

INSPECTION REPORT

RYEDALE SCHOOL

York

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121665

Headteacher: Mr G Jenkinson

Reporting inspector: Mr J W Ashton
4492

Dates of inspection: 3 - 6 December 2001

Inspection number: 190370

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Gale Lane Nawton York YO6 5SL
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. D Wilbourne
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4492	Mr J Ashton	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Equal opportunities.	The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? Leadership and management.
9958	Mr T Page	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well the school cares for its pupils. How well the school works in partnership with parents.
19913	Mr R Garrett	<i>Team inspector</i>	English and drama. English as an additional language.	Literacy.
15078	Mr C Collinson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	Numeracy.
121665	Ms P Bishop	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
22524	Ms S Innes	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology.	
8744	Mr R Whiteley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design; Music.	
18188	Ms C Thompson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
10316	Mr N Bertram	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
21061	Mr M Whitehead	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	
4617	Ms R Fox	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
17987	Mr B Coates	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
23480	Ms M Harding	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education; History.	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ryedale School is a smaller-than-average, 11 to 16 comprehensive school. Situated midway between the small towns of Helmsley and Kirkbymoorside, on the southern edge of the North Yorkshire moors, the school draws pupils from a wide geographical and mainly rural area. There are 513 pupils on roll, almost 150 more than at the time of the last inspection in 1996. A lower-than-average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The school's intake, on average, has as many pupils whose attainment exceeds the national expectation as it has pupils below the expectation for their age group. There are very few pupils of a minority ethnic background, and none at an early stage of learning English. The 75 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs include 36 at the higher stages (stages 3 to 5) of the special needs code of practice. Their educational needs are mostly due to specific and moderate learning difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ryedale is a very good school. It takes in pupils with a range of levels of attainment that are close to average overall, and adds good value to their achievement by the time they leave. This it does through a combination of very good teaching, which brings about very good learning, and very efficient leadership and management. As a result, pupils and teachers are able to carry out their work very effectively. The school provides very good value for the money it receives.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils achieve well by making good progress throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The school is very well led and managed.
- Attitudes and behaviour are very positive.
- There is a strong work ethic in the school.
- Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- Pupils are very well cared for.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Parents are very positive about the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- There are no major areas for improvement. Governors, however, may wish to build into their development planning the need for the school to:
- Improve access to and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in some subjects.
 - Improve the library provision, to make it more accessible as an active learning resource area for pupils and less tied up as a classroom.
 - Enrich its acts of collective worship, which are efficiently organised and interesting but would benefit from a warmer and more inspirational atmosphere.
 - Relate assessments more closely to National Curriculum attainment levels in some subjects and share them appropriately with pupils to guide them in raising standards.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1996, since when it has made very good progress in virtually all the areas identified then as needing improvement.

- * All its available data on students' attainment and progress is now drawn together and systematically analysed so as to better inform its curriculum and financial planning.
- * The school's short and longer-term priorities are aligned more closely to departmental planning and there are more evident links to the budget in the school development plan.
- * Health and safety issues raised during the last inspection have been attended to, and risk assessments are regularly carried out across the whole school.
- * The school is closer to meeting fully the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students than the vast majority of secondary schools.
- * The National Curriculum in ICT is now fully implemented.

There are numerous other areas of improvement, including: systems of school self-evaluation; the quality of teaching and learning; the provision and teaching of both food technology and religious education; the co-ordination of the separate aspects of humanities and of technology; the building improvements for music, technology and science, and in collaborative projects with other schools.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
End of Key Stage 3 tests	A	A	A	A
GCSE examinations	A	B	A	A

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Attainment of pupils on entry is consistently either just above or just below average.

By the end of Year 9 in the Year 2001, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected level (Level 5) and above in the national tests improved to well above the national average in each of English, mathematics and science. When compared to the results of similar schools, the proportions were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and very high (in the top 5 per cent of schools in the country) in science.

Overall GCSE results have improved steadily over the last five years, slightly faster than improvements nationally. They have been generally at least above the national average for all schools, and at least in line with the national average for similar schools. 2001 was a good year. The school achieved its performance targets for GCSE and results were well above average even when compared with similar schools, and no pupil left the school in 2001 without at least one GCSE grade.

Achievement: Very good in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11, equating to good achievement overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. A real strength of the school. Pupils come to school prepared to work. They are stimulated by challenging activities and achieve well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good behaviour is regarded as the norm.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are courteous to adults and each other, treat their surroundings with care, and are completely trustworthy. They support each other in their learning and have a very good rapport with their teachers, which sustains a very good learning momentum.
Attendance	Attendance is well above the national average. There is no significant lateness and so lessons start promptly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, and it is excellent in some design and technology and German lessons. It is never less than good overall in any subject, including English, mathematics and science. It is very good in art, music, ICT, history and German, and for pupils with special educational needs. The skills of literacy are well taught across the school; those of numeracy are taught satisfactorily.

Every one of the 111 lessons inspected was at least satisfactory, 85 per cent were at least good, 44 per cent were at least very good and four lessons were excellent. These proportions of good, very good and excellent teaching are high. There were no unsatisfactory or poor lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good quality. Broad and balanced and meets legal requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator monitors the curriculum closely to ensure that it is appropriate for the special needs of these pupils. There is excellent monitoring of pupils' performance.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Provision for their cultural development is good, and that for their spiritual development is satisfactory. Acts of collective worship are efficient and interesting but would benefit from more music and a warmer atmosphere.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pastoral care is very good.

The school works very well in partnership with parents, who in turn are very supportive of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very effective and meticulous leadership and management from the headteacher and his senior team. Strong and caring pastoral leadership. Subject leadership is good, and some is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Legal responsibilities are fulfilled effectively. A good mixture of expertise, which complements well that found within the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Detailed evaluation of its performance against all schools nationally and against similar schools.
The strategic use of resources	The school practises well the principles of best value and this has led to considerable savings on major projects.

There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers, and they represent a well-balanced team in terms of gender, age and teaching experience. The school-based additional teachers (SBATs) are very effective and efficient in making the appropriate special needs provision for the pupils. Most aspects of the curriculum are adequately resourced to support teaching and learning. The deployment of computers and software within subject areas has improved since the last inspection, but limited access to the computer suite inhibits further development of ICT. The extensive grounds surrounding the school and the premises themselves are well maintained and in good order.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Over 95 per cent of the 234 parents who responded to the questionnaire think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour in the school is good. • The teaching is good. • The school is well led and managed. • The school provides an interesting range of extra-curricular activities. • They would feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 per cent of parents responding are concerned about excessive amounts of homework. • 18 per cent would like more information about how their children are getting on.

The inspectors' findings confirmed the parents' positive comments in the questionnaire. They also found the views expressed in the parents' meeting overwhelmingly positive. The school uses homework well as a way of extending and reinforcing work begun in class. It also already gives parents more information than most secondary schools on how well their children are progressing.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school varies from year to year but is never far from average overall. This is confirmed by the results of national tests at the end of Year 6 and the school's own standardised testing early in Year 7.

2. In the end of Year 9 national tests in 2001, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected National Curriculum level (Level 5) and above in either English, mathematics or science were well above national averages for all schools. When compared to the results of similar schools, the proportions were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and very high (in the top 5 per cent of schools in the country) in science. Similar schools are those with pupils from similar social backgrounds. This represents very good achievement; in other words, very good relative progress compared to pupils' earlier attainment, especially in science. Averaged over the past three years, boys and girls at Ryedale perform equally well against either boys or girls nationally. End of Year 9 test results for both boys and girls have risen slightly in recent years in line with the national trend.

3. In every other subject, pupils' attainment in 2001 was also at least above national expectation by the end of Year 9. The work seen in Years 7 to 9 mirrors this pattern of attainment. In art and design, for example, pupils are equally at home with work in clay, collage and weaving. They show confidence when they investigate, analyse and evaluate in design and technology. Higher attaining pupils in geography can account for the growth of cities and contrast those in developed and developing countries. By Year 9, pupils in history are able to respond well to numerical and pictorial evidence as well as to written evidence, and they know about differing interpretations in history and how these must be balanced when they construct an explanation. Pupils use spreadsheets and databases confidently and competently in information and communication technology (ICT). In Year 8, after only three months of German, higher attaining pupils have high level listening skills and good speaking, reading and writing skills; average attainers give basic information about themselves and are beginning to write opinions about school subjects. Pupils' choral music is lively, and accurate; they remain in control of their singing and are confident in both unison and harmony. In dance, pupils can synchronise their movements with their partners and also in small groups. In religious education, pupils' insights are of high quality for their age, and they understand how beliefs affect the ways in which people live. They are able to relate what they learn to their own life experiences.

4. Ryedale's average GCSE points scores have been well above the national average for all schools in two of the last three years. In 2001, they were also well above average for similar schools. Sixty nine per cent of pupils achieved at least five GCSE grades in the A*-C range, and no pupil failed to achieve at least one GCSE grade G. Averaged over the last four years, girls outperformed boys overall, though boys outperformed boys nationally by a greater margin than girls outperformed girls. In 2000, for example, girls' overall GCSE results were above the national average but boys' results were well above average.

5. GCSE results in mathematics were below those of science but similar to those in English. Results for A*-C grades in 2000 were above the national average in English. Results for 2001 in English showed a slight improvement, with A*-C grades still above average. Mathematics GCSE results were above the national average in grades A* to C. The results in 2000 were close to those at the time of the previous inspection, but results for

2001 showed a slight improvement, particularly for girls. All pupils are entered for the Double Award GCSE science course at the end of Year 11. In 2001, their performance was well above average, with 74 per cent gaining an A*-C grade and 100 per cent obtaining an A*-G grade.

6. The work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection confirms the attainment seen in the GCSE results in recent years. For example, a strong feature of attainment in English is pupils' above average knowledge and understanding of texts and the demonstration of this in their writing. Pupils investigate problems in mathematics, where standards are frequently high for pupils of all levels of attainment. The GCSE Salters' science course presents the content in interesting and applied contexts, using a variety of teaching ideas. This particular approach helps pupils to achieve high standards by raising their motivation for science and expecting them to take more responsibility for their learning.

7. Standards of literacy are above average. Pupils' spoken skills and their ability to listen carefully are particularly strong features, commented on by inspectors in many subject areas. Reading skills are usually well developed, and most subject areas build up pupils' knowledge of specialist vocabulary well. Writing skills are also above average, as demonstrated in the quality of pupils' extended writing in several subject areas. Standards in numeracy in the school as a whole are in line with attainment generally and reflect the standards in mathematics lessons.

8. By the end of Year 9, the final year of Key Stage 3, pupils of all capabilities achieve at least well, in the sense of making satisfactory progress compared to their attainment on entry to the school, in every subject. Pupils achieve much better than expected and make very good progress across this key stage in science, design and technology, history and German.

9. By the end of Year 11, the final year of Key Stage 4, pupils achieve at least satisfactorily in every subject, compared to their attainment at the end of Year 9. They achieve well and make good progress in English, science, art and design, history, French, physical education and religious education. Pupils make very good progress at Key Stage 4 in design and technology, German and music.

10. For the main subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils are organised into groups that have similar capabilities. The groups are then taught accordingly. For other subjects, pupils are sometimes in mixed ability groups, especially at Key Stage 4, but teachers make sure that the work is suitable for the range of abilities within the class. Although the attainment levels of pupils with special educational needs are low when compared with the rest of the pupils, the progress that they make is very good.

11. In 2001, the school achieved its performance targets for GCSE. The targets for 2002 are less ambitious, reflecting the school's careful diagnosis of the relative performances of different year groups of pupils as they move through the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good. This confirms the findings of the last inspection, and these aspects remain a strength of the school. Attendance is now very good, and has improved at a faster rate than the national trend.

13. Pupils come to school prepared to work. Their very good classroom behaviour leads to uninterrupted lessons and a brisk pace of learning. They are stimulated by challenging activities and achieve well. In a Year 10 science lesson, all 24 pupils working in pairs rapidly moved their learning on from knowing the location of the kidneys to understanding their function. They then successfully conducted an experiment to show how waste products are filtered from the bloodstream.

14. There is very high participation in extra-curricular activities, particularly during the lunch break when numerous clubs and activities are on offer. Over 40 pupils play in the school band. Many more are involved in the choir, in school sports teams, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, whilst others follow more academic interests such as the science and computer clubs. Pupils are determined to reach high standards in all these activities. Success leads to involvement with the wider community, for example, through sports teams, concerts and drama productions, and adds to pupils' self-confidence and the pride they have in the school.

15. Very good behaviour is regarded as the norm. Pupils are courteous to adults and each other, treat their surroundings with care, and are completely trustworthy. They support each other in their learning and have a very good rapport with their teachers, which sustains a very good learning momentum.

16. The school has a very positive effect upon the attitudes of pupils who have any emotional and behavioural problems. Records and reviews show that a pupil who had significant problems now enjoys coming to school. The teachers pay particular attention to behaviour targets in the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) of such pupils.

17. Pupils say that there is very little bullying, and the school's records confirm this. Whilst there are no pupils from ethnic minorities in school, they come from widely differing backgrounds, and levels of attainment, yet they integrate very well. Pupils are tolerant and supportive of one another, recognising their differences but working with common purpose.

18. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities at all levels in the school. The house system requires the election of captains in all year groups, and these posts are taken seriously. In Year 11, pupils take on responsibilities that assist the smooth running of the school. They help supervise pupils at lunchtime and act as monitors on school buses. Pupils take the initiative in raising substantial sums for charities. This is organised by the different houses, and recent beneficiaries have been The Children's Trust, BBC's Children in Need, and Cancer Research. Atlantis and Discovery houses sponsor three Bangladeshi children between them and receive regular reports on their welfare.

19. Attendance is very good. It is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence, in particular, is very low indeed. There is no significant lateness and this leads to lessons starting promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching and its consequent effect upon pupils' learning is a major strength at Ryedale School. It is very good throughout the school.

21. Every one of the 111 lessons inspected was at least satisfactory: 85 per cent were at least good, 44 per cent were at least very good and four lessons were excellent. These proportions of good, very good and excellent teaching are high. There were no unsatisfactory or poor lessons.

22. The excellent lessons were in design and technology and German. There were also very good lessons in these two subjects and in virtually every other subject, but especially in English, mathematics, science, art, information and communication technology (ICT), music, physical education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Good lessons were seen in every other subject observed. The strength in teaching and learning is, therefore, spread across all departments. This is undoubtedly a very significant factor in the good progress pupils make during their time at the school, culminating in the high standards they achieve by the time they move on to the next stage of their education.

23. The better teaching is notable for the teachers' very secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects and their ability to make the material interesting and challenging to higher attaining pupils but also accessible to everyone in the group. The teachers in these lessons use a variety of activities and maintain a lively pace throughout. They use homework well as a way of extending and reinforcing work begun in class. They use probing questions to challenge pupils' views and to develop their thinking skills, in science, for example. They start lessons by reminding pupils and checking their understanding of previous learning, sharing with pupils the objectives for that particular lesson, and allocating time at the end to pull the threads together and to reinforce the main points. In such lessons, there is a mutual respect between pupils which leads to a very good learning ethos, one in which pupils are able to grow, intellectually, sometimes creatively. Exercise books and files are regularly and carefully monitored and marked. In the best practice, detailed comments are made on the pupils' work, and specific targets are set so that they know exactly what to do to raise the standard of their work in the future. In art and design, music and physical education, sensitive use is made of pupils' own work or performance to illustrate teaching points.

24. The very best teaching has all of the above strengths but also has flair and inspiration and is out of the ordinary in a number of ways. Year 9 pupils carrying out a 'product analysis' of some chair designs, and Year 10 pupils trying to use design ideas from the past to generate new ideas, benefited from excellent teaching from a teacher with significant expertise in this field of work. The teaching quietly and effectively enthuses and inspires excellence in the pupils. Very high expectations, a capacity for explaining things simply and clearly, and use of imaginative activities such as the device of passing on half-formed designs for other pupils to 'lovingly improve' with annotations, leads quickly to a whole range of good suggestions, many of a very high standard. Other Year 9 and Year 10 pupils experience excellent teaching in German lessons that contain enough fun and sufficient rigour for pupils to be able to achieve their very best, yet still enjoy doing so. These lessons, conducted almost exclusively in German, are notable also for the teacher's very brisk pace, which means that pupils have no opportunity to lose concentration.

25. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. The teachers have a very clear understanding of the individual needs of the pupils. Teachers use the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) of these pupils very effectively to ensure that their work focuses on their requirements. Lesson plans are well written, and there is good liaison between teachers and support staff. They work very effectively as a team and give extra help to pupils, for instance with writing strategies and their number work. The staff provide very good individual support for pupils who have extra special needs or particularly severe difficulties. Higher attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented are well provided for in most classes, with work that is well designed to stretch them, but also through the much better than average range of challenging extra-curricular activities that take place both at lunchtime and after school.

26. A minority of lessons was judged satisfactory rather than good for a variety of reasons. For example, in otherwise successful lessons in English and mathematics, the teachers' explanations became over-complicated, or too abstract, as in the case of a Year 8

mathematics lesson. These Year 8 pupils became confused when trying to subtract negative numbers from other negative numbers in order to arrive at positive numbers, because the work was being taught completely out of context, when it needed concrete examples for it to make sense. Sometimes, in physical education the lesson needed to be completed with a game in which the particular skills being taught could be reinforced. Science lessons sometimes need a wider range of tasks and strategies to ensure that higher attaining pupils are extended even further, while lower attaining pupils are given appropriate support in the same lesson.

27. The contribution of other subjects to improving standards of literacy is good overall. There is some variation in the relative attention paid to the specific skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The amount of speaking and listening opportunities provided in, for example, science, ICT, modern languages, art, music, history and religious education contribute significantly to these being a strong feature of pupils' attainment. Most subject areas also introduce and develop their specific subject vocabulary well and ensure that pupils use it appropriately. This is particularly evident in science, geography, history, ICT, art and music. Opportunities for practising writing skills are good in art, music, history and ICT. They are rather more limited in science, though that subject encourages some creative writing and written research in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in mathematics have few opportunities to practise literacy skills, however. There are limited speaking opportunities, while key words, though sometimes on display, are not sufficiently used.

28. In mathematics, particularly in Years 7 to 9, numeracy is improving through the influence on teachers of the National Numeracy Strategy. The school has not yet developed a whole school approach to the development and use of number. There is, however, good use of numeracy skills in some subjects. In geography, for example, climate and population graphs are used, as well as co-ordinates, latitude and longitude. In science, graphs are used to illustrate and interpret data, and compound units are used, for example in density. In history, data on enclosures in the nineteenth century is used to work out increases in crop and meat production. In ICT, spreadsheets are used to collect and analyse data, and graphs are used to illustrate it. Contributions from all subjects have still to be co-ordinated to set up an effective policy for numeracy.

29. In the context of a very good picture of teaching and learning overall, there are two areas where things could be even better. The use of ICT as a routine tool in day-to-day teaching is not yet established. Pupils at Ryedale are also capable of taking responsibility for more of their own learning, in history and religious education, for instance. To some extent, lack of accessibility hinders progress in both of these areas. The computer rooms are very heavily booked and the library, as well as not being well resourced, has to be used as a classroom.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

The Curriculum

30. The curriculum is broad and balanced at both key stages. It meets legal requirements well and provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils, including those with special educational needs, which meet their interests and requirements effectively. Since the previous inspection, the National Curriculum has been fully implemented in information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 4 and is systematically monitored.

31. Teaching time, at 25 hours, is in line with practice in most other schools with this age range. The school has made particularly good provision to meet the needs of all learners by disapplying one or two from the statutory curriculum at Key Stage 3 while ensuring that they have access to as much of the curriculum as possible. It caters well for the needs of more vocationally orientated pupils at Key Stage 4. Gifted and talented pupils are well catered for in subjects such as English and modern foreign languages, where the provision of the second foreign language means that they are developing the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing very well.

32. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum is enhanced by the inclusion of German for two thirds of the year group, and by drama within English for all pupils. At Key Stage 4, pupils study the core subjects, including a double award science for all. They make guided choices, including the opportunity to join a 'Bridge' course, which allows them to encounter working life whilst at the same time continuing to study a number of academic subjects. A small number of pupils have been appropriately disappplied from modern foreign languages and design and technology to enable them to study courses that are more suitable for them. Although there is just about enough time to deliver the agreed syllabus in religious education, the time allowance is restricted, particularly for those pupils studying for a full course GCSE. Statutory requirements for ICT are met, though there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills across the curriculum in subjects such as modern foreign languages and mathematics.

33. Planning is very good in many subjects. The creative planning in art enables teachers not only to cover the syllabus but also to allow for experimentation and originality. Planning is also very good in science, geography, ICT and music. Schemes of work in French, however, are not detailed enough and require review to ensure that they include tasks to meet the needs of all pupils.

34. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is comprehensive and relevant to the lives of the pupils. The subject is led well, and the good teaching is often enriched by visiting speakers. Stereotyping is successfully challenged, for instance, by a female fire fighter, who is a school governor, who gives a talk on fire safety to Year 7 pupils, whilst fully equipped with breathing apparatus and in her fire fighting uniform. Sex education is very well supported by the school nurse, who runs a regular drop-in clinic and gives advice on a range of issues. Drugs education challenges pupils to make informed choices. Pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to take a full part in lessons, which raises their confidence and self-esteem. The PSHE co-ordinator is currently expanding the scheme of work to include citizenship, which becomes part of the statutory curriculum in 2002.

35. Community links are very good. The school has well developed links with local businesses and plays an active role in the life of neighbouring towns and villages. There are very strong links with local partner schools. Both the head of lower school and the co-ordinator for special educational needs (SENCO) visit the primary schools and talk with pupils before they start at Ryedale. Pupils are invited to spend some time at the school before they actually transfer to Ryedale. This helps to overcome some of their fears and anxieties. There are also strong links with the colleges of further and higher education. 'Taster' days are arranged for the senior pupils so that they experience college life before they make a commitment. The school has links with eight main primary schools and has formed very good curricular links with them, particularly in areas such as science, music, literacy and numeracy. There are plans for further links in ICT and in developing teaching and learning. Induction procedures for Year 7 are good and pupils feel that they are welcomed into the school effectively.

36. Careers education provision is good overall. Lessons begin in Year 9 to introduce pupils to the part that subject choices play in their future employment. Records of achievement are continuously updated and include details of how well pupils do in the excellent work experience programme. There is good support from business, industry and community in the programme, which is also underpinned by a high degree of parental commitment. There is thorough guidance for Post 16 education. For a small number of pupils, the bridge course in Years 10 and 11 prepares them very well for the world of work. This course is highly vocationally orientated, and has proved to be very effective in turning round the attitudes of potentially disaffected pupils; it has led to offers of employment, and raised the aspirations of some pupils who set their sights on achieving vocational qualifications.

37. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The SENCO monitors the curriculum closely to ensure that it is appropriate for these pupils. In some cases, special arrangements have to be made when it is inappropriate for pupils to study a modern foreign language. Some pupils are also withdrawn for extra tuition in literacy and numeracy skills. This support takes place during their English and mathematics lessons respectively, which ensures that there is no negative impact on their other subjects.

38. A key aim of the school is to provide a challenging programme of academic and extra-curricular opportunities. The extensive range of activities provided during lunchtimes and after-school has a very good effect in enriching the curriculum and is enjoyed by a large number of pupils. The school has achieved considerable successes in sport, with teams playing in local and regional competitions and individuals competing successfully at international and county level. Pupils have also achieved considerable successes in other areas of the curriculum, such as art, design and technology and music, in regional, national and international events.

39. The school has a good framework in place to support pupils whose levels of literacy are weak, including help from a strong special educational needs department, withdrawal groups and carefully focused support from classroom assistants. The literacy co-ordinator has worked hard to disseminate the principles of the literacy policy and has achieved a positive response from almost all departments. Because of pressures on accommodation, however, the library has to be used as an English classroom and thus access to an important resource is limited. Nevertheless, as a result of the good contribution made by most subjects and support staff, standards of literacy are above average in the school. Numeracy provision, though satisfactory, is less well developed than literacy and the school is taking steps to improve it further across more subjects in the curriculum.

Provision for personal development

40. Overall, the school's provision for pupils' personal development is very good. There is a strong ethos in which all pupils can grow and flourish, respect others and be respected. Provision for the spiritual element is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for creativity in art and music. There are sound opportunities in several other subjects for inspiration to be drawn from human achievement and the wonders of the environment. In religious education and English, there is some scope for reflective exploration of human feelings, the meaning of life, values and beliefs, either through religions or literature. In science, pupils can ask some of the really `big` questions, and teachers take trouble to answer them well. The school has satisfactorily resolved the weakness in provision for collective worship,

which was an issue noted in the last report. Collective worship now meets statutory requirements either through assemblies or through the good quality resources given to tutors for daily use as collections of 'thoughts for the week'. Assemblies are efficient and interesting, making a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual development, though they would benefit from more music and a warmer and more inspirational atmosphere.

41. The school's provision for moral development is very good. Ethical issues are discussed in many subjects. The code of conduct is clear and well known to pupils, offering a good balance of rewards and sanctions. The high expectations for behaviour in and out of lessons encourage personal responsibility very well, and teachers set the tone by good example and the quality of their relationships with pupils. Community service is encouraged well, and is a strong feature of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme for Years 10 and 11. Many pupils help with the senior citizens' annual party and share their talents through concerts and performances throughout the year. There is generous support for a range of charities, local, national and global, which fosters compassion and good citizenship. The 'houses' initiate many of the charitable efforts, and some are sustained well, such as the sponsorship of a child in Bangladesh.

42. Provision for social development is also very good. The school is a strong and inclusive community where the most vulnerable members with severe learning difficulties are cherished, and all kinds of effort and achievement are applauded. The PSHE programme teaches many aspects of social development well. The work experience scheme is of good quality and greatly valued by the pupils who participate. Pupils are given many opportunities to work together in co-operative ways in lessons. There are ample opportunities for responsibility through a variety of roles, as form captains, house captains, prefects, librarians and members of the school council. There are also extensive opportunities for joining extra-curricular activities and most pupils do so, and for horizons to be widened through visits, outdoor activities and fieldwork locally and abroad. The assemblies, sports teams, house activities, robot-building teams and school musical productions all provide very positive corporate experiences.

