

INSPECTION REPORT

BRAMCOTE PARK SCHOOL

Beeston, Nottingham

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122853

Headteacher: Mr Philip Crompton

Reporting inspector: Kathy MacFarlane
3472

Dates of inspection: 4 – 8 February 2002

Inspection number: 180728

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bramcote
Beeston
Nottingham

Postcode: NG9 3GD

Telephone number: 0115 9130013

Fax number: 0115 9130012

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Isabel Thomas

Date of previous inspection: October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3472	Kathy MacFarlane	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19692	Bob Folks	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19599	Carmen Markham	Team inspector		The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
25072	Eunice Greenslade	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Mathematics	
31463	Joseph Walsh	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
31255	Derek Williamson	Team inspector	Science	
4915	Clive Williams	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
31296	Paul Brennan	Team inspector	Art and design	
32089	Ann Likeman	Team inspector	Design and technology	

17832	Stephen O'Hara	Team inspector	Geography	
-------	----------------	----------------	-----------	--

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18681	David Thompson	Team inspector	History	
31578	Peter Cummings	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
24056	Barbara Lawson	Team inspector	Music	
23947	Keith Massett	Team inspector	Physical education	
10072	Dilwyn Hunt	Team inspector	Religious education	
1682	Liz Godman	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
32082	Bill Lockwood	Team inspector	English (Key Stage 3)	
19135	Derek Ebbage	Team inspector	Mathematics (Key Stage 3)	

The inspection contractor was:

Staffordshire and Midlands Consortium

The Kingston Centre
 Fairway
 Stafford
 ST16 3TW

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
 Inspection Quality Division
 The Office for Standards in Education

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 12
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	13 - 17
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	17 - 19
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	19 - 22
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	22 - 24
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	24 - 25
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	25 - 28
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	28 - 29
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	30 - 35
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	36 - 65

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bramcote Park is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged eleven to sixteen. The school has 609 pupils, this is well below the average size for secondary schools nationally. Since 1997 the school has been steadily increasing in size despite the loss of its sixth form. Bramcote Park School is situated in the Bramcote ward in the district of Broxtowe but mainly takes pupils from the three primary schools in Stapleford North which is designated as an area of social disadvantage. It has a low percentage of adults with a higher education qualification. In addition a growing number of pupils attend the school from the inner city area of Nottingham. Approximately 20% of pupils live in the inner city. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average at 19.5% and the percentage of pupils speaking English as a second language is higher than in most schools at 4.6%. One out of eight pupils are from ethnic minorities. The percentage of pupils having special educational needs is well above the national average at 34.9% and is steadily rising but the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school continues to be below average and the school has been identified as a 'School in Challenging Circumstances' by the local education authority.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school with many very good features. The overall standard of attainment, although below the national average, is improving and is high compared to schools serving similar localities. The progress made by pupils, starting from a low base, is good. The quality of teaching is good, with much that is very good. The leadership and management of the school are excellent. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Although attendance remains low overall good progress has been made. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher, governors, senior staff and middle managers manage the school very well and provide excellent leadership.
- The whole school community has a clear, shared vision for the school. This has a powerful impact on progress.
- A very committed staff provide good teaching and enable good learning in all years.
- Pupils want to come to school. They behave well and learn.
- A very caring staff provide good support for pupils.
- The Student Support Centre is an excellent resource, which has a positive effect on the progress of all pupils.
- The library provides a very good learning environment which is well used.
- Improvements in standards of attainment at the age of 14 are good.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment overall but particularly the achievement of girls, at the age of 16 years.
- The opportunities for pupils' to develop investigative and independent research skills.
- The consistency in implementing new strategies to challenge the more able pupils..
- The use of pupils' skills in information and communication technology to support other subjects of the curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Bramcote Park School has significantly improved since the last inspection in October 1997. Much of this improvement has taken place in the last two years since the appointment of the new headteacher. Standards have continued to rise and results at the end of Year 9 are now well above the national average in English. In mathematics and science improvement is rising faster than national improvement so the gap is closing. GCSE results have improved with the national trend but there is still a gap between what the school is achieving and average results nationally. Leadership is now a strength of the school and governors are fully involved in the process. The school now has a vision of the sort of school it wants to be. It has very significant strengths in the way that it cares for pupils and the new Student Support Centre is central to the improvement in this area. There is a strong climate for learning in the school based on the belief that everyone has the right to achieve their potential. The school has also successfully tackled attendance and behaviour issues and this has helped the school to improve. The requirements to have a daily act of collective worship and to teach religious education to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 have still not been complied with.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Standards in national tests and examinations are below national averages at the ages of 14 and 16 years with the exception of English at age 14 which is well above the national average.

Standards are improving rapidly in Years 7-9 where the gap with the national average is closing. English is the strongest subject at the end of Year 9. Pupils also make good progress in mathematics and science from Years 7-9 and their results, although below the national average, are average in comparison to similar schools. Standards in literacy are average. This indicates good progress as pupils enter the school with low levels of literacy. Standards in numeracy are above

average. Pupils enter the school with average standards in numeracy and they make good progress in the school.

There has been a steady improvement over the last four years in the GCSE results at the end of Year 11. Although results are below the national average, they are average when compared to similar schools. Ambitious targets have been set for pupils' attainment in GCSE in 2002 and 2003 and standards seen in lessons suggest that these are achievable. Much work seen in lessons was in line with national averages. Considerable strengths were seen in English, information and communication technology, physical education, history, geography, Spanish and science. Girls are, however, performing less well than boys.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and benefit from additional support provided by the school. Progress made by more able pupils is unsatisfactory as too few pupils achieve the higher grades with the exception of English at the end of Year 9 in 2001.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to learning and take advantage of the activities provided. The majority are keen to learn and are proud of their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The majority of pupils behave well in lessons as well as around the school at break and lunchtimes. There are a small number who cause problems but in most cases they are dealt with effectively. Behaviour has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in the school are good. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to undertake positions of responsibility and to become more actively involved in the life of the school.
Attendance	Well below the national average but improving. Recently attendance has risen to just below the national average, a significant increase since the last inspection.

The majority of pupils respond well to good teaching. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and contribute significantly to pupils' learning and to the caring ethos within the school. Low levels of attendance remain an issue for the school. Despite improvements, it is an obstacle to some pupils' performance and a constraint on the school's performance overall.

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 quality of teaching is good. During the inspection, of the 126 lessons seen, teaching was almost always at least satisfactory. It was good or better in four out of five lessons and very good or excellent in almost a quarter of lessons. Overall teaching was slightly better in Years 7-9 than in Years 10 and 11.

Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. They plan lessons thoroughly, making it clear to pupils what they are expected to do to be successful. They have high expectations of both standards of work and behaviour. Relationships in lessons are good and the majority of teachers demonstrate good classroom management. Use of homework is generally satisfactory. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and sometimes very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' needs and believe they can be successful. However, there are occasions where the work set does not meet the needs of the more able pupils. In some areas of the curriculum pupils are given insufficient opportunity to take part in research based and investigative activities. Pupils respond well to effective teaching and make good progress overall.

The teaching of mathematics is good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in English and science. In Years 10 and 11, it is good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. In other subjects teaching is good overall with the exception of information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 and art and design in Years 7, 8 and 9 where it is very good.

The reinforcement of literacy skills in different subjects is good and makes a positive impact on standards. The teaching of numeracy and information and communication technology in mathematics and information and communication technology lessons is good. However these skills are not reinforced in other subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is generally broad and balanced but does not meet statutory requirements for religious education, design and technology and a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11. The school provides a good range of activities and experiences designed to meet the needs and interests of pupils of all abilities and backgrounds.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Support staff in the Student Support Centre are very effective and provide for a whole range of needs, ensuring that pupils are very well cared for and included in all aspects of school life.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few pupils requiring help are well supported and make good progress.

Aspect (contd)	Comment
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is an effective personal and social education programme. Opportunities for social and moral development are good and for cultural development they are satisfactory. Although there are clear plans to improve pupils' spiritual development these have not yet been implemented.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has a very good pastoral system and Student Support Centre. The pupils are very well looked after. Their progress is monitored closely and appropriate intervention occurs if problems arise.

The school offers a rich and interesting curriculum that has at its centre the learning needs of the pupils. As a result, alongside the more traditional curriculum, pupils in Years 10 and 11 can study vocational and work related courses. In order to study the new courses some pupils choose not to study a modern foreign language or a design and technology subject during these years. All pupils study information and communication technology throughout Years 7 to 11. There is an effective personal and social education programme in place but the school is less effective in developing pupils' spiritual awareness. The curriculum contributes positively to the quality of education all pupils receive.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent leadership and management. The management team has a very strong vision for the school and they have the support of the whole school community. There is a shared commitment to improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors share the school's vision and aims. They know the school well and take an active part in the management of the school. They have a very effective committee system. Arrangements for monitoring the school's work are thorough. However, they need to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The work of each subject area is reviewed thoroughly and systematically. The school's standards and results are evaluated effectively. Findings are well used in planning further developments.
The strategic use of resources	Effective and well documented use of resources. The school's improvement plan is very good and funding is well used to enable the targets to be met. Good use is made of a range of funding.

The level of staffing in the school is good and it enables an appropriate curriculum to be taught. Accommodation and the provision of learning resources are also good.

The leadership and the management of the school are both excellent. The appointment of the headteacher two years ago has been the key factor in the improvement that has taken place in the school. He has taken a strong lead in creating a culture where work and people are valued in a caring environment. The headteacher, his management team and the governors have a shared commitment to succeed and have the skills and experience to ensure that this happens.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards have improved. • The anti-bullying policy – bullying is dealt with quickly. • The school has improved since the new headteacher arrived – the school is now welcoming and there is a ‘can do’ culture. • The teaching is good. • The school expects their children to work hard. • The school is well led and managed. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive pupils in Year 9. • Inconsistent setting of homework. • The long time to wait for reports in Year 7. • Information about progress.

A small number of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting but 46% of questionnaires were returned. Inspectors support the positive views expressed by the parents. However, the inspection team did not find information about pupils’ progress to be poor. Annual reports to parents are of a good standard. Although there are some inconsistencies in the setting of homework the inspection judgement is that, overall, the provision of homework is satisfactory and supportive of pupils’ learning. Although reports in Year 7 are produced towards the end of the academic year, parents do have the opportunity to attend an end of first term meeting for Year 7. Inspectors recognise that there are a minority of pupils who do sometimes disrupt the learning of others. However, the school has clear procedures for dealing with them.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Overall the achievement of pupils throughout the school is satisfactory. The standards attained by pupils at the age of 14 are improving. English is above the average for all schools in England. Standards in mathematics and science are below the national average for all schools but high in comparison to similar schools. The overall standard attained by pupils at the age of 16 is well below the average for all schools in England but it is average in comparison to schools similar to Bramcote Park. One out of three pupils enter Year 7 with standards of attainment in literacy significantly below average. They make very good progress from this low level as they move through the school.
- 2 A third of pupils enter Year 7 with levels in English that are below the national expectation of Level 4. In mathematics a quarter of these pupils enter the school below Level 4 and in science a fifth of pupils fall below this level. All pupils are assessed during their first term in Year 7 using commercial tests. The results of these tests show that a third of all Year 7 pupils have low literacy skills that make it difficult for them to read and write effectively in all the subjects taught in school.
- 3 In 2001 the proportion of pupils who had reached the expected standard of Level 5 in English by the age of 14 (end of Year 9) was well above the national average for the first time. Nearly half the pupils also achieved the higher Level 6 that is above the national expectation. This demonstrates very good progress since the last inspection when English results were well below the national average. Pupils are making very good progress in English from Years 7-9. Support for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils with English as an additional language makes a good contribution to improved standards. Also an increasing number of subjects are being effective in developing literacy skills. These include information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. Overall pupils are making good progress in literacy and the standard is now satisfactory.
- 4 In 2001 the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 at the age of 14 in national mathematics tests was below the national average but above the average for similar schools. This reflects steady improvement since the last inspection and standards seen in lessons also confirms this. The standards in numeracy within mathematics are at the national average although the work on developing numeracy skills across the curriculum has only just started in the school. However, the number of pupils achieving Level 6 is well below the national average and below the average for similar schools.
- 5 The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 at the age of 14 in the 2001 national science tests shows considerable improvement in comparison to the results at the time of the last inspection. The results are improving at the same rate as the national test results but they are still below the national average and at Level 6 they are well below the national average. In

both science and mathematics the average point scores in the subjects are low as the proportions of pupils reaching Level 6 are below the national average and below those for similar schools. However, pupils were seen to make satisfactory progress in science lessons.

- 6 The standards of attainment recorded by the school for pupils aged 14 in the foundation subjects are varied. These standards achieved are based on teachers' assessments. In modern foreign languages pupils are assessed to be achieving 13% above the national average but 15% below in design and technology and 14% below in geography. History matches the national average while the other subjects are below the national average by a few percentage points. In some lessons these standards do not equate with the standards seen in lessons. Inspectors judged that the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 by the end of Year 9 is close to the national average in most subjects. An exception is music where standards are below average in Year 9, but near average in Years 7 and 8. The department had been experiencing some staffing difficulties until recently and the new subject leader is now working hard to improve standards. Standards in boys' physical education are also low. There are also considerable strengths in information and communication technology.
- 7 The overall progress that pupils make in Years 7-9 is at least satisfactory in most subjects given the number of pupils who enter Year 7 with low levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. In 2000 boys' results were better than those of the girls in the three core subjects but in 2001 girls outperformed boys and the difference was largest in English. There is currently insufficient data to indicate the standards achieved by pupils of different ethnic origins and there are insufficient pupils in each ethnic group to provide a trend that is statistically significant. However, the school analyses the specific learning needs of pupils on an individual basis regardless of gender or ethnicity.
- 8 In 2001 the proportion of pupils who gained five or more grades A*-C in GCSE examinations was 28% which is well below the national average. However, this was average in comparison to schools where 14 year old pupils had achieved similar results to Bramcote Park. This result is 9% below the figure achieved in 1997 when the last inspection took place. However, the report acknowledges that this was a very able group of pupils and that their performance did not reflect the trend before 1997. After that date the results returned to the previous pattern. The school did not meet its targets in 2001 and the results do not reflect the progress currently being made in Years 7-9. Poor attendance has had a significant impact on some pupils GCSE performance, and so on the school's average results. Indeed the failure to attend school of four Year 11 girls, excluded from other schools and put onto the roll at Bramcote Park, had a significant negative impact on the school's results in 2001. Although the school has implemented very good strategies to improve attendance it is too early for this to have an impact on these results. The 89% of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to G in 2001 was very good compared to the national average and excellent in comparison to similar schools. However, 92% achieved one A* to G grade which is well below the national average and the average for similar schools. 8% of pupils therefore left the school with no qualifications. This reflects the impact that poor attendance is continuing to have on standards. The average total point score in 2001 for GCSE examinations of 30.7 indicates a steady upward trend over time. This is below the

national average of 38.1 but average in comparison to similar schools.

