for areas where more work would be needed.

In information technology, sound knowledge of the subject linked to good knowledge of the students' prior attainment led to significant progress in a task involving data control. The teacher showed a clear understanding of the use of spreadsheets in science teaching. In many information technology sessions, however, teachers provided adequate teaching but at too low a base. Teaching was effective within the framework of objectives set by the school. A session in English where expectations of the students were too low involved an over-directive input by teacher, and the students were therefore unable to develop appropriate responses. However, in a different session, good-quality teaching deploying both open and closed questioning was effectively used to enable Year 9 English students to think about the text under study.

Planning is of good quality in most lessons. Effective joint planning between the regular

teacher and the special needs teacher enhanced a Year 7 history session on the Greeks. In lessons that were sound, lessons objectives were less clear and were not always shared with the students. In an unsatisfactory session, the main focus of enquiry was not evident except by reference to the lesson plan. Lower-attaining students in the same year benefited from good, thorough planning informed by detailed knowledge of the nature of their learning difficulties. Together with a good firm manner, this ensured all moved forward effectively.

The general management of students is carried out well, with consequent high standards of discipline. There was a good example of excellent class management in a drama lesson. Very carefully sequenced activities on 'Romeo and Juliet' were combined with good feedback and a brisk pace. The teacher was then able to make teaching points through effective use of the students' perceptions. Throughout the school, students work well in a disciplined environment.

Time is used well in most lessons. In good lessons, a brisk pace is employed and students are set targets to achieve within defined times. In unsatisfactory sessions, there is a lack of pace and a failure to match tasks to the appropriate level. In a number of English sessions, for example, a failure to match the work to the different needs in the group meant that progress was slow for some students who were not sufficiently stretched.

In art, resources are used well in sometimes crowded situations. There are, however, few examples of teachers and students deploying information finding skills in lessons. The library is rarely used during lesson times, and there is insufficient use of information technology in lessons.

There is considerable attention paid to the assessment of students' work. A good example of constructive marking of work was observed in a Year 13 session on Mazzini. Here the teacher recognised strengths in students' approaches and provided useful comments to develop further confidence. Much use is made of assessment to inform intervention by teachers.

In art, a constant flow of encouragement and evaluation of students' work is used to maintain the pace of the lesson and raise standards. Teachers have data which indicate expected levels of performance and actual achievements. They use this data to inform support and additional challenge. There was less evidence of assessment being used to modify schemes of work or lesson plans.

Most teachers are aware of students' particular learning and behavioural difficulties. All have copies of students' individual education plans (IEPs), although not all plan their lessons with reference to individual students' learning targets. In some areas of the school, attempts are made to differentiate subject work without underestimating the abilities of special needs students. This was seen in the work of some teachers of mathematics, geography, history, information technology, modern languages, music, and religious education.

The three support teachers give effective and valuable support to special needs students both within classes and in withdrawal lessons. The work of support assistants is of more variable quality. In some cases, good support is given to target students and enables them to participate fully in lessons; in other lessons, the assistance is of little value, and there is

sometimes no evidence of prior planning by class teachers.

Homework is not set systematically, and generally practice varies widely. Some useful homework was set which stretched students and enriched the scope of the lesson. In other lessons, it was clear that homework was set spasmodically. Overall, the arrangements for homework are unsatisfactory.

The school's senior management are committed to raising the quality of teaching. They provide support, and all have a teaching commitment. A direct programme of observation of lessons would enable strengths and weaknesses in the teaching to be directly addressed.

The curriculum and assessment

Recent changes in curriculum provision reflect the school's policy to increase the range of courses to meet the needs and interests of its students. The Key Stage 3 curriculum provides a satisfactory balance of subjects, though there are currently too few opportunities for information technology and the limited time for design technology in Year 9 limits progress in that subject.

At Key Stage 4, provision is enhanced by the school's participation in the national pilot scheme for the GNVQ Part 1. The option programme has been reorganised to enable students to take vocational courses in manufacturing, leisure and tourism, business, and health and social care, and to benefit from expanding opportunities in art, drama, music and physical education. The new arrangements represent a positive response to the Dearing Review proposals, though they limit opportunities to combine some full GCSE courses, for example design and technology and modern foreign languages. Despite an increasingly diverse student intake, the school has yet to introduce a community language such as Urdu. It has, however, responded sympathetically to parental requests to consider a future provision.

The school has continued to develop its curriculum in an imaginative way to cater for the 50 per cent of students who stay on in the sixth form. There are 18 GCE A level courses, which cover the main curriculum areas, as well as others, such as sociology and business studies, offering breadth.

Greater breadth also comes from the three main GNVQ vocational areas of business, leisure and tourism, and health and social care. Students can take these at Intermediate and Advanced levels, and have increasing opportunities to combine GNVQ studies and GCE A level.

The sixth form core curriculum includes a programme which all students follow - personal, social and health education, including careers education and guidance - and also GCE General Studies at both A and AS levels. However, this complementary programme does not meet the legal requirement for religious education. Although there are a number of sports and fitness activities, these are not part of timetabled provision. Students benefit from a well-planned guidance system, have opportunities for a range of extra-curricular activities, and are encouraged to contribute to the main school through helping younger students in the development of their reading and number skills.

GNVQ students also benefit from additional opportunities to gain National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) by developing job skills in extended work placements, and have good access to information technology (IT) to further develop their IT capability. There are plans to extend these opportunities to GCE A level students.

National Curriculum requirements are met in most respects. The school has agreed policies for sex and drug education, and the majority of subjects cover the required programmes of study. However, the school does not make sufficient provision to cover the respective programmes of study for information technology particularly at Key Stage 3, or religious education at Key Stage 4, nor does it meet the requirement for collective worship.

The school has a variety of setting and banding arrangements in the different subject areas and they are mostly appropriate, with schemes of work matching the needs of students. In some subjects, such as design and technology, history, information technology, and business studies, there is insufficient pace and challenge for higher-attaining students.

In addition to the GCSE and recently-introduced GNVQ provision at Key Stage 4, the school has a modified curriculum for a significant number of students less able to cope with a full examination programme. Some of the successful components - for example, outdoor education, study skills development, work with the community, links with higher education and nearby primary schools - make a useful contribution to students' general education. Though the programme of activities and learning support provides some enhancement, it does not allow sufficient challenge for those students needing to improve basic skills in mathematics and English. The school is rightly re-examining the rationale for this course, as well as its content.

Learning support focuses mainly on assisting special needs students within the classroom. In cases where there is withdrawal of small groups of students for intensive work on word and sentence building, reading and writing, care is taken to minimise the disruption to students' access to the wider curriculum. The times and days for withdrawal are changed four times a year, and few students are withdrawn throughout the whole year. The intensive support work given to some dyslexic students for short periods during lesson times is helpful in reinforcing work done at home, without seriously disrupting their access to other subjects.

The school meets fully the requirements of the Code of Practice. Annual reviews for statemented students are carried out with thoroughness, and individual education plans of good quality are in place where appropriate. In most cases, the targets are realistic, appropriate and sufficiently detailed to be of value to class teachers. For some students there are at the moment two IEPs in place: one in relation to learning difficulty, and one focusing on

behavioural problems. The management and organisation of special needs support within the school is good.

Overall arrangements for students with special needs have improved considerably, since the last inspection report with carefully planned support in most subjects. Some departments, such as modern foreign languages and music, have also devised a wider range of materials to cope with different learning needs.

The learning support and the ESL (English as a Second Language) department carries out diagnostic testing for groups of particular students after the baseline reading and cognitive ability testing has been carried out. This informs their planning for the early stages of school life.

The school has regular links with local primary schools, and efforts to support curriculum continuity through closer working between primary and secondary staff is developing with, for example, a local pyramid of the secondary and primary schools in science. Most departments have coherent schemes of work which allow for the progressive development of their subject, though these are less well planned in geography and modern foreign languages. The increased breadth of the Key Stage 4 and sixth form programmes allows students access to a full range of further education and training opportunities.

The school has recently reduced the time for guidance, including careers education, in Key Stage 4. However, its strong links with the Careers Service and the good range of careers resources ensure an effective system of careers and educational guidance in the school.

During lunch-times and after school there is a range of activities that support learning: homework clubs, for example, and extra study time in subjects such as mathematics, art, geography, information technology, modern foreign languages, and textiles. Music and drama are active, with regular clubs and school productions as well as occasional outside performances. There is a good range of sports activities, which include a gym club as well as different competition sports in football, hockey, athletics, netball, and basketball. The form groups are also active in different sponsored charity events, and there is increasing involvement with local employers with the growth of the vocational courses.

A number of students, particularly in the sixth form, are active in providing lesson support lower down the school as well as in local primary schools. Various outward bound and other trips are organised on a regular basis.

The previous inspection report commented positively about the school assessment systems, and the current policy continues to stress the importance of assessment as part of raising attainment through target setting. There is regular and frequent internal assessment in Key Stage 4 and post 16, and these established and effective procedures have now been extended to Key Stage 3.

Student records of achievement are stressed and used as a means of monitoring students in the transition from primary school and of carrying out student self-evaluation and target setting. Increasing and effective use is made of external information for assessment, including aptitude and reading tests in Year 7 and other measures used to identify student potential attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. All of these are used effectively to identify those in need of extra support and encourage them to raise their attainment.

With few exceptions, as in information technology, assessments are made fully and validly at the end of Key Stage 3; and, in general, reporting on students' attainment and progress is regular and thorough. Parents recognise that school reports are of good quality and that much care is taken in their preparation.

The school is increasingly using its analyses of assessment and examinations results data to review the curriculum it provides, including the teaching and learning approaches used. These are in an early stage of development, and the results of the regular subject reviews involving senior managers have yet to have a significant impact on students' attainment.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school's aims recognise the importance of promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students. While there are elements of good practice, the spiritual development of students is, however, a weakness. The school does not comply with statutory requirements for worship.

