

INSPECTION REPORT

BILTON HIGH SCHOOL

Rugby

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125749

Principal: Mrs Lynda Brodie

Reporting inspector: Michael Merchant
27368

Dates of inspection: 15th – 18th October 2001

Inspection number: 180721

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Lawford Lane
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Warwickshire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr George Heighton

Date of previous inspection: 6th October 1997

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15465	Terry Parish	Team inspector	Information and Communication technology	
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8329	Gillian Salter-Smith	Team inspector	Physical Education	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
12276	Terry Payne	Team inspector	Music	
17868	Eileen Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and Design Religious Education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bilton High is a much larger than average 11 to 16 secondary modern school with 1408 pupils. At the time of the last inspection there were 1321 pupils. There are more boys than girls in the school, particularly in Year 7. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is now in line with the national average but has been below for the last four years. There are relatively fewer higher attaining pupils entering the school. The proportion of pupils that is eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. About one in five of all pupils are on the schools' register of special educational needs, though this number is falling. This is average for all schools nationally. The school draws its pupils from a wide area in which the percentage of unemployment is low. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of white UK heritage, 0.9 per cent are black and 1.6 per cent Indian. There is a good social mix.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school and has many strengths. It is well placed to move into its next phase of development. It is effective in meeting the needs of its pupils because it provides security, stability and wide ranging support, together with good teaching. Leadership and management are very good. Effective learning and good behaviour are achieved almost all the time. Standards are above the national averages at age 14 but are in line with the national average at age 16. They are slowly improving. They are better for girls in most subjects. Pupils make good progress to age 14 and satisfactory progress to age 16 from their below average attainment on entry. The school has laid the foundations for further academic success and provides good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The teaching is good, including a third that is very good or excellent.
- The Principal, deputy and assistant principals, supported by an effective governing body all work hard to push the school forward and to raise standards.
- Staff are strongly committed to the school and pupils are well supported and cared for.
- Effective systems are in place to encourage good behaviour.
- Pupils' personal development and relationships are good.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Further raising attainment at Key Stage 4, particularly of pupils of higher ability and of boys.
- Pupils' understanding of number, which is holding back progress in some subjects.
- Encouraging pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Greater use of assessment information to plan the curriculum and help pupils to make greater progress.
- Improve provision to develop pupils' awareness of spiritual issues.

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 1997 and has made good progress since then. The quality and styles of teaching have improved. The wider range of interesting and varied teaching has motivated pupils to learn and has therefore improved standards. Progress is still being slowed, however, by the weak number skills of some pupils, especially boys.

The school produces much information about how well pupils are doing. This serves the school well when, for instance, setting targets for attainment. There is still much to do, however, in using this information to allow subject departments to judge their performance and hence to further improve.

The school has developed very good arrangements to cater for its pupils who have special educational needs. The school makes good use of its teaching assistants.

The senior management team is beginning to have a very positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning and hence raising attainment.

Curricular provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education is now adequate and the school supports its development plan well through targeted funds for professional development. However, the school still does not provide for a daily act of collective worship.

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				Key	
	all schools			similar schools		
	1998	1999	2000	2000		
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	D	well above average	A
					above average	B
					average	C
					below average	D
					well below average	E

The results of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 2000 were above the national average for English, below average in mathematics and well above average for all schools in science. Taken all together, results in these three core subjects were above the national average for all schools. Comparisons with test results from when pupils enter the school show that the majority of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, do better than they should in Key Stage 3. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C at GCSE is above average, but the school's average total GCSE points score per pupil is below average compared with that of all schools. This attainment represents satisfactory achievement when compared to pupils' levels of attainment when they enter the school.

In work seen during the inspection, attainment in English was above average at the ages of 14 and 16. In mathematics, attainment is close to that expected of all schools. Attainment in science is above average by the age 14 and above average at age 16. In work seen during the inspection in the remaining subjects, attainment of pupils at age 14 is well above average in religious education and above average in art and geography. In music and ICT, it is below average.

Girls continue to make better progress than boys in most subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils whose prior attainment is average or below average make slower progress than others.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Attitudes to learning are a clear strength of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in the great majority of lessons is good.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Good personal relationships are a prominent feature of the school and make a significant contribution to learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The level of attendance is about the national average.

Pupils have continued to respond well to the school's attempts to improve behaviour. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good in lessons, especially when the teaching is of high standard. The school is an orderly environment. Relationships between pupils and teachers are strong.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	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 overall quality of teaching is good throughout the school. The teaching is satisfactory or better in the great majority of lessons. It is very good or excellent in about one third of lessons and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching is very small. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

The quality of teaching of English is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and so pupils learn well. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They help pupils to learn through their good planning and imaginative and varied activities. These invariably interest, stimulate and challenge pupils. The teaching in mathematics is good at both key stages. Teachers prepare their lessons carefully and have good classroom management. Good teaching occurs where teachers expect much of the pupils. The teaching in science is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Teachers' planning is good and they have good knowledge of science. The teaching is very good overall in geography, religious education, satisfactory in music, modern foreign languages and design and technology and good in all other subjects.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory.

The overall quality of learning matches the quality of teaching. Teachers generally know their subjects well and the work in lessons is well matched to pupils' needs. Most teachers use a variety of interesting methods. Teachers know their pupils well and design activities that stimulate and challenge them to make an effort. This maintains pupils' interest and motivation. The quality of day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Where support is provided in lessons teaching and learning are often very good. Good use is made of individual education plans in most lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Learning opportunities are good and, overall, they have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils very well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for moral and social education is very good and for cultural it is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Heads of year are very effective at monitoring the progress of pupils through the school

The school provides a balanced curriculum with many extra-curricular opportunities for pupils. It is working hard to ensure that the curriculum is relevant to the needs of all its pupils although it should do more to work more closely with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Very good. The Principal and senior management team provide very good leadership and are fully committed to raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	They fulfil their responsibilities well. They have a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Strong systems are in place to encourage good teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Good.

There is a good match of teachers' qualification to the subjects they teach. The accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory. The very clear vision of the Principal is shared by staff and there is a genuine commitment by all to do the best for the school's pupils. The school takes good care to ensure that its efforts and funds are aimed at improving standards of education and it fully applies the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good behaviour • An approachable school • Well managed and led • Good extra-curricular activities • Very effective heads of year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistent approach to homework • Better information about progress • Work closely with parents

The inspection team agreed with the positive points made by parents and also agreed that the school should improve the quality and consistency of homework. Inspectors agree that the school could work more closely with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 2000 were above average in English, below average in mathematics and well above average for all schools in science. Taking all three core subjects together, results were above the national average for all schools. Direct observation of pupils' work shows these standards are being maintained and achievement of pupils is good in relation to their attainment on entering the school. This is a result of the considerable work the school has done to change approaches to teaching and the investment it has made in improving behaviour. Improvement has been broadly in line with the national average, but has been fastest in science. Comparisons with test results from when pupils enter the school show that the majority of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well in these three subjects in Key Stage 3. Girls make faster progress than boys up to the age of 14, especially in English.
2. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportions of pupils obtaining five or more grades in the A*-C range was above the national average for all and for similar schools. Those attaining five more grades A*-G, however, were below the national average. The school's average total GCSE points score per pupil is low compared to all schools. The school has met its ambitious targets for attainment at grades A*-C. Targets set were met but now we are setting appropriately higher targets A* - G. Observation of pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 shows an improvement in standards and is close to the national average overall, but because the school had a below average number of higher attaining pupils entering the school, it has relatively few pupils attaining the higher GCSE grades. This attainment represents satisfactory achievement.
3. At grades A*-C in 2000, results were above the national average for all schools in English literature, science, design and technology and history. English language, geography and physical education were just below the national average. Mathematics was below the national average and French was well below. When compared to the national average for similar secondary modern schools, French and music were average, physical education was above average and all other subjects are well above average.
4. Pupils' best overall results, compared with their attainment in other subjects, were in science, English literature, history and physical education. Their poorest results were in German, French and mathematics, where difficulties in filling staff vacancies led to an interruption of learning by pupils. Results have improved in line with the national average.
5. On the evidence of the work seen during the inspection, attainment in English is above average at age 14 and above average at 16. Boys' oral answers were as good as those of the girls. Pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening. They respond eagerly to questions with well thought out answers and show careful attention and good understanding. Pupils work well together and can achieve a balanced discussion, building upon one another's contributions. Reading skills develop well. Few opportunities were observed of pupils being asked to read aloud, but those pupils heard read well. Pupils in all years write fluently and expressively.

6. Pupils' standards in literacy are satisfactory. A significant number of pupils enter the school in Year 7 with poor reading and writing skills. More than one in five do not achieve the national level (Level 4) in National Curriculum tests at the age of 11 and a similar proportion arrive with a reading age more than two years below their actual age. Pupils make good progress in the skills of listening and speaking and good examples were observed in many subjects. In mathematics, pupils listen carefully and are ready to come to the board to offer answers and explanations. Very good use of open-ended questions and wide-ranging discussions was observed in history. In ICT pupils could explain clearly the nature of the tasks that they were engaged in, using appropriate technical terms. The majority of pupils recognise the need for standard English in formal work and use it appropriately. Reading skills develop satisfactorily. Writing skills develop less well than other skills. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment is higher in written work than it is in oral work. .
7. In work seen in mathematics, by the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils' work is generally near the national average. Attainment is lower at age 16. For instance, in a lower attaining Year 11 class, only four pupils were able to answer the question of what is two thirds plus two thirds? The National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools is beginning to influence Key Stage 3 standards. By the end of Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils can use their understanding of the laws of indices to confidently evaluate negative and fractional indices. Lower attaining pupils can solve simple algebraic equations.
8. Standards of numeracy are unsatisfactory. Standards of numeracy of pupils entering the school are very low. Over 100 pupils entering the school in the current Year 7 had a mathematics grade below the national average. The school has sensibly begun to adopt National Numeracy Strategy structures in its teaching in Key Stage 3 but there is an urgent need to develop these and the use of associated materials. Standards are particularly poor amongst lower and middle attaining pupils at Key Stage 4. Many of these pupils find the addition of simple vulgar fractions difficult as they do not know their multiplication tables and cannot find common denominators with confidence. Numeracy standards inevitably affect progress in many areas of the curriculum. Numeracy is exercised effectively in science for calculations and analysis of experimental results, in design and technology for accurate measurement, in geography for displaying survey data, in ICT for inserting formulae in spreadsheets and for data handling and display in the vocational subjects. However, there is now a need to develop this use and numeracy skills in a coherent way across the whole curriculum.
9. Attainment in science is above average by the time pupils reach the age of 14 and above average at 16. From the work seen, attainment in lessons does not always match the high attainment recorded in external examinations. However, concentration on the essentials of the syllabus and extended preparation and revision enables pupils to improve upon their classroom performance when they attempt external tests and examinations. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into classes and their oral and practical work matches that of their classmates. Practical work is done safely and competently, and laboratory discipline is good. Pupils learn sound techniques early in Year 7 and observe accurately and record their results logically. Planning and evaluation are also taught early, and by Year 9 pupils can attempt whole investigations, although none was seen during the week of the inspection.
10. In work seen in the remaining subjects, standards achieved by pupils at the age of 14 are well above average in geography and religious education and above average in art. Attainment is below that expected and music and in line with national expectations

in all other subjects. At the age of 16 standards are well above average in religious education, above average in art geography and below average in music, French and ICT. In all other subjects, standards are close to that expected nationally.

11. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good at both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress overall. The range of their learning needs is wide, the majority having moderate or specific learning difficulties, and some have emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are pupils for whom English is an additional language, but at a functional level which is well catered for. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is dependent on their type and degree of difficulty, and their achievement depends on attitude, attendance and the amount and quality of support they receive.
12. The school does well for its pupils by the age of 14 and all, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. Girls make better progress than boys in all subjects except science, where boys make equally good progress and physical education where boys make better progress. By age 16 progress is slower and is satisfactory overall. Girls continue to make better progress, as do pupils with special educational needs. Pupils whose prior attainment is average or below average make slower progress than others.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. The good attitudes to learning, good behaviour and the good progress in personal development recorded at the last inspection have been maintained. They are features of the school much valued by the parents. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are good on the whole, like those of other pupils in the school. Those with emotional and behavioural difficulties have special programmes to help them to learn self-control and develop self-esteem.
14. Attitudes to learning are a clear strength of the school. They were good or better in around 80 per of the lessons observed during the inspection throughout the school. Pupils are responding well to the good quality of most of the teaching and the expectations that prevail within the school. At all ability levels the majority of pupils show real interest in their lessons, are prepared to concentrate hard, and want to succeed with the tasks they have been set. Several examples were seen of attitudes having a very positive effect on the quality of learning. In history lessons in Years 8 and 11 the pupils worked very well together in groups and were eager to share information. In music the pupils responded enthusiastically when given responsibility for developing their own compositions. Similarly, in physical education the pupils co-operated impressively and showed a high degree of commitment to fair play. High levels of motivation and interest were equally evident in several lessons in mathematics.
15. Behaviour in the great majority of lessons is good. Most pupils have a very clear understanding of the standards of conduct expected of them. Movement around the school is made difficult by the narrow corridors and stairways, and pupils can be unruly at times, but there is little time wasting or lateness for lessons. There are very few instances of raised voices in classrooms to disturb what is for the most part a calm and productive working atmosphere. The management of behaviour is an integral part of the school's achievement and recognition system (BARS), and is carried out sensitively but firmly, thus ensuring that pupils rarely over-react. Nonetheless a few pupils in all year groups are quite capable of creating low-level disturbance which, if unchecked, can quickly affect the progress of others in lessons.

The immature behaviour of some Year 11 boys observed in a French lesson is a case in point. A few incidents of bullying have occurred over the past year but have been dealt with responsibly and firmly. The last inspection report noted that the number of exclusions was high but since then there has been an improvement and the incidence of exclusions is now broadly in line with national averages.

16. Good personal relationships are a prominent feature of the school and make a significant contribution to learning. Teachers and pupils share a strong commitment to achievement and to success in examinations. Relationships between the pupils themselves are also positive and many good examples were seen of help and co-operation during the inspection, for instance, in the way that pupils shared resources in art lessons, and developed teamwork skills in physical education, which are reflected in the school's excellent sporting success. Pupils show respect for one another's values and opinions. In their history and personal and social education lessons they are happy to exchange ideas freely and openly, confident in the knowledge that the response of their peers will be positive.
17. Where opportunities are provided the pupils are clearly able to take responsibility and show initiative. Many are willing to serve as prefects or to act as School Council representatives. In drama pupils enjoy acting out roles and use the occasion to improve their confidence and social skills. In an impressive Year 10 assembly, pupils took the lead in expressing different views on how world conflict could be resolved. The school's anti-bullying work is strengthened by the Year 11 pupils who have responded wholeheartedly to act as peer counsellors. However, sometimes pupils in lessons are allowed to be too passive because the learning is directed too closely by the teacher, and opportunities are lost for developing independent working skills or for carrying out research.
18. The level of attendance is about the national average which is not quite as good as recorded at the last inspection. However, the school has been very successful in reducing the number of unauthorised absences which is now much lower than the national average. This has had a positive effect on the attainment of the pupils concerned. Registrations are conducted efficiently and registers comply with the regulations. Punctuality can be affected by the fact that a large number of pupils are bussed in, but overall pupils arrive for school on time and lessons start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The overall quality of teaching is good. The teaching is satisfactory or better in almost all lessons. It is good or better in about three-quarters of lessons. Nearly a third of all lessons are very good or excellent. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching is very small. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
20. The quality of teaching of English is good throughout the school and so pupils learn well. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They help pupils to learn through their good planning and imaginative and varied activities. These invariably interest, stimulate and challenge pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well. Where support is provided in lessons teaching and learning are often very good. Good use is made of individual education plans in most lessons. Marking is better in Years 10 and 11 because pupils receive clear indications during drafting stages about the relative quality of their work in the context of examination criteria. Homework is generally good, occasionally requiring research or original writing, but most often consolidating and developing work done in

lessons.