- 9 Overall the standards seen by inspectors in lessons in Year 10 and 11 are better than these figures indicate. The satisfactory standard of work seen indicates that currently the school is well placed to meet the governors' target of 36% A*-C grades in 2002 and 40% in 2003. There were strengths seen in English language, science, history and physical education with weaknesses in mathematics, music, English literature and art and design. The standard of literacy seen across the curriculum is good and this is having an impact on standards in history, geography, science, physical education Spanish and information and communication technology. The examination results are not yet indicating the impact that better teaching, high expectations, strategies to improve attendance and a more appropriate curriculum are having on learning. Improved support for study skills and the wider use of new technology to support and monitor learning also need time to make an impact on results.
- 10 Most pupils now make satisfactory progress. Those pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 10 and 11. There is, however, some indication of boys and girls performing differently in different subjects. In 2000 and 2001 girls have appeared to perform less well than boys overall. This is, in part, accounted for by the non-attendance of some girls but girls' overall results in mathematics in 2001 were very poor. Girls did not achieve the higher grades and their performance in mathematics was also very poor in comparison to other subjects. There is a similar picture emerging in design and technology and in history. In English literature no girls achieved the highest grades. Overall few pupils are achieving the highest grades in GCSE. The school is aware of this and has started to work on improving its provision for more able pupils. Improved provision for these pupils would raise standards. Currently the standards achieved by more able pupils are unsatisfactory.
- 11 Standards are rising in Years 7, 8 and 9 with English attaining standards above the national average and good progress being made in mathematics and science. Pupils aged 14 perform better than pupils in similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. Standards are also rising in Years 10 and 11. Although the school's results are below the national average the results are average in comparison to similar schools. The school has implemented a good range of strategies to improve standards. These will take some time to impact on results but there is now sound evidence to indicate that these strategies have started to have an impact in the lower school. Parents recognise that the standards are improving in the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 12 The majority of pupils have good attitudes to the school. They behave well in lessons and in and around the school and relationships are good. All these aspects have improved since the previous inspection. Personal development is satisfactory. Attendance has improved considerably but is still below the national average.
- 13 The pupils enjoy coming to school and take part in the wide range of activities available. The Harry Potter Club run by the librarian is particularly successful and badminton at lunchtimes is well supported. Over the last two years staff have worked hard to develop in

their pupils a desire to succeed. The pupils' response has been good. There is a positive sense of purpose and determination in the school. It is evident that the pupils are happy to be in school.

- 14 Behaviour in and around the school is good. At lunchtimes, there is considerable pressure on the dining hall, partly because of the short lunchtime (to allow pupils to go home in the daylight) and partly because of the size of the accommodation. The school sensibly has arranged two shifts. This means that pupils have to wait outside the dining hall until their sittings. During the inspection, the older pupils waited very patiently in quite a long queue and it is a credit to the school that they just talked to each other and behaved well with little supervision. At other times during lunchtimes and break times, the pupils are given the freedom to use which parts of the school they like but are not allowed to go into the park. They respect this freedom and have taken responsibility for their own behaviour in a mature way. This is particularly evident in the three year groups who have their own social bases (Years 7, 10 and 11). The pupils enjoy having their own bases, make good use of them, look after them and respond well to this additional freedom and responsibility. The school is looking into the possibility of extending this to the other year groups. The wide corridors are well used and at times become very busy, particularly between lessons. There is limited supervision at the main junctions in the corridors but the pupils move between lessons in a purposeful and mature manner.
- 15 In lessons, attitudes to learning are good. The pupils apply themselves diligently and maintain their concentration for long periods of time. They participate in lessons well, are motivated and committed to learning. This enables them to make good and sometimes very good progress. In the few lessons where attitudes and behaviour were unsatisfactory, the pupils were often insufficiently challenged. A small minority of pupils misbehaved in lessons during the inspection but incidents, for the most part, were dealt with effectively. During the inspection the pupils were respectful and courteous to adults. The parents feel that the school promotes good values and teaches their children respect, helping them to become mature and responsible. They feel that behaviour overall is good but that there are still some examples of poor behaviour and occasionally bullying but that these are dealt with quickly by the school. The inspectors endorse this view. Permanent exclusions, e.g., for extreme misbehaviour and theft, have reduced in the last two years and there have been none so far this year. Temporary exclusions for aggressive and inappropriate behaviour have reduced considerably.
- 16 There are some good examples of pupils being given the opportunity to show initiative and take responsibility. For example, the Year Council and School Council contribute to the local Broxtowe Council meetings. Reception duties and assistance at parents' meetings demonstrate responsibility and the pupils respond very well to being given the chance to participate. The year group social bases illustrate this well. However, apart from these examples and helping teachers get ready for assemblies (Year 8), there was little opportunity given during the week of the inspection for pupils to show how well they can respond, in the daily life of the school. Similarly, in lessons seen, very few activities allowed the pupils the freedom to take responsibility for their own learning and teachers are sometimes over-supportive. There are indications, however, that some of the newer teachers to the school

are starting to develop this aspect. Relationships within the school are harmonious and the staff provide good role models for the pupils. These relationships are reflected in the common purpose to succeed and commitment to hard work that pervades the school. This spirit contributes to the good levels of motivation evident in lessons and planned activities. The pupils are developing a good awareness of how their actions may affect other people and how to respect their values and beliefs. This is done through assemblies, tutor times, personal and social education and religious education. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the week of the inspection and the atmosphere was positive and purposeful. This results in a good learning environment, which contributes considerably to the progress and achievement of the pupils.

- 17 At the time of the previous inspection, attendance was poor. This impacted severely on pupils' attainment. However, attendance has improved considerably since then as the school has successfully used a range of strategies that encourage pupils to come to school. Poor attendance of some pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, has continued to hinder their learning and to affect the school's average examination performance. So far this year, attendance is at a higher level than it has ever been and has made a large contribution to the improvement in standards. It is still, however, below the national average and the school's aim is to achieve this in the next two years.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 18 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and a strength of the school. Of the lessons seen during the inspection 97% were satisfactory or better, 62% were good or better and 23% very good or excellent. These figures represent an improvement since the previous inspection when teaching was judged to be satisfactory. The considerable amount of monitoring of teaching that has taken place, and the subsequent actions to spread good practice and reduce weaker teaching, have contributed significantly to this improvement.
- 19 Very good teaching was seen in art and design in Years 7-9 and information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11. The overall quality of teaching across all years is good in design and technology and history. It is good in Years 7-9 in geography, information and communication technology, mathematics, music and religious education whilst good teaching was seen in Years 10 and 11 in art and design. In all other year groups and subjects it was at least satisfactory. These successes are a tribute to the hard work of the staff. Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' needs including those with individual education plans, which are well used. Most importantly teachers were seen to have a strong belief in their pupils' ability to succeed. The quality of teaching of physical education, which was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection is much improved. It was good in the majority of lessons seen.
- 20 Teachers demonstrate a consistent approach to planning. In many lessons good resources have been produced to support the teaching. For example in information and communication technology, there were good examples of worksheets, guides and assessment schedules. When teaching assistants are available, they share the planning with the class teacher or are thoroughly briefed. This collaboration makes a positive impact on

access and learning for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers present clear learning objectives to pupils giving them a sense of purpose to lessons and in many lessons teachers revisit these objectives during the plenary. This occurs regularly in mathematics and has a positive effect on pupils' understanding. In many lessons teachers make good use of time and pupils generally respond with enthusiasm and commitment. All teachers have high expectations of behaviour coupled in the majority of lessons with effective behaviour management strategies, in line with the school code. In a Year 10 lesson, where a small number of pupils were disengaged, good classroom management techniques ensured they did not hinder the progress of other pupils.

- 21 A good variety of teaching strategies are used to motivate pupils and aid their understanding. For example in a Year 10 information and communication technology lesson on the use of logos, pupils engaged in a good whole class discussion which was made easier by the teacher's use of the interactive whiteboard enabling all pupils to see the presentation and participate. In a Year 7 history lesson focusing on the collapse of the Roman Empire the teacher used a strategy that required pupils to work in groups to deepen their understanding of the decisions made by the Emperor. The pupils entered into a heated debate and were confident to give reasons for their decisions as well developing their independence as learners.
- 22 In a number of subjects, however, pupils are not given the opportunity to investigate, engage in independent research or qualify their arguments. More able pupils are often constrained and prevented from developing their own ideas through lessons that are too highly structured and worksheets that are too prescriptive. Good progress has been made to improve pupils' investigative skills in geography, which were criticised at the time of the previous inspection.
- 23 The teaching of literacy overall is good and as a result this promotion of literacy skills, both in English lessons and elsewhere, is beginning to have a good effect on standards and progress in other subjects. There is evidence that a number of subjects now focus on words pertinent to the subject and use writing frames to support learning. Speaking and listening skills are promoted widely and enable pupils to explain their thinking and increase their confidence.
- 24 Basic numeracy skills are improving as a result of good teaching strategies in the mathematics department building on pupils' experiences in primary school. Numeracy skills in other subjects are developing but in many subjects tasks are low level and make insufficient demands on pupils.
- 25 Pupils with special educational needs learn very well throughout the school. The specialist team has a high level of expertise and provides very good support. Support staff intervene appropriately and enable pupils to concentrate and learn effectively. The targeted teaching of literacy skills for those pupils who have low levels of literacy at the beginning of Year 7 is effective as is the teaching of all the key skills including information and communication technology, thinking and the evaluation of their own learning. The highly effective provision for pupils in the Student Support Centre includes the management of behaviour based on the encouragement of reflection and the re-building of self-esteem. The teaching of pupils with

special educational needs is particularly good in art and design, design and technology, history, information and communication technology and mathematics.

- 26 Basic information and communication technology skills are taught effectively through well-planned activities with a strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to become largely independent in their use of information and communication technology. Apart from in GNVQ and history, the opportunities seen for pupils to use and reinforce their information and communication technology skills in other subjects were very limited. In these areas progress was reduced and as a consequence, standards of attainment.
- 27 Relationships in lessons are good and teachers manage the learning of their pupils well, generating high levels of motivation and good behaviour in the majority of lessons. Pupils generally work at a productive pace improving their skills and understanding. This is particularly true in mathematics where teachers settle pupils quickly with the starter activity and move on swiftly to the main activity, encouraging pupils to work hard. In a science lesson on the interaction of two variables, pupils were guided to think about variables in rusting whilst completing the experiment. As a result pupils were challenged and engaged.

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

- 28 The curriculum provision is good and includes a suitable range of activities and experiences designed to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of the pupils at the school. The curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 covers all National Curriculum subjects and drama. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is designed to meet the specific learning needs of the pupils of Bramcote Park School but fails to meet the statutory requirements with regard to the provision of religious education. In addition a significant number of pupils do not study a modern foreign language or design and technology so the school is not fully complying with the requirements of the 1996 Education Act.
- 29 There have been improvements in planning the content of the curriculum since the previous inspection, particularly in geography and English. The provision for information and communication technology is now much improved. The curriculum meets the needs of the majority of pupils, enabling them to achieve at levels appropriate to their abilities and allowing lower ability pupils to achieve higher than expected levels. However, in terms of planning schemes of work and lessons, it currently does not challenge the most able. Although there is good practice in some subjects, for example in science, the overall provision is unsatisfactory. The school recognises this issue and has already appointed a co-ordinator to look at the provision for these pupils. Although pupils now receive well-organised teaching of information and communication technology in timetabled lessons each year there remain weaknesses with regard to the use and further development of pupils' information and communication technology skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- 30 The curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 is good. It is reviewed annually to ensure that it is appropriate. The decision to devise a curriculum that meets pupils' interests and therefore supports the school's drive to improve, what was previously, poor motivation and

attendance is a strength. Pupils are guided to make appropriate choices of subjects through the programme of personal and social education and through individual discussions that include parents. Optional courses now include some with a large element of practical work, including a good GNVQ course on Leisure and Tourism and a good range of work-related activities. The introduction of these courses has resulted in reduced time for modern foreign languages and design and technology. However, these curriculum decisions have reduced the numbers of disaffected pupils over the last two years.