43. Cultural development is a good feature of school provision through many lessons, most notably in art, modern foreign languages and music, but also through English, geography, history and religious education. Study of aspects of European and worldwide cultures prepares pupils well for life in a culturally diverse society. Many extra-curricular musical opportunities foster cultural education on a daily basis, as do the Internet links with European schools. European visits contribute well to pupils' cultural education, as do visits to art galleries, museums and theatres.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school has very good procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety. Arrangements for child protection and pastoral support are very good. Care continues to be a strength of the school, maintaining the high standards seen during the last inspection.

45. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy, which clearly states line management responsibilities. Checks are undertaken regularly and findings recorded. The staff's health and safety representative also undertakes a termly inspection. Minor safety concerns identified during this inspection have been notified to the school.

46. Staff are well aware of the school's child protection procedures that closely follow locally agreed guidelines. The child protection team has had relevant training, and works closely with external agencies.

47. The quality of pastoral support is excellent. Attendance, behaviour, and attitudes are constantly monitored and represented in 'diligence' grades. Changes in these grades highlight emerging problems and trigger prompt and effective support, which is tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. Support is often enhanced by the sensitive involvement of outside experts, such as the educational social worker, educational psychologist and the school nurse. Pupils with special educational needs receive very strong support. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are secure.

48. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good, helped by strong peer pressure and the reinforcement of the school's positive ethos through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The school is a happy community and pupils want to keep it that way.

49. The special needs department offers support and guidance for any pupil who is feeling vulnerable or nervous about their work or the routines of the school. There is a lunchtime spelling club in which older pupils help to support the younger pupils. Many pupils of all ages and aptitudes enjoy this. Pupils come to improve their spelling and reading skills.

Assessment

50. Procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' performance are very good. Since the previous inspection, steps have been taken to improve the procedures, which at that time were seen to be a weakness of the school. A senior staff post has been established to monitor the developments that have taken place, and the co-ordination of assessment procedures is now very effective. The school assembles data on pupils' performance on entry to the school, the results of Cognitive Ability Tests, National Curriculum Test levels, and forecasts relating to GCSE performance. Very good detailed information is also available from the Local Education Authority, which compares the school's results to local and national performance. The data is available to all teachers for the classes they take, and is included in mark books so that it is immediately accessible. The information is also available to departments so they have an overall picture of pupils' achievement.

51. Good use is made of the data available. It is increasingly being used to identify and target individual performance and to set targets for groups of pupils. The needs of lower attaining pupils are recognised and their achievements monitored. Higher attaining pupils are identified. Targets are set for subject departments and for individuals in national tests and GCSE examinations. This approach to setting targets for GCSE performance has already had an impact on the numbers of pupils achieving the highest National Curriculum levels.

52. A new school policy for assessment has been written, with standard procedures to provide and maintain regular assessments in subjects. Assessments allow for individual subject needs whilst linking assessment to National Curriculum levels. The school recognises that assessment needs to provide encouragement as well as guidance, and that short-term targets are also necessary. This is still an area for discussion in school, and there is reluctance in some subjects to use levels as a means of day-to-day on-going assessment and to inform pupils of them.

53. Marking policies have been clarified to achieve consistency in departments and the school. Subjects in which there is good practice in assessment include science, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Departments are increasingly using 'milestone assessments' to obtain regular assessment information. Assessment is used effectively to guide curriculum delivery at departmental level.

54. Within the special needs department, there is excellent monitoring of pupils' performance. All pupils are tested when they join the school and, from these results, the school decides whether pupils need any extra support with their studies. If a pupil shows that he or she needs extra support because of special educational needs, then more rigorous testing takes place. The results of the tests are used very effectively and there are excellent procedures to ensure that all such assessment information is used effectively. Teachers in other departments value highly the information they receive from the special needs department. Much of the assessment of pupils' progress is made possible through the attainment targets on their individual education plans (IEPs). These plans are constantly and consistently monitored, so that it is clear when changes are necessary in the special provision for these pupils.

55. In a small minority of IEPs, the targets are not sufficiently clear. In some cases, it is not clear how the achievement of the individual will be accurately measured. This is an area where there is room for development, to improve the quality of IEPs from very good to excellent.

56. Open discussion between staff, parents and pupils at the annual review is a strength of the system. Special needs pupils are fully aware of the targets on their IEPs, and these targets are carefully translated into subject specific targets to be addressed during lesson times.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. Parents have very positive views of the school. Those attending the pre-inspection meeting highlighted the school's strong ethos, which leads to pupils doing their best. They also praised the exceptionally good pastoral care, effective leadership and the wide range of opportunities that the school provides. Parents' questionnaires were equally positive, with only a very small minority raising concerns. These were focused on parents being sufficiently informed about their children's progress, and homework. Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments, but they do not support those parents who say that they are not well enough informed. Whilst acknowledging that pupils have a full homework load, the inspection team believes it to be realistic and appropriate in supporting high achievement.

58. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good. They are given ample opportunities to be involved in their children's learning, and kept well informed about what is happening at school. There are formal parents' meetings, interim and end of year pupil progress reports, and a pupil-planner that serves as a very comprehensive source of information. Pupils' reports contain a wide range of areas upon which pupils are graded and National Curriculum levels are available on request. Targets or 'next steps' indicate to parents how further improvements can be achieved.

59. Parents are kept well informed about what is happening in school by a wealth of general correspondence, which includes regular newsletters and information for specific interest groups. This is written in a direct and easily understood style. The wide range of information provided helps parents from a far-flung catchment area to maintain close knowledge of what is happening in school. Parents of children who have special educational needs are properly involved in the review of their individual education plans.

60. The overwhelming majority of parents sign the home-school agreements; these are printed in pupils' planners and are therefore updated annually. Parents subscribe to the positive learning ethos of the school, ensuring that their children arrive punctually, are prepared to work hard and maintain an above average attendance rate. They also support the school financially through the parents and teachers association, and show interest by attending school activities and responding to questionnaires. The good material support that parents give to the school assists the maintenance of high standards.

61. The partnership that the school has developed between staff and the parents of pupils with special educational needs is very strong. The SENCO works very hard to make sure that as many parents as possible attend their children's annual reviews. For parents who are unable to attend a review, the SENCO arranges for telephone calls to discuss the education they receive at Ryedale and the special needs of their children. The school makes sure that all parents are involved in the decisions that are made concerning their children and that all agree when there is need for change.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The school is very well led and managed. All but two of the 234 parents who completed the inspection questionnaire agreed. The school is successful in its first aim of ensuring the highest possible achievement for all pupils through a challenging programme of academic and extra-curricular opportunities. This results in remarkably good relationships, effective staff teamwork, very positive pupil attitudes and high standards of pupil attainment.

63. The headteacher, in his ninth year at the school, leads very effectively, with meticulous care and a determination that standards will remain high. He is very well supported by his two senior colleagues and by a larger group of key curriculum and pastoral post holders. Between them they run a tight ship, with detailed vision on the one hand and efficient completion, via an effective system of school development planning, on the other.

64. The governing body contains a good mixture of expertise, which complements well that found within the school. Its documentation is well maintained and its procedures are secure. It meets legal requirements, including that of ensuring that pupils receive a daily act of collective worship. Expertise amongst the governors was put to very good use during some of the recent building improvements, when considerable savings were made on at least one project using the professional skills of individual governors.

65. Pastoral leadership is co-ordinated very well by the effective team of deputy headteacher and heads of lower and upper schools. Pupils are very well cared for as a result.

66. The overall management of the special needs provision in the school is very good. It is carefully monitored through discussions with teachers and through observation of lessons. Much of this work is undertaken by the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO). In return, teachers often seek advice and support so that they can make the best provision for special needs pupils in their classes. The SENCO is well respected and plays an important role in the local education authority's committees on special needs. The school generates and maintains inclusive provision for special needs pupils. There are strong links with all support agencies, which are of great benefit to the pupils. Arrangements are made to help pupils on home tuition and provision for teaching after school when it is necessary.

67. The leadership and management of subject areas are, in every case, at least satisfactory. Most subjects are managed well and some departments (science, art and religious education) are very well managed. For instance, in science there are well-documented systems in place to ensure that day-to-day administration runs smoothly, that all teachers are involved in planning future work and that financial management is efficient. The head of art is enthusiastic, committed and energetic. Art schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 are detailed and creatively designed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. In religious education, there is a clear vision for future development in line with the school's priorities for raising standards. Much work has been done by the recently appointed co-ordinator to improve provision, to work supportively with newly qualified teachers, and to work collaboratively with other colleagues, and all to very good effect. There is an effective shared leadership in design and technology that works well across the potentially disparate areas of technology.

68. All teachers are appropriately qualified for the subjects they teach. There are sufficient teachers to ensure that an appropriate timetable of lessons is provided throughout the school, and they represent a well-balanced team in terms of gender, age and teaching experience. The number of specialist teaching and non-teaching staff is sufficient to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Liaison between subject teachers and support staff is very detailed and productive.

69. There is a well-organised system for the support and professional development of teachers. Financial allocations are shared equitably, and staff are able to update their knowledge and skills in line with the demands of departmental and whole school policies and procedures. At present, much of the in-service training takes place in school, which may limit opportunities for some staff in widening their experiences and keeping up with initiatives elsewhere. As part of the performance management arrangements, all staff are appraised annually by the headteacher and are expected to participate in lesson observations of colleagues across the school. Arrangements for the statutory support and assessment of newly qualified teachers are not only efficiently implemented but also appreciated for the quality of care and support offered. The school receives student teachers in a range of different subjects each year, providing an opportunity for professional links with the teacher training institutions in the area. The skilled and experienced clerical and administrative staff, including the school bursar, provide an efficient and welcoming school office. They also play a significant part in supporting the welfare of students. There is sufficient technical staff to provide appropriate support to the teachers in the relevant subject departments.

70. Staffing provision for the special needs of the pupils is good. The SEN base is an ideal size for small group work and individual withdrawal sessions. It offers a friendly, comfortable and secure environment for pupils who are having trouble with their learning. The resources are very good. There is a wide and appropriate selection of commercially produced assessment materials and materials for teaching basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

71. The school based additional teachers are very effective and efficient in making the appropriate special needs provision for the pupils. The funding from the local education authority means that this does not drain the school's finances, but enhances the education of all pupils in the school.

72. Most aspects of the curriculum are adequately resourced to support teaching and learning. The deployment of computers and software within subject areas has improved since the last inspection, but limited access to the computer suite inhibits further

development of ICT. The stock of fiction books in the library is good, but the supply of non-fiction is still limited, although some curriculum areas have reference books in their own departments. Newspapers and magazines were provided for a while after the last inspection, but they were not read sufficiently to justify their cost.

73. The extensive grounds surrounding the school and the premises themselves are well maintained and in good order. A new science laboratory, ICT and music suites and the refurbishment of the food technology room have greatly improved the facilities, and other improvements are planned, in technology, for example. With the increasing roll in recent years, there is little flexibility left in the school's accommodation. The library is too small for the number of pupils in the school. It is also used as a classroom, which interferes with learning to some extent. The very good quality displays around the school support learning well by stimulating considerable interest and celebrating pupils' achievements,

74. Administrative and financial controls are managed very efficiently. Specific funding is identified and used appropriately. The bursar is able to provide instant current budget information from computer records. The recent financial audit gave the school a clean bill of health.

75. The school practises the principles of best value and this has led to considerable savings on major projects. The cost of the new music suite was halved when the school took on the challenge to manage the building project itself. Consultation with local groups, particularly the Ryedale District Council, led to additional funding for the school's new computer suite, which is already having a positive effect on standards. Consultation also takes place with parents through questionnaires, and with pupils through their house representatives' meetings. Comparisons made with partner institutions have led to more cost-effective arrangements for the cleaning contract, and competitive quotes are sought before contracts for consumables are awarded.

76. Pupils come from a slightly above average range of socio-economic groups and join the school with average attainment. They benefit from good teaching, making rapid progress in learning, which leads to relatively high attainment. They achieve excellent levels of personal development so that they are confident and mature by the time they leave the school in Year 11. Whilst costs per pupil are relatively high, there is now very good financial management, which has eradicated a budget deficit and provided major building improvements at a very competitive cost. Against this background, the school is judged to be providing very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

77. There are no major areas for improvement. Governors, however, may wish to build into their development planning the need for the school to:

- improve access to and the use of ICT in some subjects;
(Paragraph: 29, 32, 72)
- improve the library provision, to make it more accessible as an active learning resource area and with less use as a classroom;
(Paragraph: 29, 73)
- enrich acts of collective worship with music and other ways of creating a warmer and more inspirational atmosphere;
(Paragraph: 40)
- relate assessments more closely to National Curriculum attainment levels in design and technology, geography, history and religious education, for example, and share them appropriately with pupils to guide them in raising standards.
(Paragraph: 52)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	111
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	44	46	17	0	0	0
Percentage	4	40	41	15	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	513
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	30

Special educational needs	Y7-11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	75

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.05
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	58	53	111

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	43	43	51
	Girls	47	43	43
	Total	90	86	94
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	82 (67)	77 (78)	85 (81)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	45 (29)	55 (44)	58 (52)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	43 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	47	47	53
	Girls	48	44	44
	Total	95	91	97
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	86 (79)	82 (77)	87 (84)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	50 (42)	59 (44)	58 (58)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	43	39	82

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	24	41	41
	Girls	32	39	39
	Total	56	80	80
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	69 (61)	99 (93)	99 (95)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47.5
	National	39.0

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	513
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7-11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	32
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.0

Education support staff:

Y7-11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	234

Deployment of teachers:

Y7-11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74
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Average teaching group size:

Y7-11

Key Stage 3	23.9
Key Stage 4	18.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	8	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	1,357,488.00
Total expenditure	1,333,739.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,959.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	84,504.00
Balance carried forward to next year	110,254.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	513
Number of questionnaires returned	234

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	42	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	54	40	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	48	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	50	11	3	0
The teaching is good.	51	45	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	39	16	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	34	4	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	27	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	46	40	8	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	64	32	0	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	41	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	66	30	0	0	3

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths:

- The leadership and management of the department;
- A strong core of good teaching with very good features, including the choice of challenging texts for study;
- The good attitudes and behaviour of pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- More formal monitoring of teaching to ensure that quality is consistent across the department;
- Using assessment information to track more closely the progress of individual pupils and to set them targets for improvement;
- Departmental accommodation and the roles and responsibilities of some teachers.