The school is precluded by its accommodation from meeting as a corporate body. Students meet once a week in their year groups for assemblies, and on other days meet in their tutor groups for the morning guidance programme.

Year Group assemblies are well conducted, and students are actively involved in their delivery. They have a clear moral and social focus, reflecting the values of the school, but as a matter of policy they have no religious or spiritual content and no element of worship. It is also policy that no provision is made for worship or students' spiritual development on those mornings when they meet in their tutor groups.

In the classroom, questions of meaning and purpose are regularly explored in religious education, as they are too in English through poetry and prose. A sense of wonder and mystery at the natural world and life pervades much work in art. Music introduces students to sacred music and words through the annual service of lessons and carols in the parish church. They are challenged with the wonder of natural phenomena in science. There is, however, little evidence of any contribution in most subjects.

The school has clear values, and is successful in promoting the moral development of its students, who know right from wrong. Assemblies have a strong moral dimension. A well-planned guidance programme confronts students with a range of moral issues at appropriate points in their development. They are challenged with questions relating to personal responsibility, relationships, health, disadvantage, and prejudice and discrimination.

Moral awareness is promoted in a number of subjects. Questions concerning, for example, blood sports, gender and relationships, are explored through debate and drama in English. In religious education, students have good opportunities to apply religious insights to everyday moral situations. In history, they consider issues relating to race and ethnicity in the study of American history, and in Nazi Germany, and the ethics of war. In geography, they explore important environmental issues with a moral dimension: for example, the destruction of the rain forest, and the divide between rich and developing countries.

Good attention is also paid to the social development of students, both in the classroom and in the wider life of the community. Students respond well to the many opportunities for taking responsibility, whether it be, for example, by contributing to assemblies, by Year 8 staffing reception, or by Sixth Formers helping younger students to develop their reading skills. Charitable activities, such as in Year 9 raising money for holidays for terminally ill students, are well supported. Personal and social achievement is recognised and celebrated through credits and certificates, and through a range of awards.

Social development is promoted also in the classroom. In many lessons, students are encouraged to work together collaboratively in pairs and small groups. Social responsibility is promoted, for example, in the study of young people and the law in the Year 10 guidance programme. Drama contributes to the development of students' interpersonal skills, and social skills are reinforced in team games.

Good provision is made for the cultural development of students in a number of areas in the life of the school. It is a strength of art, where students study the work of artists from European and non-European cultures, and visit galleries, museums and culture parks. In music, students perform to a good standard in instrumental and choral works. Drama skills are enhanced through work with the Crucible Youth Theatre. Musical, dramatic and artistic skills find expression in regular school productions, such as that of 'Dracula' in 1997.

Appreciation of other cultures is enhanced by foreign language study visits to France and Germany, and there was an expedition to Pakistan in 1997. English texts are drawn from a range of cultures. Life in African tribal societies, such as the Kikuyu, is explored in geography, while the cultures of China and Rome are met in ancient history. Religious education helps students to understand the importance of religious belief to members of the major world faiths. The school celebrates the festival of Eid ul Fitr, but students from different ethnic backgrounds do not have the opportunity to express their religious values in assemblies.

Support, guidance and students' welfare

The monitoring of academic progress by teachers is very good. They regularly assess the students' work and make reference to standardised tests and external examinations. This monitoring could, however, be more effectively used in some subjects to modify schemes of work.

The support and guidance of students with special needs is strength of the school. The school is well supported by the regular visits of the LEA educational psychologist.

At the moment, there is a dual focus on those students who have a combination of learning and behavioural difficulties. The head of learning support oversees learning, and heads of year oversee student behaviour and misbehaviour. Where both difficulties contribute to special needs, a joint approach to drawing up a single individual education plan would be more appropriate than having two separate ones. Nevertheless, the quality of support, guidance and welfare work is of a high standard, both with individual interactions with students and with the support documentation. Oversight by the special needs co-ordinator is strong.

The personal development of students is well monitored by form teachers and heads of year, and is recorded in the students' records of achievement.

The procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and behaviour are good and make a good contribution to educational standards. To maintain discipline and good behaviour, the school has a good system of rewards and sanctions; these are well understood by the students, and are effective. Any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with speedily and appropriately, and incidents are recorded.

Attendance registers are marked at the beginning of each session, but many are not marked in accordance with statutory regulations. Attendance is monitored by form tutors, heads of year, the deputy headteacher and the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), who visits regularly. Parents are contacted if there are any concerns, and if necessary the EWO makes a home visit. The case is referred to the LEA's 'school non-attendance panel' if attendance does not improve. Registers are taken during the school day to monitor if any students are missing lessons. Attendance is encouraged by a never absent/never late award. The importance of good attendance is emphasised to parents and students. The promotion of good attendance is satisfactory but, because many registers are not marked correctly, the monitoring of attendance is poor.

The school stresses the need for good punctuality, and a sanction is applied if there are three lates in any half term.

The school's child protection procedures are sound. The deputy headteacher is responsible for the procedures, and all staff have received training. Proper records are kept.

The guidance offered to students is good. There is a morning guidance session, after registration, which is complemented by a planned programme of weekly guidance sessions. Sixth form students have individual guidance tutorials.

The school has a satisfactory Health and Safety policy, there is a Safety Committee, and a premises survey is completed at least twice yearly. A number of health and safety concerns were observed during the inspection week. Some of the mobile classrooms are in a very poor state of repair, some of the pathways are uneven and dangerous, some buildings have broken jagged glass in them, and there are some roof leaks.

Termly fire drills are held, and the fire bells and equipment are checked regularly. The school has a full-time matron, and the nurse, doctor and dentist visit regularly to complete health and dental checks. Drugs and sex education is appropriately delivered.

Students last year won second prize in a First Aid competition. There are sound procedures for child protection and for promoting students' well-being, health and safety.

Partnership with parents and the community

The school's partnership with parents and the community makes a good contribution to students' learning. Clear information is provided to parents. There are monthly newsletters, and information letters are sent out when the need arises.

There is one parental consultation meeting per year and there are special meetings for intake parents, Year 9 parents, to discuss option choices and Year 11 parents, to discuss GCSE coursework requirements.

Open evenings are also held. The school operates an open-door policy for parents to come into school.

Annual reports are detailed and mostly contain information about what students know, understand and can do, and areas for improvement.

The annual governors' report to parents does contain most of the statutorily-required information but has provided only a limited progress report of the action plan from the last inspection.

The school has a clear homework policy, and guidance is given on the time to be spent on homework in each subject. Despite this the provision of homework is unsatisfactory, since the frequency and quality varies from subject to subject. There is a homework diary for parents to check and sign weekly, but it is not fully operable. A lunch-time homework club is made available to students, and there are after-school homework clubs.

Parents are given full information about students with special educational needs and their progress, through regular individual education plan reviews and Annual Reviews which they are invited to attend. (Not all do so.) Students' files show that the school makes efforts to ensure that parents/carers are kept well-informed about general progress.

The school's Parents Association has ceased to function but fundraising does take place, partly through the initiative of the students. Parents collect vouchers and wrappers to obtain resources for the school, but the number helping in the school is very limited; and there is a need to improve the involvement of parents with their child's homework.

Overall, parental involvement in their child's learning and the life of the school needs strengthening.

The school's links with its local community enrich its work and make a good contribution to students' attainment and personal development.

Parents and the local community are invited to an annual school concert and regular drama productions. The annual Carol Service is held in the Rotherham Parish Church. These events assist in the spiritual and artistic development of the students. A wide range of visits is organised to extend the curriculum: both day and residential, and at home and abroad. There is a good range of team-based sporting activities which enhance students' sporting abilities.

There are good links with local commerce. All Year 10 students have two weeks of work experience, and some complete projects on local firms. Year 12 students run the school bank and contributed to 'Challenge to Industry', a two-day activity conference. The Upper Sixth students hold an 'art view evening', to which local businesses and residents are invited. Local commerce has supported the art department and the after-school clubs. Links are good with the eight main feeder primary schools. Visits are arranged for students prior to entry, meetings are held for parents, and there is a good interchange of staff and information.

Year 10 and 11 students hear students read in local primary schools. A Youth Club operates on the school premises.

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management

The headteacher's leadership gives a strong direction to the work of the school. He works through clearly-stated structures which provide many opportunities for staff participation. The governors, headteacher and senior staff manage the school effectively, using clearly-identified priorities as a basis for decision-making.

The governing body operates effectively through meetings of the full committee, and through sub-committees dealing with specific areas, such as staffing and finance. Some governors have links to certain areas of the curriculum, such as special educational needs, and required policies are in place. The governors' role in monitoring the curriculum and its delivery is exercised through the school development plan and through receiving reports on external examination and test results. They are supportive of the school and its staff, and have close links with the local community. Governors are carrying out their statutory responsibilities satisfactorily.

The organisational and management structure of the school is well documented; roles and responsibilities are clearly described. Each member of the senior management team has clearly-

defined responsibilities for several middle managers, for example heads of year teams or of subject departments. This system works well. Staff can apply to be members of an extended senior management team, or for temporary development posts. These methods provide good opportunities for staff to contribute to projects linked to school or departmental priorities and to receive valuable management training. The school and the participating teachers both benefit.

Management of subject departments is generally good, with most middle managers providing effective leadership for their curriculum areas. Science and art are examples of good practice, but management is unsatisfactory in information technology and business studies. There is also good leadership in year teams and in cross-school functions such as special educational needs and careers.