- 31 The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved considerably since the previous inspection. It is now very good in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11.
- 32 In Years 10 and 11 some successful curriculum alternatives within the work-related curriculum, have enabled the school to provide an appropriate programme for pupils with behavioural problems as well as those with learning difficulties. The Student Support Centre makes a very positive contribution and is a strength of the school. It provides effective help and support to pupils with a range of learning and behavioural difficulties.
- 33 Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are welcomed into the school and where pupils have experienced difficulties in adjusting, the staff have worked hard to gradually integrate them into the school. The school is good at making sure that pupils with special educational needs, and those pupils whose home language is not English, can benefit from all the opportunities available.
- 34 The provision for the few pupils with English as an additional language is good. They are well supported by the school and make good progress.
- 35 In Years 7-9, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented in English and mathematics lessons. In English lessons, the provision is good as are the catch-up programmes for pupils who have low levels of literacy in Year 7. Many subjects contribute to the good development of literacy skills. For example, in a Year 11 geography lesson a practical task was successfully used to develop extended writing skills as well as to explain locational factors. In mathematics lessons the provision for numeracy is good, although, as yet, numeracy skills are less well developed in other subject areas and the majority of examples seen required generally low level skills.
- 36 The arrangements for personal, social and health education are good. This is organised through a new course, taught by a specialist team, which includes the statutory elements of sex education and the consequences of drug misuse as well as careers education. Form time is well used to improve study skills and to review personal targets. The school has plans to introduce teaching about citizenship but as yet, these have not been implemented, although the school has a good school council that develops an understanding of democracy and shared responsibility. Careers education is planned into the programme from Year 7. Every year pupils take part in a 'World of Work' Day. The provision is good, as it was at the time of the previous inspection.

- 37 The school works closely with its family of schools to ensure that the transfer of pupils from Year 6 to 7 is successful. Links between the schools are very good. They begin in Year 5 and continue through Year 6 and include taster lessons.
- 38 Post-16 links are also very good. Pupils are given a wide range of information to aid their decision-making. Good links are being made with local Colleges of Further Education in order that the provision for Years 10 and 11 are extended, for example, vocational GCSE subjects. The work related curriculum is developing quickly. There is a variety of provision which includes programmes of work related and key skills teaching for Year 10. All pupils are given the opportunity to take part in work experience in Year 10. Overall this provision is good.
- 39 There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities which include sporting, musical and information and communication technology activities. Pupils also have the opportunity to take part in dramatic and musical productions. Visits outside school include geography and history field trips, outward-bound activities and visits to the pantomime. Out of school hours activities (OOSH) are provided and include a variety of clubs including homework, help with coursework as well as a more recent club for the more able.
- 40 The equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum is satisfactory. In personal and social education, pupils learn about equal opportunities and discrimination of all types. The Student Support Centre does pioneering work to enable all pupils access to the curriculum. This centre is a specially developed area where pupils can be sent by teachers, or allowed to go themselves when appropriate. Here they receive additional support and guidance for a range of learning and behavioural difficulties. The organisation of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is designed to meet the needs of the pupils, as the first priority. Despite these, there are some areas where the needs of all pupils are not met. Higher ability pupils are often given insufficient opportunities to undertake individual investigative work and demonstrate higher levels of achievement. The withdrawal of some pupils from lessons at the start of their secondary education still causes some disruption to curriculum access but there are, on balance, very positive outcomes in terms of the effects on pupils' literacy and social skills. These outcomes are designed to improve access and equality in the longer term. The inspection team agreed that overall this is appropriate as it benefits both the individuals and the class who are able to move forward. This is a school that seeks to include all pupils in the life of the school, regardless of their ability, gender or ethnicity.
- 41 The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory with several strengths but some weaknesses. An audit of how each subject can contribute to this area of pupils' development has taken place recently but most departments have not included these aspects in their planning of the work that pupils do. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory in the majority of subjects. In the library, the use of music creates a haven of tranquillity for pupils and staff – providing the opportunity for thought and reflection as well as enhancing the learning environment. However in assemblies and in lessons seen there were few instances when pupils were given the opportunity to reflect on religious issues or to consider the personal implications of the topic they were studying. The school provision for collective worship does not comply with

statutory requirements.

- 42 The provision for pupils' moral development is good, particularly in personal and social education when they do have the opportunity to discuss moral issues. The whole school community effectively promotes the principles that distinguish right from wrong and provide a moral code as a basis for behaviour. All pupils, but particularly those with educational behaviour disorders, are encouraged to reflect on the effect of their own actions. In history lessons pupils regularly consider and explore 'persecution' both in ancient and modern times. In information and communication technology pupils discuss the issues of computer viruses and hackers. In a science class pupils took part in a good discussion on selective breeding and cloning.
- 43 The provision for pupils' social development is also good. Although the opportunities for initiative and personal responsibility are limited in the work they are usually given in class, they do show positive attitudes to learning and have opportunities to explore social issues and express their own views clearly and confidently. Pupils have opportunities to work in small groups, for example, in music and Spanish. When given these opportunities they work enthusiastically, listening to, and respecting, the contribution of others.
- 44 The provision for pupils to appreciate their cultural traditions is satisfactory. In art and design they have the opportunity to look at the work of artists from different cultures. In several subjects pupils are able to consider other cultures, for example they are able to meet a native Spanish speakers in Spanish lessons and in history pupils have the opportunity to study other cultures from near and far, old and new.
- 45 Moral and social development has improved since the previous inspection when it was described as satisfactory but shortcomings in the provision of spiritual development and to a lesser extent cultural development remain a gap in pupils' personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 46 The school has very good procedures for child protection, health and safety and the welfare of the pupils. Parents are pleased with the way the school cares for their children and although this aspect was well regarded at the time of the previous inspection, it appears to have improved even further. Indeed, the pastoral arrangements are very good with a pastoral manager, heads of year and form tutors all well involved in the process. The Student Support Centre is an excellent facility and provides central support for all pupils in the school.
- 47 The procedures for health and safety are very good. Governors, the premises manager and outside agencies are involved in the regular and rigorous inspections of the buildings and grounds. All statutory requirements are met, and the care and attention in this area ensures that the pupils have a safe and secure environment. Child Protection procedures are fully complied with and are addressed with much sensitivity and care by the school. The pastoral manager is the designated person. She has had very recent training and ensures that all staff have a high level of awareness of this issue. There is very good liaison with outside agencies

and ample specialist support for the school. First aid procedures are very good with a number of qualified first aiders in addition to the nominated people. Incidents seen during the inspection were dealt with efficiently and with a high level of care and consideration.

- 48 The staff know the pupils very well and the pastoral care is of a high standard. All adults in the school contribute to the care of the pupils including the lunchtime supervisors. There is a good personal and social education programme which is delivered by a carefully selected team of very competent and caring staff. This works well. The procedures for introducing new pupils to the school ensure a smooth start to their education. Pupils' records are kept centrally in the Student Support Centre. The records are of a good quality and provide a centrally located and easily accessible system for use by all staff in the school, but particularly the pastoral team.
- 49 The school has very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. First day monitoring is undertaken by the office staff and one of them is part of the pastoral team. She provides the pastoral manager, heads of year and form tutors with excellent and frequent information on attendance, which is used for monitoring and reward purposes. The close monitoring and effective rewards system are making a considerable contribution towards improving attendance and, consequently, standards in the school. Very good use is made of the computerised system for this purpose. There is close liaison with the educational welfare officer who has praised the efforts of the school and feels that the attendance will improve once again this year. The offering of more attractive option choices for older pupils is also contributing to the improvement.
- 50 There are well-established procedures in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. These have been very successful in the last two years and have brought the behaviour to the level that now exists in the school. There is a good balance of rewards and sanctions and the pupils are very proud to receive their awards at special assemblies. They respond positively to the rewards and encouragement and this contributes to the good learning atmosphere in the school. Similarly, the procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour and bullying are equally successful and the good behaviour observed in the school during the inspection confirms the success of the procedure. Governors are fully involved in the very good procedures for dealing with exclusions.
- 51 The school's arrangements for the assessment of pupils' attainments and progress are good. Upon entry, pupils' skills and needs are assessed carefully and suitable use is made of information from their previous schools. All statutory requirements are met in relation to assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 and specific targets are set for each pupil, which seek to challenge pupils to do their best. The support needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language are identified and met, enabling the small number of such pupils to make very good progress. Monitoring of pupils' performance in relation to their ethnic background has just started and is being used appropriately to identify pupils' skills and needs. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are identified very effectively and information is used well, in line with guidance in the national Code of Practice and the school's and local education authority policies. Overall the co-ordination of assessment is effective and progress towards the targets identified in the school improvement plan is

monitored regularly.

- 52 The school has a very good database relating to the attainment of all pupils and it makes good use of this assessment information. During Year 7, every subject teacher sets targets for each pupil's likely performance by the end of Key Stage 3, using this data. The school has analysed pupils' strengths and weaknesses and has provided training for staff on teaching approaches to improve learning based on this. These procedures are relatively new and are not yet in place securely in all subjects, although they are starting to have positive effects, particularly in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and the humanities. The school's procedures for monitoring and support of pupils' progress are good. The progress of all pupils against their targets is monitored regularly by subject teachers and tutors and individual feedback and intervention take place appropriately. This information is used to raise pupils' expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils receive effective advice and support and understand the targets set for them. Marking is clear and constructive and rewards effort. Annual reports to parents are informative and advise parents as to how their child's work in each subject can be improved.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 53 The school has good links with parents who are pleased with the work of the school. They are provided with good information, which keeps them informed about events in the school and their children's progress. Many are involved in the work of the school and make a good contribution to their children's education.
- 54 The parents who responded to inspectors' enquiries are supportive of the school and feel that standards, particularly in the last two years, have improved. They used to have concerns about bullying but are now happy that incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Since the new headteacher arrived, the school has developed a more positive approach and there is a 'can do' culture in the school. They told us that the teaching is good and that the school expects their children to work hard. They feel that the school is well led and managed and is helping their children to become mature and responsible adults. Inspectors agree with all of the comments above but they believe the leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff to be excellent. There are a few areas where parents indicated some concerns. They felt that there were some disruptive pupils in one of the year groups. This was considered very carefully during the inspection and although there was some evidence of this, inspectors found that it was dealt with effectively. Parents also expressed concern about homework. Although some inconsistencies were identified it was found to be satisfactory overall. However, it was noticed that some pupils do not return homework and the use of planners as a method of communication between parents and the school does not work as well as it should. Parents told us that although the pupils' reports were good, in Year 7, there was a long wait to find out how their children were progressing. However, the school does hold an end of first term meeting for the parents of Year 7 children to inform them about how their children have settled in school and how well they are doing. The information about progress in annual pupil reports is good.

- 55 Since the previous inspection, a Parents and Friends Association has been formed. They help with a number of the school's events and organise fund-raising events themselves. They have painted the main corridor and organised the new parents' information evening. The school has regular parents' evenings and open days and keeps parents well informed through weekly and termly newsletters. The school prospectus is a comprehensive document and is supplemented by the governors' annual report to parents.
- 56 The induction arrangements for new pupils are very good and the Parents and Friends Association are fully involved in this process. They arrange a softball match for Year 6 pupils and parents and have a barbecue at the same event. They attend parents' induction meetings, talk to new parents and provide refreshments at many school events. There is regular contact between parents and form tutors, year managers, staff of the Student Support Centre and office staff in relation to pupils' progress and problems. The school welcomes visitors and parents in particular.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 57 The leadership and management of the school are excellent. This is a key factor in the improvement of the school since the previous inspection. Weaknesses in this aspect of the school were a key issue for action in 1997. Much of the progress in this area has taken place in the last two years.
- 58 Excellent leadership from the headteacher provides very clear educational direction for the school. There is a shared belief by all members of the school community that 'everyone involved in the school will fulfil their potential'. This mission statement is known to everyone, including pupils, and is part of the shared vision. This is strengthened by a shared commitment amongst staff to making learning relevant and enjoyable, and to involving adults as well as pupils in the learning process. There is also a very strong commitment to high standards of behaviour, good interpersonal relationships and the care of pupils. The grounds and the school building are maintained to a high standard and help to create a good learning environment of which pupils are proud. The pupils, with the support of an artist, painted the attractive murals in the school. Music is also used very effectively to create atmosphere. In the library quiet classical music is played, which has a calming effect on pupils, while in the canteen popular music creates an atmosphere that appeals to the pupils. The aims and values of the school are fully reflected in its work.
- 59 The headteacher provides exceptionally strong leadership. Many representatives of the school community have praised his contribution to the success of the school. He has been instrumental in the introduction of the ideas and plans that have allowed the school to respond well to the many challenges coming from both the needs of the school and national initiatives. He is a strong presence within the school and he has a regular teaching commitment. This has earned him the respect of staff and pupils who respond well to his expectations of high standards, and to the praise and encouragement that he provides. Despite heavy workloads, staff morale is high. The headteacher is very well supported by an able and effective management team. They are very strong teachers who are able to lead the implementation of agreed strategies. The deputy headteacher effectively leads and

manages the curriculum team-leaders group. He has been crucial in the development of the imaginative Year 10 curriculum. The pastoral manager has successfully introduced the improvements in the pastoral system and the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Subject leaders and year managers are also effective leaders. No area was identified as having weak leadership. The delegation of responsibility in the school is good. However, the assistant headteachers have additional responsibilities that are creating very heavy workloads.

- 60 At the time of the previous inspection, the inspection identified a need for governors to become more fully involved in many aspects of the work of the school. Over the last two years, the governors have played an increasingly important part in the school's development and financial planning, the management of the buildings and the evaluation of performance data. The monitoring of the school's progress in implementing its improvement plan is exemplary, and there is a good system to ensure that all governors are informed of the findings. Governors have an excellent knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and know what needs to be done in order to meet the targets and improvement priorities that they have set out. They play a full part in the decision-making process of the school. The governors and staff regularly review pupils' progress and results against the school's prior performance and that of similar schools. They are also effectively identifying the value for money supplied by different contractors. This is demonstrated by their role in relation to reviewing cleaning contracts for the school. They are aware that not all statutory requirements are met by the school but they are clear why this is the case, and justify some lack of compliance in the Year 10 and 11 curriculum by the need to have a curriculum relevant to the needs of their pupils. The governors have a very active role in shaping the direction of the school, and their work is now a strength of the school.
- 61 There is a well-established system for school self-evaluation, which links effectively to the annual cycle for planning further developments. This system includes thorough reviews of the work of departments, year teams and of teaching throughout the school. This is very well documented and demonstrates rigour and high expectation. The school's current development plan contains ten priorities for improvement, supported by a detailed action plan. There is also a 'Raising Achievement Plan' that is required from schools that are part of the local education authority's 'Schools in Challenging Circumstances' initiative. These relate directly to the five aims for the school and to the drive to raise standards in the school. Each subject department has a departmental improvement plan. These are well linked to the school improvement plan with priorities mainly focused on raising standards.
- 62 The office manager very efficiently manages the school's administrative systems. The link between development planning and financial planning is good. All the additional grants received by the school are used very effectively for their specific purpose. Where there is additional investment in non-teaching staffing, the intention is to relieve the teachers of workloads in order for them to be more effective in the classroom. This works well. However, the auditors' report for January 2002 reports that: 'although arrangements for financial management are generally satisfactory there are some key areas where there is scope for improvement'. One of these areas for development is the annual submission to the local education authority's School Finance Section of a statement of best value. This is

recognised by the school and currently being addressed.