Standards and achievement

78. In 2000, pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 was above average compared with schools nationally, and average compared with similar schools. In 2000, pupils performed about the same overall in English and mathematics, but not as well as they did in science. Results for 2001 were higher, indicating well above average performance and suggesting very good achievement given pupils' average attainment on entry. Their performance was better than in maths but again not as good as in science. The trend of results in these tests over the last five years has been improving at a rate close to that found nationally. In 2000, pupils' performance based on average points scores in national tests at the end of Year 9 was above average compared with their performance nationally, and average in comparison with pupils in similar schools.

79. English GCSE results for A*-C grades in 2000 were above the national average. English literature results were very high, at 92 per cent in the A*-C range, but the number of pupils entered for this examination was lower than for English. In both courses, results for A*-G grades were above national averages, with all pupils entered obtaining a grade within that range. Provisional results for 2001 in English show slightly improved and above average A*-C grades. Results in English literature were well above average, though with disappointingly few A* or A grades. Again, all pupils obtained a grade within the range A*-G, as they have done with remarkable consistency over the last five years. Results in GCSE English have been consistently above average over the last five years, and well above average in English literature.

80. In work seen during the inspection, standards are firmly above average at the age of 14, representing good achievement given pupils' only slightly above average attainment on entry to the school. In written work, higher attaining pupils show pleasing competence when tackling analytical comment on poetry, reviews of novels, reports and short stories. Their work is well structured and expressed clearly and fluently. Pupils who find written work more difficult have technical weaknesses in sentence punctuation and particularly in spelling. Mistakes with silent letters or vowel combinations as in 'generel' for 'general' or 'insted' for 'instead', and common confusions over the spelling of words that sound similar are more frequent than they should be. Nevertheless, such pupils are able to write extended pieces showing good understanding of often challenging material.

81. Most pupils are confident about speaking in front of others and can give extended replies to questions or make a sustained contribution to discussion. Some are no less confident but cannot always explain clearly what they mean. Both these cases were apparent in a Year 9 lesson on 'Macbeth', where several pupils gave thoughtfully clear responses to such questions as 'How might Macbeth react to this?' or 'What might happen next?' but one or two who embarked on explanations became stuck half way through.

82. Most pupils at the age of 14 read aloud with confidence and accuracy. This was the case in a Year 9 lesson when pupils read well from Shakespeare's 'Henry V', and their levels of skill reflect the support and encouragement given to reading throughout Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress and attain well as a result of work done in withdrawal groups, extra help with writing three times a week during tutorial time, and well chosen targets to help them improve.

83. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average by the end of Year 11 at age 16. This judgement matches the pattern of results in recent years. Pupils are building on their performance in the national tests in 2000 when they were in Year 9, and they continue to achieve well. A strong feature of their attainment is their above average knowledge and understanding of texts and the demonstration of this in their writing. Some higher attaining pupils show well above average analytical skills. The work of others would benefit from fuller exploration of the implications or ambiguities of what they read, and more precise explanation of the effect of poetic comparisons or how poetic language conveys meaning through sound as well as sense. Pupils who are close to average show good knowledge of their texts but can lapse into description or narrative rather than analysis. Their writing loses focus, and this holds down their standard of attainment. Lower attaining pupils can write at length, but their work is affected by awkward expression (as in, for example, 'In the poem it has significant differences') and errors in sentence punctuation. Spelling mistakes persist among pupils at all levels of attainment.

84. Judging from the limited opportunities to observe pupils in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection, speaking and particularly listening skills are a very strong feature of attainment in Year 10, and above average in Year 11. Some pupils in Year 11 classes spoke perceptively and knowledgeably about the poems they were studying from the GCSE Anthology and about the similarities and differences between the film of 'Lord of the Flies' and the novel. The department would help to raise the attainment of individual pupils by tracking their progress more closely and setting them targets for improvement.

85. The contribution of other subjects to improving standards of literacy is good overall. The literacy co-ordinator has worked hard to disseminate the principles of the literacy policy and achieved a positive response from almost all departments. There is some variation in the relative attention paid to the specific skills of reading, writing, and speaking and listening. The amount of speaking and listening opportunities provided in, for example, science, art, history, ICT, modern languages, music and religious education contribute significantly to pupils' attainment. Most subject areas also introduce and develop their specific subject vocabulary well and ensure that pupils use it appropriately. This is particularly evident in science, art, history, ICT and music. Opportunities for practising writing skills are good in art, history, ICT and music. They are more limited in science, though that subject encourages some creative writing and written research in Years 7 to 9. Pupils have few opportunities to practise literacy skills in mathematics, however. They do not write in any extended way. There are limited speaking opportunities and key words are not sufficiently used, though they are sometimes on display. The school has a good framework in place to support pupils whose levels of literacy are weak, including help from a

strong special educational needs department, withdrawal groups and carefully focused support from classroom assistants. Because of pressures on accommodation, however, the library has to be used as an English classroom and thus access to an important resource is limited. Nevertheless, as a result of the good contribution made by most subjects and support staff, standards of literacy are above average in the school.

Quality of education

86. The teaching in English is never less than satisfactory. Two thirds of it is at least good and one third is very good. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding enable them to question pupils very effectively and thus help them to establish key points about their texts. This was the case in a Year 10 lesson when the pupils learned much about the character of Annie in D H Lawrence's story 'Tickets, please'. The teacher used information established by pupils themselves to probe their understanding further, and at the same time brought out strongly the mixed feelings experienced by the character and set them in the social and moral context of the time. Other very good teaching shows lively pace, use of varied activities and choice of challenging material. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, the teacher used pupil 'whiteboards' to check their knowledge and understanding of spelling confusions. Questions were used very effectively to draw out the key features of persuasive writing. Reading aloud and paired work were used to establish understanding of a difficult essay by the columnist Polly Toynbee, and the very good learning about persuasive techniques was well reinforced through an appropriate written activity. Teachers expect high standards, and their relationships with and management of pupils are usually good. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good overall in Years 7 to 9, and good overall in Years 10 and 11. A Year 7 class responded with enthusiasm as their teacher generated a sense of excitement about how pupils could help themselves spell accurately. They enjoyed meeting the teacher's expectations later when working out how to compare a snake and a river. A lower attaining class in Year 9 worked at a standard above expectations because they responded to the teacher's high expectations in group-work that required them to co-ordinate sound effects and speech.

87. In a small minority of lessons, teaching is not as effective as it might be because not all pupils are fully involved in the lesson or because the stages or steps required for full understanding of learning are not always made explicit. Sometimes, too, the structure of a lesson is not firm enough, the choice of activity does not always support the lesson objectives, and the teacher's explanations are over-complicated. As a result, pupils can become confused and their learning is slowed. These occasional anomalies can be resolved by more formal monitoring of teaching to ensure that quality is consistent across the department.

88. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department provides wise and mature leadership, ensuring that the above average standards noted in the last inspection report are maintained. The department has consistently obtained above average results for all its pupils throughout the last five years. The positive features of the last report are still present in the department's work. Teaching has improved since that time, and the department has made a good response to national developments in relation to literacy strategies and the new framework for English. Obstacles to rapid improvement persist, such as the divided nature of the department's accommodation and the multiple roles carried by some teachers, but these are well understood by the school's management, and in other respects the department has a good capacity for improvement.

DRAMA

88. In the limited observation that was possible in this inspection, pupils' standards of attainment are above average at the age of 16. Pupils in Year 11, preparing for their 'controlled test' in improvisation, discussed the theme of 'ambition' with intelligence and enthusiasm. They made appropriate notes and set about their task in a mature and confident manner in response to their teacher's valuable advice on resources and 'things to avoid'. Their projects for the 'performance' aspect of the examination were interesting in their variety and challenging in their difficulty. Two pupils gave a confident and mature presentation of an extract from 'Maria Marten: the Murder in the Red Barn'. They had good articulation and awareness of the dramatic qualities of the piece, and their performance held the attention of the other pupils. Pupils' written work shows interest, enthusiasm and good analytical and self-evaluation techniques.

89. Pupils in a Year 10 class spoke clearly and confidently. They could maintain a role well, making effective use of expression, gesture and posture. Pupils with special educational needs were well supported by another teacher during the lesson so that they made as good progress as other pupils. They worked separately, however, and the teacher missed an opportunity to bring them into the work of the class as a whole. The teacher assumed understanding of a quite difficult and lengthy poem, which meant that not all pupils were able to tackle the good activity that followed without further explanation.

90. Overall, however, it is clear that pupils are acquiring drama skills well. Some Year 11 pupils show enthusiasm for the subject by participating in drama activities at the local arts centre and by their desire to continue to pursue drama studies when they leave school. Teaching is sufficiently good to enable pupils to achieve above average standards and to create positive attitudes towards their drama work.

MATHEMATICS

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths:

- Standards are high throughout the school;
- Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9;
- The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in Year 7;
- Assessment procedures provide a good basis for monitoring pupils attainment and setting targets for improvement.

Areas for development:

- Ensuring that all pupils have access to ICT in the mathematics' curriculum;
- Improvement of the schemes of work in Years 8 to 11 and extending the range of teaching strategies used in these years.

Standards and Achievement

91. Standards attained in mathematics by the end of Year 9 are well above the national average for all schools. When compared with similar schools, standards are close to the average. There has been little change in the school's standards since the previous inspection, and there is little difference in the standards achieved by girls and boys.

92. GCSE results are above the national average in grades A* to C. The results in 2000 were close to those at the time of the previous inspection. The provisional results for 2001 show a slight improvement, particularly for girls. Boys' performance has been below that of girls for the last four years, and well below in 2001. The GCSE results in mathematics are below those of science and similar to those in English.

93. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the good mathematical performance achieved in national tests at the end of Year 9. Pupils enter the school with average attainment, and the large majority make good progress as they move from Years 7 to 9. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in Year 7 is having a positive impact on calculation and the skills of mental arithmetic, as well as raising understanding of the properties of number. Pupils in all years show confidence in talking about mathematics and in explaining their answers to questions. Pupils develop understanding and skills in algebraic notation, expanding brackets and simplifying expressions. Higher attaining pupils extend their skills to the solution of simultaneous equations. Geometrical ideas are well developed, for example in identifying plane and solid shapes and their properties. Simple investigations extend pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics. There are opportunities to use ICT in mathematics lessons, for example in using spreadsheets to generate sequences of numbers. All classes cover the full range of mathematics attainment targets. Pupils with special educational needs are satisfactorily provided for through the arrangements for grouping pupils by attainment, and as a result they make good progress.

94. In Years 10 and 11, pupils consolidate and build on their previous achievements and make sound progress. They continue to extend their knowledge and skills in all areas of mathematics and in the application of these skills to problems. Higher attaining pupils use a variety of approaches effectively in solving algebraic equations. Lower attaining pupils, for example, are able to use properties of angles and find, by calculation, unknown angles in triangles. Pupils investigate problems in mathematics, and frequently achieve high standards. All pupils take courses leading to GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for and make satisfactory progress.

The quality of education

95. Teaching in mathematics is good, overall. There is some very good teaching and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding. Lesson planning is mainly good, teachers' expectations of pupils are high and classroom management is very good. In lessons where the teaching is very good, there is a clear focus, a variety of activities at a good pace and good interaction with pupils. Lessons in Year 7 are characterised by these approaches and their good use of problems, puzzles and games, such as mental arithmetic 'Bingo', as well as practice of skills. In a lesson on revision, examination techniques were discussed and developed very well. Some other lessons that are otherwise satisfactory are too closely linked to a textbook, which reduces the effectiveness of the teaching. The need to develop a wider range of teaching strategies was raised in the previous inspection report and, although some attention has been given to this, further development is still needed. The marking of homework and classwork is good, with comments helpful to pupils.

Leadership and management

96. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is a strong commitment to raising standards in all years. The department has adopted the National Numeracy Strategy, and this is having a significant impact on the development of mental arithmetic and numerical skills in Year 7. The assessment procedures are very

good so that data on pupils' achievement is recorded, and all teachers have key information about their teaching groups in their mark books. Targets for individual pupils and groups of pupils are determined using this information. The departmental handbook has a summary of useful information and guidance, but the schemes of work are mainly in outline and linked to textbooks. The exception to this is the scheme of work being developed for Year 7 which, although closely following the National Numeracy Strategy, includes activities and references that support and guide the teaching. Systematic approaches to the monitoring of the work of the department are being developed. Observation of teaching is done within the school and guidance provided where necessary. Curriculum delivery is satisfactorily monitored through the schemes of work and assessment procedures linked to it. There is consistency in the way work is marked and graded. The mathematics teachers are suitably qualified and have a good range of expertise and experience. The resources are of good quality and effectively support the work of the department.