The school has good systems for monitoring teaching and curriculum development. There are regular reviews by senior staff and post-holders of the work of their departments, and a detailed report highlights issues for future action: for example, strategies for raising attainment. Samples of students' written work are used at meetings as a basis for improving current practice. Heads of department also produce a detailed, set by set, analysis of external examination results. However, there is insufficient direct observation of teaching as a basis for disseminating good practice and discussing the effectiveness of different teaching strategies.

The school development plan is set in the context of a review of progress made against the previous year's targets. It is constructed after an extensive consultation cycle about those targets, which starts with reviews at school and departmental level. This review of progress informs the work of the senior management team in deciding the priorities and targets for the next year. This well-defined system produces clear priorities to improve the quality of education, but the accompanying action plans are not always sufficiently specific to guide implementation or monitor progress. There is a similar variation in the quality of planning for subject areas. Governors are formally involved in the production of the development plan, generally at the later stage when a draft has been produced.

The aims and values of the school are very clearly expressed. They emphasise the provision of education in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance that encourages students to achieve. The school recently produced a values statement through a process of consultation which involved students, teachers, governors and parents. This statement is prominently displayed in classrooms and corridors throughout the school, and its influence is reflected in the good behaviour of students.

Good relationships between teachers and students are a feature of the school. Students are valued, and this is demonstrated also by the importance given to tutorial and guidance support. Teachers are working hard to establish an atmosphere of achievement. There is an emphasis on raising standards, for example through homework clubs, a system of achievement credits, and mentoring underachieving students. The head and staff are creating an environment in which improvement is possible, and there is now evidence that standards are improving.

The commitment to equal opportunities is demonstrated by the effective support given to students with special educational needs, and the importance placed on raising standards and on preparing students to make appropriate decisions as to their pathways on leaving the school.

National Curriculum statutory requirements are met, except in information technology in Key Stages 3 and 4, and religious education in Key Stage 4. There is no daily act of collective worship.

There were no issues raised regarding management in the relevant section of the last inspection report.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

There are 79 full-time and 15 part-time qualified teachers. Forty two have served at the school for ten years or more, and 11 for more than 20 years. The match between qualifications and subjects taught is good. The deployment of staff across the age range is according to their qualifications, with the exception of information technology support. There are 25 non-teaching staff: educational support staff (including technicians); special educational needs staff; and administration and clerical staff. The administration and clerical staff work efficiently and effectively to support the school. The level of caretaking in the three weeks prior to inspection has been appropriate.

The school has detailed policy documents on staff induction, appraisal and development. The induction arrangements for new colleagues are good at both department and school level. Arrangements for appraisal and the professional development of staff support the school development plan and the needs of individuals. The senior management team monitors the outcomes of staff development through the appraisal system and the line management of heads of departments.

The school makes successful use of its teaching accommodation, within the limitations of the buildings and student numbers. The condition of the accommodation is at best satisfactory and in some instances poor. Specialist accommodation is generally adequate. However, the science department would benefit from more spacious preparation rooms, and the art department could develop a more varied range of work if there was better storage space. The mathematics department does not have enough teaching rooms; as a result, there is a lot of student movement. The condition of a number of areas of the school reflects poorly on the status of the subject: the religious education department, for example. Some departments, such as English, have made imaginative use of their accommodation. A few areas of the school benefit from good displays of artwork. There are many missed opportunities, however, for celebrating students' work along the corridors. During lesson change-over times, corridors are overcrowded; it is only the good behaviour of the students which prevents major disruptions.

The school is currently allocating 4.8 per cent of its budget to learning resources; at £96 per student, this is well below the national average of £120. The level of learning resources is never better than satisfactory and in a number of cases it impairs learning. This is most apparent in the area of information technology. There are also other needs:- for example: in geography, there is a shortage of up-to-date atlases and resources for audio-visual aids are poor; in mathematics, students in some classes share a textbook. The library is well used by students and staff at break and lunch, and after school for homework clubs. It is not used effectively by departments during lesson times. Library stock in some curriculum areas, such as geography and history, needs updating. The library is sometimes unsupervised; the school needs to reconsider this practice, to ensure that the loss of books is reduced to a minimum from the previous high figures. The level of spending and the overall provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory, although the effectiveness of spending on

assistants needs continued monitoring.

The efficiency of the school

The school development plan indicates the major priorities which form the basis of the school's financial plan. There is sound financial planning, and the school has made a number of income and spending projections for the next few years. The prospective income pattern is uncertain, and there has been a lack of stability in LEA funding. Planned initiatives are carefully costed, both in terms of staff time and the financial costs of the proposed initiative.

Staff are deployed effectively at all key stages. There is a significant use of non-teaching assistants in the special needs provision. Further use of non-teaching staff, especially in the area of information technology, will need to be considered. There is a core team of head, deputy and assistant head. They are part of a larger group known as the senior management team. The commitments of this group have been carefully analysed in terms of value for money. There is in addition an extended senior management team which achieves good value for money: teachers take on managerial responsibilities for a short period without further direct financial reward. The balance of budgetary spending between staffing, training and resourcing will need careful review to ensure that students benefit fully from information technology and other resources.

The condition of the accommodation is at best satisfactory and in some instances poor. A building programme for new classrooms is under way, and a careful reappraisal of the uses and maintenance costs of the school buildings will be needed once these are completed. The level of learning resources is never better than satisfactory and in a number of cases it impairs learning.

Although well used after school, the library is under-used during the day, and there is insufficient IT provision. The school will need to recast its priorities to ensure adequate level of recurring financial provision for Information and Communication Technology (ICT), including the library.

Financial control is handled well, and there is a conscious effort to ensure good value for money in purchasing consumables. A recent auditors' report was generally favourable, and its recommendations have been acted on. The administration of the school is smooth and effective, and the administration team creates a helpful environment for teachers, students, and parents.

Money received for professional development is effectively used, although the overall funding received in this area is well below national averages.

The level of funding the school receives is below average, but not greatly so. The level of attainment on entry is also below average, and most other socio-economic indicators for the catchment area place the school in the lower quartiles. Spending patterns are evaluated with a value for money perspective. Whilst overall levels of attainment as observed by inspectors at the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are not at the national average, they do indicate that students make effective progress. Analysis using the YELLIS scheme, which relates predicted results for students against actual GCSE results, indicates that in most subject areas the school is now producing above-average results for students of given attainment levels. When

account is taken of the improved picture in attainment in relation to attainment on entry, and of its low unit costs, the school provides above-average value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science

English

Students' attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 3 is generally in line with national standards. Recent below-average national test results were not borne out by teacher assessments, nor by inspection evidence.

Students' attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 4 is generally in line with national standards, but the most recent GCSE results were below them. This was largely because of the poorer performance of boys. The girls' results approached their national average, whereas the boys' results were considerably below theirs. Attainment at A level was close to the national average, but fewer boys than nationally took A Level English courses.

At both key stages, students attain national standards in speaking and listening, and some do better - particularly at Key Stage 3, where dramatisation is used to explore texts. Students make satisfactory progress in speaking and listening at both key stages. Students in Year 7 already have the skills to plan together, to hold debates, and to present their ideas and work to each other. Skills of oral presentation are well established in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Some students are less skilled than others in listening and in joint planning. Others have above-average skills in improvised role play.

The reading levels of students entering the school are around average; some read well for their age. A significant minority have reading difficulties, however, and boys are over-represented among the poorer readers. For some students, these difficulties persist into Key Stage 4 and impede general progress. The school is aware of these problems and has started an innovative paired reading scheme involving sixth form students in helping younger students to read; there is some evidence of improvement in reading standards as a result. At both key stages, students are competent in reading from a wide range of literary texts. In Key Stage 4, through anthology based reading, they study a good range of themes and authors, especially modern poets such as Heaney, Garret, Ewart and Bonnick.

Parts and figures of speech are learned early and rehearsed regularly. This knowledge is used both in the analysis of poetry and in original descriptive and imaginative writing. By the end of Key Stage 4, students are able to identify the features of language style in newspapers and other texts, although in some cases there needs to be more use of specialist terms to ensure rigorous analysis.

By the sixth form, students extend their knowledge of language forms, history and uses to a high standard. For example, they can identify the features of childrens' fiction and how these reflect how children learn.

At both key stages, students attain national standards in writing. Standards of handwriting and spelling are generally satisfactory, although occasional spelling errors persist even into the sixth form. From early in Key Stage 3, students are used to polishing their work from rough

drafts. Some short personal and biographical writing on families is of a good standard. By the end of the key stage, they are competent in writing for a range of purposes and some adopt appropriate styles: for example, in the work done to illustrate themes and events from 'Romeo and Juliet'. By the end of Key Stage 4, students are able to prepare audio scripts, taking account of audience and features of spoken language. The best fictional writing shows a command of dialogue effects and point of view, but some work is confined to simple narrative. In the sixth form, some work on campaign posters shows an ability to choose and combine text and images for effective persuasion.

Whereas the general rate of progress through the school in reading and writing is satisfactory, the progress of individual students is sometimes unsatisfactory because the level of work set in classes is undemanding for some students but taxes the skills of others.

Students with English as a second language generally progress well, and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

Students respond well in lessons, especially in Key Stage 3. Most have positive attitudes to written tasks, but they particularly enjoy debating, discussing and role-playing. They present their work carefully, and are usually attentive to each other's contributions. Boys are sometimes less attentive than girls. Some have difficulty in accommodating to small group settings, but teachers generally arrange groups to minimise problems.

The standard of teaching is generally satisfactory in both key stages, and it is often good in Key Stage 3. Small-group discussion and class presentations are used widely as a learning method. Teachers organise students' work carefully from a secure knowledge of the subject, although planned outcomes are sometimes too generally worded. Teachers manage classes effectively. Rapport with students is good. Activities are well introduced and paced. Homework is set regularly, and provides extension of the classroom activities. In order to improve examination results, close attention is being given to the teaching of examination techniques, developing students' familiarity with assessment tasks, and their knowledge of assessment criteria.