- 63 The school has a good match of suitably qualified staff to teach the full range of the National Curriculum. There has been a large turnover of staff since the previous inspection but careful selection has served to improve the quality of staff. There is a good cross-section of age and experience in the school's teaching staff. The school is fortunate to have a chartered librarian who is providing an excellent service to staff and pupils. Support staff provide good help in a number of areas but particularly for pupils with special educational needs. The arrangements for professional development are good and are linked to the priorities of the school's school improvement plan and to the needs of the staff identified in professional development interviews. Arrangements for the performance management of teachers have been set up correctly and are working well. The rigorous systematic monitoring of teaching contributes to this process. This demonstrates excellent progress since the previous inspection where it was reported that the appraisal system had been 'discontinued'.
- 64 The school is situated on a very attractive site in parkland. There is plenty of space generally with wide corridors and, for the most part, large attractive classrooms. The buildings are well maintained and provide a good learning environment. Most areas are well decorated with the exception of those for physical education. This area is in poor condition internally but there are, some very good outside facilities. There is good provision for performing arts (drama and music) in a separate building. Information and communication technology suites have been developed more recently and are very good. The library is an excellent facility. It is light and airy and is used for lessons including religious education and personal and social education. It houses the careers library. It also provides a potentially very good area for independent learning for the pupils which is not always used effectively by the subject areas. Apart from the subject-related books and a good selection of fiction and reference books, there are a number of computers connected to the Internet for research purposes and story tapes are available. Accommodation for most subjects is good. Although, art and design has one very good room available, the other classroom is inadequate. It is some distance away from the other room and is small and with poor acoustics. It is unsuitable for the subject. The dining hall is too small for the number of pupils in the school.
- 65 Overall, learning resources are good. They are very good for music and in the library. The resources for mathematics, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and special educational needs are all good. In history, the audio-visual resources are good and the staff make many resources themselves. In physical education the GCSE resources are very good although overall in the department they are satisfactory. Resources for all other subjects are satisfactory with the exception of art and design and design and technology. Art and design does not have sufficient artefacts or CD-ROMs and there is insufficient storage space.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 66 This is a school committed to continuous improvement. The school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff, should take the following actions to raise

standards:

- 1) To raise standards of attainment of all pupils by:
 - Ensuring that teaching and learning strategies in place in Years 7-9 are extended and embedded into pupils' experiences in Years 10 and 11. (9, 11, 21, 91)
 - Extending the present strategies to improve levels of attendance by ensuring that all staff regularly stress to parents and pupils the relationship between successful learning and good attendance. (10, 17, 85, 97, 113, 135)
 - Extending the school's monitoring system to evaluate the relative progress of girls and boys, and to take action on the findings. (7)

- 2) Developing pupils' independent learning skills by:
 - Ensuring that opportunities for investigation and research activities are built into each subject's schemes of work. (9, 22, 109)
 - Identifying and sharing with pupils the skills needed for independent study and research and reviewing pupils' developments in this area. (22)

- 3) Improving the extent to which the learning needs of all more able pupils are fully met by:
 - Building on the current work in school to ensure that tasks set in lessons have the scope to challenge the more able pupils. (22, 29, 40, 153, 165, 181)
 - Devising monitoring and evaluation strategies to track the progress of the more able pupils and ensure that best practice currently in place is disseminated throughout the school. (7)

- 4) Using pupils' very good skills in information and communication technology to support their development in all subjects in the curriculum by:
- Ensuring that all subjects identify opportunities for information and communication technology in their schemes of work. (26, 146, 158, 162)
 - Identifying best practice in using information and communication technology in the school. (29)
 - Developing strategies to monitor and evaluate the implementation of information and communication technology in all subjects and its impact on learning and pupil motivation.

67 In addition, governors and staff should also:

- Extend pupils spiritual development. (41)
- Address the lack of religious education in Years 10 and 11. (28)
- Take steps to comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils. (41)

The numbers in brackets relate to the main paragraphs of this report where these issues are mentioned.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	143
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	34	57	46	3	1	0
Percentage	1	24	40	32	2	1	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	609
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	101

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	173

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	37

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	37
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.9
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
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 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	59	50	109

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	32	30
	Girls	43	35	34
	Total	78	67	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (61)	61 (59)	59 (43)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	45 (23)	24 (28)	16 (12)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	16	37	31
	Girls	43	37	31
	Total	59	74	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (49)	68 (60)	57 (30)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (11)	29 (26)	22 (17)
	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
	2001	58	42	100

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	14	53	55
	Girls	14	36	47
	Total	28	89	102
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	28 (27)	89 (87)	92 (96)
	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	31 (30)
	National	39 (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	0
	National	n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	19
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	11
Indian	4
Pakistani	30
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	534
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	1	0
White	26	5
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	35.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	280

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
---	----

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.7
Key Stage 4	21.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
----------------	------

	£
Total income	1,638,857
Total expenditure	1,581,818
Expenditure per pupil	2,877
Balance brought forward from previous year	32,037
Balance carried forward to next year	89,076

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	13
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	609
Number of questionnaires returned	278

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	50	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	44	50	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	54	9	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	47	16	5	2
The teaching is good.	32	58	4	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	47	16	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	39	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	32	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	29	51	14	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	47	45	2	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	51	5	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	48	7	1	8

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

- Rising standards at the end of Year 9.
- The head of department is providing effective leadership. His colleagues are supportive of him in trying to improve standards and ready to implement new ideas to help to do that.
- Lessons have good pace and structure.
- Below average pupils achieve well, reaching higher standards than are indicated by their earlier results.
- Speaking and listening skills are developed well in English lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Higher standards at GCSE.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their own ideas and responses.
- Greater challenge for above average pupils.
- The use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning.
- Links with primary schools.

68 Standards on entry to the school are below the national average but pupils' results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 were well above average when compared to results nationally and to results in similar schools. This was a very sharp rise on the 1998 to 2000 trend that was below the national average but close to the average for similar schools. Girls have achieved higher results than boys have over the past three years but both boys and girls achieved results above the national average in 2001. In 2000 the school's performance was close to the national average but well above in comparison to similar schools. The significant improvement in 2001 results indicates that changes introduced by the head of department are having a positive impact.

69 In the 2001 GCSE English examination the proportion of pupils achieving a grade C or higher was well below the national average. About half the girls achieved a grade A*-C while two-thirds did so nationally. Only a quarter of the boys attained higher grades while just over half did so nationally, though it was notable that boys attained the highest grades in English in the school. In English literature, results were also well below the national average with only just over a fifth of pupils achieving the higher grades. Girls' results were higher than boys' results in English literature. Nearly all pupils, however, attained a pass grade in both English and English literature. Overall, they performed less well in both English and English literature than they did in other subjects.

70 Standards observed in lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work show that pupils are attaining well in Years 7, 8 and 9. Year 9 pupils are able to develop characters and settings well in narrative writing and they are beginning to adapt the style of their writing to suit audience and

purpose. Most pupils are able to spell with reasonable accuracy and use a range of punctuation in their writing. Pupils can write persuasively on a range of topics including bullying, global warming and foxhunting. They are able to read challenging texts, including Shakespeare plays, with understanding and some insight. They also show an understanding of a range of texts including non-fiction and fiction texts. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils were able to identify key differences and similarities between an article from a broadsheet newspaper and an article from a tabloid newspaper. They could give thoughtful and well-developed responses and select sentences, phrases and relevant information to support their views. However, there was insufficient evidence in English lessons of opportunities for pupils to develop inferential and deductive reading skills as well as literal reading skills in Years 7 and 8 or opportunities for pupils to develop their own responses to their reading.

- 71 Pupils are encouraged to enjoy reading for pleasure through a range of imaginative programmes developed by the school librarian. These include a reading trail designed to encourage pupils to read a wide range of fiction, a group which reads the books short listed for a major children's book award and the provision of a wide range of alternative reading material such as magazines and graphic novels.
- 72 In Year 11 standards are below average. However, considering the low starting point at the beginning of Year 10 and they have made good progress, particularly in writing. Standards of speaking and listening are good. Pupils make thoughtful and confident contributions on a range of texts in lessons. Reading standards are average. Higher attaining pupils make good progress. The work they do in their ability-based groups is well focused in terms of texts and tasks. In particular, they apply knowledge and understanding well to support their argument when discussing challenging literary texts such as *The Sherlock Holmes Stories* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. One group of Year 10 pupils made thoughtful and perceptive comments and showed good close reading skills when discussing in groups a pre-twentieth century poem - *The Beggar Woman* by William King – as part of their preparation for their GCSE examination.
- 73 Higher attaining pupils are developing confidence in their writing and most are producing coursework at grade C or better. Their vocabulary and sentence structure are varied and paragraphing is sound. Average and below average pupils lack the consistency of accuracy and range of phrasing of above average attainers. A small number of pupils are well below average and their work contains a range of errors. Nevertheless, with support and guidance, they are making good progress. Coursework assignments are detailed and extended showing good understanding of the given tasks.
- 74 The standard of teaching overall is good. There is better consistency of challenge for more able pupils in Years 10 and 11. During Years 7-9, the department is more effective in improving the standards of pupils who enter the school with low standards in English. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly with clear teaching objectives in mind. Lessons are well structured and have a brisk pace and teachers show good classroom management skills. Group discussion is used in lessons to promote and support learning. In a Year 10 class the teacher's thoughtful management of group talk enabled pupils to work with a variety of their peers on the 'Hearts and Partners' cluster of poems from the GCSE

Anthology. The teacher's use of a list of statements about the poems helped pupils to initiate and sustain sensitive discussions about the poets' use of language and structure and how this helped to convey mood, atmosphere and meaning. In Years 7-9, there is not consistent evidence of tasks being adapted to meet the needs of higher and potentially higher attaining pupils despite very good results in the 2001 tests. Teaching was less effective when the tasks set for pupils were too prescriptive, giving pupils limited opportunities to develop their own ideas and responses. In one Year 7 class, pupils were asked to write a newspaper article but the worksheets provided gave them too much information so there was not sufficient scope for pupils to develop their own writing skills. There was some evidence of the use of moving image technology and digital cameras in the GCSE media studies lessons but over all there is not sufficient use of information and communication technology to support and promote pupils' learning in English.

- 75 Teachers' marking is generally thorough and detailed and it gives pupils good guidance on what they need to do in order to improve. National Curriculum criteria are shared with pupils who find this information useful when they are checking their work. Moderation procedures have been developed to help to ensure that teachers' assessment of pupils' work is consistent but the outcomes of assessment are not always effectively used to plan lessons and set curricular targets for pupils. This aspect of the department's work, however, is currently being developed. Homework is set regularly in order to help consolidate and extend pupils' learning.
- 76 A new head of department was appointed just under two years ago. He provides effective leadership for the team and the morale of the teachers in the department is good. The teachers are working together to plan for the new National Literacy Framework and the department intends to forge closer links with feeder primary schools in order to ensure that pupils build on and develop the skills which they have. Staff have worked hard to establish and maintain good relationships with pupils and to create an environment which will support and promote learning; lessons have a sense of pace and purpose. Classrooms are bright, attractive and colourful. A good range of book resources is available and the department has purchased some new equipment such as overhead projectors, which will help teachers to develop a new range of teaching strategies. Solid foundations have been laid and the department is now well placed to secure further improvement.
- 77 Overall arrangements for the development of literacy are good. Pupils who join the school in Year 7 with literacy skills below the national average are well supported to catch up as quickly as possible through a structured programme of literacy teaching. The quality of this teaching is good; the pace and structure of the lessons is appropriate and pupils learn well. However, the process of monitoring the effectiveness of this programme needs to be more rigorous. There has also been a school wide focus on developing literacy strategies to support learning in subjects across the curriculum. An emphasis on subject specific vocabulary is apparent in a range of subjects and writing frames are used in lessons such as design and technology, art and design and geography. In music, pupils are asked to write poems in response to classical music. Information and communication technology lessons encourage pupils to use features such as spelling and grammar checkers to help improve the technical accuracy of their writing. Speaking and listening activities are widely used to

promote and support learning. The best practice seen during the inspection was in history where a strong emphasis is placed on the teaching of literacy skills to promote learning in the subject and a wide range of strategies including group discussion, debates, key words and writing frames are used.

Drama

- 78 All pupils study drama in Years 7, 8 and 9 and it is a popular GCSE option.
- 79 Standards and teaching in drama in Years 7, 8 and 9 are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy the activities in lessons. In Year 7 lessons, pupils created a ‘soundscape’, using a range of sounds to create a mood or an atmosphere. Pupils demonstrated high levels of concentration and a clear focus on the task although some were unable to maintain concentration for a sustained period. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils used Shakespeare’s ‘All the World’s a Stage’ speech to work on dramatic representations of different stages of life. Pupils found the language of the speech difficult and were unable to engage effectively with the dramatic activities.
- 80 Teaching in Years 10 and 11 in drama is good. Pupils are encouraged to work in a range of situations and lessons are structured well to promote learning. In a Year 10 lesson, groups of pupils performed improvisations that represented work in progress. Pupils showed good control of voice, movement and facial expression and the teacher ensured that all pupils had the opportunity to evaluate their own performance and that of others. Pupils made thoughtful and constructive critical comments.
- 81 Drama has its own accommodation, but there is limited use of costumes and props. Drama is part of the performing arts department but schemes of work do not, as yet, identify clear links with other subjects such as music. However, the subject makes an effective contribution to pupils’ extra-curricular and cultural development through its work, in collaboration with music, on school productions and its organisation of theatre trips and visits to the school by theatre groups.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Very good leadership and management by the head of department
- Effective systems for assessment and the monitoring of pupils’ progress
- Improvements in standards at 14.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Key Stage 4 are unsatisfactory – particularly amongst girls.
- Planning for the development of pupils’ skills in using and applying mathematics, investigations and problem solving
- Appropriate provision for all the pupils in some classes – particularly the more able in Year 7.