21. The teaching in mathematics is good. Learning patterns follow the teaching profile closely at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils learn well as a result of good planning and challenging tasks. They enjoy the mental games in Key Stage 3 and the more academic challenge presented in Key Stage 4. In isolated lessons the teacher's planning does not accommodate the needs of all pupils and pupils' learning suffers or the pace falls off, with consequential loss of interest by pupils.
22. Teaching in science is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Staff know their pupils well, give unobtrusive support when it is needed and harness pupils' personal interests and enthusiasms to enrich the planned activity. Firm but fair class control is greatly assisted by the school's behaviour support system, which pupils understand and which provides a stable and well-known framework in which pupils can learn in supportive conditions. Lessons contain a variety of activities, and changes of pace help to maintain pupils' concentration, especially amongst low-attaining pupils.
23. The teaching is very good at both key stages in geography and religious education. In all other subjects it is good with the exception of music and modern foreign languages, where it is satisfactory. In design and technology the teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4.
24. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. In art, this knowledge is used to good effect in giving pupils an understanding of the artistic possibilities of the themes they study in each year group. In drama, teachers use good subject knowledge of improvisation and performance techniques to check what pupils know and to encourage them to move on.
25. The teaching of basic skills across subjects is satisfactory. The school has sensibly begun to adopt National Numeracy Strategy structures in its teaching in Key Stage 3, but there is an urgent need to further develop these and the use of associated materials. Numeracy is exercised effectively in science for calculations and analysis of experimental results, in design and technology for accurate measurement, in geography for displaying survey data, in ICT for inserting formulae in spreadsheets and for data-handling and display in the vocational subjects. However, there is now a need to develop such use and the skills of numeracy in a coherent way across the whole curriculum. The school development plan contains the requirement to create a whole-school numeracy policy. Unfortunately this has not happened to date. There is a need to expedite this development. In French, it is weak at the moment. This is because little use is made of ICT.
26. Some English lessons systematically include exercises derived from the National Literacy Strategy. Literacy lessons provide low attaining pupils with specific help in learning valuable skills. History teachers have received in-service training to develop their skills as literacy teachers. Modern foreign language teachers devote one week each term to improving pupils' literacy skills in exercises developed in partnership with the English department. Very good use of open-ended questions and wide-ranging discussions was observed in history. In ICT pupils could explain clearly the nature of the tasks that they were engaged in, using appropriate technical terms. Drama offers many good opportunities for pupils to use language to explore ideas, characters and themes through talking together and devising dialogues in small groups. The majority of pupils recognise the need for standard English in formal work and use it appropriately. In many subjects learning support assistants help weaker pupils to read

and understand the question, and refer to key words on display so that pupils can get on with the task. The language support teacher effectively helps pupils for whom English is an additional language to make similar progress to that of others in the class.

27. In English pupils are asked to read from a variety of fiction and technical sources. Private reading and the use of the library are encouraged. In history pupils are asked to read aloud at every suitable opportunity. The content of some Year 9 reading boxes, used for private reading in registration, was most unsatisfactory because it was too easy and too juvenile for the pupils to make the best use of the time. Good presentation skills are encouraged in mathematics. In design and technology subjects pupils are required to write extended evaluations of projects. Writing models were used in history, and pupils were challenged to write in a range of different styles: love poems when studying the life of Henry VIII, diaries describing the life of slaves and their own short plays on the subject of the plague. Many pupils use word-processing technology at school and at home to produce well-organised and well-presented written assignments.
28. Such examples of good practice do not occur consistently across the whole school, however. The school has identified poor language skills as a factor impeding pupils' progress. A literacy summer school was organised in the summer holidays. The appointment of a literacy co-ordinator and the setting up of a literacy working party as part of its development plan to enable the school to provide more coherent and equitable arrangements to improve pupils' skills in speaking listening, reading and writing.
29. The effectiveness of teachers' planning is good. Lessons are usually well planned in order to lead pupils from a simple review of information to an understanding of its significance. Pupils know what they are working on and whether they have improved or not because teachers set out clear aims for the lesson and share them with the pupils. Throughout lessons teachers refer back to the lesson aims and they ensure that pupils are aware of whether they are making good enough progress towards them. Teachers' planning is detailed and, for most lessons, takes account of different levels of prior experience and attainment. In many lessons higher attaining pupils make good progress because they are given more demanding tasks and activities. For example, in a Year 7 rugby lesson, more advanced players carried out a practice which involves carrying out a series of rucks whereas other pupils stuck to one ruck and recycle of the ball.
30. Teachers have good expectations of what pupils should learn in lessons. The most effective learning takes place where teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort, improvement and behaviour. Teachers generally have appropriately high expectations and pupils are encouraged to develop their responses through effective use of open-ended questions. An excellent lesson in Year 8 was characterised by excellent relationships with pupils that encouraged them to make a real intellectual effort in their work on 'The Great Plague'. The integration of spreadsheets into a presentation package lifted standards and was indicative of the high level of challenge created by the teacher. In French, expectations are not as high as they should be. Double periods taught in history, in Year 10, overtax pupils' concentration and teachers take care to plan their lessons accordingly. In design and technology, as pupils move from unit to unit, the gains in learning that they have made are not sufficiently taken into account; this leads to a lack of challenge for the more able pupils.
31. The effectiveness of teaching methods is good. Teachers generally use a good

variety of approaches that ensure that pupils maintain interest and concentration. For example, in a Year 10 theory lesson in physical education, on the heart and blood, pupils answered questions on their homework and read from the textbook. They organised cards with related facts into categories in groups and wrote down facts in their own words. In design and technology, a good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of pupils of all levels of attainment, and pupils with special educational make good progress. However, many of the tasks set are routine and are not sufficiently different for the more able students to be extended or fully challenged. Learning is best when pupils are actively engaged in practical work, the pace of lessons is brisk, and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. Pupils are prompted by the teacher to think carefully when questions are posed, as in a geography Year 7 low set suggesting innovative ways of measuring curved lines on maps. Practical activities, such as measuring in a Year 7 middle set lesson, and the sorting into the correct order of cards with statements about waterfalls in Year 8, lead to greater physical involvement and retention of learning. Teachers' clever questioning techniques lead to pupils responding intelligently, revealing their understanding of issues and the development of correct terms.

32. Teachers manage pupils well and create a good climate for learning in all lessons so that pupils know what is expected of them and respond well to good humour and high expectations. In the unsatisfactory lessons there was a failure to maintain discipline and to apply the school's sanctions that are designed to promote good behaviour and learning. The poor attitudes and behaviour of a significant number of pupils spoiled the atmosphere for other pupils and little work of value was done.
33. The use of time, support staff and resources are good. Little time is wasted, though occasionally too many activities are attempted, reducing the planned impact on learning. Teachers use available resources well to stimulate learning. In history, though, a lesson with significant weaknesses was marred by insufficient support and/or expertise in dealing with recalcitrant boys and other pupils with special educational needs.
34. The quality and use of assessment by teachers are satisfactory. Marking is good in most subjects. Most teachers add helpful comments and pupils generally know what they need to do to improve. In art, assessment is good and ongoing in all lessons. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are examined at the beginning of most lessons to reinforce learning. Pupils display their work at the end of most lessons and the class is helped to understand what might be done to raise the standard of each piece of work. In other subjects, though, constructive feedback is not being used consistently to set targets and raise performance. In drama, more could be done to ensure that pupils in their last two years receive specific advice about their written work and how well they are doing. In history, the use of assessment to correctly identify the potential and need of individual pupils is under- developed.
35. The use of homework to develop and extend learning is satisfactory. Homework supports and consolidates work done in class, but there is little clear planning of opportunities to extend higher attaining pupils through more demanding tasks. In design and technology, homework is carefully monitored and recorded and is used to reinforce learning. In geography, recap of previous learning, and often of homework, was an important introduction to lessons, consolidating learning.
36. The teaching of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in small sets in Key Stage 3 is good on the whole. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in normal lessons by a team of teaching assistants, and learning

is usually good, although sometimes support is inconsistent and not always effective. A very good feature is the appropriate manner of those teaching and supporting pupils with special educational needs, encouraging the development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem. In Key Stage 4 the teaching of pupils with special educational needs in vocational courses is good. The proportion of pupils using English as a second language is low in relation to national averages. No pupils observed were in the early stages of learning English. Pupils whose first language is other than English make satisfactory progress and achieve reasonably in relation to their peers.

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

37. The quality and range of the learning opportunities are good and, overall, they have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The length of time spent in lessons during a school week, at 25 hours, is similar to that found in most schools. Each day of six 50-minute lessons is a suitable arrangement for many subjects. However, in Years 10 and 11 some GCSE subjects such as history have double lessons of one hour and 40 minutes duration, which is too long for some pupils, especially boys, to easily maintain interest and concentration. Additionally for some practical subjects, such as physical education, too much time is lost in changing and moving from changing areas to working areas which has a negative effect on pupils' learning and achievement. The school has identified the need to review the arrangements for the school day in its most recent development plan.
38. The breadth, balance and relevance of subjects included in the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. Statutory requirements are met and pupils have good equality of access and to the learning opportunities provided. Pupils are taught all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education plus a lesson of personal, social and health education and a lesson of drama. ICT is taught as a separate subject. In Year 9, German is taught to groups of higher attaining pupils as a second language. A strong feature of Year 7 is the arrangement whereby pupils are taught by the same teacher across a range of subjects. This helps pupils to settle down well into the school and has a positive effect on their achievement and progress. Some uneven allocation of time over the Years 7 to 9 in geography, history and religious education results in a lack of depth of study and lack of continuity in at least one year out of the three for each subject. Arrangements in design and technology, where pupils have a long gap between their experiences of different activities, result in a lack of continuity in study.
39. The arrangements for grouping pupils in Years 7 to 9 means that small teaching groups can be formed for lower attaining pupils. However, in Years 7 and 8 the arrangements are less appropriate. Pupils are divided into two bands based on ability and then into further classes based on attainment across a range of subjects. As a consequence, in a number of subjects, pupils are not in a group of pupils of like ability in that subject. The school is aware of the shortcomings of these arrangements and is planning to review them.
40. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in both key stages. Year 7 lower attaining pupils are taught English, mathematics and humanities by the same teacher, and this provision is effective. All pupils follow the full curriculum, allowing equal access to all courses, other than those excluded from modern foreign languages in Key Stage 4, who follow vocationally oriented courses. Four teachers in the special needs department run individual and small group sessions, where pupils are withdrawn from ordinary lessons to improve literacy, particularly reading and

spelling. They also provide extra help for those with behavioural difficulties to follow anger or behaviour management courses. Gifted and talented pupils are not sufficiently identified; provision and monitoring is inconsistent.

41. Teachers and learning support assistants know their pupils very well. A pupil with physical disabilities is well catered for, and individual needs are addressed for all statemented pupils. The legal requirements of statements for all pupils at stage 5 of the special needs register and annual reviews are fulfilled, and individual education plans exist for those on stage 3 to 5 of the special educational needs register. The targets and strategies on these plans are not sufficiently specific, and do not involve subject teachers or help the pupil to know how to improve. Effective strategies include group plans devised for lower attaining sets, and pastoral/behavioural plans with advice on positive classroom management for those with emotional or behavioural problems. The special educational needs files are thorough, with full details of annual reviews and individual education plans from primary school onwards. In the last inspection, comments on the Special Needs Department included criticisms of the Year 7 arrangement for lower attaining pupils and they have now proven to be good. The good provision overall shows adaptation to the changing needs of pupils and increase in support.
42. The school has satisfactory strategies for teaching literacy skills. Effective practice already exists in several areas of the curriculum to develop pupils' skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Some English lessons systematically include exercises derived from the National Literacy Strategy. Literacy lessons provide low attaining pupils with specific help in learning valuable skills. History teachers have received in-service training to develop their skills as literacy teachers. Modern foreign language teachers devote one week each term to improving pupils' literacy skills in exercises developed in partnership with the English department. Drama offers many good opportunities for pupils to use language to explore ideas, characters and themes through talking together and devising dialogues in small groups.
43. The effectiveness of the school's strategies for teaching numeracy is satisfactory. No whole-school policy exists as yet to ensure consistency of approach between the subjects. There is an urgency for the school to do this.
44. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. An excellent range of sporting opportunities involves around 80 per cent of pupils in competitive games and an impressive number of pupils achieve county, district and, sometimes, national recognition across a wide range of activities. Musical activities include a choir; an orchestra and a jazz band which all build on the individual instrumental tuition the school offers and regular school productions are organised by the drama staff involve many pupils. Many subjects organise revision classes. They are well attended and give effective support to pupils. A summer school for a small group of gifted and talented pupils was held this year in addition to a summer school for Year 6 pupils about to enter the school.
45. Personal and social education is taught well as a discrete subject to all ability groups in Years 7 to 11. The provision is good and includes appropriate work on health and sex education, advice about drugs and the development of key skills. Several external organisations, such as the community drugs team, Rugby Youth for Christ and the Health Authority, are providing some valuable assistance with the programme of work. Similarly the pupils benefit from the close links with the Connexions Service and Education Business Partnership. As a result the quality of careers education and guidance is good and enables the pupils to make well-informed choices about their

future education and employment. The department has recognised the need to enhance the personal and social education curriculum through the introduction of citizenship and by developing its medium-term planning and assessment procedures.