A weakness in some otherwise satisfactory lessons was that the tasks set are nearly always the same for all students, regardless of reading age or of the fact that the groups are of mixed ability. This practice impedes the progress of higher and lower attainers. It also fails to acknowledge the specific need to improve boys' attainment.

The English schemes of work cover National Curriculum requirements; some subjects - notably mathematics, art, and technology - particularly encourage students to use their skills of explanation and evaluation. Procedures are well established for monitoring and assessing progress. Marking is detailed and constructive. Students also benefit from the informal assessment which occurs in most classes. There is good liaison with special needs and ESL staff. The schemes and learning materials give effective support to the teaching of course themes, although library-based work is not well developed and a more explicit strategy is needed for information technology in English. A whole-school approach to literacy is in development. Within English, this approach needs to adjust the reading level of learning materials and the nature of the content to more effectively meet the needs of mixed-ability groups and increase the appeal of the subject for boys.

There is competent leadership and organisation of the subject. Newer staff have been given the opportunity to contribute to improvements in schemes of work and teaching. The literacy initiatives which feature in the subject development plans now need to be driven forward.

Drama is an accessible and popular subject, and makes a notable contribution both to the overall quality of students' education and to their skills and confidence for learning. It is led separately from English, and has good quality leadership.

In both key stages and in the sixth form, standards in drama are in line with national expectations; some individual attainment is higher than that. In many classes, there are students with impressive skills in improvising, interpreting and presenting characters and feelings. Students are creative, show confidence in giving and taking criticism, contribute their own ideas, and stay in role. They clearly enjoy their lessons.

Effective teaching underpins the steady progress made both within lessons and from one age group to another. Students are taught to build up individual performances from component actions and sequences, as the basis for a group performance. Occasionally, more reference to the textual source would enhance understanding. Examination criteria are highlighted in an appropriate way.

There are effective teaching links with English: for example, to help students in Year 9 to explore 'Romeo and Juliet' through dramatic performance. Schemes of work are detailed and helpful. Students are encouraged to extend their school experience into the wider world through a popular drama club, school performances, and contacts with drama in the community.

Mathematics

Judging by the results of tests at the end of Key Stage 2, students' attainment on entry is in line with national averages, although a smaller proportion achieve the higher levels.

At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national averages, and more students reach the higher levels than on entry to the school. The National Curriculum test results in 1997 were below the national averages. Inspection findings showed an improvement in the standards of students' work, both in lessons and over the year. There was little variation in attainment, either by gender or by ethnic background.

Progress through the years in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. All students gain confidence in applying an increasing repertoire of mathematical skills. They can use fractions in solving problems of money and time, and in working out the probability of events taking place. They can name a number of simple two-dimensional shapes and describe their properties. Students have a good range of graphical skills and can use co-ordinates in relation to maps. Higher attainers make good progress in Years 8 and 9, and by the end of the key stage are developing a good grasp of algebraic techniques, including the solution of simultaneous equations by graphical and other methods.

Whereas the current Key Stage 3 students are meeting national expectations, the previous

cohort - who are now in Key Stage 4 - were below expectations, as was demonstrated by their Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results in 1996 and 1997.

By the end Key Stage 4, students are achieving standards below national averages. This inspection judgement reflects external examination results. The 1997 GCSE results are below the national average at the higher grades, although in line for grades A* to G. There are more girls than boys in the higher sets. Girls are achieving in line with national averages at grades A* to C; boys' results are below them. There was no observable variation in attainment by ethnic background. The GCSE results given in the last inspection report were above national averages, but a much smaller proportion of the year group was then entered for the examination. GCSE results overall have improved since the last inspection report.

Students make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 4. Higher-attaining students develop further competence in manipulating a wide range of algebraic expressions and in solving equations. Students' skills in handling data improve, and they can draw accurately bar and line graphs and pie charts. They learn to apply trigonometric ratios to find unknown sides and angles in triangles. Lower attainers strengthen their number skills and use them with increasing accuracy and speed. Most students, of all levels of attainment, can talk about their approach to problems and any difficulties they had in reaching a solution. Most students are also competent at recording their results and describing the methods used to reach their conclusions.

Attainment in GCE Advanced level courses was judged to be satisfactory, which was consistent with examination results. In 1997, the results at both A to C and A to E grades match course averages, with some students achieving high grades. This pattern has been maintained for the last few years. Students follow a modular course, and options include mechanics and statistics. Those students studying further mathematics are reaching a good standard compared with course expectations. During Years 12 and 13, students are rapidly extending their knowledge base - for example, in statistics - and are applying this effectively to the solution of increasingly complex problems.

Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in both key stages, owing to the matching of tasks to their level of attainment and to effective in-class support.

Standards in mathematics are steadily improving. External assessment results over the past three years confirm this, as do outcomes from research on 'added value', for example YELLIS data.

Students' numeracy skills are good when required for use in other subjects. For example, in science they can accurately plot and draw graphs to represent experimental data; and in geography, they can calculate the flow of rivers. Staff work closely with other departments to develop the use of mathematics in cross-curricular themes, making progress on what was an issue in the last inspection report. However, there are still limited opportunities to use information technology, which was also reported as a weakness in the last inspection.

Many students clearly enjoy mathematics and are keen to take part in whole-class discussions and to answer questions. They do not as frequently show curiosity and ask questions. They work well in small groups or pairs when the task requires them to do so. Relationships with

the teacher and with each other are good, and their behaviour is very good. All these factors help to establish a good working atmosphere which encourages effective learning. The increasing number of students choosing to study mathematics at A level is an indicator of students' interest in the subject. Standards of presentation of written work are usually good, showing a pride in their work.

The quality of teaching is good in about half of the lessons and is satisfactory in nearly all the rest. Teachers have at least a sound grasp of mathematics, and they use it to plan lessons effectively. Some teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and use it to challenge students, rapidly extending their knowledge base and introducing them to increasingly sophisticated mathematical methods. Practical tasks and investigative methods are used effectively to gain students' interest and so develop and reinforce their knowledge and understanding. One example of this was a group activity based on calculating probabilities of certain events. The management of students is invariably very good, helping to create a working atmosphere which supports attainment. The frequency and length of homework assignments is unsatisfactory. There is some good departmental practice, but there is inconsistency across classes. Some parents felt that that at times homework was confined to finishing class work which some students had already completed.

The recording and assessment of students' work is good, and follows clear guidelines. Tests are used at the end of units to check coverage of a topic, and assessment data is used to pinpoint areas for improvement. The setting arrangements from Year 8 onwards contribute positively to raising standards of attainment.

The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements. The schemes of work are written to give sound guidance for progression and continuity for nearly all the attainment targets, but are insufficient for developing effectively the higher levels of Using and Applying Mathematics. The department is well led, and teachers work hard to provide students with a good mathematical experience. There are many after-school revision and support sessions to encourage students to improve their grades.

The level of resources is unsatisfactory. Many students do not have a personal copy of a textbook, and this has a negative impact on their ability to prepare for the lesson and to revise work. The issue of unsatisfactory accommodation was raised in the last inspection report. The situation has improved, but there are still deficiencies. Where rooms are grouped together, they provide a good environment for learning and enable resources to be shared. On many occasions, however, staff are teaching in rooms away from the mathematics base, and this wastes time in the movement of books and resources.

Science

Standards in lessons and work seen during the inspection show that, by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is broadly in line with the national average. At Key Stage 4, there is a range of attainment; many students attain expected levels, and a few reach standards that are well above the national average. The work of other students is below average. Standards in A level classes are broadly average.

National Curriculum standard test results at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national averages. These results, however, show an improvement over the past two years. More girls than boys achieve Level 5, but the number of boys achieving at the higher Level 7 has increased sharply in comparison with 1996 and is higher than the number of girls achieving this level. Within a small cohort of students (81), GCSE results for double science are well above national standards. They are similar to results of the previous year, 1996. A high proportion of students obtain the highest grades. Within a cohort of 131 students, results for single science are above the national average. Although there is a wide-ranging attainment, 58 per cent of students achieve A* -D grades. These results show an improvement on the previous year. The number of students studying each of the three sciences at A level is too small for comparisons to be made with national figures for individual subjects. A few students obtained the top-most grades. The number of students currently studying A level science has increased. However, fewer boys than girls have chosen chemistry and biology, and only a few girls have chosen physics. There are procedures in place to improve grades at both GCSE and A level.

In lessons, students develop good use of mathematical skills in calculations and the use of formulae. They are able to make accurate observations and relate them to new ideas about, for example, the quantitative relationship between speed, distance and time. They can support their ideas about irreversible and reversible changes, using appropriate evidence from practical work about chemical reactions. A level students are skilled at interpreting results and drawing conclusions: for example, about the properties of thermosetting polymers. Year 12 students are able to construct complex equations when studying halogens in chemistry. As they do practical work, all students work safely and handle equipment competently.

Progress in lessons is satisfactory and often good. It is best in the sixth form, where teachers make effective use of students' prior learning to enable them to cope successfully with complex tasks and make substantial gains in knowledge: for example, in understanding Kepler's theories applied to astrophysics. Through strong self-motivation, most students take responsibility for their own rates of progress.

In each key stage, students are making satisfactory progress in understanding key scientific facts and principles. The development of knowledge and understanding about experimental procedures is less progressive at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4, in that there is insufficient independent investigative work at Key Stage 3. Opportunities are sometimes missed for students to suggest their own hypotheses and plan their own experiments. Many students understand about fair testing principles and can make predictions, although they tend not to base their guesses in scientific knowledge. In Key Stages 3 and 4, standards of handwriting and the presentation of notes do not match the expected standard in a significant number of books. There are too few two-dimensional science diagrams which are well drawn and

suitably annotated. Information technology skills are not used enough. Skills of discussion and debate are underdeveloped, particularly in the sixth form.