- 82 Standards are below the national averages, but this overall judgement hides a complex picture.

- 83 In the Key Stage 3 tests in 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above was below the national average but well above that for schools in similar circumstances. Girls performed better than boys and there was a bigger difference between their results than nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 6 was well below the national average and below that for similar schools. Pupils' work seen during the inspection shows an improving trend. Pupils in Year 9 are currently performing well, although there is a wide range of attainment. Some of them are working with Pythagoras' Theorem and lines of best fit, which might enable them to achieve Level 7. Others are challenged by Level 5 work such as multiplying decimals by 10, 100 and 1000. Pupils in Year 8 are doing well and have almost caught up with Year 9, but they too have a wide range of attainment in lessons. Higher attaining pupils can deal with straight line graphs and angles associated with parallel lines, whilst lower attainers can write rules for generating simple sequences. In Year 7, the average attainment is in line with the expectations of the new Key Stage 3 National Strategy.
- 84 The provision for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is good, and enables them to make good progress. In Years 8 and 9, higher attaining pupils are making good progress but in some Year 7 classes they are doing work which is too easy for them and as a result, they are not achieving as well as they could. Results over the last few years have been improving and are significantly higher than at the time of the previous inspection.
- 85 In Key Stage 4 in 2001, standards of attainment were well below the national average and also well below those of similar schools judged on the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C. Within the school, pupils performed less well in mathematics than in any of their other subjects. Boys were under half a grade lower than the school average and girls were three-quarters of a grade lower. In the previous inspection, there was concern that some boys were underachieving. This is still the case, but the performance of girls of all abilities in 2001 is a cause for concern. In the current year 11 girls of average attainment are not working hard enough.
- 86 Overall, standards of attainment in lessons are above average and pupils are making good progress in the top set, where they can do simultaneous equations and transformations. In the lowest set, pupils successfully subtract negative numbers and make good progress. All pupils are on track to achieve a GCSE pass at grade A*-G if they maintain their efforts.
- 87 The upward trend in results since the previous inspection was not continued in 2001. This was at least partly attributable to staffing changes. However, Year 10 pupils started their GCSE course from a higher base at Key Stage 3 than their predecessors and are making good progress. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm this improvement.
- 88 Skills in basic numeracy are improving because strategies for teaching them in mathematics lessons are good and the school is building on the work done in Key Stage 2. Numeracy standards at Key Stage 4 were criticised at the time of the previous inspection, these are now satisfactory. There are many good examples of other subjects contributing to the development of numeracy by expecting the pupils to use and apply their skills. For example,

pupils planned a party with a budget of £80 using a spreadsheet in information and communication technology and calculated forces on levers in science. In other areas, such as art and design and history, more opportunities could be offered by planning them into the scheme of work.

- 89 Most pupils have a positive attitude, are willing to work and rise to challenges when offered. They are confident in explaining how they got their answers, they listen to each other's explanations, and will seek help. Most are happy to be guided through investigative work to make generalisations, but are less confident without support.
- 90 Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. The positive aspects have been maintained. The department identified the main issues and most weaknesses have been tackled. Teachers now make clear what pupils should learn, numeracy skills are improving, as are standards of attainment generally and particularly in Key Stage 3. The department still needs to develop consistent approaches to investigative, independent and group work.
- 91 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. During the inspection, teaching was good or very good in about two thirds of the lessons seen and only one lesson was unsatisfactory. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection when it was sound. The main reasons for this are that the department has adopted many of the ideas from the Key Stage 3 Strategy which have helped to improve teaching and there has been a high turnover of staff resulting in the appointment of some new talented teachers. These improvements in teaching are bringing about the higher attainment, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- 92 Teaching generally meets the needs of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs, including visually impaired and those just acquiring English, are well supported and provided with appropriate work which enables them to progress. There are some more able pupils in Y7 who are not being challenged because the work is repetitive and all pupils do the same tasks.
- 93 In the best lessons seen, the starter activity was short, involved the whole class and required them to think, such as counting up the three and four times tables simultaneously. Teachers moved quickly to the main part of the lesson where carefully planned steps built up understanding. For example, a Year 7 class was asked to gather together examples of co-ordinates which lay on a straight line, then asked to find some common pattern or rule for each set. Plenary sessions were well done in some lessons when the teacher used good questioning to probe misconceptions and refer pupils back to the objectives of the lesson. The subject contributes to pupils' personal and social development when, for example, pupils explain and demonstrate their answers and others listen and watch or they are asked to work in pairs on a problem or game.
- 94 In less effective lessons, the starter activity did not involve all the pupils quickly enough and was too long, cutting down the time for the main teaching. Teachers sometimes did not concentrate on helping the pupils to remember facts, such as names and properties of

quadrilaterals, so they were unable to complete a comparative table. Sometimes planning was weak and teachers misjudged what could be done in the time. There are several sensible policies in the departmental handbook, which if followed, would improve quality, but these are not followed consistently. There are inconsistencies, for example in the quality of marking, particularly on how work could be improved.

- 95 There is very good leadership and management from the head of department, who knows what is needed to improve the quality of teaching further and thereby raise standards. He leads by example, is ready to embrace new initiatives and the team of teachers at present in the school support him. The new scheme of work for Year 7 and the associated collaborative planning has already moved the department forward, as have the lesson structure and classroom practices adopted from the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Continued development of the schemes of work is planned, currently, they do not integrate or build up the skills needed for using and applying mathematics and problem solving nor focus clearly on objectives. Monitoring the work of the department is well done, within the time available, using a range of methods. There are very good systems for assessment and tracking pupils' progress. The department does not currently focus on developing and sharing good practice and ensuring that some of the agreed policies and procedures, such as the range of teaching and learning styles, planning, marking and homework, are being consistently followed.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The provision and organisation of practical work is a strong feature of the teaching.
- The relationship between pupils, and between pupils and staff is good.
- Assessment is used effectively to check pupil progress and identify areas for future development.
- There is good technical back-up for teaching staff.

Areas for improvement

- Work, in Years 7-9, often does not match pupils' needs – particularly for the more able.
- Standards at age 16 – particularly those achieved by girls.
- More effective use of information and communication technology.
- More effective support for special educational needs pupils.

- 96 Standards of attainment at age 14 are well below the national average but above those of similar schools. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below the national average. Results for 2001, however, show the majority of pupils make good progress by Year 9 and although results are still below the national average they are improving.
- 97 Results at age 16 have shown a gradual improvement since the previous inspection, although in 2001, 34.4% of pupils achieved grade A*-C, well below the national average. Pupils achieving grades A*-G in science, were similar to the national average. At age 16, boys are achieving higher standards of attainment than girls.

- 98 Standards of work seen during the inspection show that pupils are making satisfactory progress in lessons, although levels of achievement are still low compared to national averages at the age of 14 and 16. In all years work from above average pupils was well presented, and demonstrated good organisational skills. Within the middle and lower ability groups, work was not as well presented, and, at times, work was not matched to different pupils' needs and abilities. The majority of pupils are able to demonstrate their practical skills. For example, some members of a Year 9 group in an open-ended experiment were able to determine that mass is conserved during the dissolving process. This experiment provided an example of independent learning and produced a wide range of ideas from the groups taking part. Year 10 pupils made simple salts by neutralising acids, and were able to produce word equations for these reactions. Year 11 pupils discovered that reaction rates are changed by the concentration of the chemicals and used the results of the reaction to construct a graph. They were able to use the graph to make predictions and check these predictions experimentally. The work of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory although a more active identification of the needs of these pupils would lead to more positive support within the department. Throughout the inspection there was little evidence of the use of information and communication technology to support learning.
- 99 The department meets the demands of the National Curriculum and has detailed schemes of work. Pupils in Year 11 work towards the double award in science. Pupils in Year 10 work towards the core award of a single GCSE certificate in science, in addition some pupils opt for the double award. This provision meets the needs of the pupils.
- 100 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. However, in Years 7-9 teachers often do not fully meet the learning needs of pupils across the whole ability range. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. The setting arrangements in these years are effective in providing appropriate work for different ability groups. A pleasant and co-operative relationship exists between pupils, and between pupils and staff and this creates a supportive and co-operative environment for learning. The progress made by pupils reflects the emphasis placed by staff upon practical investigation, and upon constructive marking and assessment. Implementation throughout the department is consistent. The department make good use of the library facilities. Every year pupils use the library to research a specific topic, for example, Year 8 pupils used the opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of animal and plant adaptation, and the solar system. Teachers make good use of the specialist support available for special educational needs. In Years 10 and 11 they set demanding work for the more able pupils. For example in a Year 11 lesson on selective breeding and cloning, a group of high attaining pupils not only showed a good understanding of the biological processes but also discussed the social and moral implications. The staff act as good role models and make a positive contribution to the pupils' social and moral development both in terms of the relationships within lessons and the clear expectations in terms of behaviour and attainment. Opportunities for spiritual and cultural development are not well used.
- 101 The administration within the department is good. There are detailed schemes and lesson plans. Laboratory facilities and resources are satisfactory. The teaching staff receives good quality support from the laboratory technician. Marking is consistent and informative.

Safety procedures for the department are in place, and staff are familiar with Health and Safety regulations.

- 102 The leadership and management of the department is good. There is a pleasant co-operative working relationship within a department that is committed to the education of its pupils. There is an effective programme for monitoring teaching and learning by both the senior management team as well as the head of department and other science staff. This has led to shared strategies directed to the improvement of pupil performance.
- 103 Good progress has been made overall since the previous last inspection. There has been a definite improvement in results at age 14. The poor behaviour and resulting lack of progress in science in Years 8 and 11, identified in the 1997 report, is no longer evident. This previous report recorded evidence of unsatisfactory teaching but during this inspection there was no evidence of such teaching. Progress has also been made in relation to developing investigative approaches in science in Years 7-9.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in art and design lessons are good.
- The progress that pupils make in the development of their skills whilst at the school.
- The quality of relationships between pupils and teachers.
- The development of literacy skills in art and design lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment at the age of 16.
- The use of information and communication technology to improve learning.
- The development of pupils' independent learning skills – particularly responding artistically to real objects and artefacts.
- The quality of accommodation for the teaching of art and design.
- Opportunities for pupils to learn about the art of other cultures.

- 104 The standards of attainment achieved by pupils' in art and design are in line with national averages overall.
- 105 Pupils come to the school in Year 7 with standards of attainment and experiences that are poor for their age and below the national average. Most pupils demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding at Level 3 of the National Curriculum with a very small number working at higher levels up to Level 5. In Key Stage 3 most pupils make good progress in their development of skills, especially in relation to their use of drawing materials and techniques. By the end of the key stage pupils' work indicates that they have achieved Level 5 or 6, additionally some pupils are working beyond this at Level 7 and exceptionally at Level 8. For example where Year 8 pupils have been identified as talented they attend extra-curricular art and design lessons and are working towards a GCSE. A small number

are working at Level 4 or below. This is in line with national expectations.

- 106 During Key Stage 4 pupils continue to develop their skills in the use of drawing and painting materials and techniques. In 2001, 27.3% of pupils achieved higher grades at GCSE; this is well below the national average. However, work seen in the school would indicate that pupils in the current Year 11 are likely to attain GCSE grades in line with national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well due to a combination of individual target setting and a targeted tutorial style approach to teaching in practical workshop lessons.
- 107 All pupils follow a course in art and design in Years 7, 8 and 9 and may opt to study GCSE art and design in Year 10 and 11. The curriculum is tightly structured, it ensures that the National Curriculum is covered, that lessons are well planned and that the sequence of lessons allows the pupils to build upon skills from one lesson to the next. However, the curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to research and respond in authentic and creative forms to the works of other cultures and first hand stimulus materials. In lessons pupils undertake projects that are designed to promote existing skills in drawing, painting, collage, printmaking and three-dimensional work.
- 108 Pupils' learning is very good and is promoted by interesting lessons that ensure an excellent pupil response. Individual target setting promotes learning for all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs as well as the most able. For example, individual targets were used very effectively in some Key Stage 4 lessons where pupils were encouraged to set and review their own targets for work on a 'superhero' painting at the start and finish of lessons. Virtually all pupils take a keen interest in their work and approached the tasks set enthusiastically, including homework. Pupils demonstrate a high level of respect for the subject and, in particular, the art and design work produced by other pupils. Working relationships in the department are excellent. Pupils and teachers respect each other, pupils listen carefully to clear appropriate instructions and work with consideration for others. They readily help each other when required and they take responsibility for their own learning.
- 109 Teaching is very good overall. Teachers' explanations and demonstrations establish high expectations of pupils' in terms of safety, skills, response, behaviour and relationships. Good pace is a strong feature of most lessons ensuring that pupils make maximum benefit from the time available in lessons. In all years teaching includes a focus upon technical vocabulary which successfully introduces pupils to a good range of new words. In Key Stage 3, where lessons are taught by subject specialists, good teacher subject knowledge develops pupils' practical skills. In Key Stage 4 very good teacher subject knowledge is used to enhance pupils' confidence in exploring and experimenting with a wider and more sophisticated range of materials and techniques. For example, pupils used materials boldly to produce exciting responses to the work of Aboriginal artists. Good routines and teachers' use of their own examples to demonstrate techniques together ensure that by the start of Key Stage 4 pupils are able to select and use materials and tools appropriately. However, pupils are still too dependent upon teachers for research materials. All pupils can use a good range of materials with increasing skill especially in drawing, painting, printmaking and three-dimensional work. Their creativity and critical skills are developing by the end of Key

Stage 4 but are undeveloped in Key Stage 3. Although the teachers have been successful in making the environment visually rich and stimulating for the development of pupils' literacy and making skills, other forms of learning such as research, personal response, risk taking, cultural development, creativity and spiritual development are under developed.