97. Improvement made since the last inspection is satisfactory. The national test results at the end of Year 9 and the results in GCSE are steady and close to those at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' numeracy skills are improving, particularly in Year 7, and this is having an impact on Years 8 and 9. The need to extend teaching strategies was raised in the previous report and there is still a need for this in Years 8 and 11 to match the improvements in Year 7. The limited use of ICT to enhance the mathematical curriculum was noted in the previous report. Resources have been much improved and ICT is now used to enhance the mathematics teaching. However, access to the facilities is limited and use of ICT needs to be more fully integrated into the curriculum so that all pupils benefit.

98. Numeracy standards in the school as a whole are in line with attainment generally and reflect the standards in mathematics lessons. In mathematics, particularly in Years 7 to 9, numeracy is improving through the influence of the National Numeracy Strategy. There is good use of numeracy skills in some subjects. For example, climate and population graphs are used in geography, as well as co-ordinates, latitude and longitude. In science, graphs are used to illustrate and interpret data, and compound units are used, for example in density. In history, data on enclosures in the nineteenth century is used to work out increases in crop and meat production. In ICT, spreadsheets are used to collect and analyse data, and graphs to illustrate the results. Nevertheless, there is no whole-school approach to the development and use of number, and contributions from all subjects need to be co-ordinated through an effective policy for numeracy.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- All pupils are provided with access to a broad, balanced, relevant and challenging science curriculum;
- Pupils are taught and managed well so that all are able to achieve high standards that often exceed national expectations;
- The department is well led and efficient; it monitors and evaluates well the effectiveness of its work.

Areas for improvement:

- The provision and use of ICT in the science classroom;
- Further development and implementation of a wider range of teaching, learning and assessment strategies;
- Ensuring that all teaching and technical staff keep abreast of current developments and initiatives in the teaching of science.

Standards and achievement

99. Pupils come to the school with attainment in science that is broadly average. In 2001, the results of the National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well above those attained in all schools nationally. They provide evidence of the very good progress made by pupils from the time that they start science in Year 7. Since the last inspection in 1996, results at the end of Year 9 have closely followed trends nationally, but have been consistently above national figures. All pupils are entered for the Double Award GCSE science course at the end of Year 11. In 2001, their performance was well above average, with 74 per cent gaining an A*-C grade and 100 per cent obtaining an A*-G grade. In the period between the last inspection and 2001, results at GCSE have remained well above national figures. Pupils make good progress during Years 10 and 11, with a significant group achieving the A and A* grades at GCSE, while those with special educational needs also gain a graded pass.

100. A well constructed 'What is science' topic at the start of Year 7 introduces pupils to basic laboratory procedures. They learn to use equipment safely, to practise and develop a range of scientific and study skills, and to see science as a worthwhile and exciting activity. This initial work establishes the high expectations that teachers have of all pupils, both in terms of their approach to lessons and the quality of their work. Other topics in Years 7 to 9 build progressively on biology, chemistry, earth sciences and physics work already started in the primary schools. In Year 7, for example, most pupils build electrical circuits, measure and record current and voltage with correct units and use circuit symbols to record their work accurately. Some pupils, however, have difficulty in understanding what their results mean, and in grasping the concepts of electron flow and energy transfer in their work on electricity. Pupils generally use scientific terms correctly and confidently, and apply their knowledge and understanding well from one unit of work to another. They are helped in this by having only one science teacher in each of Years 7 to 9 and over the two years of their GCSE course. This particular member of staff knows the aptitude and attainment of each pupil and can therefore set realistic targets for improvement. Experimental and investigative work is introduced specifically in Year 7, and a problem solving approach is used in most practical work. However, pupils lack sufficient experience of designing practical tasks and evaluating ways in which they could be improved. Pupils have very good laboratory skills but need more practice and encouragement to think about what they are doing. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE Salters' course presents science content in

interesting and applied contexts, using a variety of teaching ideas. This particular approach helps pupils to achieve high standards by raising their motivation for science and expecting them to take more responsibility for their learning. For example in Year 10, theoretical calculations on atomic mass in chemistry are set within the topic of 'Mining and Minerals'. In this way, pupils see the industrial and economic relevance behind their work in class. Many pupils particularly enjoy biological topics. They produce work of very high standard when required to research and present projects on the social and moral issues related to health or the environment.

101. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. Direct and well structured teaching provides them with a sound framework for learning facts and for acquiring skills and understanding. Pupils are expected to present their work logically and neatly. This helps them to prepare for tests at the end of the course and to achieve their potential. Literacy support for lower achieving pupils is particularly good in Year 7, but more strategies for helping pupils to record notes and to read with greater understanding need to be used in Years 8 and 9. There is very good liaison between science teachers and the support assistants who work alongside pupils in the laboratory. Together, they share a plan of what will happen in the lesson and discuss any specific actions to be taken. In this way, all pupils benefit fully from the learning activities. Close attention to assessment data enables teachers to prepare lessons that closely match the needs of individuals in the group.

102. Pupils are punctual to lessons and come with a very positive attitude. In class, pupils are expected to be attentive, to settle to tasks quickly and to concentrate on their work. They develop a mature and respectful relationship with teachers. This is apparent in the way in which they respond openly and fluently to questions and often want to discuss and know more about the ideas that come up in class. These factors contribute greatly to the high standards of work achieved. In Years 10 and 11, they are confident enough to challenge what teachers say and to suggest other ways of tackling tasks. They are very good listeners, following instructions well and organising themselves and their workspace to complete tasks successfully. Pupils are tolerant of each other, sensitive to individual needs, and accepting of what classmates say and do. They work co-operatively in groups and in pairs (in mixed gender pairs in some lower school classes) and support each other to make progress.

Quality of education

103. Overall, the quality of teaching is good at both key stages and contributes significantly to the high standards seen. Teachers are knowledgeable and confident, and plan their lessons in detail to meet the needs of the National Curriculum and the GCSE syllabus. They start lessons by checking and reinforcing prior learning and by setting out clear learning outcomes. They keep pupils working at a brisk pace, moving them on from one task to the next and usually allocating time to summarise what has been achieved at the end. In some cases, the pupil activities start late into the lesson and pupils are then too rushed to understand fully the key learning points. Teachers are skilled in giving instructions, in demonstrating work and in explaining facts and more complicated ideas. In the best lessons, teachers also use probing questions to challenge pupils' views and to develop their thinking skills. Practical work is always well prepared and set out by the laboratory technician, and is well organised by the teachers. Pupils are tightly managed to ensure both safety and the effective use of resources and space. Teachers know the pupils well, though more thought could be given to the planning of different tasks and strategies within the same lesson, particularly in Years 7 to 9. This would ensure that the higher attaining pupils are extended even further while appropriate support is offered to the lower achievers within each setted group. Books and files are regularly and carefully monitored

and marked. In the best practice, detailed comments are made on the pupils' work, and specific targets are set so that they know exactly what to do to raise the standard of their work in the future. The current action plan to develop teaching and learning in the department needs to continue so that present good practice can be shared and developed even more.

Leadership and management

104. The leadership of the department is very good, with well-documented systems in place to ensure that administration runs smoothly, that all teachers are involved in planning future work, and that financial management is efficient. The head of department is skilled in the analysis of data related to the attainment of students in external tests and examinations at each stage throughout the school. Comparisons are made against national and local benchmarks, and the results are used not only to help students achieve their potential but also to evaluate teaching and curriculum organisation. This is a strength of the department. Laboratory accommodation is satisfactory overall, with good displays contributing to a stimulating and attractive environment. The quality and provision of resources is adequate. The department has made good progress in addressing the limited use of ICT reported at the last inspection. The use of a comprehensive and good quality computer simulation programme is helping pupils at all levels to observe and understand scientific phenomena. The development of more opportunities to use computer software, data logging equipment, data and word processing packages across the curriculum and in all years would help pupils to learn science even more effectively. The teaching and technical staff work together as a committed, capable and enthusiastic team. They would, however, benefit from more in-service training to keep abreast of recent developments and initiatives in the teaching of science. Nonetheless, they remain dedicated in support of the high achievement of all their pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is very good.

Strengths:

- Strong, caring relationships;
- A strong work ethic at both key stages;
- Teaching at both key stages is very good.

Areas for improvement:

- More up-to-date ICT programs and a CD re-writer;
- The kilns need refurbishment.

Standards and achievement

105. The majority of pupils enter the school with close to the national average attainment. By the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001, pupils' attainment is above average. This represents good progress over time and significant value added achievement. Girls are attaining slightly higher than boys.

106. In 2000, at GCSE level, the proportion of pupils who gained grades in the A* - C range was close to the national average. This improved in 2001, when an above average proportion gained A* - C. In both years, the girls' results were higher than those of the boys.

107. Inspection evidence from observation of lessons and scrutiny of work in Years 7 to 9 indicates that current standards are high. Pupils have good control of light and intense shading, and are able to outline the light source in their observational drawing. They produce imaginative collage work and bold pattern decoration based on natural forms. They write well, using appropriate art vocabulary, when discussing the design of Celtic knots and illustrated manuscripts. Their compositions, based on the work of established artists, are carefully executed and reflect very clearly the styles that they are investigating. Particularly impressive are some of the angular, richly coloured self-portraits based on the work of Picasso. Pupils are equally at home with work in clay, collage and weaving. Pupils of all levels of ability are able to blend colours successfully, use perspective and enjoy working in a variety of media. The attainment in Year 9, at present, is above average for the majority of pupils, and some are attaining well above average. From work seen in Years 10 and 11, the large majority of the present pupils are on track for achieving at least GCSE grade C. Pupils are able to use highlighting, shading and texture to investigate speed and direction in their work based on the Futurist Movement. Their 3-dimensional work, inspired by primitive African art, is bold and imaginative. The integration of rope, feathers, natural fibres and grass emphasises the ethnic quality of the work in both mask making and the construction of mobiles. Drawing skills are well developed, and the large-scale compositions on display represent work in a variety of media, including acrylic, watercolour, charcoal and oil paint. There is a confidence in the use of bold colours to underline the mood, for instance in a piece based on war images, and an outstanding surreal painting of a bright red couch on which a twisted, dead dahlia is reclining. The influence of Islamic, Chinese and Indian cultures is obvious in the collage work. The Cubist and Romantic styles studied are well documented in pupils' notebooks and used to inform both portraiture and landscape painting.

Quality of education

108. Teaching at both key stages is very good and promotes high educational standards. Enthusiastic, well-informed teaching and good relationships encourage the positive responses that pupils display in lessons. Lessons are well paced and planned, with sensitive use of pupils' work to illustrate teaching points. Skilled demonstrations of painting and 3 dimensional techniques are much appreciated by pupils, whose own skills are enhanced as a result of teacher example. Teachers' high expectations challenge pupils and result in an eagerness to refine and adapt work in the light of teacher input. Through well-considered feedback to individual pupils, independent learning is encouraged and pupils feel confident to move on and experiment. Strong, caring relationships are obvious in lessons, resulting in a sympathetic, positive and constructive exchange of ideas. The use of appropriate art vocabulary has a positive, beneficial effect on all the pupils' work and increases their understanding of styles and techniques.

Leadership and management

109. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is enthusiastic, committed and energetic. Schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 are detailed and creatively designed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Imaginative approaches to projects help pupils in Years 10 and 11 to address, securely, the demands of the GCSE syllabus. The department's development plan is realistic. It outlines strategies to raise the attainment of boys and the inclusion of more ICT work at both key stages. There is a clear marking policy, accessible to pupils, which gives indications of levels or grades. Records are carefully kept in the department and used to inform tracking and target setting for individual pupils. These records are also used as benchmarks for the success or failure of

individual schemes, in the light of which they can be refined or modified. The department is aware of pupils with special educational needs and adapts the marking and teaching approaches accordingly. Higher attaining pupils are also well supported with an extension programme of work. Because of this support system, the pupils can gain an extra GCSE and still produce work of high quality. Resources are adequate, but funding only covers consumable items, leaving little to build up further resources for the department. More up-to-date programs for the computer and a CD re-writer would enhance the work of the department. The kilns are in need of some refurbishment. Both art rooms are light and airy, and the displays within them and elsewhere in the school are exciting and stimulating. In response to the last inspection report, independent learning is encouraged at both key stages and teaching is now consistently very good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- Standards are high at both key stages;
- Pupils make very good progress throughout the school;
- Teaching is good overall and some is excellent;
- Design and technology subjects at GCSE benefit from the attention given to basic DT processes and skills in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement:

- Computer assisted design and manufacture in all areas of design and technology;
- Building National Curriculum level descriptions into the schemes of work, so as to increase the accuracy of lesson planning and assessment of standards in the lower school.

Standards and achievement

110. Results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above the national average. Pupils achieve much better than might be expected and make very good progress from their starting points on entry to the school. Attention given to basic designing and making skills in Years 7 to 9 benefits the separate design and technology subjects taken in Years 10 and 11.

111. GCSE results are well above the national average. There has been significant improvement in standards in food technology since the last inspection. Over the last three years, standards have been consistently very good in most of the design and technology subjects.