46. A well-planned programme of careers education prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. The programme starts from Year 9 and is part of the personal, social and health education programme and part of the programme of form tutorial time. Pupils and their parents are given sound advice and guidance in preparation for their choices at age 14. The local careers personal advisers are involved in the programme from the start and additional support is carefully targeted towards pupils in most need. In Year 11 the programme of interviews is well organised by the pupils themselves. Pupils value the careers education and guidance they receive. They appreciate the facility the careers library offers. Pupils are introduced to the full range of opportunities open to them at age 16 and 18. An established link with Warwick University ensures that pupils are encouraged to aspire towards higher education.
47. The school forges a good number of effective links with the local and wider community. A two-week programme of work experience for all Year 10 pupils is well established and appreciated by pupils. Links with local businesses include a local car manufacturer where contributions are made to the work in modern foreign languages and the GNVQ engineering course. The school takes part in the Young Enterprise competition regularly. A cultural link with a school in Sweden gives pupils the opportunity to take part in exchange visits. Musical events given by the choir and orchestra take place in various settings. Parents value the Community Award awarded by the governing body to pupils who carry out outstanding service to the community. However, opportunity to carry out community work is not extensive.
48. The school has good arrangements with primary schools to ensure that pupils who arrive in Year 7 are familiar with the school and what to expect and that staff are well informed of individual pupils' needs. Apart from ICT, few subjects have established links with primary schools. In ICT pupils from primary schools visit the school regularly and make use of the ICT facilities. The school has well-established links with post-16 and higher education institutions which ensures that pupils are well informed when making decisions about their next steps in education.
49. The school makes good provision overall for pupils' personal development. The schools' provision for the spiritual development of its pupils is, however, unsatisfactory. Assemblies, while making good provision for the moral and social development of pupils, make little provision for their spiritual development. They do not fulfil the statutory requirement for a daily act of worship. The quality of the presentation of the 'Thought for the Day' is inconsistent and depends upon individual teachers for delivery. While the religious education department makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual development, in most other areas of the curriculum opportunities are missed rather than seized. A good opportunity was seen in a geography lesson, in which pupils had the time and opportunity to marvel at the beauty of waterfalls and were clearly moved. In an English lesson Year 10 pupils considered the nature of prayer and reflected upon what it meant to them before moving on to compose a prayer for a child. Their response was clearly sensitive and reflective. The school makes good use of the work of the Rugby Youth for Christ group which contributes to assemblies and extra-curricular groups. Generally, however, time is not planned to allow pupils to develop their feelings and consider the wonders of the world around them.

50. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of the pupils. The school's system of credits and consequences encompasses all areas of school life and the 'achievement league' celebrates positive achievement. Pupils are encouraged to be responsible for the welfare of others through charity fundraising and through representation on the 'anti-bullying council'. 'Friendly faces' enables pupils throughout the school to support their peers and become more aware of the feelings of others. Contemporary moral issues are discussed in several departments such as in art where pupils research into alcohol abuse, and in geography where environmental issues are discussed. Religious education and personal and social education classes provide good opportunities for pupils to discuss such issues as the misuse of drugs, the consequences of an irresponsible attitude towards sex, and the effects of prejudice.
51. Provision for the social development is very good. The school is developing its links with the community and groups of pupils are involved in musical performance to a range of audiences, for example local elderly people, and in community projects such as the road calming measures and the creation of a 'millennium gate'. In school there is a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, which are well attended, and many pupils from different year groups work together in choirs and orchestra groups. The large number of prefects in Year 11 provides good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for others in the school, and lower down in the school form prefects, council representatives and team captains support the organisation of the school.
52. The school makes satisfactory provision for the cultural development of the pupils. Regular musical performances take place at school and in local venues and the services 'Normandy Band' has held workshops prior to performance in the school. Pupils visit art galleries and theatres although these visits are limited to pupils studying art and drama. The art and culture of different areas of the world such as Asia and Japan are studied through art, and in religious education pupils consider the customs and culture that support the world faiths studied. The 'European Taster Day' and 'European Language Day' promote awareness of Britain's place within Europe and the school values its local links with Peugeot. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to travel abroad to France and Germany. There are few opportunities to celebrate the cultural diversity within Britain, however, and there are few multi-cultural images around the school. There is insufficient use of multi-cultural music and dance at present, although pupils from the school do support Asian dance groups in Rugby and participate in a number of local multi-cultural events. There have been no concert visits over the last few years or theatre trips to support study in English.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

53. The school provides a very good level of care and support for its pupils and has maintained the high standards recorded at the last inspection. The pastoral system is very strong and the form tutors play an important part within it. The same teacher stays with the form from Years 7 to 11 and this provides good continuity of care for the pupils. Pupils feel valued and know where to turn to for support. There are generally good relationships between pupils and staff. All this has a very positive effect on the progress and attainment of pupils.
54. Appropriate policies and procedures have been adopted for child protection and for health and safety. The policies are implemented effectively by the designated members of staff in these areas and all staff are kept well aware of their responsibilities. Liaison with the specialist external agencies is good.

55. The policy and procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. The school is rightly proud of its achievement and recognition system ('Bilton Achievement and Recognition System' – BARS) for promoting good behaviour and raising achievement. This has been introduced since the last inspection and commands a high level of support from staff, pupils and parents. The inspection found that BARS is having a powerful and beneficial impact on the way behaviour is managed in the school. On just a few occasions there is some inconsistency between teachers on how the system of credits and consequences is used, but generally the whole school approach works very well.
56. The policy and procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. The governors have made it clear that they will not tolerate any form of bullying within the school and a senior member of staff has been appointed to manage the comprehensive arrangements that the school has in place for dealing with this issue. Concerted efforts are made through the school's pastoral system and assemblies to explain to all pupils the school's concern about bullying and to get their full co-operation in helping to eliminate it. The pupils have responded well and the group of peer counsellors appointed from Year 11 pupils operates very effectively. Parents are also left in no doubt of the school's policy. Records are kept of any bullying which is alleged to have taken place, and the investigation and work done after any incident with both the bully and the bullied pupil are extremely thorough.
57. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Reasons for absence are always sought by form tutors and heads of year. The pupils respond well to the targets set for each year group, and to the system in place for rewarding good individual and group attendance. The school has recently introduced arrangements for contacting the parents of pupils identified to be at risk of disaffection or exclusion on the first day of absence. Registers are taken at the start of each lesson and random checks made of any truancy. The heads of year receive weekly summaries of attendance and work closely with the education social worker who visits the school regularly.
58. The school's procedures for supporting, monitoring and assessing pupils' academic performance and personal development are very good. They are economical and systematic and guided by a clear and concise policy statement which is proving very helpful to pupils and parents as well as to staff. On entry pupils undertake a series of tests which, together with data on attainment at Key Stage 2, establish a firm base line of performance. The school has also laid down an explicit set of assessment criteria for grading work which are being applied consistently across all subject. Consequently, the school has in place a reliable system for measuring the attainment and progress of pupils and groups as they move through both the key stages. However, the school has not yet developed a system for identifying gifted or talented pupils, other than by performance indicators.
59. Across the school, good use is made of assessment data to determine the needs of individuals and to support their learning. A start has been made to use assessment data to set individual targets and to track the progress of individual performance and thereby identify any under-achievement. However, this work requires further development. Similarly, the school is beginning to use its assessment information well to set improvement targets for the whole school and for particular groups of pupils, but data on value added is still at an early stage. At Key Stage 3 the pupils' progress against the National Curriculum levels is recorded at least twice a year and the information conveyed to pupils and parents through the reporting system. At Key Stage 4 each subject department organises its own assessments which form the

basis of the very useful grade reports made to parents.

60. Within departments, the procedures and practices for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good for the most part, but there are some inconsistencies. For example, no whole-year group assessments are yet in place in history although the head of department is developing them. In science throughout the school the procedures and the use of assessment data need improvement, and in music targets for pupils are lacking. Similarly, although the use of assessment in the school for guiding curricular planning is satisfactory overall, the standard varies across departments. Assessment is used to very good effect in religious education, in ICT and for vocational studies, but less so in geography, music, history, and science.
61. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. The pastoral support system is very strong and form tutors and year heads maintain well-organised records of pupils' personal progress, including their commendations, rewards and misdemeanours. The records of achievement of Year 11 pupils to mark the end of their compulsory education are compiled carefully, and the annual progress reports to parents contain a separate sheet giving information on their children's personal and social development. Personal development is further supported by the opportunities for extra-curricular activities and the various responsibilities given to pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. At the last inspection the parents had generally positive views about the school and this continues to be the case. The school is over-subscribed. Parents are pleased particularly with the high expectations the school sets, the teaching, and the progress being made by their children. They approve too of the way that the school is led and managed and the help given to their children to become mature and responsible. Evidence from the inspection shows that these views are firmly based.
63. A few parents were dissatisfied with the information they receive about how their children are getting on. In addition, a small number thought that the school could work more closely with them. The inspection findings did not support either of these concerns. However, there were also a few parents who were unhappy about the amount of homework, and the inspectors agree with them.
64. Overall, the school has established effective links with parents, enabling them to play an active part in their children's education. The quality of information provided to parents is good. Formal documents such as the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are very informative. In addition, each year a Handbook Update is produced for pupils and parents which includes an impressive range of information, including the results of the Key Stage 3 assessments and the GCSE examinations. The school has established a well-developed reporting cycle to parents. The quality of the interim grade and full reports made to parents about their children's progress is good in all subjects. The weekly newsletter keeps parents in touch with events at the school and pupils' achievements and successes. Their main point of contact with the school is through the heads of year and parents report that this works very effectively. They appreciate the trouble that the year heads take to notify them when their children have done particularly well in something. The 'student organiser', which includes a homework diary and weekly planner, is used satisfactorily by both pupils and teachers, and provides an effective method of communication with parents. A few useful meetings have been held with parents to discuss curricular developments, such as the introduction of the GNVQ courses. However, the school has recognised

that more could be done in this area.

65. Parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory. Parents are represented well on the governing body and make a strong contribution. They are consulted on many issues relating to the running of the school and the response is invariably good. The response parents made to a survey of the effectiveness of the Bilton Achievement and Recognition System is a very good example. The school does not have a formal parent-teacher association, and although many parents respond readily to the school's fund-raising and social activities, overall the communal support and involvement in the life of the school could be enlarged. One or two departments, particularly in the technology and vocational areas, have formed some constructive links with parents, but on the whole relatively few parents play a sustained part in helping with learning activities within the school.
66. A home-school partnership agreement is operating which emphasises to parents the importance of supporting their children in homework and in other activities for home learning. Most parents are making a satisfactory contribution. A few departments try to get parents more involved at critical times in their children's education, an example being the efforts made by the science department in the revision period before examinations. Homework is recorded in the 'student organisers' but varies both in quantity and quality from subject to subject. The inspection team agrees with some of the parents that the school's policy on homework should be reviewed and implemented more rigorously and consistently across the school.
67. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are good, both in informal telephone or letter contact and through the annual reviews. Links with primary schools are good, with a detailed exchange of information about statemented pupils. Liaison with local education authority agencies is good, though not as frequent as it should be.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

68. The quality of leadership and management in the school is very good. The Principal provides very good leadership and is fully committed to raising standards through a clearly defined review process, linked to staff development and training. She has established a very clear direction for the work of the school and, by example and consultation, has brought together a staff that shares a common sense of purpose and good relationships. This has resulted in a shared commitment to improvement and a very good capacity to succeed. The school's shared aims are central to its work, making a positive contribution to the development of good attitudes among pupils. The contributions of all members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are recognised and valued. Strengths and weaknesses are clearly understood because the process of self-review is well developed; the long-term effects of decisions are evaluated and action is taken to secure improvement. The members of the senior management team provide the Principal with very effective support and have a key role in monitoring standards and maintaining the very positive ethos of achievement in the school. Their individual strengths complement those of their colleagues. Staff and pupil relationships are very positive.
69. The overall quality of leadership at middle management level is good. Most middle managers have established clear educational direction for the work of their departments and monitor standards effectively. Good leadership in nearly all subjects is reflected in the improving standards achieved by pupils. Good management is an important factor in the rising standards in English, mathematics, science, art,

geography, history, ICT, modern languages and drama. GNVQ provision, design and technology and physical education are very well led and managed. Although there is some developing good practice, for example in science, assessment is not used effectively across the school to monitor standards, to set targets for improvement or to support the planning of the teaching.

70. The commitment of the school to supporting pupils with special educational needs is reflected in the good leadership and management of this area. The policy and practice in the special needs department match the school's aims well. Specific funds for special educational needs are well used. The previous special educational needs co-ordinator left last term, and the acting co-ordinator is on a tight learning curve, but is managing well. Staffing is good, with three other teachers, and ten teaching assistants. Accommodation is good, and includes a large office, a small classroom for literacy sessions and a smaller room for individual sessions, as well as another room elsewhere in the school for behavioural management. Learning resources are satisfactory. The acting special educational needs co-ordinator is a form tutor, which conflicts with the special educational needs co-ordinator role, and is not an effective use of such a valuable member of staff.
71. The governing body has a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Frequent informal contacts, together with a programme of more formal subject reviews and presentations, ensure that governors understand clearly the challenges that face the school. They play an active role in monitoring and supporting its work. They provide direction by working closely with the senior management team to identify areas for development and to set targets for improvement. The professional strengths and experience of the governors contribute significantly to strategic planning of high quality, based on a clear long-term view.
72. Development planning is very good. Carefully identified priorities are linked to the targets associated with the school vision. They show commitment to raising standards and improving the quality of education provided. One of the most noteworthy results of this approach is the high quality of staff development.
73. Financial planning is very good. The school manages its enhanced budget, additional funds and grants outstandingly well, particularly to secure improvement in premises and resources for learning and to support developmental priorities. Very good procedures are in place to monitor the effectiveness of spending. Strategic and contingency planning is closely related to available and projected finances. This planning benefits from the contribution of the senior manager's expertise to the financial management of the school.
74. Routine administration of the school's budget is good. The school makes effective use of new technology to monitor spending against the budget and to provide accurate up-to-date information. There are well-defined procedures to ensure best value purchasing. Routine administration is very efficient and ensures that the school runs smoothly.
75. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. There are a sufficient number of qualified and experienced teachers to meet curriculum needs. The few non-specialist teachers are effective in their subject areas. The problems associated with a high turnover of staff in modern foreign languages in the recent past have been overcome. The school is well provided with effective support staff. The school has gained the Investors in People award and it consequently has strong staff development procedures for both teaching and support staff. The school has successfully implemented performance management to head of

department level and is continuing with this process within departments. Induction of new staff and of newly qualified teachers is well organised and additional support is provided when problems arise. Since the last inspection staffing has improved significantly.

76. The provision and use of resources overall are good. The ICT resources are of very good quality and this is having a positive impact upon teaching and learning in many areas of the curriculum such as design and technology, history and religious education. There is a well-resourced library which provides a good range of illustrative texts on a wide range of topics. Most departments provide individual textbooks for pupils, and where necessary these have been updated to meet changing examination board requirements and provide effective support for student learning. Resources for learning are good in history, vocational education and design and technology and very good in ICT.
77. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by the Principal and senior colleagues is very good. It is one of the factors that is leading to improvements in the effectiveness of teaching and hence to the improving standards evident in the school. All staff are monitored as statutorily required by the performance management legislation. The school has set realistic, challenging and achievable targets to raise the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE results by the end of Year 11. The school has set up further professional development for the coming term so that all staff can reconsider strategies that are effective in motivating and sustaining boys' learning. The school has not, as yet, carried out an audit of the specific strategies that each department adopts to make learning attractive and effective for boys. The major challenge now facing the school is to raise the attainment of boys. Nevertheless the school is fully aware of the many examples of very good practice and the value of disseminating this effective practice across the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. Further raise attainment at Key Stage 4, particularly of pupils of higher ability and of boys, by increasing expectation and introducing more approaches to teaching which motivate and challenge them.
- (1) Improve pupils' understanding of number, which is holding back progress in some subjects. The school should move quickly to create a whole-school numeracy policy and ensure its uniform application across the curriculum. (Paragraph 1).
 - (2) There is insufficient provision to develop pupils' awareness of spiritual issues. Ensure that all subjects plan to include this in their provision and ensure that a daily act of collective worship takes place. (Paragraph 8).
 - (3) Make greater use of assessment information to plan the curriculum and help pupils make greater progress. (Paragraph 49).
 - (4) The governors may also wish to take steps to involve parents more fully in the educational life of the school. Governors should seek ways of tapping into the potential that exists for parents to work more closely with the school in helping it meet its' aims of raising standards. (Paragraph 59).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	171
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	135

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	12	43	73	36	7	0	0
Percentage	7	25	43	21	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1408
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	96

Special educational needs	
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	331

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	94

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
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
	2000	146	145	291

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	95	111
	Girls	117	110
	Total	212	221
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	73 (68)	76 (71)
	National	63 (63)	59 (55)

Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	37 (30)	44 (39)	39 (35)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	72	89	86
	Girls	106	97	102
	Total	178	186	188
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	61 (67)	64 (65)	65 (65)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	28 (28)	36 (32)	27 (39)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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
	2000	116	137	253

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	49	100	110
	Girls	81	123	132
	Total	130	223	242
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (44)	88 (90)	96 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35
	National	38.4

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	N/a
	National	N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	13
Indian	22
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1362
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y 7 – Y 11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	77.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

Education support staff:

Y 7 – Y 11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	486

Deployment of teachers:

Y7 – Y 11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.9
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Average teaching group size:

Y 7 – Y 11

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	21.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	33.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	30.4
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)	1.9

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	3	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	72	2
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	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3368095
Total expenditure	3559232
Expenditure per pupil	2235
Balance brought forward from previous year	261113
Balance carried forward to next year	69976

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1400

Number of questionnaires returned

245

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	51	8	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	33	57	5	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	58	10	3	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	52	15	4	2
The teaching is good.	27	57	5	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	52	16	2	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	45	5	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	40	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	24	50	16	1	9
The school is well led and managed.	33	50	7	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	53	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	53	6	2	9

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 department is well managed and good teaching leads to learning of high quality in many lessons.
- Pupils are well taught so they have a positive attitude to the subject and good relationships with one another and with teachers.
- Standards are rising.