- 110 The subject benefits from good leadership and management. The curriculum and resources are well managed by the head of department. Information provided for staff is clear. Equality of opportunity is provided for pupils by consistency of approach to subject content in the scheme of work and the consistent application of whole school policies. There is regular monitoring of teaching, homework and assessment by the head of department, strengths and weaknesses have been identified and have lead to action to secure improvement.
- 111 The accommodation for the subject has serious shortcomings. The ceramics room is affecting pupil achievement because of the very difficult acoustics. The use of information and communication technology is still undeveloped and is very poor in both key stages. Resources for the subject allow for the maintenance of the current curriculum but is insufficient for necessary development. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. Standards of attainment are now broadly in line with national expectations following a period of decline where much teaching was undertaken by non-specialist staff. All pupils use sketchbooks well to enhance their learning, composition is good and pupils now make good progress.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology has **very good features** but is **unsatisfactory** in that it does not meet statutory requirements.

Strengths

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.
- The staff are hard working and committed to the pupils in their care.
- The management of the behaviour of pupils by teachers is good.
- There is very good support for pupils, particularly those with special educational needs.
- The department is well led.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Opportunities for developing independent learning.
- Meeting the needs of the full ability range – particularly the more able in Years 7-9 and girls at the age of 16.
- Using information and communication technology to support and develop skills of research and designing
- Staffing the department in order to meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11.

112 At the age of 14 in 2001, teachers assessed their pupils as working at an overall standard below that expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Work seen during the inspection reflected this. However, there were examples of work in Year 9 where pupils are achieving work in line with national expectations. The low attainment is in part due to the low attainment of pupils on entry to the school. Pupils' skills in selecting from a range of materials and processes are also underdeveloped.

113 In GCSE examinations in 2001, 32.8 % of pupils gained A*-C grades which is well below the national average but represents an improvement on results in 2000. Fewer pupils achieved the higher grades in comparison with 2000 but there was an increase at grade C where results were broadly in line with the national results for this grade. Overall, boys achieve better results than girls. Generally, pupils achieve less well in design and technology than in their other subjects.

114 In work seen during the inspection, at the age of 14 pupils are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their low prior attainment. Standards in lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 are variable. Pupils are experiencing a good range of practical skills within all areas. They are developing the ability to evaluate the design and construction of products. However, their awareness of design is underdeveloped. Their ability to select independently appropriate materials and construction processes is weak. This is restricting the progress of some average and higher ability pupils. Lower ability pupils are responding well to the structure of projects and making good progress.

115 In work seen, at the age of 16 pupils are achieving an overall standard below that expected for their age. The quality of making of the final product is usually better than the

development of their designing skills. With some exceptions, pupils do not produce in-depth research or apply analytical skills with any degree of confidence or success. Some pupils produce coursework of a good standard in Year 11 and make good progress in lessons. Pupils' skills in using a design specification to develop and evaluate their work are increasing. Current work with resistant materials and food shows increasing precision in the use of tools, equipment and techniques. In food technology pupils are able to relate their designs to the systems used in industry to control the quality of food products.

- 116 The quality of teaching is good overall with examples of very good and excellent teaching. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan effectively. Support for lower ability pupils is effective. Teachers use a range of strategies to enable pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. When available, support assistants play a key role in this. Teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' needs and use positive encouragement to motivate pupils.
- 117 A variety of teaching approaches and good planning are apparent in the best lessons. In a Year 10 food technology lesson the teacher skilfully used whole class teaching, individual advice, support, and demonstrations to highlight particular skills. In a Year 9 textiles lesson, pupils received helpful guidance to use tools in a safe manner and discussed a range of ways to develop their designs for a cushion. In a Year 11 resistant materials lesson, the teacher demonstrated how to mark and cut a specific means of joining wood. The style of questioning encouraged pupils to consider different solutions for their project. These approaches had a positive impact on the learning for all ability levels.
- 118 Independent learning is best when pupils are actively involved in lessons through question and answer sessions, making their own decisions and exploring alternative solutions to designing and making their product. This approach was working well for the higher ability pupils in a Year 9 food group. They were able to plan and develop ideas for a new product for a specific dietary need. In some units of work there is a lack of clarity about how focused tasks contribute to the main design and make activity. For example, in a Year 8 textiles lesson to practise the basic skills of weaving fabric, pupils were not making a connection between the task and the design of their individual greetings card.
- 119 Literacy skills are often poor on entry but the department uses a range of strategies to raise levels of competence. These include the use of non-fictional writing and presentations to the whole class. Active reading strategies are encouraged when pupils work in the library to research the functions of ingredients in food manufacture. Year 7 pupils write a story to incorporate the puppet made in textiles and have the opportunity to perform this. All teachers encourage the use of numeracy skills by accurate measurement and weighing of materials.
- 120 The vast majority of pupils have good attitudes to their work and respond in a positive manner. They co-operate well with teachers and with each other.
- 121 The curriculum is generally appropriate but does lack the development of designing for clients and large-scale industrial production. Computer aided manufacture is restricted by a

lack of resources. Information and communication technology skills and their application in a range of contexts are limited. The department is now in a strong position to review the Key Stage 3 schemes of work against National Curriculum requirements. The school is not meeting statutory requirements at Key Stage 4.

- 122 A developing system of assessment is used effectively to make pupils aware of their current National Curriculum level and what they need to do to improve. Where pupils are actively involved in judging their own progress against targets, they make good progress. In a Year 7 lesson involving the completion of the fine finishing of a box, pupils were developing their ability to set their own targets to plan the use of time and resources. They were eager to comment on what they had learned and were able to reflect on what they would like to improve.
- 123 Leadership and management of the department are good. The subject leader has a clear sense of purpose and is very aware of the strengths and areas for development. There is a collaborative approach that makes best use of teachers' complementary strengths. However, the leadership and management of art and design in addition to design and technology makes this a complex role.
- 124 The areas identified as requiring improvement in the previous inspection report show good improvement. This is attributable to the commitment and dedication of all staff. Enabling pupils to select from a range of materials and components has begun. Management of pupils' behaviour is calm and effective in maintaining discipline. Use of positive encouragement and praise to motivate pupils is now a strength of the department. The considerable work done by the department to write the new schemes of work will provide a strong basis for the next stage of development to refine and share the very good practice evident in lessons.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising at age 14 and 16.
- Teaching is good in all years.
- The positive response of pupils to their learning in lessons.
- Very effective leadership offering a clear direction for the subject.
- The use of the literacy strategy to improve pupil achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring work is sufficiently challenging to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Continue to monitor work at Key Stage 3 to ensure policies are applied consistently.

- 125 When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their geographical knowledge and understanding is below average and their literacy skills are below the national expectation. However, good teaching and the effective use of the literacy strategy ensure that all pupils including those

with special educational needs make good progress through Years 7, 8 and 9.

- 126 In 2001, pupil attainment at the end of Year 9 was below the national average but the present Year 9 pupils are achieving well in lessons and are reaching standards above the national expectation. This good level of achievement is supported by the high expectations that teachers have of their pupils and the level of challenge provided by their teaching.
- 127 GCSE results have risen significantly over the last two years and the number of pupils obtaining A*-C and A*-G grades are broadly in line with national average and compare favourably with many other subjects. Analysis of the higher grades for the last three years shows that boys and girls do equally well in the subject.
- 128 Pupil's knowledge and understanding is secure and a range of both basic and geographical skills are constantly being developed. In one Year 9 lesson looking at the issue of soil erosion in Nepal, pupils clarified and extended their understanding of key terms such as deforestation before examining the human, economic and environmental implications of suggested solutions to the problem. A very well constructed task sheet guided pupils to consider the alternatives and then acted as a series of prompts for the extended writing in the following exercise. Similarly, in a Year 7 lesson on settlement, pupils were challenged to classify human and physical factors that would influence the site of a settlement. This work was supported by another well constructed task sheet, which supported pupil recording and again acted as a framework for the extended writing task.
- 129 Standards of work of Year 10 and 11 pupils seen during the inspection overall were of a good standard. Coursework produced by some higher attaining pupils in Year 10 was good and included the application of theoretical models of land use to the study of a city followed by a thorough analysis of the reasons for change over time. Another example of good quality work involved pupils producing a reasoned explanation of tectonic plate movement. Pupils of average attainment are able to acquire and analyse data before presenting a range of solutions. Similar work in Year 11 showed that for both of these groups their geographical understanding and their skills of analysis and evaluation are further developed. Lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. They are able to offer limited analysis and use basic forms of presentation. The department needs to give further consideration to how activities could be better matched to the needs of pupils. The quality of work is enhanced by the opportunities for fieldwork, which encourage the development of enquiry skills in Years 7, 8 and 9 and provide opportunities for good quality coursework in Years 10 and 11. More recent use of library based enquiries and the use of information and communication technology have further strengthened this area.
- 130 Teaching is good overall. In two thirds of the lessons observed teaching was good or very good. All teaching is well planned. Lessons are well structured and build upon good teacher subject knowledge. Expectations of pupils are high, learning objectives are explained to pupils and carefully designed tasks ensure pupils achieve in each lesson. Appropriate homework supports the classroom learning. The pace of teaching ensures that pupils are well motivated and apply themselves well to learning. A key feature is the starter to the lessons that rapidly engages and involves pupils.

- 131 Pupils learn new knowledge and skills or consolidate existing learning in all lessons. They show a high level of commitment and concentration and respond to the challenges set by the teacher. Learning is supported by a range of teaching methods that fully involve the pupils. They are frequently asked to work in pairs or groups, which they undertake confidently. They respond willingly to teacher questions. Relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils are good. Well structured written tasks are marked frequently and the regular formal assessment at the end of each unit provides pupils with a clear statement of progress against their target and suggests how they could improve.
- 132 The department benefits from the commitment, enthusiasm and industry of the head of geography. There is a clear educational vision for the subject and the contribution that it can make to pupil learning and personal development. The departmental development plan is based upon a realistic analysis of the current position of the department. The schemes of work have a clear structure and fully meet the National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 3. Support is needed for the new member of the department. Monitoring of the work of the department particularly at Key Stage 3 needs to ensure the rigorous implementation of departmental policies.
- 133 Geography makes a significant contribution to pupil's moral and social development but the spiritual and cultural elements are in need of further development. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The focus on teaching and learning has led to pupils gaining improved standards.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Lessons are challenging and stimulating asking pupils to use and develop their thinking skills.
- The effective teaching strategies used to develop literacy skills in the teaching of history.
- High expectations of behaviour and good behaviour management strategies.
- The history curriculum is well planned and ensures a high degree of consistency across all classes in terms of what is to be taught.
- Teacher assessment is rigorous giving teachers and pupils an accurate picture of what pupils know, understand and can do.
- Very effective subject leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards and achievement at 16 – particularly amongst girls.
- Ensure that the few pupils who have negative attitudes do not disadvantage the vast majority of pupils who wish to learn.
- Make better use of performance data in the setting of targets and the monitoring of progress.
- Work to minimise the disruption to learning caused by the withdrawal of pupils from lessons.

- 134 Following a period of decline standards overall in history are now approaching the average for all schools. Standards indicated by teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2000

and 2001 were in line with national averages and inspection findings confirm that this is the case. Last year boys did less well than girls, the gap being wider than the national picture. In lessons most pupils make good progress in history particularly high attainers and girls due to the challenging nature of the teaching. When well supported pupils with special educational needs make very good progress as teachers use very good strategies to ensure that pupils can access the learning. The progress of a small number of boys is hindered by their reluctance to work independently. At the time of the last inspection standards at the age of 14 years were also judged to be in line with national averages and the rate of progress judged to be good.

- 135 In 2000 and 2001, GCSE results in history were well below the national average overall with boys performing better than girls. Inspection findings indicate that standards, although still below the national average, are improving and progress is satisfactory. High attaining pupils, both boys and girls, make good progress in history as they take full advantage of the support available to them. Low attaining pupils do struggle with the literacy demands that the subject places on them. A few boys in Year 10 have poor attitudes to learning and consequently make unsatisfactory progress and they put some others at risk of underachieving. At the time of the previous inspection standards at age 16 were also judged to be below the national average but the rate of progress then was generally unsatisfactory.
- 136 At Key Stage 3 pupils have a very secure knowledge and understanding of history particularly in terms of change and causation. By using an excellent simulation game Year 7 pupils were able to analyse and explain the reasons for the decline of the Roman Empire with some pupils having a clear grasp of the multi-causal nature of events. Pupils' historical enquiry skills beyond Year 7 are good. Year 8 and 9 pupils can select and prioritise information extracted from a wide range of source material and use this information to reach important conclusions e.g. who was the best monarch? What was life like for soldiers in the trenches? Pupils use information and communication technology fairly regularly but some make uncritical use of information researched from CD-ROMs or Internet sites.
- 137 At 16 years pupils have a good understanding of change and causation developed through their study of Medicine Through Time. Pupils are beginning to produce better quality course work in Years 10 and 11 although more can be done both in terms of content and presentation. Pupils can extract relevant information efficiently from source material but the ability to interpret and evaluate source material is less well developed. Many pupils, boys and girls, have difficulties with literacy and this impacts on standards and achievement in history. At the time of the last inspection it was reported that too little emphasis was given to extended writing. The balance is better although there is the need to have a more cohesive approach to building pupils' capacity to write accurate and relevant descriptions and explanations from Year 7-11.
- 138 Teaching in history is consistently good or very good and teachers work hard to meet the very diverse needs of the pupils. Enthusiastic teachers plan lessons thoroughly, explain clearly the objectives of the lesson, initiate interesting and stimulating activities, make very good use of resources, and check with pupils that the objectives have been achieved. Particular strengths are the support for and the use of literacy in the teaching of history, the use of group work and group talk, and the effective strategies used to manage behaviour.