112. The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the pupils' high performance at the end of Year 9. The large majority of pupils make very good progress as they move through from Years 7 to 9. They show confidence when they investigate, analyse, evaluate and design. For example, pupils in a Year 9 class were evaluating a range of chairs that were found in the school. They showed that they were able to cope very well with intellectually challenging work when analysing the shape, the materials, how the chairs were manufactured for cost effectiveness and the environmental issues relating to recycling. They handle tools, equipment and materials skilfully, for example, when using bread dough for pizza shapes in a Year 9 lesson. In a Year 7 lesson, the pupils worked with precision and accuracy to attain a high level of finish on their acrylic squares. They use technical language well, particularly in their projects. Pupils with special needs are well

provided for. Many pupils, including the higher attainers, extend their knowledge independently by carrying out research on the Internet. ICT is used in most projects and as a very good presentation tool. Most pupils extend their design and technology knowledge, understanding and skills and make very good progress compared to their attainment on entry to the school.

113. Pupils maintain and build on their achievement in lower school, and standards are well sustained as they make very good progress also in Years 10 and 11. At Key Stage 4, pupils continue to extend their knowledge and skills in all areas. The standard of presentation, particularly in coursework, is very high. Pupils of all abilities design very well, develop a specification and produce good quality outcomes.

The quality of education

114. The teaching at both key stages is good overall, with the occasional very good lesson and some lessons that are truly excellent. All lessons seen were effectively organised and managed well. All teachers have very good knowledge of design and technology, are experts in their specialist subjects and totally committed to their work. Planning is thorough and follows the agreed scheme of work. High expectations are set and a variety of teaching strategies used, including practical activities, design drawing, product analysis and evaluation. Where teaching is very good and excellent, the lessons are highly organised and stimulating. They have very straightforward and uncomplicated demonstrations, which make creative and intellectual demands on their pupils. This was illustrated very well, for example, in a Year 10 product design lesson, where pupils were asked to design in the style of 1930's Art Deco. The lesson itself had an expectation of high achievement and an ethos of working together as designers improving each other's work, which was very successful.

Leadership and management

115. The shared and co-operative leadership works well. Although the curriculum is independently written and delivered in separate subject areas, there is a common philosophy of process and assessment procedures. GCSE results are analysed in order to meet the school's targets. Teachers evaluate and monitor the impact of the curriculum on their pupils' learning, so that they can constantly keep improving the subject. They are beginning to use National Curriculum level descriptions for assessment throughout the lower school, and are in the early stages of including computer assisted design and manufacture in all areas of design and technology. Pupils' work is consistently marked well, with comments given on how to improve. Paired lesson observations help teachers to review their practice. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has greatly improved, particularly in food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall provision for geography is good.

Strengths:

- GCSE results over many years;
- The quality of teaching;
- Leadership and management of the department;
- Support for literacy and numeracy skills.

Areas for improvement:

- Relating assessments more closely to National Curriculum attainment levels and sharing them appropriately with pupils to guide them in raising standards.

Standards and achievement

116. Results in the National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above national expectations for this age. This is a continuation of the trend of the last few years, with slight variations, such as lower scores in 1999. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is slightly below national expectations overall, and so the results in 2001 represented a good achievement for them. There is no significant difference between the results of girls and boys.

117. In the GCSE examination in 2001, the proportion of pupils who attained grades in the range A*-C was just above the national average and similar to that in similar schools. This is similar to the results in 2000. Over the years, the department has maintained this standard and in some years, for instance 2000, it has exceeded the national averages for pupils who score the highest grades of A and A*. In small schools such as Ryedale, results are variable from year to year, depending on the nature of the year group. Lower attaining pupils are entered for the Certificate of Attainment in Geography, and they do well at this level.

118. Standards reached by pupils currently in Year 9 are above the expected levels for their age. With their sound basic skills of numeracy, they are able to interpret climate graphs and tell which is typical of a range of world climatic conditions. They are also familiar with the physical nature of the Earth and understand such terms as core, mantle and crust. Most pupils can explain what happens when the earth's tectonic plates meet. They can distinguish between constructive and destructive plates. By the end of this phase, most understand the models that describe land use in towns, and confidently use terms such as "the central business district" with confidence. Higher attaining pupils can account for the growth of cities and contrast those in developed and developing countries. The simpler approaches used for those of lower previous attainment ensure that they know the required content of the National Curriculum. All pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs. The teaching supports literacy development, for example, enabling pupils to make notes, to draft pieces of work and to write short empathetic pieces, such as letters, with increasing competence. Numeracy is supported through the use of statistical material. More use is made of ICT than noted in the previous report, but ICT is not yet a consistent part of everyday teaching.

119. Standards of pupils presently in Year 11 are in line with those expected for pupils of this age. A greater number than usual are studying for the Certificate of Achievement. They are all making steady progress and achieving satisfactorily. Pupils have a wide knowledge of the world, both physical and human. They understand the way in which water erodes the landscape, both physically by rivers and chemically in limestone areas. In their

coverage of man's relation to his environment, they describe well how the rain forest is being deforested. Higher attaining pupils understand that this is a global problem in which the more economically developed nations have a responsibility in the process and a moral responsibility to rectify it. Most pupils use data collection and analysis in coursework when they study land use in the centre of York. The majority competently put forward hypotheses, collect appropriate data and test their initial thoughts. Having done so they make suggestions as to the validity of the conclusions they draw from their research. Few have higher skills of research. The subject is a popular choice for pupils at the end of Year 9, and most enter for the GCSE examination.

Quality of education

120. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and it is at least good in a large majority of lessons and occasionally very good. The basis for this good standard of teaching is good long term planning which includes due attention to National Curriculum attainment targets, the production of good learning resources and the documenting of suggested teaching approaches. Each teacher adapts to suit the needs of the class. When teaching is good or better, the pupils have the benefit of good examples from the teacher's own experience as, for instance, in a Year 10 lesson on deforestation. Planning in all lessons is clear, ensuring that pupils know what is expected of them. In another Year 10 lesson for the Certificate of Achievement, pupils were taken carefully through their previous learning on the structure of the Earth to ensure that they could recall it. They built up their understanding of plate tectonics so that they understood the mechanisms behind volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. The teacher in this very good lesson confirmed pupils' learning by giving frequent feedback. New concepts were introduced through relevant video clips and then reinforced through paired work developing short presentations to the rest of the class. In a good lesson in Year 8, pupils knew the effects of an earthquake in California and realised its human consequences. Literacy is constantly reinforced by means of questions on spelling, by encouraging pupils to speak aloud and by reading textbook passages. Numeracy skills are strengthened by the relevant use of statistical data. Marking is regular and frequent, with references to the quality of the work and to how it might be improved in presentation and content. In a very few instances, questioning relied on volunteers, enabling some pupils to drift away from the subject, but mostly the well directed questions maintained every pupil's attention. Most pupils are aware of making improvement, but not in terms of specific National Curriculum attainment levels, which makes individual target setting more difficult. The attitudes of virtually all pupils are good, strengthened by the good relationships amongst all people in the school. It is rare for teachers to need any negative disciplinary methods, but they use the positive ones with tact and sensitivity, so that wanting to do well is the norm.

Leadership and management

121. Leadership and management of the department are good overall. The head of department knows the pupils well and has planned the programme of study thoroughly, not only to cover the National Curriculum scheme of work, but also to provide other teachers with a good basis to underpin their own teaching. This is helpful to teachers new to the profession and those who teach only one or two geography groups. Planning takes account of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, as shown, for example, by the varied levels of examination at the end of Year 11. Teaching and curriculum coverage are regularly monitored to ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement. Book resources are adequate, though some are in need of updating. Video

references are many and varied, and ICT is used more than in many other departments, despite the difficulties of access to the computer rooms. Use of the Internet makes access to up-to-the-minute data possible, such as current population figures for Mexico City as opposed to figures quoted in the textbook published in 1991.

122. Some improvement has been made in weak areas noted in the last report, such as assessment and in the use of ICT, though further improvement is still possible. All members of the geography staff have the commitment and capacity to raise standards further.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths:

- Standards are high at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11;
- The quality of teaching is very good;
- Literacy skills are encouraged well and the standards of writing in history are very good across the school.

Areas for improvement:

- Pupils' ICT skills in history applications.

Standards and achievement

123. The standard of pupils' work is very good by the end of Year 9. Pupils of all levels of attainment make very good progress over the first three years, with no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Most notable is pupils' achievement in extended written work, which is very good for their age. Their skills in responding to evidence are also of high quality, with well-extended answers, good vocabulary and perceptive explanations. Current standards are much better than noted in the previous report time for this age group. However, teachers' assessments for the end of the Key Stage in Year 9 do not match this good picture, as they are unduly pessimistic.

124. GCSE results are well above the national average. This is clear from the latest results and also from those in recent years, although numbers are too low for reliable statistical interpretation. Pupils build on the high level of skills already acquired by the end of Year 9, and their achievement is good. Pupils of all abilities do well, and it is very rare for a candidate not to gain a grade in the GCSE examination. GCSE results were well above the national average at the time of the previous inspection and these high standards have been maintained.

125. Lessons in the first three years show that pupils make very good progress in oral competence as well as in written work. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to make well-sustained and thoughtful replies to questions, and pupils across the attainment range are confident in giving spoken answers. By Year 9, pupils are able to respond well to written evidence, as well as to that in statistics and pictures. They know about differing interpretations in history and how these must be balanced when they construct an

explanation. Work in the current Years 10 and 11 shows good knowledge and understanding of aspects of modern world history for this stage of the school year. Year 10 pupils have already learnt about the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles in appropriate depth and detail.

126. Pupils respond to history very well. Their behaviour is very good across the school. They are generally interested and well engaged, working hard and sustaining their interest to the end of the lesson. They take good care to present their work well, and most pupils try hard to do their homework thoroughly. They do not choose to do history for GCSE in great numbers, although those who do enjoy the course.

The quality of education

127. The teaching in history is very good. Pupils reach high standards because teachers have high expectations and challenge pupils appropriately across the attainment range. The setting arrangements are helpful here. Pupils in the lowest sets are expertly taught and learning assistants are used well to provide individual support where most needed. Also, pupils do well because the teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and use this to good advantage. Where they have particular expertise, as in local history, their love of the subject is clear and very helpful in engaging pupils' interest. Lessons are well planned, with careful thought given to providing a variety of tasks. This includes working in pairs, to which pupils respond well, and also to enlivening lessons with the judicious use of videos and other visual sources.

128. The attention to basic skills is very good. Literacy is given great attention in the younger years and this means that pupils gain good levels of vocabulary and writing skills. These establish a very good base for progression into GCSE. Numeracy is also given attention by developing understanding of time scales and the use of statistical evidence. There could be more scope for pupils to use their initiative, to work independently, and to use their ICT skills in a historical context during lessons. Good examples of assignments that had been competently word-processed at home were seen. Marking is very thorough, with good levels of helpful comment provided.

129. The schemes of work in history are well developed in relation to both the core and the optional units of study. The choice of the unit on Native Americans makes an interesting and engaging start to the course and allows good consolidation of historical skills from primary school. The choice of the French Revolution as the European unit of study challenges Year 9 pupils well and makes a strong contribution to their cultural education. The use of local history, in conjunction with fieldwork, is a strong feature of provision. The lower school course is well balanced and includes some specific attention to women in history.

130. History contributes well to the personal development of pupils in many ways. Most notably the ethical aspects of many topics give cause for reflection on what is right and wrong and what is just and unjust. Teachers' high expectations have a good impact on pupils' development of responsibility and self-discipline.

Leadership and management

131. The department is well led and managed, with a clear direction for future development in keeping with the school's priorities. There is only one specialist teacher but the recent appointment of a humanities co-ordinator has provided a useful forum for monitoring standards and discussing developments, as also has closer collaboration with the co-ordinator for special needs. More opportunities for professional development, including out-of-school in-service training would be beneficial to such a small department.

132. There have been significant improvements since the previous report in raising standards in Years 7 to 9 and in meeting the full range of pupils' needs. Assessment allows pupils' progress to be monitored satisfactorily, though better use needs to be made of National Curriculum levels, and this shared with pupils. There has been sound planning for the improvement of the use of ICT in history lessons, and CD ROMs and other resources have been bought. Nevertheless, implementation of the plans for ICT is at an early stage. While the levels of accommodation and resources for the subject are satisfactory, the library stock is limited, as also is access to the library for research purposes in lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is good.

Strengths:

- Standards of attainment are rising as a result of improved provision;
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 7-9 and in GCSE lessons in Years 10 and 11;
- There is a well-structured course for pupils in Years 7-9;
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and behave very well in lessons;
- Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils are very good.

Areas for development:

- Monitoring of individual progress of pupils towards identified targets;
- Increasing the range of opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation for their work in Years 10 and 11;
- Increasing access to ICT facilities for other departments.

Standards and achievement

133. Results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed that pupils' attainment was above average. This represents a significant increase from below average in the previous year. There were no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls in either year. The rising trend in standards is largely because of very good teaching, the high levels of motivation of pupils and improved resources to teach the subject.

134. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 was above the national average. Boys and girls did equally well. More pupils have opted to take the subject in recent years because they recognise that standards are rising and facilities are improving.