Areas for improvement

- More use of active exercises from the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9.
- More consistent marking in Years 7 to 9, with explicit reference to National Curriculum criteria in the comments on key assignments, so that pupils understand what they have to do to achieve a higher level.
- In Years 10 and 11 more attention to helping the pupils improve the relevance, structure and development of written work at the drafting stage.

79. Standards in English of pupils entering the school have risen in recent years from below national expectations to levels that are now broadly in line with or better than national averages. The quality of work seen in Years 7 to 9 is good overall, because effective teaching promotes, in pupils whose attainment is about or below expectations, good progress to levels above the national average. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 standards have been above the national figure for the last four years. Attainment is higher in English than in mathematics, but lower than in science. Girls at this age achieve better than boys in English. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at all ages, as do pupils for whom English is an additional language.
80. In 2000, the last reporting year, attainment at GCSE was below the national average. Girls achieved above the national figure, two thirds attaining grades A*-C in 2000, but boys' attainment was significantly worse, only 40 per cent achieving those grades. This depresses the average for the school. Overall standards at GCSE have improved significantly over the last four years and in 2001 the percentage achieving grades A*-C in English language has increased from 44 per cent to 61 per cent which is now slightly above the national average for all schools and well above the average for secondary modern schools.
81. Over the last four years there has been a steady improvement in GCSE English Literature and the percentage achieving grades A*-C has increased from 62 per cent to 68 per cent. The quality of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection confirms both the general raising of standards and the relative under-achievement of boys. In 2000, grades A*-C were achieved by three-quarters of the girls but only half of the boys entered achieved those grades. In lessons, boys were observed attaining as well as girls in activities connected with a wide range of literature, from seventeenth century poetry to twentieth century novel, like 'A Kestrel for a Knave'. Boys' oral answers were as good as those of the girls. However, work scrutinised indicated that boys' written assignments are often not as thorough nor as well argued

as those of girls. The department is addressing the issue of boys' relative underachievement in a variety of ways, including adapting the timing and the content of schemes of work, greater emphasis in Year 10 on oral assessments, and revision clubs after school in Year 11.

82. The quality of teaching in English is good overall. In Years 7 to 9 the teaching was good or better in almost all of the lessons inspected. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching was good or better in six of the seven lessons observed, including lessons for groups of pupils of low prior attainment who were making good progress for their ability. High attaining pupils and pupils of low ability benefit from excellent teaching, promoting the highest standards of learning. Teachers work well with learning support assistants and with the language support teacher. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.
83. Standards of literacy at ages 14 and 16 are satisfactory. Almost all lessons contain a good mixture of activities and styles of learning, in language and literature, with group and individual tasks, and with some oral and some written work. Many lessons contain an emphasis on the understanding of language and on the form and function of expressions and parts of speech. Short exercises derived from the National Literacy Strategy are used as part of some lessons in Years 7 to 9, but these are not used extensively enough to develop pupils' literacy skills, especially their writing skills. Most lessons begin with a clear setting out of the learning objectives, the tasks to be completed and the standards by which the work will be assessed. Lessons end with a revision of the work covered, praise for what has been achieved and an indication of the next stages, either in class or as homework. Where written work is set, pupils have a clear understanding of the purpose of the writing and the style appropriate for its intended audience. Many good lessons include scope for originality and creative writing from pupils. Expectations are high.
84. Most lessons are brisk and purposeful and there is sufficient challenge for the more able pupils. Pupils are well managed in groups arranged according to their ability and respond positively to effective teaching. Good use is made of the credits and consequences sanctions of the schools' behaviour system. In most lessons there was very little disruptive behaviour and no time lost. However, some unsatisfactory behaviour in three lessons limited otherwise good progress and challenged the skills of teachers, who used the school's behaviour management systems to maintain order and progress by awarding 'merits' for good responses and explaining very clearly why 'consequences' arose from unacceptable behaviour.
85. Marking and assessment are generally satisfactory for Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive good and well-focused praise, but often do not benefit from precise advice about how to improve their work nor from a clear indication about how their work relates to National Curriculum levels of attainment. Marking is better in Years 10 and 11 because pupils receive clear indications during drafting stages about the relative quality of their work in the context of examination criteria. In many cases, however, teachers' comments concentrate on error of spelling or expression and do not address the more fundamental errors of planning and coherence needed for substantial improvement in the quality of essays. Where pupils could learn in lessons from seeing models of good writing as examples to develop their own skills, they achieved well and made good progress. Homework is generally good, occasionally requiring research or original writing, but most often consolidating and developing work done in lessons.
86. Pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening. They respond eagerly to questions with well thought out answers to indicate careful attention and good

understanding. When required pupils can develop their original answer, adding more detail or finding better expression, but often they are not challenged to do this and another pupil answers the next question. Older pupils respond without inhibition to very challenging discussion topics associated with the study of literature, for example their personal understanding of the nature of prayer. Pupils work well together and can achieve a balanced discussion, building upon one another's contributions.

87. Reading skills develop well. Teachers read well, providing good examples of intonation and characterisation, for example the convict Magwitch terrifying the young Pip at the start of 'Great Expectations'. Few pupils were asked to read aloud, but those pupils heard read well. Pupils are required to read from a variety of materials, from fiction, advertising and news media, from printed text and from electronic sources.
88. Pupils in all years write fluently and expressively. Writing skills are taught well in Years 7 to 9, but pupils' progress in writing is less satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 in which the evidence of their learning in their written work is less convincing than it is in their oral answers. There is a lot of emphasis on 'brainstorming' and spider diagrams to stimulate ideas. Spelling and expression are corrected in the drafting stages of written work, but there is less advice to improve the structure and the development of the argument in answer to a question. At all ages pupils are made clear about the aims, readership and style of a piece of writing and they understand the criteria by which it will be marked. Written work is thoroughly marked with perceptive and pertinent comment praising pupils' achievements. Spelling, punctuation and grammar errors are noted but corrections are not always evident and an opportunity to raise standards is lost.
89. Marking at GCSE includes a comment, a numerical mark and a grade related to examination criteria so that pupils understand their own achievement in the context of national standards for their age. Marking in Years 7 to 9 is less consistently applied. The mark scheme is based on National Curriculum levels of achievement and is displayed in classrooms and in pupils' books, but marking in Year 9 does not always include specific reference to National Curriculum levels so pupils are less clear about what is needed to achieve a higher level.
90. The English department is well managed. Aims and procedures in line with school policies are clearly set out and consistently enacted by the whole department. Day-to-day management of the subject is good and is supported by good co-operation and effective delegation of responsibilities. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are very good and are contributing to a general raising of standards. Resources are adequate and are well managed. Accommodation is good. Classrooms are attractive and full of stimulating displays, including many that celebrate the quality of the pupils' own work. The collaboration of a team developing strength and unity is limited by the fact that classrooms are not close together and that some teachers teach in several different classrooms. The curriculum is good for all ages, but would benefit from more National Literacy Strategy activities in Years 7 to 9. Revision clubs have been very useful, but the provision of other extra-curricular experiences is limited. The academic leadership of the subject is strong and the curriculum area manager is able to lead by example. The department responds positively to new ideas and is capable of reviewing its own performance. A sense of direction, enthusiasm for the subject and commitment to raising standards is shared by the department and is communicating itself to pupils through good teaching.

91. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection and its current strengths indicate that the capacity for future improvement is good.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Strong and very effective departmental leadership which gives positive guidance to a good teaching team.
- Growing confidence and self-belief within the department.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of numeracy in Years 10 and 11.
- Cross-curricular provision of ICT.
- No whole-school numeracy policy and marginal introduction of National Numeracy Strategy structures and materials.
- Standards of numeracy, particularly at Key Stage 4.

92. Pupils' attainment when they enter the school is close to the national average. There are very few higher attaining pupils and many pupils with near average attainment. The mathematics attainment in the latest intake, however, shows that numeracy standards at entry to the school are well below national averages. Standards of attainment in the 2000 National Curriculum tests at age 14 were below those expected nationally and in line with the results for similar schools. The results were below those for English and science. The 2001 results were significantly higher and were similar to those for the other core subjects. The results for boys and girls were similar. Given the poor Year 7 mathematics entry profile, pupils make good progress by the age of 14.
93. In the GCSE examinations in 2000 the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C was below the national average for all schools, but above that for other secondary modern schools. Attainment at this level in 2001 showed a significant improvement on previous years. It was, however, below the results for science and English although it represented a significant improvement on the previous year. These pupils were below national average in their tests at age 14 and thus had made good progress by the age of 16.
94. Inspection evidence indicates that the rise in standards seen in the 2001 tests and examinations is now being reflected in the classroom. By the ages of 14 and 16 pupils' work is generally near the national average. The good teaching and vigorous new management are beginning to have their effect on standards. Numeracy standards are particularly poor in many pupils by age 16. This was illustrated in a lower attaining Year 11 class where only four pupils were able to answer the question, 'What is two thirds plus two thirds?' However, the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools is beginning to have an impact on Key Stage 3 standards. Pupils enjoy the routine mental warm-up work in the three-part lessons and consequently improve their knowledge of multiplication tables and number bonds. There is a need to further develop the National Numeracy Strategy structures and the use of their materials in Key Stage 3 lessons. Numeracy skills are exercised effectively in science for evaluating formulae, design and technology for measurement and calculation, geography for data presentation and analysis and in the GNVQ subjects for data analysis and presentation. The school recognises the need for a whole-school

numeracy policy in its development plan. There is an urgent need to implement this in the near future.

95. By the end of Year 9 higher attaining pupils can use their understanding of the laws of indices to confidently evaluate negative and fractional indices while lower attaining pupils can solve simple algebraic equations. By the end of Key Stage 4 high attainers can simplify complex expressions involving use of vectors to describe geometric transformations while lower attaining pupils can enlarge simple geometric figures confidently but struggle with applications of basic numeracy to percentages. Pupils' standards of presentation are generally good and occasionally very good. In many lessons pupils willingly explain their understanding of aspects of the subject using appropriate mathematical language. Additionally key words are often displayed in most classrooms. ICT is underdeveloped in mathematics. There is no uniform provision for pupils at both key stages though an example of very good use was seen in a middle attaining Year 11 class who developed their understanding of geometric transformations using design software confidently to create tessellations. There is a need to train and support several of the teaching staff in the use of ICT. This area requires urgent development. The department should have timetabled access to ICT facilities in all years. Calculators are used sensibly and accurately in lessons. There is also a need to develop the use of graphical calculators.
96. Pupils' progress in lessons is generally good and sometimes very good. Pupils enjoy success and learning new techniques. This was seen in a middle attaining Year 9 class where pupils learned to simplify algebraic expressions involving directed numbers and brackets. By the end of the lesson, as a result of practice and effective guidance, they were able to successfully apply their understanding to the solution of complex simple equations. They appreciate group working and challenge. The isolated cases of less successful progress were associated with inappropriate planning and consequential loss of interest by some pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are usually taught in small groups, especially in Key Stage 3. They generally make good progress. Pupils are almost always well behaved and motivated in mathematics classrooms. They enjoy learning and applying their knowledge to new problems. This is exemplified in some of the investigative work seen in the department. In particular the analyses of 'T' patterns involving algebraic modelling were of a high standard.
97. The teaching is good. The quality of learning reflects the quality of teaching. In the very good lessons teachers are stimulating and keep a brisk pace with lots of probing questions to keep pupils on their toes. Pupils learn well in these circumstances. They enjoy the mental games in Key Stage 3 and the more academic challenge presented in Key Stage 4. In one middle attaining Year 11 class, pupils learned by effective demonstration using an overhead projector the general principles of finding centres of rotation and then successfully applied them to more complex rotations. Teachers make effective use of pupils coming to the board to explain their understanding using appropriate mathematical terminology. Relationships in the department are invariably good and pupils respond generally to the high expectations of most teachers. In isolated lessons the teacher's planning does not accommodate the needs of all pupils and learning suffers or the pace falls off with consequential loss of interest by pupils. Teaching methods are largely traditional, the board the main tool and there is a need to develop more colour in lessons using overhead projectors, ICT including the Internet, and graphical calculators. Teaching standards have gone up significantly since the previous inspection but there is a continuing need to monitor and further develop the teaching

98. The department has suffered from lack of consistent management over a period of years. The current head of department has been in post for one year but is now on maternity leave. She has achieved a great deal in her first year. In particular she has given very positive leadership to a team that needed re-invigoration and support. She has initiated considerable change in terms of introducing challenging targets for pupils and staff and in monitoring and developing teaching. However, there remains much to be done in the department. Teaching standards, including methods, need to be further improved and ICT needs to be developed. There is a need for numeracy to be promoted more across the curriculum and for the National Numeracy Strategy to be securely installed in the curriculum at Key Stage 3. The acting head of department, who already has major responsibility for examination entries, is successfully keeping things on an even keel while his leader is absent.
99. Overall the department has made good progress since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- The commitment and subject knowledge of an enthusiastic staff.
- High quality staff-pupil relationships.
- Teachers' knowledge of individual pupils.
- The extensive experience of staff in preparing pupils for public examinations.

Areas for improvement:

- Centralised assessment records for easier access and monitoring.
- Increased opportunities for the use of ICT in lessons.
- Increased opportunities for pupils to use extended writing.
- Scientific vocabulary, especially in preparation for post-16 work.

100. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment close to nationally expected levels. In national tests in 2000, 14 year olds attained levels well above national averages for both modern schools and for all maintained schools. Science results were better than English and mathematics. Although the results in 2001 are not quite as good as those of the preceding year, they are still well above national levels. At the end of Year 11 pupils in 2000 attained results above the national averages. In single award science at GCSE, all pupils obtained grades in the A*-G range, and A*-C grades were close to national levels. In double award science, A*-G grades were close to 100 per cent in 2000, and reached this figure in 2001. A*-C grades continued to be almost double the national average for all schools.
101. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress through Key Stage 3 and good progress in Key Stage 4. In relation to their prior knowledge and understanding, pupils achieve well in science.
102. From the work seen, attainment in lessons is above average at ages 14 and 16. This does not always match the high attainment recorded in external examinations. However, concentration on the essentials of the syllabus and extended preparation and revision enable pupils to improve upon their classroom performance when they attempt external tests and examinations. From Year 7 onwards, pupils are used to being tested every few weeks and use their test results to set themselves targets for the next unit of work; however, this process has not yet been extended beyond Year

8. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into classes and their oral and practical work matches that of their classmates. When they are supported in class by non-teaching staff, their written work is also of the same standard, and the use of worksheets which avoid the need for extended writing assists these pupils to maintain steady progress. However, this support does not occur in every lesson. Practical work is done safely and competently, and laboratory discipline is good. Pupils learn sound techniques early in Year 7 and observe accurately and record their results logically. Planning and evaluation are also taught early, and by Year 9 pupils can attempt whole investigations, although none was seen during the week of the inspection.
103. The standard of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The expertise, commitment and enthusiasm of staff communicate themselves to pupils and raise interest and motivation, especially when staff are teaching their own specialisms from Year 9 onwards. An example was a low attaining group working whose interest and rate of learning were raised by a brisk and fascinating demonstration of the distillation of hydrocarbon fuels. Staff know their pupils well, and can give unobtrusive support when it is needed as well as harnessing pupils' personal interests and enthusiasms to enrich the planned activity. A further strength is the high quality of relationships between pupils and their teachers. This creates a relaxed and informal learning environment in which pupils can freely ask as well as answer questions and can confidently suggest their own theories to explain what they see. Firm but fair class control is greatly assisted by the schools' behaviour system which pupils understand, and which provides a stable and well-known framework in which pupils can learn in supportive conditions.
104. Lessons contain a variety of activities, and changes of pace help to maintain pupils' concentration, especially amongst low attaining pupils. Challenges, both of recall of past work and of mastering new knowledge and skills, are frequent, and staff have high expectations of their pupils. A low attaining group in Year 10, for example, consolidated their knowledge of human digestion as well as mastering complex vocabulary by a series of activities in which they had to identify and correctly sequence the various steps in the digestion of food, finishing with a novel practical demonstration which summarised and reinforced all that had gone before. Such activities not only widen pupils' knowledge but also allow them to experience success and to gain in confidence. The department has the basic equipment to meet the requirements for the use of ICT within the National Curriculum, and is awaiting conversion of one small laboratory to greatly improve ICT opportunities in the subject. No use of ICT in science was seen during the week of the inspection.
105. While the chosen path of minimum writing requirements in tests and exercises makes learning easier for many, for some it restricts development of their skills in writing extended accounts of their work and does not permit them to research individual topics – two skills which are essential for success in post-16 science. Similarly, high attaining pupils are not given the opportunity to extend their mathematical skills and knowledge beyond the requirements of the immediate task.
106. Pupils are well motivated and well mannered and are interested in science. They enjoy experimentation and arrive expecting to enjoy their lessons. A good-humoured approach and plenty of encouragement from their teachers make them eager to work well and they tackle new challenges positively. Disruptive behaviour is rarely seen when they are fully occupied in a well-paced lesson, and it is common to see pupils helping each other over minor difficulties. The written work of the majority of pupils is neat and their notebooks are well presented.

107. The department is well led and well managed. Aims are clear, and staff work well as a team with a clear, shared commitment to help each pupil to obtain the best possible results during his or her time in the school. The result is an examination record to be proud of. The high standard of teaching is underpinned by first-class support from a dedicated technician team that services the two separated sets of laboratories unobtrusively and efficiently. The department receives large quantities of data from tests and assessments, but has not yet developed a centralised system of records to allow rapid access and effective monitoring of the progress of both individuals and groups of pupils. Of the three issues that arose from the last inspection, the only outstanding one is the incidence of a small number of pupils who are unwilling to co-operate or to involve themselves in lessons, and this is a perennial problem. Improvement since the last report is good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- The teaching
- The provision and use of ICT
- Techniques in painting

Areas for development

- The use of three-dimensional work in GCSE studies
- The use of sketchbooks to research and experiment with ideas
- Independent learning

108. In 1999 and 2000 the GCSE results have been at the national average for all schools and above that of modern schools at grades A*-C. There was a sharp decline in the proportion of these higher grades in 2001. This school, along with a large number of other schools in the area, is having all the GCSE work re-marked.
109. In the work seen during the inspection the standards that pupils reach by the end of Year 9 are above average and they are achieving well. In Year 9 pupils can use signs and symbols creatively to form design units. Some of the best examples of Year 9 work are the large black and white chalk drawings based on studies of Michelangelo's work. These are bold and dramatic with some exquisite use of line and shading for tone and three-dimensional effect. In Year 8 pupils take inspiration from the work of the artist Mondrian and create a sense of movement in their own work by the careful positioning of units of primary colours. They are successful to a good degree. In Year 7 pupils use all the skills they have learned this term to produce a large, closely observed painting of a feather. They can mix the shades of colour subtly to achieve the details and texture of a feather. Overall, work in painting and the use of tone is subtle rather than bold.
110. Standards of work seen of pupils by the time they reach age 16 are above those expected nationally and are an improvement over last years' examination results. Progress from Year 9 is good and pupils achieve well. Pupils' work shows good development, particularly in painting and the use of colour. Pupils have visited Kew Gardens to sketch and do research for their work on the 'Tropical' theme. Most of their first hand observations have captured the flavour and lushness of the tropics in their compositions. Pupils in Year 10 are doing similar research for their theme on

'The Natural Environment'. The use of colour is vibrant but there is scope for more shading to achieve depth. Pupils use the nearby ICT room to research ideas. They use the scanner well to incorporate ideas from the work of other artists into their own. They do not as yet use the digital camera although there are plans to do so. Little work is developed into three dimensions in GCSE coursework and there is little use of ceramics, although a kiln is available.

111. Standards in art and fashion are average. Pupils explore a range of ideas for fabric designs including the concept of 'Stripes'. They use the work of the artist Bridget Riley to gain inspiration. There is not enough exploration of the work of other artists' use of line. However, this theme gives good scope for pupils' individual research and learning and they are beginning to grasp the immense possibilities for further development of this theme.
112. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It ranged from very good lessons to one that was unsatisfactory. All teachers are art specialists and have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This knowledge is used to good effect in giving pupils an understanding of the artistic possibilities of the themes they study in each year group. The teachers work hard to make the lessons interesting for their pupils. They encourage pupils to be creative and to research ideas for themselves. They give illustrations of the ideas being considered and examples of other artists' work are used to good effect. However, more direct demonstrations are needed to inspire pupils who fail to grasp the extent of the possibilities within themes such as 'Stripes' or 'The Natural Environment'. With one exception, all teachers have good class management skills and create a good climate for learning in all lessons. In the unsatisfactory lesson there was a failure to maintain discipline and to apply the school's sanctions designed to promote good behaviour and learning. The poor attitudes and behaviour of a significant number of pupils spoiled the atmosphere for other pupils and little work of value was done.
113. Assessment is good and occurs in all lessons. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are examined at the beginning of most lessons to reinforce learning. Pupils display their work at the end of most lessons and the class is helped to understand what might be done to raise the standard of each piece of work.
114. Pupils have good attitudes to this subject. There is a good learning environment in almost all lessons. Pupils are attentive to their teachers and concentrate well on their work. They work at a good pace. There was only one exception.
115. Except in that one lesson, all pupils, including pupils on the special educational needs register, make good progress. Pupils are grouped according to ability in the creative arts area and teachers focus clearly on the needs of each group. All pupils get individual attention in turn and so they are helped to develop their work in individual ways. The skills of drawing and painting are taught formally from Year 7 onwards and this leads to good progress. More independent learning in all years is needed and also better use of sketchbooks for exploring and experimenting with ideas in a range of materials.
116. Management of the subject is good. Art is taught within the creative arts area and benefits from this broader vision. Documentation and schemes of work are in very good detail. There is good order everywhere. All teachers, including the newly qualified teacher, receive good support. The subject benefits from attractive, new accommodation and a computer room within the area.

117. The good standards reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- The experience and quality of the teaching staff and how well matched they are to the curriculum.
- The quality of the accommodation and the resources, and how these are managed.
- The breadth and coverage of the curriculum.
- The leadership and management, which provide clear vision and direction.

Areas for improvement:

- Providing a greater challenge for the more able.
- The development of effective analytical and evaluative skills.
- Raising attainment at Key Stage 4 in line with school and national indicators.

118. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was in line with the national average for all schools are well above the average for secondary modern schools. Girls performed better than boys by 14 per cent overall. In 2001 pupils achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations fell and were below the national average and the average for all subjects in the school. The difference between girls' attainment and boys attainment rose to 23 per cent – this is well above the national average.

119. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment in Year 9 are in line with the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally, but this represents a good level of achievement given their levels of attainment when they entered the school. Pupils' practical skills are well developed and the quality of practical projects is good. The use of practical tasks, for example in the Year 8 staple foods project, develops within pupils a secure grasp of basic tools and processes. Pupils experience a wide range of topics including systems and control and electronics. Design skills, evaluation and analysis are underdeveloped to some extent because of the nature of the Years 7 to 9 course and its concentration on the development of practical skills. Where thorough analysis has not occurred, pupils fail to understand the relevance of the activity and are unable to justify or evaluate the product against identified criteria.

120. In the work seen during the inspection, the pupils' standard of attainment at the age of 16 is in line with that expected of pupils of the same age nationally. As with attainment at age 14 practical skills are well developed. Pupils' show confidence in using a range of materials and processes and their work is often accurate and well finished. Some particularly good work is evident in graphic products and electronics where pupils are designing and making products using a range of techniques and processes. In general, analysis and evaluation is often subjective and lacks the rigour needed to achieve high levels of attainment. Design specifications and subsequent analysis are not being used effectively as the basis for performance criteria within projects. This is particularly evident within the design development stage of projects and often leads to superficial design. Both low attaining and high attaining pupils follow this pattern but the impact on attainment is greater for more able pupils as it precludes them from achieving the highest GCSE grades. Overall achievement at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory.

121. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers, who demonstrate enthusiasm and interest throughout. Lessons are well planned and the pace of lessons is often brisk. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of pupils of all levels of attainment and those with special educational needs make good progress. However, many of the tasks are routine and are not sufficiently different for the more able pupils to be extended or fully challenged. The use of ICT within design and technology is a positive development and, together with the development of systems and control technology, reflects the progress made since the previous inspection. The carousel system used to teach the National Curriculum programmes of study in Years 7 to 9 does not provide enough progress for pupils. As pupils move from unit to unit the gains in learning that they have made are not sufficiently taken into account and lead to a lack of challenge for the more able pupil. Homework is effective in Years 7 to 9 and is set consistently across the faculty. Homework is carefully monitored and recorded and is used to reinforce learning. A system for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' performance at Key Stage 3 system is in place and is being used across the department to set individual targets. Whilst pupils' work is regularly assessed using a common system, constructive feedback is not being used consistently to set targets and raise performance.
122. Overall the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. The teaching is good when pupils are actively involved, the pace of lessons is brisk and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. Overall, teachers are enthusiastic and work hard to ensure that pupils maximise their achievement. The standard of marking is good. Where assessment is effective, realistic grades and targets for improvement are shared with pupils on a regular basis. The department is beginning to use target setting and the monitoring of pupil performance to raise their attainment in electronics. Analysis of examination performance is carried out within the department but it is not being used to inform future curriculum planning. The use of standardised test scores and National Curriculum levels is available for pupils on examination courses but target grades are not being used consistently by teachers to monitor pupil performance.
123. The provision of a vocational course in engineering at both Foundation and Intermediate level is a positive aspect of the design and technology curriculum. The quality of the teaching is very good and results at both Intermediate and Foundation levels in 2000 were in line with national expectations.
124. The leadership and management of design and technology are very good. There is a clear view of what constitutes good provision for education in design and technology and teachers work together to achieve common goals. The team meet regularly and there is a positive working relationship within the department. The department is making use of self-evaluation as a tool for improvement and the quality of provision reflects the very good progress that has been made since the previous inspection. Overall, standards are now in line with national expectations, the requirements of the National Curriculum are met in full, teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 are now good and accommodation and resources are very good.

DRAMA

Overall, provision in drama is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers' planning for a good range of activities, which hold pupils' attention effectively as well as building their self-confidence and practical drama skills
- Pupils' exploration and research into social issues as a basis for performance, and their thoughtful use of play scripts to develop characters and original ideas
- Very good attitudes and behaviour in lessons
- Good progress made by all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs

Areas for improvement

- Improve pupils' confidence and flow in performance by offering more opportunity to exploit space, using different types of equipment and furniture
- Give examination course pupils more specific information about how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve

125. Results in GCSE drama have risen steadily over the last three years. The proportion of those gaining higher grades A*-C is similar to national averages for all schools and is above the average of similar modern schools. Girls exceed, and boys match, the national trends for the subject. All pupils entered gained a grade in the examination.
126. Work seen in lessons confirms an improving trend from the time of the previous inspection. The gap between boys' and girls' performance has also narrowed as a result of teachers' efforts to ensure that appropriate demands are made on all pupils, including those with special educational needs.
127. By Year 9, pupils understand well how to use key dramatic ideas in a scene, such as realism and suspense. They demonstrate this in their practical acting, with assurance and a reasonable level of characterisation through voice and movement. Girls' performance is better than that of boys, particularly in speaking, although the standards of speaking and listening of boys and girls are always up to the standard expected. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress, achieving similar standards to others in their speaking and listening. As a result of good teaching, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make good progress.
128. By Year 11, pupils have matured well in their grasp of how to create and perform a dramatic character, using speech reasonably and deploying acting techniques effectively, such as 'freeze framing' or 'hot seating' to communicate their ideas to an audience. They reflect upon each other's work perceptively and supportively, for instance by viewing a video recording of their own practical work and suggesting ways to improve it. Girls' speech is more expressive and varied than boys'. In addition, approximately three-quarters of boys lack a sufficient range of facial expression and physical gesture needed to reach the higher standards of practical drama of which they are capable. Nevertheless, four out of five pupils perform at a level at or above expected standards.
129. Teaching was good in all lessons observed. Teachers plan their lessons well with a good range of experiences and opportunities. They use good subject knowledge of improvisation and performance techniques to check what pupils know and to encourage them to move on. As a result, behaviour and attitudes are very good in nearly all lessons seen and never less than good. In all lessons, there is an

atmosphere of infectious enthusiasm and hard work, which helps to ensure good progress. At the same time, more could be done to ensure that pupils in their last two years receive specific advice about their written work and how well they are doing, and what they must do in order to improve further.