As a result of such good teaching pupils, particularly in Years 7-9, learn well and display increasingly positive attitudes towards the subject and the way in which it is taught. In a few lessons the timing of the end of the lesson was signalled a little early and at times teachers can be pre-occupied with managing the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils to the detriment of the rest of the class.

- 139 Management is very effective. The head of department has high expectations, models effective teaching and learning, has a very clear and accurate view of current strengths and areas for development and the subject development plan is closely linked with the school improvement plan. Better use could be made of performance data to set targets, monitor progress and evaluate results. The history curriculum in Years 7-9 is good and this leads to a consistency of approach across all history classes. Assessment in Years 7-11 is becoming increasingly rigorous and in Years 10-11 assessment procedures prepare pupils well for GCSE examination.
- 140 Overall satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection although progress has been good since the arrival of the new head of department in January 2000. Standards and achievement have not yet made significant improvements but good progress has been made in providing challenge for the most able and the development of written communication in history. The issue of pupils with special educational needs being withdrawn from lessons still remains and needs to be reviewed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils' ability to use information and communication technology independently.
- Quality of teaching in specific information and communication technology lessons.
- Pupils' response to the subject.
- Curriculum provision for the discrete information and communication technology courses in both key stages.
- Arrangements for accreditation of information and communication technology for all pupils at GCSE.

Areas for improvement

- Cross-curricular provision for applying information and communication technology skills and enriching learning in other subjects.
- Standards achieved in GCSE examinations in information and communication technology.
- Depth of coverage of computer control and data-logging within information and communication technology lessons.
- Moderation of assessments within the information and communication technology department.
- Replacement programme for the ageing computer stock.

- 141 At the end of Key Stage 3, the standards of attainment achieved by pupils in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average. Attainment in GCSE examinations was well below the national average in 2001, with 31% of pupils achieving an A*-C grade compared with 55% nationally, although further analysis shows that these pupils were generally achieving appropriately for their ability. Girls generally performed better than boys in examinations but

their results were still well below the national average.

- 142 All pupils follow a course in information and communication technology in each year and all are entered for a GCSE examination.
- 143 Standards of attainment achieved in information and communication technology lessons are at least in line with national expectations and often exceed them, especially in Years 10 and 11 where pupils are independently applying their skills. In Key Stage 3, pupils are also developing independence in an increasing range of information and communication technology skills. In Year 7, most pupils can use desktop publishing and multimedia software confidently and make appropriate use of formulae in a spreadsheet to plan a party. Lower attaining pupils achieve a similar result but with extra help and the higher attaining pupils go on to investigate the effects of changing variables in a spreadsheet. By Year 9, most pupils are confidently using a range of software for word-processing, desktop-publishing, graphics, multimedia presentations, spreadsheets and databases, and they produce documents containing information obtained from many different sources. In searching the Internet, they are starting to understand about the reliability of data and the wider effects of information and communication technology on their daily lives. Lower attaining pupils are also able to apply a range of information and communication technology skills but often with the aid of more support. All pupils understand the purposes of the different software packages and know when to use them although their understanding of computer control and data-logging is hindered by the limited coverage of these aspects. All pupils in Year 10 can produce high quality multimedia presentations and desktop-published documents, with particular audiences in mind, and generally work independently. Higher attaining pupils plan and evaluate their work well and produce coursework involving extensive writing such as designing and documenting a database application and creating an Internet user guide. Lower attaining pupils use their information and communication technology skills to present their work well. Recent improvements in the attitudes of pupils, preparation for examinations and overall curriculum provision have increased standards in lessons. However, they have not yet had sufficient time to impact on performance in examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is good in both key stages. In many cases, pupils are achieving levels of capability in information and communication technology that are considerably higher than would normally be expected.
- 144 In lessons, pupils make good, and often very good, progress and it is especially good for those pupils who enter the school with limited previous experience of information and communication technology. Throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils progress rapidly through the basic software packages with the aim of becoming independent users as soon as possible, a strategy that has had considerable success. Progress is equally good in Years 10 and 11 where pupils are extending their skills to meet the criteria of the GCSE syllabus and are learning to plan and evaluate their work. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, make good progress as a result of the extra support that is provided by teachers and classroom assistants. Pupils' attitudes to learning in information and communication technology are generally very good. Most pupils respond well to the activities in lessons, showing perseverance and a determination to succeed. Behaviour and

relationships are good and the information and communication technology equipment is used sensibly at all times.

- 145 The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons and is very good in the majority of lessons. Teachers generally have a good knowledge and understanding of the information and communication technology curriculum and good personal information and communication technology skills. Lessons are well-planned with clear objectives and the longer term planning is also of a high standard. Teachers have high expectations and set appropriately challenging tasks that can be applied to all levels of ability. Pupils' interest and motivation are maintained by the pace of learning and the variety of teaching methods used, including good use of the network for demonstrating new skills. Teachers give good individual support to pupils in lessons to extend their information and communication technology skills, question their understanding and identify the next steps in learning. Marking in exercise books is more variable but often includes helpful guidance for pupils.
- 146 Curriculum provision for information and communication technology as a timetabled subject is very good, providing all pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop expertise in a wide variety of information and communication technology skills and to leave school with an accredited award for their achievements. Good use of information and communication technology was observed in GNVQ and history lessons, and in the Student Support Centre. However not all subjects are making use of good opportunities to support information and communications technology across the curriculum. This aspect is unsatisfactory.
- 147 Information and communication technology is very well led and effectively managed by a subject leader who promotes high standards of work and is a very good role model for effective teaching and learning. Strengths in provision and areas for improvement have been identified and the department continues to improve. Areas for further development include moderating assessment between teachers and sharing examples of assessed work with pupils. The department benefits from a full-time network manager who makes a major contribution to the successful running of the information and communication technology facilities in school and gives effective support to pupils in lessons. The number of computers available is good, allowing all pupils to have individual use of a computer in lessons, and most of the school's information and communication technology facilities are intensively used. There is a good range of software and peripheral devices.
- 148 The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection through the support of senior managers and the commitment and leadership of a conscientious subject leader. All the key issues reported in the previous inspection have been addressed although the equipment bought at that time is now in need of replacement and the school's strategy for improving the cross-curricular use of information and communication technology has yet to be effective. Reports to parents in Year 10 now meet statutory requirements. Attainment in lessons has improved and pupils' aspirations have been raised. There has been a dramatic improvement in curriculum provision in both key stages which provides a very good course for all pupils throughout Key Stage 3 and a strategy in Key Stage 4 which enables all pupils to receive an externally-accredited award for their achievements in information and communication technology.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory** with some good and very good features.

Strengths

- A conscientious, hard working team of teachers who have a shared commitment to raising standards.
- Well developed strategies for evaluating the work of the department which result in the identification of appropriate priorities for improvement.
- A scheme of work which supports teachers' planning of work based on clearly identified learning objectives.
- Effective procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress towards National Curriculum and GCSE targets.
- Relationships with pupils.
- Effective use of the language assistant who plays a valuable role in the work of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards by broadening the range of teaching and learning styles.
- Develop strategies to enable pupils, particularly high attainers, to become less dependent on the teacher and more independent in their use of, and understanding of the target language.
- Develop the use of information and communication technology in teaching and learning.
- Develop an agreed expectation of the use of the target language in lessons.
- Comply fully with the statutory requirements for modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4.

- 149 In Spanish, the results of teachers' assessments in 2000 and 2001 indicate that pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 were just above the national average. Girls outperform boys and in 2001 the difference was greater than the national difference.
- 150 A higher proportion of pupils is entered for the GCSE examination in Spanish than is the case nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving pass grades (A*-G) was in line with national figures in 2000 and above national figures in 2001 when all pupils entered achieved a pass grade. The proportion of pupils achieving a higher grade (A*-C) has been below national averages and in 2000 it was well below the national figure. In 2001 the proportion was improved but remained below the national averages. Girls achieve more of the higher grades than boys by a margin, which in 2001 was in line with the national difference but their results remained below national average figures for girls. In both 2000 and 2001, most pupils did at least as well in Spanish as in their other GCSE subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades (A*-A) is well below the national average.
- 151 A small number of high attaining pupils was entered for the GCSE examination in French in 2000. They achieved results which were above national figures for both pass grades and higher grades.
- 152 Spanish is the modern language studied by all pupils up to the age of 14 years. Currently, however, a small group of pupils in Year 11 are studying French. These pupils represent the full range of achievement and are making satisfactory progress based on their prior

attainment.

- 153 In Spanish, throughout all year groups, most pupils make satisfactory progress overall in all the skill areas when compared to their prior attainment. Pupils are encouraged and supported from an early stage in their learning of Spanish to move from understanding and producing single words and short phrases to working in full sentences. In a Year 8 lesson, high attaining pupils were able to write their own sentences to describe the presents, which they were going to buy for family members in the context of a forthcoming holiday. High attaining pupils by the end of Year 9 can express and justify opinions in Spanish. They can write and talk about daily and past routines and refer to the future. With support, in speaking and writing, average attaining pupils can give simple information to describe a holiday. They can understand the main details of longer passages made up of familiar language and can take part in simple, closely structured conversations. Low attaining pupils in Year 9 can repeat words and phrases and can make short sentences provided that they are given appropriate support. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. In a Year 7 lesson a pupil with special educational needs made good progress because the support of a teaching assistant in class enabled the pupil to take part in speaking activities about school subjects. In Years 10 and 11 high attaining pupils can produce extended pieces of writing, referring to past, present and future events in a variety of contexts, such as describing their home town and holidays. In general, however, high attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged to take the initiative and to produce language independently. Pupils in both key stages lack confidence in speaking without prompts and support. Pronunciation is sometimes approximate. A small number of disaffected pupils in Year 11 are not making satisfactory progress because they do not engage in the work.
- 154 The attitudes and behaviour of most pupils are at least satisfactory and often good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are almost always good or very good. Most pupils co-operate, concentrate satisfactorily and respond to their teacher's encouragement to take part in activities. They respond well to opportunities to take part in pair work and to work in the language laboratory. Those pupils who work with the language assistant enjoy the challenge and stimulation of contact with a native speaker of Spanish. The attitudes and behaviour of a small number of disaffected pupils in Year 11 are unsatisfactory.
- 155 The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with good features in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan carefully. Learning objectives are routinely shared with pupils so that they understand the purpose of the lesson. Grammatical explanations and comparisons between English and Spanish support the development of pupils' literacy skills. In the best lessons planning is based on clear linguistic learning objectives and activities are designed to gradually consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of the language. Support is initially provided but is withdrawn appropriately to challenge the pupils to memorise, adapt and reuse the language. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, the teacher skilfully enabled the pupils to talk in increasing detail about past and future holidays. The pupils demonstrated the learning in the target language at regular intervals throughout the lesson. The teacher encouraged pupils to move quickly to using complete sentences and to extend their use of language. Where teaching is less effective, the target language is not used consistently. This leads to confusion because

expectations are unclear and opportunities for pupils to practise the spoken language are missed. Where too much support is provided, pupils are not challenged to memorise language or to produce language independently. Variety is lacking in some lessons when the lesson is centred around the teacher without the support of audio-visual resources.

- 156 The marking of written work is regular and teachers provide constructive comments on how to improve work. Homework is set and generally reinforces the work of the lesson. The monitoring and assessing of pupils' work is effective. Targets are shared with pupils and pupils are aware of the requirements for achieving the next National Curriculum or GCSE grade level.
- 157 The team is well managed and work closely together. Effective systems for review and self-evaluation have provided the team with an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. Priorities for the subject improvement plan have been appropriately identified and are linked to the whole school improvement plan. Some of the key actions planned to raise standards, particularly in Key Stage 4, are in their early stages and have not yet had time to impact. The curriculum is broad and balanced at Key Stage 3. A significant number of pupils are not studying a modern language at Key Stage 4 and full statutory requirements are therefore not met.
- 158 The teachers are all skilled linguists. The language laboratory is a well-used resource which offers variety to teaching and learning. It promotes the development of listening skills in particular, because it allows pupils to have control of the listening material. The Spanish assistant plays a full role in planning lessons and in preparing materials for the classes in which she works. She offers effective support in both whole class activities and in intensive small group work. Display is well used to model examples of good work by pupils. Curriculum content gives pupils the opportunity to learn about the culture of the countries of the target language and this is also reflected in display. Social and cultural awareness is further enriched by an annual visit to Spain. The department is in the process of establishing a link with a school in Argentina. There is a lack of appropriate resources for the development of reading for pleasure. The use of overhead projectors and video to give variety to lessons is limited. The use of information and communication technology in teaching and learning requires development.
- 159 Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. Whilst some issues of disaffection and disengagement remain, pupil response and behaviour have improved, particularly in the last two years. Continuing action is required around the use of the target language and the development of teaching and learning styles. End of Key Stage 3 attainment is slightly above national averages. GCSE results have been slower to improve but in 2001 moved closer to national norms. High attaining pupils no longer study French as a second language in Key Stage 3 because it reduced the time available for the teaching and learning of the first modern foreign language. Assessment and monitoring procedures have developed appropriately. Effective strategies for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department have been established. The department is well placed for further improvement.

MUSIC

Overall the quality of provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise.
- Lessons are well organised and managed.
- The pupils enjoy music and have good attitudes towards the subject.
- Consistently good behaviour during music lessons and within the music department.
- The excellent accommodation and wide range of resources which are used and managed effectively to support teaching and learning.
- Good contribution to cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of achievement at the age of 14 and 16.
- The use of teachers' ongoing assessment to plan appropriate levels of work for all pupils and clear assessment criteria which are shared with the pupils.
- Opportunities for increased singing in all years.
- The use of information and communication technology to enhance pupils learning.
- More challenging work for the more able.
- Clear leadership for the music department.