135. Standards of attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 are above average. They have a good understanding of basic applications, and use spreadsheets and databases confidently and competently. They know the reasons for using them and incorporate them appropriately into work in other subjects. For example, in geography, pupils compare

employment structure and how it has changed, and present their findings in pie charts. Pupils use the Internet for research and are aware of ethical and safety issues when using it. Pupils often demonstrate well above average standards, for example, when they create stationery for party invitations and later use a previously developed database to mail-merge invitations to be sent out to guests. They design and make presentations using special software, which they evaluate sensibly and maturely. They are confident users of computers and recognise them as tools for learning in other subjects because skills and concepts are explained in relevant contexts.

136. Standards of work seen are average overall at the end of Year 11. In GCSE courses, pupils reach above average standards. In computer literacy courses taken by some pupils in Year 11, most reach higher standards than expected compared with their prior attainment. Pupils continue to use ICT resources satisfactorily to present and research their work in other subjects, and a significant majority reach above average standards when, for example, they desktop publish their coursework. In GCSE courses, pupils have a good understanding of how to use computers to manage small businesses. They design projects for which they write instruction manuals, using knowledge they have gained after identifying the main strengths and weaknesses in commercially produced examples. Pupils following basic computer literacy courses are able to create simple databases and spreadsheets, and they have satisfactory word processing skills. Most rely on the teacher to refresh their memory of previous work and have limited problem-solving skills. Pupils have less knowledge of computer control technology because they have insufficient experience of this to fully develop their skills and knowledge. Pupils reach good standards with data logging in science lessons.

137. Achievement is good in Years 7-9. Pupils enter the school with average skills in using computers for word processing and producing simple graphics. A few are able to combine text and graphics to present information. They quickly learn to extend these skills to produce more complex and attractive work. In Year 8, they learn to use spreadsheets and to convert information from them into graphs and charts. They make good progress in creating simple databases. By Year 9, they are able to combine these skills to create, for example, wedding invitation stationery, which they send to friends using their own databases. Pupils make good progress in using the Internet to research ideas and to send e-mail messages. In design technology, pupils learn to use computer resources to design and manufacture boxes. In art, they create designs and then use computers to produce repeat patterns for decorative wrapping paper. The well-structured course in Years 7-9 prepares pupils effectively for their GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 and for using ICT as a tool for learning in other subjects. For example, they learn to research information and to present extended coursework in appropriate forms. They increase their knowledge of software packages that are most appropriate for this purpose, so becoming confident in selecting those that are most useful and efficient. Limited resources restrict progress with computer control. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in learning to present their work clearly and attractively and to improve their literacy levels. For example, they learn to reorganise continuous prose into verse form in English lessons.

138. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, and their very good behaviour and high levels of motivation are significant factors in their good quality of learning. They work co-operatively in groups and form very good relationships with each other and their teachers.

Quality of education

139. The quality of teaching in lessons observed was mostly very good and never less than good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use effectively to plan relevant and interesting lessons. They identify learning objectives for the lesson, make

them very clear to pupils and review progress at the end. In consequence, learning is consolidated and pupils feel good about what they have achieved in lessons. Pupils work productively and sustain concentration and interest because teachers provide appropriately challenging work. Tasks are related to National Curriculum levels and pupils know what they have to do to reach higher levels. Teachers have high expectations but provide appropriate support and guidance so that pupils can achieve highly, and often beyond what is expected of them. There is mutual respect between teachers and pupils, which leads to a very good learning ethos and a desire to please each other. Teachers use effective teaching methods for all pupils. They raise the confidence and self-esteem of pupils with special needs. Pupils who have the potential to gain very high standards are provided with suitable tasks to enable this. Teachers give their time generously to providing extra-curricular clubs in lunch periods and after school. The technician is well respected for the support she gives to the work of the department and to teachers from other subjects who use the facilities.

Leadership and management

140. The quality of leadership and management is good and there are some very good features emerging. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of the subject and has established some very good systems to manage and monitor subject performance. A well-structured course has been developed for pupils in Years 7-9, which includes imaginative projects and provides good preparation for pupils to work at higher levels in examination courses. Good progress is being made in provision for ICT in other subjects and in monitoring its use. Day-to-day management of the subject is efficient and effective and has led to a rise in standards. There is a shared commitment to improve standards and provision, but departments still do not have enough access to the computer rooms at appropriate times. The subject now meets statutory requirements. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, including a rising trend in standards, improved provision, improved teaching and learning, opportunities for pupils to enter for public examinations and more effective monitoring of cross curricular ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

141. In the teacher assessments in 2000, pupils attained standards at the end of Year 9 that were in line with national expectations for this age group. In 2001, results were slightly higher with about half of the year group attaining National Curriculum level 5 or above. Teacher assessments represent a combination of results in both French and German at the end of Year 9.

French

The quality of provision in French is good.

Strengths:

- Good care and knowledge of pupils;
- Positive relationships;
- Good subject knowledge;
- Good assessment procedures;
- High expectations;
- Very good attitudes and behaviour.

Areas For Improvement:

- The review of schemes of work to include tasks that meet the needs of all pupils.

Standards and achievement

142. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 is above national expectations for this stage of the course. Higher attaining pupils write fluently in the past tense when describing their bedrooms. They take risks with language and use past, present and future tenses well. They use relative clauses effectively and know how to raise the level of their work. Average and lower attaining pupils have covered the past tense and are using it with support. They produce role-plays of several exchanges on the subject of buying birthday presents, and manipulate reflexive verbs well. They use French for basic requests, such as 'Pouvez-vous répéter'. Standards in Year 7 are higher than in the subsequent two years, with higher attaining pupils already working on paragraphs of several sentences on the topic of self. Standards level off in Year 8, because pupils are not learning how to use past and future tenses soon enough, although the standard of their work continues to be above national expectations.

143. GCSE results for 2000 were lower than the national average but significantly higher in 2001, with two thirds of those entered gaining A* - C passes. They were particularly high for girls, with almost half of those entered gaining the higher A*/A grades. Since 1997, results have fluctuated because average and higher attaining pupils have chosen to study German rather than French, and there has been a steady downward trend in French results overall, although the proportion of higher A* and A grades has steadily improved over the same period.

144. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection confirmed these results. Higher attaining pupils produce top quality work. They describe holidays in the past, present and future well. They employ a variety of enhancing expressions well. Average attaining pupils also use past, present and future tenses well when talking about daily routine. They write letters to an employment agency, for example, using the correct form of address. Lower attaining pupils write well in the present tense about their Saturday jobs. They discuss pocket money and give opinions about topics such as the testing of products on animals. They are not yet secure in their use of the perfect tense. Standards in Year 10 are higher than in Year 11. Pupils use French to converse with the teacher and are comfortable in the totally French environment. Higher attainers are already achieving very good grades on GCSE past papers. They use creative language to describe the house of the future and take risks with language, trying out new structures and a range of vocabulary.

145. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, achieve well at both key stages. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils present their work very well.

Quality of education

146. Teaching and learning are good at both key stages. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Strengths of the teaching include good planning and methodology. In the best lessons, teachers constantly require pupils to use their initiative in expressing themselves and insist that they speak from notes or bullet points rather than read their scripts, which develops their oral skills well. They have high expectations. Relationships are positive. In a Year 8 lesson, the teacher shared with pupils his collection of ties, many of them outrageous in design, and insisted that pupils describe a tie before loaning it to them for the duration of the lesson. This meant that pupils consolidated their knowledge and skills whilst having enormous enjoyment and fun. The same teacher increases pupils' confidence by telling them what gifted linguists they are and by pointing the way to future careers where languages will be of great benefit.

147. Support teachers offer good support to pupils, and the very small numbers of pupils in the sets for lower attainers also helps to improve their performance. The use of ICT is developing and provision for pupils' social, moral and cultural development is good. Literacy development is a strength of the department, with every opportunity used for extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of the structure and form of language. One teacher who develops the pupils' knowledge of French through a series of number manipulation exercises is developing numeracy very well. Marking is particularly good, and teachers have very good procedures for assessing pupils' work and using the results to inform the next stage of learning. They provide a good standard of care.

Leadership and management

148. The head of department, who has responsibility for French and German, manages both subjects well. Curriculum provision is good and meets the needs of individual pupils effectively. French is the first foreign language for two thirds of the cohort, who also study German from Year 8. Schemes of work in French are adequate but they restrict the progress of pupils because they do not identify the range of activities required to match the needs of all pupils, and they do not address grammatical structures, such as future and past tenses, early enough. Teachers in the small team work together very effectively. Since the last inspection, results have fallen in GCSE as a result of the lower capabilities of particular year groups. Progress is now good at both key stages.

German

The quality of provision in German is very good.

Strengths:

- Excellent care and knowledge of pupils;
- Very high quality teaching and learning;
- Very high achievement and standards;
- Very good subject knowledge;
- Very good assessment procedures;
- Very high expectations;
- Very good use of time and resources;
- Attitudes and motivation are very good and excellent at Key Stage 3.

Areas for improvement:

- No significant areas for improvement were identified.

Standards and achievement

149. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 9, in their second year of learning German, is well above national expectations for this stage of a second language course, and higher than indicated by the 2001 teacher assessments. Pupils make a very good start in Year 8 and achieve very well. In three months, higher attaining pupils have mastered topics such as school subjects, opinions and ages. They have high level listening skills and good speaking, reading and writing skills. Average attainers give basic information about themselves and are beginning to write opinions about school subjects. Lower attaining pupils write paragraphs of several sentences with few mistakes. Year 9 higher and average attainers are producing extremely high quality work, though they are not yet using the past tense. Lower attainers also write, with support, extended passages in the present tense.

150. Results at GCSE were well above the national average in 2000. Girls did particularly well. The results in 2001 were slightly lower but still high, with about a quarter of those entered gaining the highest A*/A grades. Since 1997, standards have fluctuated considerably in line with the attainment range of the year group, but the overall trend is one of improvement as higher attaining pupils choose German at Key Stage 4.

151. Current Year 11 pupils represent a range of attainment but all are heading for passes in the A*–C range. Their standards are not quite as strong as those of Year 10. Higher attainers in the group, however, are very strong and were producing GCSE grade A answers in Year 10. By this stage of the GCSE course, they write fluently and confidently in German, using clause constructions and unusual vocabulary. All their skills are well developed, though they are better at writing than at reading, listening and speaking. Average attainers attempt the same exercise as higher attainers, but with some mistakes. However, their use of the imperfect tense was much more secure by October. Lower attaining pupils write to a pen friend about their school day, with the support of writing guidelines.

152. All pupils achieve well. They make measurable progress over the two key stages in their knowledge and understanding of the language. They are well aware of their levels of attainment because of the very detailed information provided by teachers. Attitudes and motivation are very good overall and excellent in Years 7 to 9. The overall work ethic is

very high. Pupils are determined to do well. The work in their exercise books is very well presented, which enables them to revise effectively. The German skills group provides good opportunities for lower attaining pupils to continue with a language at Key Stage 4, whilst allowing them to improve their ICT skills in Year 11.

The quality of education

153. Teaching and learning are very good at both key stages, and some teaching is excellent. Strengths of the teaching include very good linguistic skills, planning, use of time and resources and relationships between teachers and pupils. Work is marked extremely well. Pupils are given very good guidance and preparation for their GCSE examinations. They are provided with lots of practice examination papers, with the result that they are confident and secure when answering questions under examination conditions. Assessment procedures are very good. Teachers take excellent care of their pupils and know them very well. Pupils complete detailed self-assessment sheets showing that they know exactly where they are heading and what they need to do to get there. Many pupils comment in these assessments about how much they enjoy learning German.

154. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in German, and progress is now very good. Response is very good and often excellent. Teaching and learning have improved and are now very good at both key stages.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is very good.

Strengths:

- Strong caring relationships;
- Teachers` expertise in music and high expectations;
- Lively well planned lessons;
- The strong range of extra curricular activities.

Areas for improvement:

- A link to the school computer network to enhance the work of the department.

Standards and achievement

155. Pupils enter the school with attainment in music close to the national average. By the end of Year 9 in 2001, pupils aged 14 were assessed to have above average attainment. This represents good progress over time and significant added value. Girls are achieving higher than the boys. Inspection evidence, from observation of lessons and scrutiny of work, indicates that present standards are very good. Pupils' choral music is lively and accurate, and pupils remain in control of their singing. They are confident in both unison and harmony. They create graphic scores accurately and are able to articulate clearly the meaning of the symbols. They are able to recognise and use notation, and were observed creating effective variations on the theme of Frere Jaques.

156. In 2000, four candidates were entered for the GCSE examination and all four gained grades A* to A. In 2001, from six pupils, results again were 100 per cent A* to C. Although not yet validated against national results, it is expected that this represents attainment above the national average. It was not possible to observe pupils in Year 11 because of the GCSE mock examinations. However, from scrutiny of work and observation of Year 10

pupils, it was possible to establish that their attainment is very good and above national expectations. All the pupils on the music course are skilled musicians, who play a variety of instruments and keyboards with accuracy and display a strong command of the elements of music.

157. Year 10 pupils were seen giving a powerful, rhythmic, melodic performance of a minimalist piece. They improvise with confidence, are able to recognise how individually composed melodies complement each other, making corporate decisions regarding the overall shape of the piece. They are aware of dynamics, rhythm changes and the balance of the instrumentation. They listen carefully to each other, which improves the quality of the ensemble playing. There is evidence of research into historical periods, a good range of composition work, and coherent development of musical ideas in very individual styles. They demonstrate, through written work and recordings, that they can analyse historical approaches to musical performance and create their own compositions based on this evaluation. They are on target to achieve GCSE grades in the C to A range.