130. Drama teachers arrange theatre visits and involve pupils in regular drama productions. This makes a good contribution to the cultural and social experiences pupils enjoy in school. Drama teaching is led effectively by a newly promoted subject manager who is taking appropriate steps to review teaching methods, particularly of speaking and listening, and to ensure that they are promoted to a level which will more closely match national expectations.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- The teaching is very good.
- Classroom management techniques are good.
- The attitudes of pupils are good.
- Accommodation is now very good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils need to know what to do to improve.
- Links with primary schools need to improve.
- Spiritual awareness and multi-cultural understanding needs to be made more explicit.
- Literacy and numeracy need to be developed.

131. When pupils entered the school, their attainment was below average overall, and most have made good progress through Key Stage 3. GCSE results for geography have also steadily improved over the last four years, with the percentage of A*-C grades being in line with the national average for all in 2000, and well above for similar modern schools. This good attainment continues into 2001 when the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades at GCSE was well above the average for all and similar schools. Average points score at GCSE has also steadily improved, and shows good gains in pupils' knowledge, relative to their prior learning, during Years 10 and 11. Boys' results at each stage have generally been much lower than those of the girls.
132. The analysis of last year's work for a sample of pupils from each year group showed very good achievement. Work seen in lessons during the inspection was above national expectations overall in all years. Pupils show good levels of knowledge and understanding when speaking, whereas their writing skills are weaker. Boys and girls generally achieve equally well in lessons, although the lower sets in each year group tend to contain more boys, whose written skills are poor. Pupils are very attentive to the interesting video extracts used, such as that dealing with the problem of overpopulation in China, and ask perceptive questions, which reveal their gains in knowledge, and understanding of the issue. The 'home-produced' video of a waterfall in Iceland and the teacher's commentary, led to better understanding, by a Year 8 lower set, of the power of water and the formation of a gorge. Difficulties arise when subsequent individual work requires extended writing. The recently purchased sets of high quality photographs stimulate pupils' interest and understanding of geographical features and processes, and of their complexity in real life. The geographical skills of sketching and annotating diagrams and maps are developing well, but there is less

emphasis on graphical skills and extended writing. The comparative weakness in literacy and numeracy is affecting standards in geography for most pupils.

133. The teaching is very good at both key stages. This results in good attitudes to learning in Years 7 to 9. Pupils listen well, and most respond appropriately and willingly to the teacher's questions. They are prompted by the teacher to think carefully when questions are posed, as when the Year 7 low set suggested innovative ways of measuring curved lines on maps. Games and puzzles stimulate their interest, such as the 'bingo' game with map symbols. Pupils respond well to being asked to investigate maps like geographical 'detectives', and to use the textbook as a 'treasure hunt'. Practical activities, such as measuring in a Year 7 middle set lesson, and the sorting into the correct order of cards with statements about waterfalls in Year 8, lead to greater physical involvement and retention of learning. Behaviour is good overall, with the consistent use of the schools BARS system to correct infringements or reward good responses. Work is set at an appropriate level for each set across the year, although all pupils cover the same topics, themes and places, and similar skills are developed.
134. Very good teaching in Key Stage 4 ensures that attitudes here are also good, although involvement and attendance by lower attaining pupils is poorer. Recap of previous lessons, and review of work covered in earlier years, show good retention of learning, such as the Year 10 group revisiting river features, using this knowledge and understanding to interpret photographs of rivers and to draw annotated sketches. Year 11 pupils remembered earlier work and the correct geographical terms concerning population. The teachers' explanation of population pyramids being bar charts 'on their side' enabled pupils to understand and draw such diagrams. They understood how the differing outlines of such pyramids showed the nature of the economic development of the country. Extended writing is being encouraged with clear distinctions being made between description and explanation, to develop higher standards in coursework and examinations.
135. The experienced specialist teachers not only have depth and breadth of knowledge but also understand how to convey this to pupils through their own interest and enthusiasm for geography. Schemes of work and lessons are well planned, with a range of timed activities to stimulate the pupils' interest and develop geographical skills. Recap of previous learning, and often of homework, were important introductions to lessons, consolidating learning. The teachers' clever questioning techniques lead to pupils responding intelligently, revealing their understanding of issues and the development of correct geographical terms. Relationships are good between teachers and pupils as well as among the pupils themselves, and teachers have good classroom management skills, being relaxed but rigorous, friendly but firm. The marking of books is very good, with corrections and constructive comments on how to improve, and praise for good work.
136. The quality of teaching overall has improved since the last inspection, and standards have steadily improved, with an increased emphasis on skills, although writing is still weak compared to speaking and listening. Textbook and other resources are good, and computers are now provided, but they are not used enough. Assessment using the National Curriculum levels and descriptors is developing. Display is good in the now very good accommodation, which has light spacious rooms with plentiful storage space.
137. Leadership and management of geography are good, with the three specialists working as a team. Improvement since the last Inspection has been good.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- Attainment in the GCSE examination.
- Good relationships that support an effective working environment.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work do not clearly identify the key focus for learning.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not enable teachers to monitor progress in the key elements across the years, or involve pupils in their assessment.
- ICT is not yet used to support the development of the skills of analysis.

138. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001, shows standards just below the national average. Work seen during the inspection suggests that the majority of pupils are achieving standards in line with the national average. Standards have risen over the last two years. Girls are achieving a greater proportion of the higher levels than boys, though the difference is reducing. Results in the GCSE examination in 2000 were above the national average in comparison with all schools for grades A*-C and well above the national average for secondary modern schools. Results in 2001 have risen further. This represents very good achievement by the department. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-G is in line with the national average for secondary modern schools. Girls are achieving a significantly larger proportion of the higher grades than the boys; in 2000 all girls achieved a grade between A*-C. Over the last two years twice as many boys as girls have followed the history course. There has been a clear upward trend in the results over the last four years.
139. In the work seen during the inspection the attainment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is average and in line with expectations. Teachers emphasise the use of historical information and as a result pupils' skills in analysis are developing well. Pupils have a secure understanding of some of the key features of the periods studied and are beginning to identify factors that led to major changes, for example the Reformation in England. Most pupils tend to generalise however, and in some groups the lack of historical detail results in over-simplification of events. By Year 9 most pupils have a simple understanding of the events that led to the outbreak of the First World War. Pupils identify long and short-term causes and higher attaining pupils make links between them. Higher attaining pupils recognise that a range of factors should be considered and that they do not have equal importance. With the support, pupils consider different views of events and most demonstrate understanding in clear extended writing. A good example is the 'interview' with the man who killed the Archduke at Sarajevo in 1914. They review the use of propaganda and can identify the emotions that led people to volunteer to fight. There are good opportunities for pupils to present their work in a variety of forms, such as leaflets, posters and essays, and written work is generally well presented and accurate. Higher attaining pupils include clear reasoning to support their opinions and to explain events, and most pupils are able to demonstrate an awareness of more than one view of history. Lower attaining pupils tend to limit their writing to the events themselves.

140. The standards reached, by pupils following the GCSE course, are above average. Pupils gain an overview of the development of medicine over time and they are able to identify factors that lead to innovation and change. They can compare attitudes to medicine across different ages, and identify the contributions of the different civilisations to medicine today. In Year 11 pupils have a secure understanding of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and its effect upon the Weimar Republic. Most pupils are able to make links between the treaty's terms and the rise of Hitler in the 1930s. Higher attaining pupils identify a variety of different responses to it and give reasons for them. Teachers use skilful questioning to develop pupils' oral responses which would otherwise remain limited. Written responses to questions are generally accurate but other than those of higher attaining pupils, they are often undeveloped without outlines for their written work. Lower attaining pupils are sometimes content to leave work unfinished.
141. Achievement at Key Stage 3 is good for all groups of pupils; however, attainment in year 9 is affected by the availability of only one lesson per week, which reduces the opportunity to develop understanding and skills. Pupils generally work with interest and they are keen to respond in class. Teachers encourage pupils to explain and justify events that took place, and opportunities for pupils to 'role-play' enable them to develop their understanding of events. Homework is generally a useful development of the lesson, and the use of extended writing tasks supports the development of ideas. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and their positive attitudes ensure good progress in lessons. Achievement in the GCSE groups is good. Pupils are co-operative and well motivated. The majority of pupils are keen to offer oral contributions in class although their written responses do not always demonstrate depth of thought unless in an essay form. Some pupils do not complete work missed through absence and this has a detrimental effect on their learning. There is a good emphasis on specialist vocabulary and every opportunity is taken to encourage pupils to read aloud. History, as a result, makes a good contribution to the development of the pupils' literacy. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress. The setting arrangements at Key Stage 3 enable teachers to use methods that are appropriate to the needs of the pupils and support the growth in understanding. Writing frames enable pupils to develop their writing skills and lead them to more analytical responses.
142. The quality of teaching is good overall; many very good lessons were also seen. A strength of the department is the relationship that teachers have with pupils. This enables them to create a safe working environment where pupils are confident that they can question and respond. In most lessons teachers present pupils with clear learning objectives at the start, that are reviewed at the end so that pupils have a clear impression of their progress. Lessons are usually well planned in order to lead pupils from a simple review of information to an understanding of its significance. A variety of activities are introduced to enable pupils to become actively involved in their work. Lessons are less effective where group activities are not supported with sufficient historical knowledge to enable pupils to develop understanding. Teachers generally have appropriately high expectations and pupils are encouraged to develop their responses through effective use of open-ended questions. Double periods taught in Year 10 strain the concentration of pupils. Teachers take care to plan their lessons accordingly, but progress in a double lesson still suffers. Teachers are beginning to use National Curriculum levels when marking work in Key Stage 3 but pupils are not yet clear about its requirements. The absence of whole year group assessments of specific key elements means that monitoring of the progress of groups and individuals in these skills cannot take place. Feedback sheets that accompany marked essays at Key Stage 4 provide valuable information for pupils about their

progress and how they might improve their work.

143. The leadership and management of the department are good. The newly appointed head of department has correctly identified the priorities for development. The humanities suite is an open and attractive area where display is of high quality and is used to extend pupils' learning. The department now has easy access to computers although their use has yet to be developed. Opportunities to develop the numeracy skills of pupils have not been introduced though the department is making a very good contribution to the development of literacy in the school. Schemes of work have been identified as a priority for review as at present they do not include clear assessment tasks or support cross-curricular topics. Communication within the department is good but there is insufficient sharing of good practice and monitoring of progress.
144. Progress since the last report has been good. GCSE results have risen steadily and all teaching is at least satisfactory; often it is good. The department now has better access to ICT and has moved into a designated humanities block that is a lively and attractive environment for learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Improvement since the last inspection report
- Some teaching is very good
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment and monitoring needs to be more firmly focused on individual pupils.
- The work provided for both talented pupils and those with special educational needs is not always appropriate.
- Better strategies to manage disaffected pupils in Year 11 need to be developed.
- E-mail links to support homework, modern foreign languages, science, geography and any other subject that might benefit, need to be developed.

145. As pupils have not recently sat public examinations in ICT, there is no national test data by which to compare standards in this school with any other. In Year 11 pupils are taught key skills at Levels 1 and 2. Year 10 pupils will have opportunities to become accredited in key skills, but are not taught them. Their knowledge, skills and understanding are derived from work they completed by the end of Year 9 and by further work they will do, using computers, in their optional subjects. Teacher assessments of work at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate standards that are below national expectations. This is an improvement on 2000 when indications are that standards were well below average. There is little doubt that staffing difficulties contributed to these unsatisfactory standards.
146. Work seen in Year 9 during the inspection meets national expectations related to most requirements of the National Curriculum. This constitutes satisfactory achievement by the pupils as their attainment in ICT when they entered the school was below average. Standards of work in Year 11 generally meet national expectations in the higher ability classes. Standards are below average in most sets and so are below average overall. Consequently, achievement for the current Year 11 is unsatisfactory. Their ICT experiences in other subjects are patchy, depending on the options they have chosen, and many are unlikely to reach expectations before

they leave. The situation is complicated by the fact that the teaching groups in which pupils find themselves are not formed according to their attainment in ICT. Consequently, some quite adept users of computers are in lower ability classes. The work they have to do does not sufficiently recognise this and so these pupils make poor progress. Pupils with special educational needs tend to cluster in lower ability classes and this is not always appropriate. to meet the diverse needs of these pupils. Consequently pupils with special educational needs do not make sufficient progress in any year. Now that staffing and technical support are stable, there is evidence that the achievement of pupils by the end of Year 9 will quite rapidly improve and their competence on computers be transferred through to Years 10 and 11. A proposed GCSE or GNVQ in ICT (to start in September 2002) is a good idea and should meet the needs of capable pupils who wish to choose it. Other pupils will need close monitoring.

147. Some subjects contribute to pupils ICT experiences quite well, others are developing, and others need to do a lot more. ICT lessons sometimes support other subjects, for example the French menu in Year 7, and 'The Great Plague' project in Year 8. The latter project will soon be handed over to history so another can be developed for another subject. There is currently no pupil e-mail service. This is quite commonly used in many schools to support language work and for pupils to send work to and from home and to teachers. Geography is using the Internet to research some work. Design and technology provides opportunities for computer control but software and hardware to support other aspects, such as computer assisted design and manufacture, is not functioning yet. Science apparently offers a range of ICT work including data logging, databases, simulations, and spreadsheets but none was seen during the inspection and pupils say there is none. However, science teachers need further training and development and judge their own experience of New Opportunities Fund training to be unsatisfactory. ICT in mathematics is very thin. One teacher has expertise and uses ICT for tessellations and graph plotting. The mathematics department is still awaiting training, though ICT has been expected to be a component of mathematics for around 12 years. The humanities block has a new ICT area and history teachers have been trained and are enthusiastic about developing the areas use with pupils. Discussions with pupils indicate that they consider there is no ICT in mathematics, French, or physical education as well as science, though it is used to some extent in other subjects. Year 10 pupils criticised the lack of ICT opportunities in their year.
148. Able pupils in ICT lessons, by Year 9, can access business class word processing, spreadsheet and presentation software well and integrate it into their work to produce good presentations. Database work is a little limited and relies heavily on software encyclopaedia or web searches. Like their peers in Year 11 they lack independence and discrimination in the use of ICT; they follow instructions and are sometimes creative but are not inventive. Able Year 11 pupils should certainly be approaching this. Less able pupils show less flair, follow instructions more closely and are uncertain how to refine searches to avoid wasting time or getting an incorrect response, for example searching for 'virus' in the Year 9 project on computer viruses and then reading screen text about 'Aids'. Year 11 pupils are very similar to their Year 9 peers; they can do similar things, as they had less experience of ICT when in Years 7 to 9 and only use computers in some subjects in Year 10.
149. Both the attitudes and behaviour of pupils are variable, particularly in Year 11. In Years 7 to 9 they range from very occasionally poor to frequently excellent. In Year 11 they range from unsatisfactory to excellent. This range is due in part to the nature of the teaching. Teachers' experience, expertise and giving the right level of work promote

good attitudes. Teachers being slow to get started on the practical aspect of the work and being unclear about expectations do not. Neither is it helpful to place an unprepared and inexperienced teacher with a significant number of difficult pupils and pupils with special educational needs, and provide no support. On balance attitudes are good and behaviour is satisfactory, but where a significant minority of pupils in a class behave poorly, all pupils in the class learn unsatisfactorily or poorly.