160 There is no information available on standards when pupils first join the school but evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the majority of pupils are working in line with expectations at age 11. At 14 pupils' attainment is below the national average but attainment of the 11 to 13 year olds is in line with expectations. There is no difference in the standards achieved by boys and girls or by ethnic groups but the more able are not always challenged. In recent years, a small number of pupils have taken GCSE music. Most gained high grades. In 2001, of the four who were entered, one gained a grade A, two gained a grade B and one gained a grade E. These small numbers makes the comparison of GCSE results with national figures unreliable. There are no GCSE pupils in the present Year 11 but in Year 10 there are 21 pupils. Standards of attainment are below those expected for Year 10.

161 Teaching and learning are good overall at Key Stage 3, it is good or very good in Years 7 and 8 but satisfactory in Year 9. The strengths of these lessons include very good subject knowledge and expertise with clear learning objectives that are shared with the pupils. Open-ended questions are used in both the introductions to the lessons to recap on previous learning and in the plenary when pupils have the opportunity to listen to and discuss the group performances. However, assessment criteria is not shared with the pupils. Pupils' musical knowledge and understanding is developed effectively because performing, composing, listening and appraising are integrated in a practical way. For example, pupils in Year 7 successfully improvised music to represent the seasons. This work built on previous learning when the pupils listened to *Spring* from the *Four Seasons* by Vivaldi. During practical composing work the majority of pupils worked creatively. Pupils experimented with the different sound effects on keyboards and a wide range of percussion. Older pupils demonstrated a good understanding of the Blues scale as well as a sense of rhythm and appropriate keyboard techniques.

- 162 Teaching and learning are satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 10 have to overcome the gaps in their basic musical knowledge and some very targeted catch-up work is needed. Two additional GCSE sessions are held after school each week in an attempt to raise standards. New computers have recently been installed and the use of music technology to support composing at Year 10 is already having a positive impact on the quality of the compositions of a small number of pupils. Homework is not effectively used, for example, and the pupils do not use the Internet or CD-ROM for independent research.
- 163 Pupils enjoy their music, especially composing in small groups. The attitudes, response and behaviour of pupils of all ages are consistently good. Pupils respond well to teacher input and settle well, on the whole, to work together in groups. They share ideas and discuss ways for improving and completing compositions, for example combining sounds, the use of dynamics to create an effective ending to a piece or using a conductor to enhance the quality of their performance. The majority of pupils remain on task and concentrate very well, for example Year 8 pupils, including those with special educational needs, demonstrated a good understanding of the Blues chord sequence as they played it on keyboard, reading from simple notation and chords symbols. Many pupils successfully used three or four notes of the Blues scale to improvise a tune over the chords.
- 164 At Key Stage 3 pupils with special educational needs and pupils who have English as an additional language participate fully in lessons and make satisfactory progress overall. The progress of a pupil with special educational needs is less good at GCSE level. Homework is used effectively at Key Stage 3, for example, poems written by the pupils, partly during lesson time and completed for homework, formed the stimulus for group compositions. The use of poetry as a stimulus for composing and the use of Key Words, for example in the Blues display, effectively promote the development of literacy through music. There is insufficient singing in music lessons. However there is good quality solo singing on the recently recorded CD of the departments' production *Sadly Yet Madly*. Information and communication technology is not yet used to support the music curriculum at Key Stages 3.
- 165 Music is managed within the performing arts department and management systems and procedures are in place. Priorities for improvement, such as the use of assessment, challenging the more able and extending the range of extra-curricular activities have been identified, but targets need to be more specific. The music subject leader effectively manages the music department. However, the present focus on teaching, raising standards, securing good standards of behaviour and ways of working is entirely appropriate. Schemes of work are being developed in line with national guidelines and the new specifications for GCSE music. Assessment procedures are in place but now need to become embedded into practice. A number of pupils have been identified as having a talent for music but no special plans are made to develop their talent. A range of instrumental tuition is available in school, for example, keyboard, woodwind and brass and vocal tuition, but access to this is dependent on the ability to pay. A limited range of extra-curricular music activities is on offer involving a relatively small number of pupils. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development, including the opportunity to experience a range of music, such as Blues and Rock 'n' Roll, as well as Classical music and the music of other cultures.

166 Since the previous inspection there have been considerable staffing issues and for one term there was no music teaching. The music subject leader, appointed 18 months ago, is developing the department from a low starting point. However, overall there has been insufficient progress since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- Standards achieved by GCSE pupils are good.
- The majority of teaching is good or better.
- There is a clear strategy for improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Standards, particular of boys at the age of 14.
- Some unsatisfactory and poor teaching in Years 7-9.
- Self review and monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment to inform the planning of lessons.

167 By the end of Year 9, girls reach the expected standards in physical education but the standards reached by boys are below average. This is supported by the teachers' own assessments at the end of Year 9.

168 For the last two years examination results of Year 11 pupils have been above or in line with national expectations. For the last two years every pupil entered has achieved a grade A*-G with no pupil achieving lower than a grade F. 64% and 50% respectively have achieved the higher A*-C grades. Pupils who are entered for GCSE perform significantly better in physical education when compared with the other subjects they study. Boys and girls attain equally well at GCSE. This is an excellent improvement since the last inspection. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the standard of core physical education at the end of Key Stage 4.

169 By the end of Year 9 standards in badminton are satisfactory but the standard of boys' football is poor and gymnastic activity is below average. However, the appointment of additional specialist teachers and smaller classes have already improved standards in Years 7 and 8 of both boys and girls. In dance, Year 8 girls are able to perform quite complex routines with a good range of exaggerated movements. They have a good understanding of technical language and are already achieving the level expected by the end of the key stage. Girls in Year 8 badminton are also achieving well. Boys in Years 7 and 8 are achieving satisfactory standards in gymnastic activity and football, where they perform with effective teamwork and are able to play competitively with a sense of fair play. Overall, pupils in Years 7-9 make satisfactory progress. Girls of all abilities make at least satisfactory progress. Higher ability boys make satisfactory progress but lower ability boys and some pupils with special educational needs, who are not supported by the student support team, make unsatisfactory progress.

- 170 The standard of theory work for GCSE is high. Pupils of all ability make good progress. In Year 11 pupils demonstrate good knowledge of the benefits of sponsorship and are able to apply their own knowledge to group discussions. Pupils are able to produce coursework studies of a high standard. Two studies on the analysis of performance in shot putt and swimming were of a particularly high standard. Class work also reflects high standards of presentation and pride in pupils' work. It was not possible to observe standards of core physical education in Year 11 as the only lesson during the inspection was a recreation session at the local sports centre. However, the standards seen in Year 10 are satisfactory with some good girls badminton observed. The high numbers of pupils taking GCSE and the standards they achieve has a very positive impact on the standards achieved by all pupils in core lessons.
- 171 Teaching is good overall throughout the school. In Years 7-9 teaching is good or very good in the majority of lessons. Teachers are all experienced specialists with good subject knowledge. Where teaching is very good, the lesson is well planned, proceeds at pace with good transition between activities. The teacher demonstrates good assessment knowledge of the pupils and tasks are appropriately challenging and progressive for all pupils. Very good relationships exist between teachers and classes, which helps pupils to learn and enjoy the experience. Key words are displayed in dance to support learning. Good use is made of the rewards system. In the two lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory this does not apply and resultant poor behaviour is not managed well. In some lessons the behaviour of boys is not managed well and this impacts on the learning of others. Opportunities for pupils to plan or solve problems and self-evaluate are often missing.
- 172 In Years 10 and 11 all the teaching is at least satisfactory. Most of the teaching is good or very good, particularly for the GCSE groups. The teachers have very high expectations and these are fully understood by the pupils. Good relationships are maintained. Lessons have clear objectives. Teachers use a range of strategies and resources to stimulate learning. Very good use is made of the local professional clubs in learning about sponsorship in Year 11. Wide ranges of resources are provided to support different learning styles and develop thinking skills in learning about the heart and exercise. Pupils are well aware of how they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. Very good use is made of the GCSE pupils to support teaching and learning in core physical education. Year 10 GCSE pupils lead warm up activity and act as feeders to enable others to practise returning shots from the back of the court. They are also encouraged to practise their skill analysis in coaching their peers.
- 173 As a result of effective strategies by teachers, in most lessons there is a co-operative atmosphere for learning and pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning is mainly good. This is particularly good in all girls' lessons. Good relationships are observed in all girls' lessons, attendance and participation is good and pupils are well equipped with correct kit. Boys are less well equipped although there are improvements in Years 7 and 8. Some boys, and in particular the lower ability boys, are less well motivated and the teaching does not always address their needs. A large number of boys are excused from taking part with notes from home.

- 174 Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but with significant recent improvement. The school has invested in additional subject specialists and reduced class sizes. The newly appointed subject leader has prioritised a strategy for improvement and this is outlined in the subject improvement plan. There is a clear curriculum plan for the year. A subject handbook is being developed and a number of new policies are being introduced. Risk assessment guidelines are in place. Some good new units of work have been developed, for example personal fitness where pupils keep personal fitness diary. A full curriculum review needs to be completed as identified in the improvement plan. Liaison with the feeder schools is not well developed. A programme of self-review and monitoring of teaching and learning has been identified but not yet implemented. Assessment to inform curriculum planning needs further development. There is a clear, shared desire to further improve physical education. There is very good practice within the department but at present this is not consistent
- 175 Extra-curricular sport offers opportunities for pupils of all abilities. Girls' opportunities are good and those for boys are satisfactory and improving. There is a mixture of open club and team practices in activities such as netball and basketball as well as teams for hockey, football, tennis, rounders and athletics. School teams enter local and county competitions extending the opportunity for the more able.
- 176 Facilities for physical education are satisfactory. Outdoor facilities are good. Indoor facilities are unsatisfactory. Only one gymnasium means that the multi-use school hall is regularly used for lessons. Curriculum time is sometimes lost and this impacts on standards. Changing facilities are sometimes not adequate for the number of pupils changing. The classrooms used for theory lessons are in need of decoration and refurbishment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The provision for religious education is **satisfactory in Years 7-9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11** as statutory requirements are not met.

Strengths

- The new head of religious education shows dedication, energy and commitment and has, in a relatively short period of time, re-established the subject and has raised its profile.
- The non-specialist staff that teach religious education, although not specifically trained in the subject, provide a consistent team who through discussion and continual support are developing their expertise.
- The attitude of most pupils towards the subject is very positive.

Areas for improvement

- Meet the statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Improve the resources and financial provision for religious education.
- Extend opportunities for 'learning from religion' in order to develop pupils' abilities to reflect on their own beliefs and values.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions other than Christianity.
- Develop and extend the range of teaching strategies so as to actively engage the pupils and enhance their learning.
- Develop differentiated tasks to extend the more able and support the less able.

177 Attainment on entry to Year 7 is slightly below expectations. Pupils make good progress so that by the end of Year 9 the attainment of pupils is broadly in line with local expectations. There is no religious education provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11, consequently the attainment of pupils by the age of 16 is below local expectations. There are no recent GCSE results or any other information available in order to assess standards against national figures.

178 Most pupils have a reasonable grasp of Christianity. They are able to talk about Christian beliefs and practices like prayer, infant baptism and the Eucharist. They make use of specialist vocabulary like confession, adoration, the Son of God and the resurrection and are able to provide a rudimentary explanation of their meaning. However, their knowledge and understanding of other religious traditions is less secure. Pupils in Year 9 have some limited knowledge of Hinduism as this is the religious tradition they have most recently studied but their knowledge of other religious traditions like Judaism and Islam is sparse.

179 Some more able pupils show a sophisticated level of religious understanding. For example, one pupil in Year 9 understood that Hindu worship was closely linked to the concept of acquiring good karma. Also, when discussing issues many pupils show an ability to make thoughtful judgements and identify reasons to support their view. For example, during a discussion of the problem of evil while studying the holocaust one pupil in Year 7 argued, "God made mankind in the world to keep it the same, so evil is down to us."

180 Overall teaching is good. The aims of each lesson are usually made known to the pupils and

questions are well directed. Pupils are given clear instructions. Activities are well supported by both visual as well as written resources. Also, the time allocated to each task is shrewdly judged enabling pupils to complete what has been asked of them while avoiding prolonging the activity so that pupils become distracted. Good use is made of group work and there is evidence of other strategies like model making and discussion.

- 181 However, the focus of much of the work concentrates on 'learning about religion' and on strategies that involve reading, writing, observing and listening. Opportunities for pupils to 'learn from religion' do take place but they are insufficiently developed. Sometimes, as in the case of a discussion by pupils in Year 8 talking about the rights and wrongs of those without belief celebrating religious festivals, the activity arises towards the end of the lesson when time is short. This results in only a limited sharing of ideas and views, and no time, outside of homework, for a thoughtful and carefully considered writing activity. Insufficient use is also made of differentiated tasks to extend the more able or provide targeted support for the less able.
- 182 The leadership and management of the subject are now good. In the two years prior to the inspection the department experienced difficulties with long-term illness. This has resulted in weaknesses in both the management and the teaching of the subject. Relatively recently this situation has been resolved with the appointment of a teacher responsible for both religious and also personal and social education. Since that appointment good progress has been made in re-establishing the status of the subject. Pupils are very well behaved, attentive and take a genuine interest in the issues being explored. Resources are poor but very good use is made of what little is available. The work of the pupils is marked regularly although a great deal of this marking encourages the pupils rather than formally guides them. The non-specialist teachers are very well supported by the subject leader. They respond positively to advice, work well as a team and are keen to develop their skills in the subject.
- 183 There has been no effective improvement in religious education since the previous inspection. However, this discounts the fact that due to the long-term illness of the previous teacher responsible for the department, the subject suffered a substantial set back and has now done well to recover that lost ground. The school, however, still does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 thus preventing older pupils from continuing to make progress in the subject.