Quality of education

158. Teaching at both key stages is very good overall, which promotes high educational standards. The skilled musicianship of staff and their very good relationships with pupils encourage the positive responses displayed in all lessons observed. In Years 7 to 9, the emphasis on the techniques of singing, including breathing and articulation exercises, ensures that pupils concentrate hard on their choral work and understand the importance of correct posture, breath control and clear diction. The teacher singing a phrase that is repeated by the pupils encourages them to incorporate dynamics into their performance. The teacher, who is a skilled accompanist, supports the singing and guides pupils securely through changes of pace, pitch and key. At both key stages, expectations of pupils are high. Individual challenges set are appropriate so as to encourage rather than defeat them. Lessons are well paced and contain a variety of activities to ensure that pupils remain enthusiastic, committed and on task throughout the lesson. The teacher's support for individual pupils and sympathetic evaluation of their work set a good example to classes who are eager to share performances with each other, confident that they will be discussed constructively. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher's skilful trumpet playing was much appreciated, inspiring pupils and setting the tone for the lesson.

Leadership and management

159. The department is well led by an enthusiastic, committed and talented head of department. Schemes of work at both key stages are creatively designed to fulfil requirements but still allow room for experimentation and individuality. There is an excellent, wide range of extra-curricular activities, which is well supported and enhances the reputation of the department. Pupils' progress is recorded on comprehensive assessment sheets during and at the end of projects. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are made aware of their attainment levels and targets for improvement are set. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are also informed about their grades, and the examination criteria are used to establish where individuals have areas for improvement. The department takes good account of pupils with special educational needs by using work sheets of appropriate degrees of difficulty and varied approaches to ensure equality of opportunity. The link with art for higher attaining pupils is working well and, because of their advanced musical ability, their progress is not impeded by the shared timetable.

160. Assessment is used to inform departmental planning and the revision of schemes of work. In the future, pupil assessments will be recorded on a computer program for easier reference and more detailed analysis. The new accommodation for the music department is very good and compact. The main teaching room is big enough for classroom teaching and can also cope with large band rehearsals. The practice rooms are a reasonable size and well equipped. Resources in the department are adequate and include a plentiful supply of keyboards and percussion instruments. A link to the school computer network would enhance the work of the department. The department has addressed the issues raised in the last inspection report. There is now more independent learning in Years 7 to 9, teaching is consistently very good, and homework provides opportunities for pupils to extend their musical knowledge and aptitudes.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- High standards of performance in the curriculum, effectively supported by the extra-curricular activities programme;
- The attitudes and behaviour of all pupils is very good; often achieved as the result of positive relationships and very good behaviour management;
- Curriculum planning shows progression and is appropriate to the needs of the majority of pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- The structure of the schemes of work to ensure coverage of all aspects of the National Curriculum;
- Ensuring that teaching meets the needs of all pupils;
- The development of assessment criteria to guide teachers' judgements and to assist in the moderation of standards;
- Further development in GCSE curriculum planning and resources.

Standards and Achievement

161. By the end of both key stages, the standards of attainment in physical education are above national expectations. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

162. In 2001, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examination in physical education was above the national average. This was the first time pupils at the school had undergone examinations in physical education. In this examination, the attainment of girls was better than that of boys.

163. Pupils' performances seen during the inspection show that they make good progress as they move through Years 7 to 9. In Year 7, pupils are able to demonstrate increasing quality in their actions, for example in dance where they link their actions with control, and in games such as netball, basketball and football, where they pass and receive a ball with both accuracy and control. Heading skills are developed well in football, and pupils can identify when and where in a game the different types of heading skills should be used. In dance, pupils can synchronise their movements with those of their partners and when working in

small groups. They show contrasting levels, pathways and directions, and apply the concepts of canon and unison very effectively. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, they are able to demonstrate more complex sequences of movements, including control in their footwork and the ability to create space in attack.

164. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make good progress, building well on their achievements at Key Stage 3 in football in particular. They improve their skills through practice and apply the concepts of increased width in attack, marking their opponents closely to deny them space in defence. Their knowledge of the rules and tactics of their games are good. They know which passes they should make and how they should respond in different situations. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 understand factors that affect fitness and the benefits of a warm-up, and can usually identify the muscle groups involved. In practical activities, pupils often lead the warm-up activities themselves, and are able to demonstrate safe practice in these stretches.

165. The provision for higher attaining pupils is good at both key stages, particularly when they are provided with a variety of extension activities, such as coaching other pupils and more specific activities to challenge their skills more directly. They make good progress in lessons and also have the opportunity to develop their skills through a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. When different grouping strategies and a variety of resources are used in games, low attaining pupils also make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are satisfactorily provided for, particularly when additional support is provided, and they make good progress overall.

166. Throughout a variety of games activities, pupils always respond with enthusiasm whilst listening and co-operate effectively. In these activities, pupils demonstrate good skills and apply them effectively in a game. During games, they show consideration for each other and accept decisions very well. In dance, pupils demonstrate good group dynamics, with very positive group interactions and attitudes. They are able to provide constructive criticism whilst being sympathetic to the feelings of others. When provided with the opportunity, pupils work independently very effectively and sustain their concentration well.

The quality of education

167. Teaching in physical education is good overall. One lesson was satisfactory, but all others seen were of higher quality and there is a high proportion of very good teaching. All lessons have an orderly start, with good warm-up activities. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their planning is detailed and set at an appropriate level for the pupils. Their planning has clear learning objectives and these are reinforced through effective questioning. Appropriate amounts of time are provided for pupils to consolidate their learning and to improve their levels of skill. Lessons have good pace and generally set high expectations of the pupils. There is often an opportunity provided for discussion, with good use of group work, particularly in examination subjects and dance activities.

168. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are involved in their own assessments and this process will be extended over time until all year groups are involved. This is a good feature of the physical education curriculum, but it needs to be built into the schemes of work to ensure further development. Resources are well organised. Pupil management is very good, with effective involvement of non-participants. Very good attention is paid to safety issues, and risk assessments are always conducted at the start of every lesson. Teachers demonstrate a very sympathetic approach towards the pupils and their needs, and provide good support whenever necessary. Relationships between teachers and pupils are always very good, and are complemented by a very good programme of extra-curricular activities.

169. In some isolated lessons, the range of teaching approaches used was too limited. In these lessons the pupils were not always provided with the opportunity to develop their understanding of the activities taught. The continuity and progression of individual skills in the context of a game were not always thought through to ensure that the needs of all pupils were met. There was also an isolated case where a lack of insistence on quality resulted in a group of pupils not making the kind of progress expected in their performance.

Leadership and management

170. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has established a clear direction and ethos for the work of the department over a long period of time. In particular, the teachers have established high standards of performance in curricular and extra-curricular activities. Departmental policies, guidelines and schemes of work are well established and show clear progression, providing good guidance for the work of the department. However, more specific links between the schemes of work and the National Curriculum programmed of study would lead to further improvement. In particular, there is a need to further develop assessment strategies, including the use of individual targets to inform curriculum planning. The department should also identify within its planning how literacy, numeracy and ICT skills could be developed within physical education.

171. Observation of teaching by members of the department is done in an informal way and good practice is shared. Nevertheless, there is a need for management to monitor the work of the department more formally to ensure higher standards of curriculum delivery and assessment. The department has adequate resources, though a greater variety would benefit pupils with special educational needs.

172. Examination course work has been developed over the last two years and the variety of teaching strategies used within these lessons has led to good quality in curriculum delivery. Standards in physical education have improved since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress at both key stages and attainment is now above national expectations. Teachers assess pupils on a regular basis and also involve them in self-assessment. A review of safety procedures in the swimming pool area has been conducted and safety procedures, including risk management, are all well established.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is good.

Strengths:

- Standards are very high in the short course GCSE;
- Teaching is good;
- There is very good provision for pupils' personal development, especially the spiritual, moral and cultural aspects.

Areas for improvement:

- Better development of pupils' ICT skills in religious education;
- Scope for pupils to use their initiative and take responsibility for more independent learning.

Standards and achievement

173. Most pupils reach good standards by the end of Year 9. Their attainment is above national expectations and the requirements of the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education. They acquire a good basis of knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the other main world religions. They are also able to understand how beliefs affect the ways in which people live, and to relate what they learn to their own life experiences. Their insights are high quality for their age. They acquire above average levels of appropriate terminology, which they use with accuracy. Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress across the first three years, and their standards at the end of Year 9 represent good achievement.

174. GCSE results are well above the national average for the short course, and the results in 2001 were a great improvement on those of the previous year. They were also high in relation to other schools in the county. Most candidates matched or exceeded their personal predicted grades. Most pupils across the attainment range achieve well. The difference between attainment of boys and girls varies from year to year but is not a significant issue.

175. Standards for the lower school and for pupils not following an accredited course were judged from the work seen during the inspection. The local syllabus does not have levels of attainment, but the school's records for performance in RE confirmed the overall strong picture. In lower school lessons, pupils show a good recall of previous work, which helps them to make good progress in new learning. In Year 7, they are able to write good descriptions of stories concerning the Hindu gods. By Year 9, they progress to writing thoughtful comparative work on marriage ceremonies in different religions, identifying the concepts they have in common, such as the making of a commitment and the community acting as witness to vows made by the couple.

176. Literacy skills are developed well, especially with regard to extending vocabulary. No contribution to numeracy was seen. There are limited opportunities for extending ICT skills, though the assignments of some pupils show that they make good use of word-processing and desk-top-publishing for homework tasks.

177. There is strong provision for ethical work in Years 10 and 11, and pupils who have not opted to take an examination in Year 11 were observed thoughtfully discussing aspects of crime and punishment. They have learnt that there are social and moral perspectives to RE and are evaluating the Christian concepts of forgiveness and remorse in relation to their own values. Their oral skills are good and they are confident speakers.

178. Pupils across the school respond well to religious education. Behaviour is very good and attitudes are generally positive. Pupils work hard and sustain their efforts throughout lessons. They take care to present their work well, showing interest and high levels of motivation. Large numbers of pupils choose GCSE accreditation for their work in Year 11, and those who do not choose it maintain open and thoughtful attitudes. Some pupils would welcome more opportunities to use their initiative and to work more independently.

The quality of education

179. Teaching is of a good standard overall. Lessons are well planned with a clear focus on specific attainment targets. There are four targets in the local syllabus, so good organisation is necessary to meet their requirements. Lessons show a good balance of learning about faiths and learning from faiths, using the pupils' experiences and a range of skills. Planning also takes account of varied activities, with good provision for enlivening

learning through use of resources with a strong visual appeal, such as artefacts and videos. Generally the level of challenge is appropriate, and lessons proceed at a good pace using time and resources well. Teachers show strong subject knowledge in the best lessons, and sustain high standards of academic rigour.

180. The setting arrangements help teachers to adapt work to meet all needs effectively. In the lowest sets, work is skilfully modified and learning assistants are used effectively to give individual support where it is most needed. As at the time of the last inspection, there are not enough opportunities for independent learning or for using ICT.

181. The recently appointed subject leader has worked hard to write new schemes of work. These are of good quality, thoughtfully interpreting the local requirements in ways that provide a balanced course that meets all needs in the lower school. The only inequality in provision is that few boys are included in the top sets. Much work has also been done to strengthen the academic challenge of the GCSE short course to good effect. However, it has been decided to offer the full GCSE course rather than the short course, as more relevant to local needs, but still within the four per cent time currently available. It is not yet possible to evaluate the feasibility of this decision.

182. The current Year 10 has followed this pattern, gaining time by beginning the full GCSE course in Year 9. They will continue to choose whether to pursue accreditation in Year 11, and those who do not will fall back to two per cent of curriculum time for their core RE studies, as at present. This does not mean that shortage of time to meet the requirements of the syllabus will be an issue as their religious education is of high quality in all other respects and pupils continue to build on good achievement from earlier years.

183. The subject makes a very good contribution to the personal development of pupils, particularly the spiritual, moral and cultural aspects. The department prepares pupils well for life in a culturally diverse society, and encourages them to explicit reflection on beliefs and values.

Leadership and management

184. The leadership and management of the department, and of the humanities team, are very good overall. The subject leader combines both roles. There is a clear vision for future development in line with the school's priorities for raising standards. Much work has been done to improve provision since appointment, all to very good effect, including working supportively with newly qualified teachers and collaboratively with other colleagues. Cross-curricular links are being developed, and joint fieldwork planned with history, such as the forthcoming Flanders battlefield visit and joint local fieldwork in Helmsley.

185. The accommodation and resources for RE are satisfactory, though there are some gaps in the book stock; most notably more foundation texts are needed. The library stock is low for RE, although specific efforts have been made to build up the stock of books on religions other than Christianity. Access to the library for research during lessons is limited, and this has some effect on the range of learning opportunities.

186. There have been significant improvements to standards of attainment across the school, and also improvements in teaching, as no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The assessment procedures have been improved considerably, and much more on-going assessment is being put in place that promises to be helpful to pupils' progress. The procedures are complex to operate, given the four targets for attainment and the lack of levels in the local scheme. This means there is no clear data that compares with other

subjects. However, the local syllabus is currently being revised and the department is awaiting the outcome before finalising its assessment procedures. Improvements have been made to the provision for pupils at both ends of the spectrum of attainment. The main areas for development are the inclusion of the use of ICT into lessons and more opportunities for independent learning.