Students increase the accuracy of their observations and record them in more detail although, too often at Key Stage 3, they carry out structured experiments that do not encourage their own explorations. All students use an increasing range of scientific vocabulary correctly: “contamination” in Year 7; “reactant” in Year 9; “negative feedback” in Year 10; “disproportionation” in Year 12. They are able to use equipment safely and with growing confidence, for example as they investigate distillation in Year 9. They make measurements with increasing accuracy as they learn to use an electronic balance. Throughout the key stages, they learn to work with less guidance from their teacher. Progress is best where the pace through a lesson is brisk, students find the work interesting, and they are involved in demanding work that causes them to apply information. It is slowed down by uninteresting lengthy introductions to lessons and when students are passively occupied by text-book work which does not sufficiently provoke thinking. Work is not always adapted to meet the needs of individual students: high attainers are not given sufficiently challenging work. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

Students take a keen interest in their work and usually enjoy the activities. During practical work, they competently record results together and share equipment safely. They have good relations with each other and with their teachers. A few need extra monitoring to prevent loss of concentration. They usually listen carefully to each other, as they discuss the pattern in their observations about electrical current and resistance of wires. Their pleasant humour contributes substantially to the good ethos and purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. Sometimes, at Key Stage 3 and 4, there are too few occasions when students ask questions to enquire more deeply into a topic, and sixth formers refrain from challenging the information provided.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Almost all lessons were judged satisfactory, and a quarter were good. Teaching is at its best in the sixth form. A striking feature of the department is the teachers’ competence in their own specialist subject. The teaching has several strengths: lesson plans focus clearly upon what students need to learn; expectations are shared with students; and practical activities are safely and skilfully managed. Relationships are very good and there is effective use of praise and encouragement, although the work set for higher-attaining students is not demanding enough. In the best lessons, there is skilled questioning that causes discussion, and clear explanation that, coupled with interesting and relevant analogies, helps understanding. Carefully judged sprinklings of humour reinforce clarity and provide a stimulating working atmosphere. The main weaknesses in science teaching are slow, lengthy introductions to lessons and teaching approaches which constrain opportunities for students to explore their own ideas. Lessons do not begin in ways that capture students’ imagination, and not enough time is left at the end for them to think about what has been learnt. Homework is not regularly set.

There is a strong team spirit among staff who have written their schemes and plans together and support one another. The curriculum mapping ensures coverage of most aspects of the programmes of study; not included is the integration into topics of experimental and investigative work or information technology. Test and examination results are carefully analysed and acted upon. Assessment is used constructively in curriculum planning. Marking is consistently done. Comments meticulously guide the progress for A level students but, on

occasion, contain too little guidance at Key Stage 4 and hardly any at Key Stage 3. However the leadership in the department is no more than satisfactory since there is no central system for monitoring an individual student's progress from Year 7 onwards; teachers keep their own records. The department does not systematically monitor science teaching and learning. The departmental development plan identifies suitable priorities for developing science, but it does not link these to the budget, and omits resource and time implications and specific criteria for success.

Large class sizes constrain provision and some laboratories are too small for effective practical work. Aspects identified, in the last inspection (1993), for improvement of the preparation areas have not been satisfactorily attended to. Most preparation laboratories are congested and not organised to ensure maximum effectiveness. The areas for preparing lessons are highly cluttered. The procedures for ordering equipment for all sciences is inefficient and detrimentally affects standards. Very good service is provided by dedicated technicians, who greatly contribute to science education; but the amount of work they are able to do is tightly restricted by this inadequate provision. There are few areas that display and celebrate the work of students.

Other subjects or courses

Art

Students' attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is broadly in line with national expectations. There is evidence, in lessons and from a scrutiny of course work, that levels of attainment improve towards the end of Key Stage 4. GCSE results are below national averages, but they show an upward trend over the past three years. The attainment of students in the sixth form is consistently higher than national expectations. A level results are consistently above national averages; work submitted for assessment this year shows evidence of very high attainment. At Key Stage 3, the students understand the effects of transparency, translucency and opacity on colour; they utilise them effectively in their still life paintings. They are able to construct a Fabonacci grid and use it to produce creative distortions of images. Higher-attaining students use colour sensitively in their drawings and paintings. Most students shape clay confidently; by the end of Key Stage 3, higher-attaining students can model figures accurately and present them in effective and interesting ways. At Key Stage 4, the students have good observational skills and can work quickly and confidently in charcoal. As they approach the end of Key Stage 4, they can interpret well known artists from Breughel to Lichtenstein and incorporate many styles into their own work. In the sixth form, the students are aware of a wide range of important artists; they understand styles such as Impressionism, Cubism, pre-Raphaelite, Renaissance and Dada. They handle an appropriate range of media well, including photography and screen printing, often bringing them together in creative and individual ways. They present their work well, utilising graphic and constructional skills to good effect.

Progress across both key stages and in the sixth form is good; at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, it is mostly good and sometimes very good. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Evidence from sketch books and portfolios as well as lesson observations shows that sixth form students make very good progress towards their A level examinations.

They build up an effective art vocabulary and use it well.

The students are courteous and show respect for adults and each other. They work with enthusiasm and enjoyment on individual research and pieces of work. They speak clearly and confidently about their work. Their good behaviour and ability to work well together support the industrious ethos of the classroom, enabling good progress to be made.

Teaching across both key stages and in the sixth form is never less than good. It was very good in almost half the lessons observed, and occasionally excellent. All teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject; they are able to demonstrate a range of techniques effectively to promote high standards of achievement amongst students. In the best lessons, teaching is inspirational, with drive, enthusiasm and high expectations combining to ensure that most students make very good progress with their work.

An excellent ethos for learning is established, and lessons proceed at a very good pace. Classes are always well managed. Teachers have high expectations of the students' work and behaviour, ensuring that all make good progress.

The department team is knowledgeable and committed, and works hard to get the best from students. It is led well and administered efficiently, and benefits from the support of a capable and hard-working technician. Good use is made of field and study trips to London museums and galleries and to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park; students at Key Stage 3 do not yet benefit from them. The resources for learning are adequate; restrictions on accommodation, and poor storage facilities, limit the use that can be made of resources for three-dimensional work. Teachers are keen to explore the rapidly-expanding field of information technology, but lack the hardware and software resources to do so. A local bank recently sponsored a Royal Academy tutor and a professional model to provide a stimulating contribution to life drawing for the department. The art department has improved considerably overall since the last inspection and is a strength of the school.

Design and Technology

The students come into the school with limited design and make skills. The rate of progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 4 but unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3. There is a similar variation in the different aspects of the subject. At the end of Key Stage 3, students reach levels below national averages overall. They tend to be stronger in food technology and less strong in areas using resistant materials such as wood, metal and plastics. In terms of design, students develop sound presentation skills, though the range of ideas and applications is narrow, reflecting limited research skills and understanding. Most students use tools and materials safely and with some accuracy, and make some well-finished products. There are limited instances of detailed planning and evaluation, particularly in resistant materials.

In Key Stage 3, progress in the subject is variable. It is unsatisfactory overall, because of the lack of challenge and coverage in the scheme of work. Though sometimes good in food and textiles, progress is slower in resistant materials and electronics.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 varies considerably between the different courses; overall, it is below national averages. The school provision has taken some time to adjust to

the changing requirements of GCSE, though there has been steady improvement in results over the last three years. About 40 per cent of students gained GCSE grades A*-C in 1997, compared with 47 per cent nationally. Current attainment in project work indicates levels a little below the 1997 figure. Girls tend to perform better than boys, and results are stronger in food technology and textiles. In all the design technology areas there are examples of high attainment when challenging tasks are provided. However, this is not sufficiently consistent. The making skills are often strong in resistant materials, though overall attainment is constrained by the underpinning knowledge and limited research and design process.

Progress in Key Stage 4 is broadly satisfactory, though it varies with the specialist course being pursued. In the newly-introduced GNVQ, students show considerable gains in planning, research and presentation, stimulated by the increased access to information technology and number of industrial links. Progress in food technology is mostly satisfactory, and good on occasion; strengthening knowledge and skills in product analysis inform design. Similarly, there are instances of good progress in electronics, resistant materials and graphics among the higher-attaining students, though generally progress is constrained by students' weaker than average foundation in knowledge and design skills gained at Key Stage 3.

Most students show interest in design and technology, though a significant minority are less committed and do not complete GCSE. Students respond well to good teaching, staying on task for extended periods, and when given the opportunity they co-operate well in group work. However, they tend to lose momentum when the design process is a prolonged and largely paper exercise, and a few become disaffected when they fail to cope with the course requirements: for example, in electronics.

Teaching in design and technology is mostly satisfactory, with a number of good features, though there are weaknesses in schemes of work and lesson planning. All teachers are committed to the subject, frequently showing this commitment in the extra time they make available at breaks and after school to help students with GCSE projects and to run a successful electronics club. They share considerable experience and a secure grasp of their specialist area, and they use these in giving effective support in lessons. The best practice uses a variety of methods, including question-and-answer and group work, and introduces more challenging content at appropriate times. Good examples are in food technology where students use computers to analyse the content of meals they have designed, and where students are given clear demonstrations of the constraints in manufacturing. The teachers delivering GNVQ manufacturing make good use of information technology and industry links, as well as explicit assessment schemes, so giving greater purpose to the lessons than other areas of provision in design technology.

However, the work schemes used in Key Stage 3, particularly in resistant materials, are based on long design-and-make projects which are at times slow paced and lack sufficient challenge in terms of knowledge and understanding. Although they broadly meet National Curriculum requirements the schemes of work do not reinforce a clear and rigorous design process in areas - such as electronic systems, structures and mechanisms. Homework is not sufficiently used to encourage personal research and to develop ideas. This difficulty in meeting requirements is exacerbated by the lack of timetabled time in Year 9.