150. The teaching in ICT lessons is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Year 11 where there is some unsatisfactory teaching too. In all years there is a significant amount of very good teaching and some excellent teaching. In Years 7 to 9 strengths in the teaching are teachers' knowledge and understanding and the teaching of numeracy. There are no major weaknesses, but the management of pupils, through lack of experience, occasionally slips, and the use of assessment to correctly identify the potential and needs of individual pupils is underdeveloped. In Year 11 the unsatisfactory management of some difficult classes and the work produced by pupils indicate that teaching methods are not always satisfactory and teachers' expectations, especially of pupils in lower ability sets, are too low, particularly for the competent pupils within those sets. Pupils' learning follows the pattern of teaching: good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Year 11. However, too many pupils, particularly in middle and lower sets, do not show sufficient independence of thought or action in their work; pupils with special educational needs do not progress as well as they might and talented pupils or potentially very able pupils are not stretched enough.
151. In an excellent lesson in Year 8 excellent relationships inspired pupils to make a real intellectual effort in their work on 'The Great Plague'. The integration of spreadsheets into a presentation package lifted standards and was indicative of the high level of challenge created by the teacher. This challenge was reinforced all through the lesson as the teacher supported pairs of pupils working at a very good pace, intermingling praise with "but" and "what if?" to promote further refinement to pupils' work. An unsatisfactory lesson in Year 11 took too much time to get started on any practical work so already disaffected boys became more disruptive and there was a lack of clear focus to the lesson. The teacher put in quite a lot of effort but to little effect, the pupils effectively learnt nothing. Another lesson with significant weaknesses was marred by insufficient support and expertise in dealing with recalcitrant boys and other pupils with special educational needs. Too much time had to be taken trying to address problems and although the teacher used the school's behaviour management system it proved ineffective.
152. Leadership and management in the subject are good and there is a clear vision of the direction ICT should move in to approach best practice. Very good use is beginning to be made of a new assessment scheme, which informs pupils clearly about what they are and are not competent at. Significant contributions have been made to a summer school for gifted and talented pupils, involving a feeder school; training of teachers from feeder schools and from Bilton High has been undertaken. Very good use has been made of National Grid for Learning money, for example to purchase computer projectors that are used very well to support teaching in the classroom. Other money has been used to lease a number of laptops to help teachers develop their ICT skills.
153. Despite problems with staffing and technical support progress since the last report has been good. Standards in ICT in Years 7 to 9 are better. More work with computers is still needed in some subject areas and teaching support is still needed in lower ability ICT classes.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision for modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards are improving.
- The teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Assessment procedures are good.
- The curriculum area is well led and managed.
- The monitoring of work in the subject is thorough.

Areas to be improved

- Speaking skills are unsatisfactory.
- The attainment of boys.
- Planning for the improvement of the examination grades of higher attaining pupils.
- The use of readers and new technology.

154. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 indicate standards are below national expectations. There is a trend of improvement at the same rate as is found nationally. Girls do significantly better than boys. At the end of Year 11, by which time a substantial number of pupils no longer study a modern foreign language, results in French at grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below the national average. They were average when compared with results in other secondary modern schools. Results in 2001 were similar, but there has been a trend of improvement since the previous inspection. Girls again do better than boys, the difference in 2001 being far greater than is found nationally. Boys' results are very low compared with the national average for boys. Results for a smaller number of pupils in German were below the national average in 2000, but there was a sharp improvement in 2001 due to a significant rise in the grades achieved by girls. Results in 2001 exceeded the national average for 2000, with girls doing far better than boys. In both languages the number of pupils gaining the higher grades, A* and A, well below the national average. In 2000, pupils did less well in French and German than in almost all their other subjects. However, all candidates gained a grade across the full range A*-G, showing that pupils with special educational needs who completed the course gained satisfactory grades. A small number of pupils gained a Secondary Certificate of Language Learning.
155. Evidence from lessons and other work in French indicates that standards in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory and improving further. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Higher attaining pupils, beginning to learn German in Year 9, make satisfactory progress in the limited time available. Pupils acquire knowledge of vocabulary and learn grammatical rules steadily, so that they are able to identify key points in language they read or hear. Most pupils have difficulty with recorded extracts but understand better when teachers read texts. To some extent this is because pupils do not hear enough French or German, as some teachers use too much English to conduct lessons. This also affects pupils' oral standards. Pupils exchange a small amount of information in brief utterances, but pronunciation is often poor, especially in French. There is little evidence of increased competence or confidence over the key stage. Progress in written work is better. All pupils write short descriptive passages about themselves, their family and their local area. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils begin to include a range of tenses and opinions, for instance in giving an account of a holiday. Accuracy is not as good as content, but pupils of all abilities convey some information in writing. Pupils with special

educational needs make satisfactory progress in special sets in Years 7 and 8, and in more integrated teaching groups in Year 9.

156. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average in French and average in German. Pupils currently in these years make satisfactory progress in French, maintaining but not improving upon standards attained by the end of Year 9. Higher attaining pupils taking German instead of French make good progress. However, there is little evidence of high achievement in either language. Speaking remains the least developed skill. Pupils, even in higher attaining groups, are diffident about speaking aloud, and exchanges remain brief and inaccurate for the most part, though better in German. Pupils lack the ability to converse freely on prescribed topics, and need considerable direction. On the other hand, they benefit from clear guidance and models to improve the quality of their writing as they prepare for written coursework for GCSE. Though content remains better than complexity or accuracy, pupils write reasonably well about work experience, past and planned holidays and to promote their local area. The ability to communicate successfully in writing is less secure when support is removed. Reading is the best developed skill. Most pupils retain sufficient vocabulary to understand increasingly lengthy and challenging passages in both French and German. Listening skills are not as sound as reading skills, again reflecting the extent to which pupils are used to hearing the foreign language.
157. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The teaching is consistently good to Years 7 to 9, and in German in Years 9 to 11. There is unsatisfactory teaching in one in 15 lessons. This is linked to much more negative attitudes towards learning French in Years 10 and 11. The work now being done by pupils in Years 7 to 9 is much more interesting and stimulating than that done by pupils now in Years 10 and 11 at the same stage. This has improved both attitudes and progress in learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their knowledge of national requirements well to direct pupils' learning. Sadly, too much use is made of English to conduct lessons, often in combination with the foreign language, so that the impact of teachers' subject knowledge on learning is reduced. As a result, pupils pronounce poorly and never make spontaneous use of French or German in lessons. Expectations are not as high as they should be. Planning for activities within lessons is satisfactory. Teaching of basic skills is weak at the moment, because little use is made of ICT. Numbers are used, for instance in prices, but numeracy is not taught as such. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution towards improving pupils' literacy skills. Teaching methods are more varied in lessons for Years 7 to 9. Because of this, pupils enjoy lessons more and make progress in learning. In a Year 7 lesson on learning French numbers, pupils engaged in a range of brisk oral tasks, did some arithmetic in French, then cracked a number code to reveal the names of famous people. They heard the teacher use French consistently, had fun, and consolidated their knowledge. In Years 10 and 11 teaching methods are more constricted by attention to examination requirements, though some examples of brisk and varied work were seen, for example in a Year 11 German lesson on holidays.
158. Management of pupils is usually good, especially where the pace and quality of the work sustain interest and pupils are aware of their progress, although the lack of opportunities for pair and group work suggests that teachers are reluctant to delegate responsibility for their work to pupils. All pupils are satisfactorily integrated into the work, so that pupils from minority ethnic groups, for example, share the same experiences as others, though uneven targeting of questions means that some pupils are insufficiently involved in classwork to ensure that they make the same progress as others. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because lack of interest leads to

poor pupils' behaviour, which impedes the progress of the whole class. However, relationships are usually strong. Teachers have an easy authority, inject humour and encourage pupils to learn. They use time well. Little time is wasted, though occasionally too many activities are attempted, reducing the planned impact on learning. Teachers use available resources well to stimulate learning, especially overhead projectors, though they do not use resources for personal reading or computers to vary and broaden learning experiences. Marking is good. Most teachers add helpful comments and pupils generally know what they need to do to improve. Homework supports and consolidates work done in class, but there is no clear planning of opportunities to extend higher attaining pupils through more demanding tasks.

159. Leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a thorough programme of lesson observation and sampling of pupils' work, which enables teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses and to respond. Assessment information, for example from GCSE results, is carefully analysed and used to plan what pupils learn. Development planning is good and includes strategies to improve the attainment of boys and to implement a scheme for the use of ICT. The curriculum area is aware of its weaknesses and does its best to address them. There is shared commitment to raising standards. Teachers have the capacity to improve speaking skills. Standards in the subject are well supported by participation in trips to France and Germany and by the good display of work within classrooms, though teachers do not benefit from having an area to prepare work and teaching materials. A Spanish class is available to all pupils at lunchtime. Most criticisms made in the previous inspection report have been addressed, and progress has been evaluated.
160. Given rising standards, more consistent quality in teaching and better attitudes related to more stimulating provision, there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, especially in view of difficulties in attracting and retaining staff throughout the intervening period.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The department has very good accommodation and is well equipped.
- Pupils show positive attitudes.
- The range of opportunities of extra-curricular work and instrumental tuition is good.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient improvement since the last inspection.
- The leadership and management of music are unsatisfactory.
- Standards are below average.
- The provision for pupils' personal development in music is underdeveloped.

161. Pupils enter the school with varying musical experience. Some pupils come with above average experience but most pupils are of below average attainment in music and teachers' assessments confirm this. Standards in Years 7 and 8, where pupils receive two lessons a week, are approaching the national expectation, but in Year 9 standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Most pupils are average but some talented pupils attain higher levels. In 2000, GCSE examination results at all levels have been below average when compared with results in all schools nationally but have been broadly in line with those of secondary modern

schools. The 2001 results showed an improvement on those of previous years.

162. Pupils sing infrequently and insufficiently after Year 7 and do not sing as a class in GCSE work; this is a major weakness as pupils do not experience or enjoy an appropriate range of repertoire and develop their music reading skills. Pupils keep good time when playing instruments in ensemble but have insufficient experience of instruments other than keyboards and little opportunity to use their own instruments in ensemble. Performing skills and music reading skills are unsatisfactory. In composing, students have some imaginative ideas but only the most musically experienced know how to use devices and structures to develop pieces confidently. Pupils listen respectfully to examples played on audio and to each other when performing, but the technical vocabulary they use in appraising is underdeveloped; their general musical knowledge, for example of instruments, composers, forms, structures and well-known pieces of music, is below average.
163. In GCSE work, standards in Year 10 are broadly average but standards in Year 11 are below those expected. There is a very wide range of attainment in the group. Pupils' performing skills are average and about a third of the group disadvantage themselves as they receive no instrumental tuition. Similarly, more than a half disadvantage themselves by not taking part in the extra-curricular opportunities offered. The most musically experienced show good understanding of devices and structures in composing and create imaginative and original compositions, but many find the work difficult because of their lack of basic skills; pupils are disadvantaged by the lack of computers and other music technologies in the department which are now being introduced. Pupils listen well to recorded extracts and to each other but vocabulary used in appraising is too limited and general musical knowledge is unsatisfactory. Because some pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory in Year 11, especially of boys, overall achievement in GCSE work is unsatisfactory. This is often caused by the poor behaviour of a minority of boys.
164. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers show secure subject knowledge so that they teach confidently. Instructions are clear, the teaching is energetic and pupils understand the objectives. Schemes and lesson content are thoughtfully put together but major weaknesses are the lack of sufficient singing in Years 7 to 9 lessons and the over-reliance on keyboard work. In the best lessons, expectations are appropriate and lessons are matched to the needs of different levels of pupils but expectations are too low in a minority of lessons. Higher attaining pupils need to be stretched more. Pupils with special needs are well integrated and make similar progress to the other pupils. Lessons have clear structures and are well organised; the management of pupils is good so that most lessons are orderly. As a result, relationships are good and pupils are usually good humoured and work well. They enjoy practical work but dislike writing in music. Lessons start briskly and maintain a good pace so that students remain focused but there is insufficient use of visual aids such as an overhead projector, illustrations or classroom display. The assessment of pupils is supportive and shows them how they can improve. Appropriate use is made of homework to extend pupils' learning. Most pupils are attentive and work productively; they are supportive of each other and keen to answer questions and the most enthusiastic avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the department and musical opportunities outside school.
165. Staff work hard and are committed but the leadership and management of music are unsatisfactory because not enough time is allocated to the task. There is some monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance, but these need strengthening. Documentation is very much out of date and the music development plan does not

focus on the main priorities of raising standards. The department has plans to introduce a new assessment scheme, revise the schemes of work to bring them into line with Curriculum 2000 and make them more relevant to the pupils. The contribution of music to pupils' personal development is underdeveloped. There are inadequate links with other schools, including the primary schools. Music accommodation is very good and supports work well by providing good facilities, but desks in the main room inhibit work, limit the opportunities to make music in the classroom and encourage an unsatisfactory academic approach. Keyboard resources are good and support pupils' learning well, but there is a need for additional tuned percussion instruments such as xylophones and glockenspiels to enhance creative work.

166. Forty-three boys and 57 girls receive instrumental lessons from ten visiting teachers; this is about seven per cent of the school's population and is an average number. Standards are broadly average. The teaching is satisfactory and some very good teaching was observed in cello tuition. The progress and achievement of pupils are satisfactory in relation to their ages and the time they have received tuition; the keener students make good use of their practice books. The monitoring of pupils' progress needs strengthening. The curriculum insufficiently supports instrumental tuition and it makes little impact on the quality of pupils' musical experiences in the classroom. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is good and includes choir, chamber choir, guitar group, jazz combo, band and orchestra. Standards (as seen live and on video) and the quality of teaching are good and sometimes excellent, as for example in jazz combo. The school promotes regular concerts and musicals, such as *Guys and Dolls*, involving large numbers of pupils. Music groups perform in assemblies at the end of terms but the regular use of music in assemblies and visits to concerts are constrained by the pressures on staff. The Normandy Band visits the school regularly and a South American ensemble, *Caliche*, have also visited. These visits and those from county ensembles broaden the experience of the pupils. Groups perform frequently at festivals and local arts and charity events. The jazz combo has taken part in many events out of the area and several individual pupils make music in groups ranging from the County Youth Orchestra to local rock bands. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, the support of parents and the enthusiasm of the musicians whose performances and successes bring great credit to the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Above average standards are reached in GCSE.
- Good teaching sets high expectations, especially in GCSE groups.
- An excellent programme of extra-curricular activities gives around half the pupils the opportunity to achieve at a high level and an even higher proportion of pupils to compete in inter-form events.
- An enthusiastic and committed team of staff are very well managed and led.

Areas for improvement

- Short lessons and a limited number of lessons in Year 11 restrict pupils' achievement.
- Girls' standards in games are below average.
- Inadequate and crowded changing areas and their distance from working areas restrict the time available in already short lessons.

167. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are broadly average, and pupils' achievement in relation to their average standards on entry to the school is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Above average standards are reached in GCSE and pupils' achievement in GCSE is good. Good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes contribute to good learning in lessons but the short time in each lesson restricts their achievement over time. The outstanding extra-curricular provision helps pupils to achieve well, particularly those pupils taking GCSE.
168. The 2000 GCSE results were above average compared with results in all schools nationally and compared with those of modern schools. Boys outperformed girls but the numbers of girls taking the examination was relatively small. Results in 2001 have improved and are likely to be well above average. No pupil gained less than an E grade.
169. Standards of work in Year 9 are broadly average. Boys reach above average standards in football and rugby but girls' performance in games is below average. In football, boys control the ball well and they carry out a number of different turns successfully in practice and in a game. Higher attaining boys perform more advanced turns with confidence. In rugby, boys pass and catch successfully in complex passing drills. Girls' skills are weaker in hockey and netball. Girls know the techniques and can describe them but their performance of them is inconsistent both in practice and in games. Pupils know how to warm up and, on occasions, take some responsibility for this part of the lesson. Pupils evaluate demonstrations and performance in response to teachers' questions but they are less confident when talking to each other about performance. Pupils' achievement in relation to their average standards at the start of Year 7 is satisfactory overall. Pupils benefit from good teaching in lessons but because the lessons are very short, sometimes only 25 minutes, then it is difficult to consolidate skills, knowledge and understanding, and consequently achievement is no better than satisfactory overall. Girls particularly need more time to consolidate their physical skills.
170. Standards of work in Year 11 are broadly average. Standards of work in GCSE groups are above average. Boys perform at an above average standard in badminton. They use a good range of shots effectively in play and they use various doubles strategies appropriately. They analyse performance and suggest improvements. Girls' performance is not so advanced. Their execution of strokes is less secure and their use of strategies in play is at a basic level. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of GCSE theory. In devising a series of revision tasks for each other they reveal a secure understanding of most aspects of theory.
171. Those pupils in Years 10 and 11 not taking GCSE reach broadly average standards. Year 11 boys use advanced strategies in football and have secure skills. In hockey boys' skills are less advanced but they show a reasonable understanding of tactics. They make use of wings and carry out set pieces strategically. Girls' performance in badminton continues to be below average but their performance in trampolining and dance is satisfactory. The short lessons and the limited curricular time in Year 11 continue to have a negative impact on pupils' achievements. Despite good teaching in lessons, girls especially do not get the chance to consolidate what they have learnt.
172. Around half of pupils benefit from involvement in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities which includes clubs, team practices and GCSE revision sessions. Around one sixth of the pupils represent the school at county, district and sometimes national level in a variety of sports and they reach outstanding standards. The additional experience of these activities and access to good quality teaching and coaching, help

these pupils, particularly those taking GCSE, to achieve well.

173. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the teachers know the pupils' needs well and they adapt lesson activities and equipment appropriately. Additional support is targeted carefully in lessons such that pupils with physical disabilities are included in lessons and make good progress.
174. Pupils have good attitudes towards the subject and behaviour in lessons is very good which helps to promote good learning in lessons. Apart from girls in Year 11, participation rates in lessons are high. Relationships are good and pupils respond well to the department's strong commitment to fair play and good sporting behaviour. Pupils work very well in groups and pairs in both practical and theory lessons.
175. Teaching and pupils' learning are good overall. In two thirds of lessons teaching is good and there were no unsatisfactory lessons. The teaching of GCSE is especially strong. The most effective learning takes place where teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort, improvement and behaviour. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils based on a mutual respect. Teachers manage and organise classes efficiently such that pupils know what is expected of them and the pupils respond well to good humour and high expectations. Teachers generally use a good variety of approaches that ensure that pupils maintain interest and concentration. For example, in a Year 10 theory lesson on the heart and blood, pupils answered questions on their homework, read from the textbook, organised cards with related facts into categories in groups and wrote down facts in their own words. Pupils responded well to this variety of activities and the challenge of time restraints, and learning was rapid.
176. Pupils know what they are working on and whether they have improved or not because teachers set out clear lesson aims and share them with the pupils. Throughout lessons teachers refer back to the lesson aims and they ensure that pupils are aware of whether they are making good enough progress towards them or not. Teachers' good knowledge of their subject is evident in the advice they give to pupils. Teacher's planning is detailed and, for most lessons, takes account of different levels of prior experience and attainment. In many lessons higher attaining pupils make good progress because they are given more demanding tasks and activities. For example, in a Year 7 rugby lesson, more advanced players carried out a practice which involved carrying out a series of rucks, whereas other pupils stuck to one ruck and recycle of the ball. Pupils generally maintain good levels of physical activity in these short lessons because the teachers ensure that they are physically active. However, in 25 minutes it is difficult to consolidate skills and then use them effectively in game situations and consequently achievement overall is no better than satisfactory.
177. Where satisfactory or good teaching has features to improve, pupils not taking a physical part in lessons are not learning as much as they should. These pupils are not included in question and answer sessions or in observing demonstrations very often, so that when they are given tasks, they have not gained sufficient knowledge to enable them to carry them out. Pupils are less confident when discussing their work with each other because they do not have enough chances to do this. In some lessons opportunities to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are overlooked. Learning is not always broken down into sufficiently small steps to ensure that lower attaining pupils make progress in understanding difficult theoretical concepts.
178. Very good leadership and management have a clear focus on raising standards and

supporting and improving the quality of teaching. This relatively young and committed department set high expectations and they are determined to succeed.

179. There have been major changes in staffing since the previous inspection and improvement overall is good. Teaching and the standards at GCSE have improved. However, the changing rooms have not yet improved. The restraints of the short lessons together with inadequate changing spaces result in an unacceptable loss of time for teaching which has a negative impact on pupils' progress overall, despite the high levels of commitment of the staff and overall good teaching.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **excellent**.

Strengths

- The high quality of the teaching.
- The very high standards of attainment.
- The promotion of thinking skills.
- Independent research and learning.
- Excellent leadership and management.

Areas for development

- Monitoring the pace of work for pupils in lower ability groups.

180. Standards in GCSE improved significantly in the higher grades A*-C from broadly average in 1999 to well above average for all and similar modern schools in 2000. There was no GCSE course in this subject in 2001.
181. In the work seen during the inspection the standards that pupils achieve at the end of Year 9 are well above the expectation of the Agreed Syllabus for the vast majority of pupils. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well as a result of pupils' studying religious education in an academic way. There is a philosophical approach. Pupils are taught to think for themselves in all years. In Year 7 they examine ideas such as "What is religion?" and "Why study religious education?". They can define both religion and superstition clearly and can explain concepts of fear and reason as they are relevant in these contexts. They study the basic teachings of the six major world religions and can make links and comparisons between these religions. In Year 8 pupils study the Bar Mitzvah ceremony to learn concepts of commitment and responsibility. They can link these concepts to Christian teaching. In Year 9 pupils examine the arguments for and against the existence of God. They study the classic arguments including those of Thomas Aquinas and Charles Darwin. They take a pride in learning and explaining the correct vocabulary such as omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent in relation to god. There are some very impressive independent studies by pupils in Year 9. These include: a professional level website on Christianity entitled 'Dying to Know You'; an outstanding video on the crucifixion and resurrection; a cassette tape of a rap on the life of Jesus that combines a subtle use of humour with the appropriate reverence; and, research on the life of Jesus for a programme 'This is Your Life – Jesus Bar Joseph' that was produced as a video and presented to their group. All these independent studies show exemplary standards of work.
182. Standards in Year 11 GCSE are well above average and the very good progress and achievement seen in Years 7 to 9 are maintained. Pupils have completed their coursework on capital punishment and are considering the nature of love and the

complex nature of emotion. They examine the variety of perceptions associated with love in different situations and explore complexities such as possessiveness and jealousy. They learn the Christian teachings from St. Paul and the Sermon on the Mount. They can define and explain the different types of love from Greek definitions of 'eros', 'phelos' and 'agape'. A very impressive aspect of this study is that the teacher structures this subject matter so that pupils can learn the concepts in a step-by-step analysis and apply the skills of analysis in their answers. They are taught to use language concisely and correctly, distinguishing between descriptive words such as 'normal' and 'usual'. Year 10 pupils are taught to examine the concept of aggression in a similarly analytical way. There are excellent strategies to make pupils think for themselves about cause and effect. There is good use of drama and suspense to enable pupils to confront and illustrate their own prejudices. Pupils learn the differences between objective and subjective judgements and understand the use of evidence.

183. Core studies in religious education for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 are done in equally good depth and with good provision for independent research and learning. Pupils study issues that encompass moral and social issues such as abortion and euthanasia, religion and the media, or religion, wealth and poverty. Marriage is studied with appropriate links to other religions such as marriage in the Christian and Hindu faiths.
184. Teaching is very good overall. The majority of lessons are taken by one teacher who is the subject manager, and three part-time teachers. There are two lessons in Year 7 that are taken by the class teacher where the teaching for these groups is arranged in an integrated primary structure. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent. In the best lessons there are high expectations and the subject is taught in a serious academic way. The teachers' specialist knowledge is well used to make the lessons interesting and to enable pupils to gain depth in knowledge and understanding. Thinking skills and the skills of analysis are taught formally in a philosophical way. Argument is promoted seriously as part of the analysis. These skills can be applied to other areas of pupils' study in school. Teaching that is satisfactory is occasionally done at a too fast pace for the understanding of the pupils or they are not given enough time to engage in the exercises. There is good support for literacy in all lessons. Pupils are encouraged to use language precisely.
185. Pupils enjoy and respect this subject. They are attentive to their teachers and are well behaved and serious in class. They answer questions readily and with a sense of pride. They maintain a reflective atmosphere throughout lessons.
186. Management is excellent. Documentation and schemes of work are exemplary. The school's work has been included and used by the local education authority's Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. The subject manager and another teacher in the subject have received international recognition for their work. Their work on 'suffering and reconciliation' has been published in an international academic journal and noted specifically for its quality and because it involves pupils in research in the community. The most significant aspect of subject is the promotion of research and independent learning and the presentation of this research in a range of ways such as video, tape, poetry, board games and art, all using ICT to very good effect. Visiting speakers are invited to give first hand experiences in the areas studied.
187. Religious education was described as "a strong subject" at the time of the last inspection. This strength is maintained and extended. The school now provides adequate time for religious education in Year 10 but Year 11 still has only half the

recommended time, although this will be rectified next year.

188. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by examining these aspects formally as part of all units of work. The spiritual arguments for the existence of God are studied in depth as are the moral and social aspects of life and death and crime and punishment. The cultural aspects of the major world religions are taught as an integral part of the subject.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

GNVQs BUSINESS STUDIES and HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision for GNVQ Business Studies and Health and Social Care is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good results for candidates in 2001.
- High standards in current Health and Social Care and in Business Studies Intermediate classes.
- Very good teaching and learning.
- A high degree of independence in the ways pupils learn.

Areas for improvement

- The attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils at Business Studies Foundation level.
- Better use of available data for tracking pupils' achievement and progress across these courses.

189. Numbers on the school's GNVQ courses in recent years have increased to a point where results are now statistically valid. In 2000, very small numbers of students took any course except the Business Studies Intermediate level, where almost all attained merits or distinction grades. Health and Social Care numbers were small but results good. In 2001, three quarters of students taking Business Studies Intermediate attained merits and distinctions, with about a third attaining distinction. About 40 per cent of girls entering attained this level. Very few did not attain a pass grade. Results were similarly high for Business Studies Foundation candidates with similar creditably high grades for girls. On the Health and Social Care courses, very few boys took the qualification in 2001, and of the girls taking Intermediate level nearly half got distinction grades, with again, about three quarters reaching merit and distinction level. Those taking the Foundation level achieved an average spread of grades, lower only because the higher attaining pupils in this group are always encouraged to attempt the Intermediate level instead. Only those pupils whose attendance levels did not match the school's expectations did not achieve well in the subjects. Overall, these results represent very good achievements for individual pupils and for groups in both disciplines.
190. Work seen on inspection in both areas matches the high attainment and achievement levels described above. The course specifications have recently changed to include greater emphasis on examination aspects which are not always pupils' greatest strengths. Recent unit tests are not showing the same high level of attainment as pupils' portfolios of coursework. Pupils can, however, re-sit these tests now that they have more experience and confidence. It is likely that their examination grades will then more nearly match high coursework levels. Attainment in Business Studies Intermediate level is very high. In the Year 11 Business Studies Intermediate level

course, for example, pupils have set up a 'company', with all departments necessary to operate in the quasi-real world of business, which forms the basis of their present studies. The current objectives are to source, market, sell and account for the profit from jubilee mugs and bookmarks to celebrate 25 years of the school's life. Pupils understand exceptionally well the functions of business departments as they go about organising this 'real' project, and can use a high level of business language to describe their objectives and operations.

191. Year 10 Business Studies Intermediate level pupils are also achieving well at this early stage of their course. In a lesson about gross domestic product and economic sectors, pupils were learning extremely rapidly about these topics, which were completely new to most of them. Pupils on the current Business Studies Foundation level course in Year 10 are working at a much more average level of attainment, in line with course expectations. The Health and Social Care group in Year 10 always starts on the assumption that pupils will be able to attempt the Intermediate level, and this year, very few pupils' current work falls below that level. Pupils working on a project about the use and abuse of prescription, over-the-counter and illegal drugs, for example, showed good understanding of the physiological and psychological effects of these on the body and mind. Depending on the results of unit tests, the whole cohort looks set to achieve very high levels of attainment in both current years.
120. Pupils' attitudes to these subjects are very good indeed, with only a few instances in Business Studies Foundation level where less positive attitudes and a degree of unsatisfactory behaviour from a small minority of pupils lead them to achieve less well than they otherwise might. Despite open access to these courses, pupils tend to choose gender stereotypical options, girls opting for Health and Social Care and boys for Engineering, another GNVQ option not inspected in detail.
121. The teaching of these two GNVQ subjects is very good. Two excellent lessons were seen in Business Studies. Here, pupils' learning was excellently facilitated through a skilful mix of brisk pace, high levels of challenge and very effective use of resources, including ICT by both teacher and pupils. An extremely shrewd knowledge of the different needs of individual pupils leads to pupils of all abilities progressing very well indeed in their knowledge and understanding. Very effective use of real examples also greatly helps pupils' learning, for example by taking advantage of a visitor's own financial documents for their database lessons on profit and loss accounts. Pupils learn well from Business Studies teachers' very good subject knowledge, even where teaching is by less experienced staff. Very good liaison between learning support assistants and teachers also helps pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in the subject.
122. In Health and Social Care, excellent planning for the needs of pupils of all abilities leads to very good teaching and learning based on equally good subject knowledge. Key skills are very well integrated into plans and pupils understand these well as a seamless part of their course. Pupils' easy access to the ICT in the Health and Social Care room means that they can use computers at any point as an integral part of their learning. Pupils in Year 10 researching their drugs-related project were accessing the Internet very competently, finding and synthesising information well to use it in their own work. In both courses, pupils respond very well to their teachers' expectations that they will work independently, as these girls in Health and Social Care were doing.
123. The management of these two courses is very good. Assessment and marking are very effective and form the basis of detailed feedback to individuals, who thus know well what to do to improve their work. These aspects conform fully to the rigours of

external expectations. Departments do not yet make full use of data available to track pupils' progress through these courses, to establish precise progress and achievement for individuals or cohorts. This would be useful, particularly for those pupils whose attitudes and immaturity give cause for concern, as it would identify any under-achievement more clearly. The courses suffer somewhat from their own success, as classes are sometimes too big for the limited spaces available in the current accommodation. The Health and Social Care groups in particular are located in a space which is only just adequate for the needs of the course.