In Key Stage 4, the school offers a wide range of courses: they include GCSE in food technology, textiles, resistant materials, electronics and graphics, and GNVQ Intermediate in manufacturing. The Key Stage 3 programme needs to be more challenging to ensure success in those subjects offered as GCSE short courses.

Except for graphics, resources are mostly sound. Good use is made of the few computers in the food and resistant materials areas, though in general the use of information technology is unsatisfactory. This is particularly so in the area of control technology, where there is limited use of the computer-aided manufacturing equipment.

The subject is led by the design and technology co-ordinator who is conscientious and clear about the development needs of a diverse department. With the recent staff changes and dispersed teaching areas, it has however been difficult to establish a cohesive team in which all members have a sense of ownership in the subject. This needs to be strengthened to ensure the continued development of the subject.

Geography

There is a wide range of attainment in geography at the end of Key Stage 3. Students in the upper sets have a sound knowledge - in line with, and in some cases above, national age-related expectations - of economic development, tectonic processes, and countries studied. Most other students have covered similar ground but have a lower level of geographical understanding. Overall, attainment is near but slightly below national standards. At the end of Key Stage 4, students are achieving levels which overall are similarly just below national expectations. Some of the local fieldwork on surveying shopping patterns is of a good standard, and many students have covered the examination topics thoroughly. In the 1997 GCSE examination, 43 per cent of students reached higher grade (A* - C) passes, compared with the national average of 50 per cent. Girls generally attain more highly than boys, in line with national trends. In the GCE A level groups, students are working at appropriate levels for the successful completion of the course. In 1997, in the last examination, three of the five entrants were successful.

At Key Stage 3, most students make good progress in geography lessons; at Key Stage 4, they make progress in lessons which is at least satisfactory, and sometimes good. This is commendable, as there have been major changes in teaching staff in the past eight months. Progress is generally satisfactory in the sixth form. Teachers ensure that higher-attaining students are challenged and stretched at Key Stages 3 and 4, and make efforts to support students with special needs.

Fieldwork and practical activities are well used to engage and sustain students' interest in the

subject at all levels.

Students at all stages show interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Behaviour is particularly good at Key Stage 3, where students enjoy working collaboratively in paired and group activities. Students at all levels are able to participate thoughtfully in discussion and to listen carefully to other people's opinions.

Despite the recent staff changes, lessons seen in the inspection week were well planned and encouraged students to think geographically about the topics studied. Teachers have good subject knowledge, they are enthusiastic about their teaching, they praise good work, they use a range of approaches and, in most cases, they have high expectations of what students may achieve. Teaching is generally satisfactory or better, and most lessons observed had good features. The few weaknesses were where teaching objectives were not made clear enough to students, and where teachers were not sufficiently familiar with some examination requirements. A strong emphasis is placed upon developing observations and recording skills through fieldwork and individual research projects.

The new head of department has made good progress in starting to put in place full schemes of work for Key Stage 3 and for the examination courses. The completion of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work is rightly acknowledged to be a priority, as the lack of a complete teaching programme is a major weakness. The geography area has limited teaching space, and most rooms have poor projection and viewing facilities. The department is under-equipped with visual resources and makes insufficient use of information technology within the curriculum, except for some use of automatic weather recording.

History

Teacher assessment results at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the national average. At Key Stage 4, the overall level of attainment is slightly better than the national average. Girls achieve better A*-C GCSE grades than boys, in line with national trends. In lessons observed at Key Stage 3, attainment for a substantial number of students is in line with national expectations. At Key Stage 4, there is evidence of some underachievement by the more able students. At A level, the proportion of candidates achieving grade E or above is in line with national averages.

Progress is good for the majority of students at Key Stages 3 and 4 in terms of their knowledge and understanding. Average- and lower-attaining students improve their ability to handle evidence in terms of comprehension and inference. Students' extended writing skills are developing through the department's use of supportive writing frames, so helping students organise their work. An example of this is the Year 9 lesson on the role played by riots in bringing about reform in nineteenth century Britain. The regular use of textbook questions limits the opportunities for students to develop a wider range of skills and higher levels of historical thinking. Higher-attaining students are not always given chances to examine evidence critically. At A level, students make satisfactory or good progress. They show a good knowledge of the period studied and are developing skills and conceptual understanding. Across the 11-18 age range, students make most progress when there is a variety of activities which challenge them and give them opportunities to develop their own ideas. An example of

this was the decision-making activity in Year 7 related to the claims to the throne in 1066. In the sixth form, the use of role play and debate in analysing the role of key figures in the unification of Italy is similarly both stimulating and effective in improving students' historical thinking.

Attitudes to learning in both key stages and in the sixth form are good. When provided with the opportunities, students respond positively.

Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject at all levels within the school. They have good relationships with students. At Key Stage 3, teaching is satisfactory or good in all lessons; at Key Stage 4, it is satisfactory in the majority of lessons. A level teaching is satisfactory or good. Where teaching is less than satisfactory, the lesson is dominated by teacher talk and activities are not varied. Where teaching is good, students are encouraged to think analytically. Teachers keep records of all students' achievements in their planners and assessment record cards. Students' work is regularly marked. The best marking pointed out what students needed to do to make further progress. Methods of assessment and monitoring are good. The department uses assessment tasks which focus on the key elements and the National Curriculum levels. Outcomes are used to support an effective system of target setting which is valued by the students. Analysis of GCSE results is used to good effect. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements.

Equal opportunities issues are addressed by studying the role of women in the seventeenth century, the transatlantic slave trade, and the Holocaust during World War II. Resources are managed efficiently. The department enriches the curriculum with a programme of educational visits to York, for example, and information technology is beginning to be integrated into the history curriculum. The department is well managed. The head of department sustains a climate of openness in which staff development is encouraged.

Information Technology

At the time of the previous inspection, the school's information technology policy and development plan had recently been reviewed. There has been little development since then. Attainment levels are currently well below average, progress is poor, and the management of the area is unsatisfactory. Staff training was seen as a priority and this need has been addressed, but only patchily. Those teaching information technology as a discrete subject have a relevant level of confidence and competence.

Some new equipment has been purchased. The ratio of one computer to nine students appears to be an improvement over the situation at the last inspection, but it masks the fact that the majority of the computers were considered in 1993 to have been 'becoming outdated'. There is a new computer room to service the GNVQ courses, with additional new hardware in design and technology and business studies, a weather station in geography, and 15 palmtop computers in the mathematics department. The two information technology rooms are available to be booked by other subject teachers when the rooms are free. It was significant that only one such session took place during the week of the inspection.

In Key Stage 3, students in Year 7 still follow a taught information technology programme of one period per week in class groups. The activities used are appropriate but limited. In Years 8 and 9, information technology capability is written in to the schemes of work and assessed

through English, mathematics, and science. There are occasions when it is used positively and appropriately in other departments, by those teachers confident to do so: in history, for example, modern foreign languages, and music.

In Key Stage 4 students in Year 10 follow a taught information technology programme of one period per week in sets. Students develop their information technology capability further through careers guidance or if they follow GNVQ, keyboarding or business studies courses.

Students at post 16 have the opportunity to use information technology significantly in advanced GNVQ and business studies courses, and they achieve appropriate course-related standards.

In the lessons observed, students made satisfactory progress in terms of the lesson objectives. Progress through the school is unsatisfactory, however, since the curriculum offer is too limited. In the majority of lessons, students consolidate previous learning and, according to their abilities, have a satisfactory grasp of specialist vocabulary and concepts. Most can handle data in an appropriate form and offer oral explanations of their actions. Students with special needs are generally well supported in class by their peers in focussed groupings. Higher-attaining students, however, are rarely challenged to develop the higher skills of problem solving and data manipulation. The department does very little to analyse progress by gender or ethnic groups.

Teaching is at best satisfactory; it was unsatisfactory in 10 per cent of lessons. Monitoring and assessment to target higher levels and be used to inform the planning of further work is not systematic. Homework is not set. However, specialist staff show a good knowledge of their subject and give clear explanations.

Students' response is broadly satisfactory at all levels and sometimes good in Key Stage 3. Students are friendly and open, and establish positive relationships with staff. They show enthusiasm for the subject, contribute to discussions, and collaborate well. When asked to settle down to work independently, a minority have a very short attention span and behave inappropriately as they lose interest. This is usually in the younger age groups. The extent to which students take responsibility for their work and learning is limited. However, students do respond well to opportunities to work collaboratively, in pairs or groups, and to share ideas.

Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1997 was addressed internally. Fifty per cent of students were placed at or above Level 5 of the National Curriculum. The procedure for determining these levels was rudimentary and over-optimistic, however, and indicated attainment in line with the age-related national averages. Observation of lessons indicates that students' attainment is in fact well below national averages at the end of Key Stage 3, and below them at the end of Key Stage 4. In addition, the complete range of and requirements for information technology in the National Curriculum are not covered.

The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The mapping exercise undertaken prior to the last inspection is still in need of being formalised into a coherent scheme, and the existing resources remain under-used. Accommodation has improved since the previous inspection; there is a continuing, but slow, programme of upgrading of

equipment.

Other factors which have a negative impact on overall standards are the low allocation of time to the subject at Key Stages 3 and 4, and the lack of full access to IT entitlement. Development planning should now focus on medium- and longer-term objectives, be integrated into school priorities, be fully costed, and have measurable criteria for success.

Modern Foreign Languages

Attainment in modern foreign languages is average at the end of Key Stage 3 and below average at the end of Key Stage 4. There has been a downward trend in examination results over the last three years.

In Key Stage 4, some students studying German are on course to achieve or exceed national standards. This is a product of good professional knowledge informing a wider range of activities in the target language.

GCSE results for A-C grades in both French and German were below the national average, although results in German were slightly higher than the other language.

In the sixth form, although students are showing some ability to apply grammatical rules, progress is too slow to ensure good grades in the 1998 French A level examination and attainment is therefore below course related expectations.

In both key stages, students listen to and follow quite complex instructions and explanations in the target languages. In Key Stage 3, students are beginning to read for the gist, and extract detail from short spoken and written texts. Most students can express themselves in a range of everyday, familiar situations, and can give and ask for basic information. At Key Stage 4, students have increased the range of topic areas and are generally given adequate opportunities to extend their vocabulary. Students would be challenged further if they were tackling longer and more complex passages where higher skills such as inference could be practised, and where there were more opportunities to use previously acquired language in unfamiliar situations.

Across both key stages, pronunciation and accents in French and German are reasonable; intonation needs to be improved. Reading for pleasure is under-practised at both key stages, and should be developed.

Writing at both key stages is limited in scope but sufficiently accurate. Students would benefit from being presented with tasks requiring more extensive writing. Knowledge of vocabulary is good, but their grammatical knowledge is less confident.

All students make some progress, including those with special educational needs. However, the lower-attaining students would achieve higher standards if encouraged by higher expectations and more challenging tasks. These comments apply equally to the GNVQ and units of accreditation groups. In German, although time is limited in Key Stage 3, students' attainment is satisfactory to good in all aspects.

In all lessons observed, students demonstrated a positive attitude to learning a foreign language. Relationships are good and students behave well. Groups are industrious and settle well to their work. They collaborate willingly in pair work and with the teacher, and concentration is sustained during activities. Some students in the lower-attaining groups lack confidence when speaking.

The quality of teaching was satisfactory in all the lessons observed, and in some it was good or better. Lessons are well planned and organised, and have appropriate content and clear objectives which are shared with the students. The foreign language is used consistently and sometimes humorously in the classroom. Pace is often well maintained. A range of resources is used effectively in lessons.

The schemes of work need to make explicit that there is adequate coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study parts 1 and 2 relating to the use and understanding of the target languages. There are at present no indicators of progression and continuity within and across key stages. Assessment is used to inform planning and delivery. However, continuous assessment needs to be reviewed so that appropriate evaluative judgements across the department can be made and, alongside constructive marking of their work, become more effective in helping students to improve.

The amount of time given to studying the second language in Key Stage 3 is low.

Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are efficiently used, although reading material for both key stages needs to be increased.

The systematic integration of information technology into language teaching needs to be developed further.

Communication within the department is very good, and the teachers operate together as an effective team.

Music

The music department continues to be a significant strength of the school. High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection, and nearly all the weaknesses itemised in the report have been satisfactorily overcome.

Students' musical attainment on entry is overall below national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is at the national expectation. With the exception of one year, GCSE results since the previous inspection have been above or well above national expectations. GCE A level results are exceptionally high, with a 100 per cent pass rate since 1994. Instrumentalists generally make good progress, and some reach the higher grades of Associated Board examinations. The orchestra and choir perform a good variety of music to a high standard at concerts in the school and local community. Other extra-curricular music groups, for example the recorder group, play to a high standard and perform some demanding music. Students are not, however, as familiar with computer applications in music as many other students in similar schools.

Students of various attainments are very well catered for. The higher-attaining students are spotted early in Year 7 and given every encouragement to participate fully in instrumental lessons and in the extra-curricular musical provision. Students of average attainment receive in class a very broad and traditional musical education with an emphasis on practical musicianship that equips them thoroughly for future music-making. Preparation and support for externally- accredited instrumental examinations is a strong feature of the department's ethos. The lower attainers receive much help and attention in class, and are valued highly and praised very much for good progress.

The attitudes of students to music are generally good and sometimes very good. In all Key Stage 3 lessons, students are seen settling quickly to the tasks in hand and acting in mature and sensible ways. Behaviour is often very good, and levels of trustworthiness and courtesy are marked features of music lessons. Students respect the cultural diversity represented in the school and are often very sensitive to the embarrassment that music-making causes to some members of specific faith communities. Key Stage 4 GCSE students are particularly keen to get on with their work, and have good relationships with their teacher and each other. GCSE students in Years 10 and 11 understand clearly the importance of acquiring both a theoretical understanding of the rudiments of music and the development of their own practical individual musicianship on an instrument. Students' interests in, and commitment to, the orchestra and choir bear testimony to the enjoyment they receive by being involved. The range of items presented in the school concerts and carol services demonstrates a breadth of interest and student commitment.

Two very capable and inspirational teachers cover the class music teaching throughout the school. They work well together and have high expectations of students, and their complementary teaching styles give the students a variety of learning experiences. Thorough knowledge of the National Curriculum and a love of music characterise their approaches to class teaching. Lessons are planned well in advance and are appropriately sequenced. The elements of music are taught in the context of performance and listening exercises which are well prepared and carefully differentiated. Good management of students and resources ensures that students are kept on task throughout the lessons. Both teachers make sure that all students have a thorough grounding in keyboard techniques. Students are thoroughly assessed throughout, and at the end of, all units of work. Teachers cover music from all around the world in both the performing and appraising aspects of the syllabus.

The extra-curricular music activities give students good opportunities to develop their musicianship. The extra-curricular instrumental tuition is generally good, but not all the visiting instrumentalists fully support the department's perspective on external examination entries. The time allocation for instrumental tuition across the instruments is imbalanced.

The accommodation is still inadequate. Despite being in a purpose-built music block, the facilities for instrumental tuition and practice remain inadequate. Lack of soundproofing is still the main problem.

Better and more computer facilities for information technology applications need to be provided in order that the department can in the future equip all students in computerised musical performance, composition, and recording.

Physical Education

By the end of Key Stage 3, students' attainment is at least in line with national averages, and in gymnastics and dance it is often above them. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is at least average, and in some activities, such as football, many students are attaining higher levels. A number of students successfully represent the school in a wide range of sports at district, county, and national levels.

On entry to the school, some students have only limited skills. However, all students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as they benefit from good teaching. By the end of Key Stage 3, students develop skills which they apply to a variety of team and individual games, and they know and understand the basic rules and scoring systems specific to them. In gymnastics, students develop skills of working with a partner to perform some complex balances, and in dance they compose and perform expressively, showing sensitivity to music. At Key Stage 4, some students follow a GCSE course. Students play a variety of games competitively, and show an understanding of tactics and a good awareness of space and positioning. Many students show initiative in organising resources and activities, and use appropriate terms in evaluating others' performances. However, almost half of all Year 10 students receive only one lesson per week. A small number of sixth formers follow an A level course, but there is no provision for physical education (PE) lessons for the other students in Years 12 and 13.

Students' attitudes and behaviour are always good, and sometimes very good. In both key stages, students are highly motivated and willing to work hard to improve their performances. They collaborate well in small groups, and in all activities they demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment. Many students, especially in Key Stage 4, have an independent approach to lessons, and take responsibility for whole group warm-ups.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge, constantly reinforce specific vocabulary, have high expectations of students in terms of skills and behaviour, and use very good demonstrations. Students are always well managed, time is used efficiently, and in nearly all lessons there is a sense of urgency. The enthusiastic approach of all teachers has a positive effect on students' progress.

The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad, but at Key Stage 4 it is more restricted, especially for many Year 10 students. This is a result of the limited time allocated to PE; it is insufficient for covering a range of activities in any depth.

The accommodation for most activities is satisfactory, although the hall used for dance is cramped when the group size is large. Resources are generally satisfactory, and good use is made of the local environment for outdoor adventurous activities.

Inter-school fixtures in a variety of sports are well established, and the school enjoys a good level of success. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enhances the taught curriculum and is well supported by students. This is an effectively led department.

Religious Education

This is a department with a number of good features and the potential to address weaknesses in its provision. At the end of Key Stage 3, students are attaining appropriately for their age. They show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country, of the distinctive features of those traditions, and of religious language, concepts and symbols. At the end of Key Stage 4, however, attainment is unsatisfactory. This is not a reflection on the quality of the teaching, or on the attitude of students towards the subject. It is because the subject is allocated too little time in the curriculum to be studied in the breadth and depth required to reach appropriate standards of attainment. There is no provision for religious education in the sixth form.

Students make satisfactory progress within the Agreed Syllabus in Key Stage 3, both within lessons and across years, and some make good progress. In Year 7, for example, they progress from simple ideas of belonging and community to a more detailed study of the Buddhist and Islamic communities. Work in Year 8 makes increasing demands on their understanding, as was well seen in work on a visit to Sheffield Synagogue as part of their study of Judaism. In Year 9, students meet increasingly demanding tasks, requiring higher order skills, in the consideration of ultimate questions and of philosophical arguments for the existence or otherwise of God.

Progress is not maintained through Key Stage 4. Although students make satisfactory progress in individual lessons - as was seen, for example, in Year 10 work on Human Rights and the work of Amnesty International - progress across the key stage as a whole is unsatisfactory. This again is a reflection of the inadequate time available to the subject.

The great majority of students in both key stages are well-motivated, interested in their work, and come to lessons keen to learn. They settle down quickly, and concentrate well. Their behaviour is generally very good, and they enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers and with each other. The classroom provides a secure environment in which students feel able to express their own beliefs and ideas, and they listen with respect to those of others. In a Year 7 lesson on pilgrimage in Islam, for example, a Moslem student felt able to contribute her knowledge and experience of her faith to the discussion. Students are provided with very good opportunities for developing the skills of working together in pairs and small groups, and they respond well to them. As a result of time pressures and inadequate resources, however, there are few opportunities for developing skills of independent learning and research, particularly at Key Stage 4.

The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in both key stages, and in many instances it was good or very good. It was stronger at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4, where the curriculum limits the range of teaching and learning styles which may be used. All teachers were committed and hard-working, had a sound knowledge of their subject, knew their students well, had excellent relationships with them, and were attentive to their individual needs. They set homework regularly, marked work conscientiously and helpfully, and displayed it well in the classroom. Where teaching was strongest, lessons were well-planned with clear objectives, and well-linked with previous work: as, for example, in Year 9 lessons on concepts of God, and Year 10 lessons on Human Rights. Activities were varied and interesting, and particularly good use was made of paired and small- group work. Teachers

drew on students' own experiences to introduce new knowledge and ideas: as, for example, in Year 8 work on rules for living, and the Five Pillars of Islam. Very good use was made of questioning and discussion to extend students' understanding. Where teaching was less strong, and particularly at Key Stage 4, there was an over-reliance on worksheets at the expense of textbooks, and an over-emphasis on oral work, with inadequate opportunities for extended writing.

The department is well-managed within the constraints of the timetable, and non-specialist staff enjoy good support. The condition of the fabric of two of the teaching rooms is very poor indeed, and has an adverse impact on standards of attainment. The provision of resources is poor, and hinders attainment. Curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is unsatisfactory, and should be reviewed if older students are to reach appropriate standards of attainment. The school needs to ensure that it meets current statutory requirements.

Key Stage 4 Vocational Education

Since September 1997, the Key Stage 4 curriculum has been enriched and broadened by additional vocational options that are not part of the statutory National Curriculum. New courses comprise The Part One GNVQ Pilot in Manufacturing and Leisure and Tourism and other GNVQ units are offered in Business and Health and Social Care.

Courses such as Business Studies at GCSE, RSA Modular Text Processing, and the Pitman Examination Institute examinations continue to run and are popular and successful. A recent delivery of industry-standard computers has enabled the students to enhance their IT skills and to use more up-to-date business software.

GNVQ courses provide a new, relevant and attractive option to students who prefer courses related to the world of work. GNVQ work (for students of ages 14-16) is a significant strength of the school. Although only two terms into the courses, students appear to be on task and working enthusiastically and well. Levels of attainment are currently at the national expectation. Some students' assignments demonstrate good-quality research being carried out in the community. Use of information technology (IT) has significantly enhanced some students' assignments and reports, but the school needs to encourage students in further relevant IT applications: many of the GNVQ students have limited key skills. The department should now concentrate on raising students' literacy, numeracy and IT levels.

The alternative mode of learning clearly appeals to many of the students, who enjoy working and researching together. Motivation and commitment to GNVQ programmes are hallmarks of their attitudes. Visits to local industries have enhanced learning, and contribute much to improved levels of student interest, enthusiasm and dedication. All GNVQ areas should further develop timetabled curriculum support with local businesses.

The programmes are well co-ordinated, and they are taught by a group of dedicated staff who are upgrading their vocational qualifications. Lessons in all four GNVQ areas are made challenging by teachers, who present the work attractively and manage students well. They work hard to ensure that all students receive personal support and individual guidance.

Teaching resources are well used and enliven lessons. There is a need, however, for all teachers to concentrate on the quality of students' written work, and to make sure that key words are spelt correctly and used appropriately. Careful and thorough marking of all written work needs constant attention.

The GCSE Business Studies Course has been offered for many years, but students' attainment at GCSE has declined from 89 per cent A-C grades in 1994 to 17 per cent in 1997. Nevertheless, student numbers have this year increased, with a Year 10 cohort of 76 students spread across three teaching groups. The department is aware of the decline in attainment, and is seeking to reverse the trend by taking a series of measures to ensure that the quality of students' work is higher and that assignments are all satisfactorily completed in good time. Effective measures need to be taken urgently to avoid further decline in GCSE results. Departmental management must monitor students' progress more carefully.

Students enjoy their lessons but do not always produce their work on time. Students' evaluation and consolidation of their work sometimes lack rigour. Some students do not fully realise that GCSE questions need to be answered in much more depth. Students show respect for the teachers, and work well in lesson time. Opportunities to take work experience placements that are related to the course are very popular.

Teachers work hard to ensure that the syllabus is adequately covered. Lessons are lively and interesting. Good relationships with students are evident. Nevertheless, there is a need for teachers to demand from all students a higher level of work in class and at home. Teacher assessment needs to be more critical. The quality of students' written work needs to be examined by teachers more carefully to ensure that all students have a thorough knowledge of all GCSE requirements. Teachers must find ways to prepare students more thoroughly for GCSE work. Revision exercises need to be carried out rigorously if results are to improve.

The GCSE course provides students with a broad introduction to the world of business. It gives them the opportunity to learn about business practices and procedures, and to develop specific skills in problem solving. Further Post-16 courses in GNVQ and A level offer progression for students who wish to continue their studies.

Attainment in GCE A level business studies is in line with national average with a slightly lower proportion of the highest grades but a higher proportion of pass grades. Most students have a sound grasp of the main business concepts and are able to use it appropriately in the case-study work which typifies the modular A level programme. In the last four years, the school has also developed GNVQs at both Intermediate and Advanced levels; over the last two years, it has maintained a 100 per cent successful completion rate - compared to the national average of around 70 per cent - with a high number of merits and distinctions in health and social care.

Post 16 vocational education

Progress across all the sixth form business and vocational courses is generally good. In GCE A level business studies, students increasingly work confidently with a range of business information and co-operate well in paired and group work. In GNVQ courses, students steadily improve their process skills through activities, which require assignment planning,

research and evaluation in a variety of contexts. They do this in contexts which include work placements and links with a range of employers in the business, leisure and care sectors.

The positive response students have to their studies is reflected in the high success-rate for course completion and the commitment most make in lessons. In the case of GCE A level business studies, they attend additional lessons.

Teaching in the sixth form courses is always at least satisfactory and is, in the majority of lessons, good. With some attractive displays, teachers endeavour to create an appropriate learning base for the different courses, though this is difficult in one of the rather cramped rooms. Lessons are well prepared, with attention given to course work and examination preparation. Examples of good practice include looking at examiners' feedback on examination work in GCE A level, and exploring the range of leisure facilities for a research assignment in GNVQ Advanced Leisure and Tourism. Teachers have a good relationship with students, who are prepared to discuss ideas and offer explanations and solutions. The three key skills of communication, application of number, and information technology are adequately developed overall as an integral part of the vocational courses, though at times insufficient attention is given to the teaching of key skills as against the assessment of those skills in set assignments.

The school has a clear and effective management structure of the GNVQ courses, and a shared approach to course documentation and assessment. This has helped the school make considerable progress in the development of its GNVQ provision, though it recognises the need for continued staff development in the teaching of key skills, and the training and accreditation of staff as assessors and internal verifiers.

RSA Modular Text Processing is also open to students as an option in Years 10, 11 and 12. Students have traditionally achieved good results at Stages 1 and 2 in Text Processing, Typewriting, Word Processing, Shorthand Transcription and French Text Processing. The school has recently added to its portfolio of examinable courses Medical Text Processing and Legal Text Processing. Examination times are flexible, giving students the opportunity to take some qualifications in Year 11 and some in Year 12. Despite the shortage of available time on computers, and a limited amount of teacher time, some students have succeeded in gaining some very good results.

The students who have taken Pitman examinations have also been successful.

Teachers of GNVQ Business, RSA, and Pitman courses offer much time to students in school breaks and in extra-curricular support and guidance. A dedicated and committed group of teachers have worked hard to deliver a wide range of flexible courses. Teacher expertise and experience is considerable, and high expectations are set. Management of students is good, and discipline is firm but fair. Some of the skill-based learning is highly relevant and applicable to other subject areas.

Students respond and work well to obtain a variety of qualifications at different levels. Their attitudes in class are positive; many support each other when learning new software. Students appreciate the one-to-one help that they receive from staff. Many return to computer rooms

to complete assignments in their own time, and they appreciate the support of members of staff outside lesson times.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

The inspection was carried out by 14 inspectors, who spent a total of 57 days in the school. During the inspection, 328 lessons or parts of lessons were observed, together with assemblies, a sample of registration times, and other activities. Over 192 hours were spent in classes, evaluating work and in discussions with students. Students across the age range were heard reading. Interviews were held with the headteacher, teachers, the chair of governors, a group of governors and non-teaching staff. A meeting was held with parents before the inspection.

Data and indicators

PUPIL DATA

	Number of students on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of students with statements of SEN	Number of students on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals
Y6 - Y13	1420	35	49	252

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (Y6 - Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	84.10
Number of students per qualified teacher	1 : 16.88

Education support staff (Y6 - Y13)

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked each week	419

Secondary schools

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	78.8
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Average teaching group size	KS2	
	KS3	23
	KS4	21

FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:	1997
	£
Total income	2772901.00
Total expenditure	2781982.00
Expenditure per students	1977.24
Balance brought forward from previous year	41623.00
Balance carried forward to next year	32542.00

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

1420
775

Number of questionnaires returned:

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	13.6	66.6	14.7	4.5	0.5
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	27.3	63.8	4.9	3.4	0.6
The school handles complaints from parents well	13.4	56.2	22.7	6.7	0.9
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	17.0	66.9	10.4	4.8	0.9
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	36.9	53.9	5.7	2.6	0.9
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	27.8	63.7	6.1	1.7	0.7
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	28.7	57.6	10.0	3.5	0.3
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	21.9	63.9	6.0	7.3	0.9
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	17.1	62.1	15.8	4.4	0.5
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	10.0	57.4	21.6	9.4	1.6
My child(ren) like(s) school	26.7	56.8	9.9	4.9	1.7