

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**CITY OF LEICESTER SCHOOL AND  
SIXTH FORM CENTRE**

Leicester

LEA area: Leicester

Unique Reference Number: 120297

Headteacher: Dr M J Griffiths

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe  
1025

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2000

Inspection number: 180746

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Downing Drive Evington Leicester
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Rowley
Dates of previous inspections:	13 <sup>th</sup> –17 <sup>th</sup> February 1995 27 <sup>th</sup> –31 <sup>st</sup> October 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Dr D A W Biltcliffe	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Results and achievements Teaching and learning
Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay Inspector		Attendance
Mr H Meggitt	Lay Inspector		Partnership with parents
Mr H Heller	Team inspector	Special educational needs	Pupils' attitudes and values School's care for pupils Leadership and management
Mr A F Barringer	Team inspector	English; drama	
Mr A W Dickens	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mr C P Hewson	Team inspector	Science	
Mrs W Burke	Team inspector	Art	
Mrs S M Mansell	Team inspector	Design and technology Information technology	
Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	Curriculum
Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History	Efficiency Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr A E Nutton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Music English as an additional language	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Assessment
Mr R D Gaunt	Team inspector	Physical education	
Mr R C Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious education	
Mr R H Crowther	Team inspector	Vocational education	

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>5 - 9</b>
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	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10 - 15</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>15 - 17</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>17 - 20</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>21 - 22</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>22 - 23</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>23 - 25</b>
<b>THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>25 - 26</b>
<b>PUPILS FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE</b>	<b>26 - 27</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>28 - 29</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>30 - 34</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>35 - 39</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Number of full-time pupils:	1380	(much larger than average)
Pupils with English as an additional language:	60.9%	(very high)
Pupils entitled to free school meals:	18.8%	(broadly average)
Pupils on the register of special educational needs:	20.1%	(broadly average)
Average number of pupils per teacher:	16.1	(below average)
Average class size:	21.9	

The social and economic background of pupils is broadly average overall. The overall level of attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age 11 is below the national average, especially so for the proportion of pupils of high attainment. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is a little above average. About seven-tenths of the pupils come from families of ethnic minority heritage. This is the school's third Ofsted inspection in five years.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a sound and improving school. It has worked hard and successfully to do better, although still has a few things to put right. Standards are broadly average overall and pupils make satisfactory progress. These aspects could be higher still. Teaching has improved markedly since 1997 and is now good. The school's leadership and management are strong, clear, realistic and effective. Teaching and management were judged to be serious weaknesses in 1997, but are now strengths. The school gives good value for money on its low level of funding. Overall, it has far more strengths than weaknesses and is firmly on an upward path.

#### **What the school does well**

- The school's leadership and management now have a track record of significant improvement.
- Teaching is good overall and a slice of it is very good; the amount of unsatisfactory teaching is much reduced.
- The pastoral care of pupils and racial harmony are strengths of the school.
- Pupils' attendance has improved significantly over the last four years and is now average.
- The school plans its spending carefully and works hard to remedy deficiencies in resources.

#### **What could be improved**

- Pupils' attainments and progress (and their spiritual development) could be still higher.
- A small minority of pupils are troublesome and readily adopt unacceptable attitudes and behaviour.
- Large numbers of pupils are unpunctual for lessons and sixth-formers' attendance is poorly registered.
- There is much to put right in the school's fabric, decoration, toilets and resources.
- Design and technology, information technology and religious education are not taught enough.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress overall in the two and a half years since its last inspection. Major weaknesses have been faced squarely and positively. The school has improved to at least a satisfactory level most of the weaknesses identified then. For example:

- the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has declined significantly from about 20 per cent to six per cent now.

- the headteacher's management is very clear, comprehensive and effective. The senior team works closely and thoroughly together. Most middle managers now secure a sound quality of teaching and learning in class.
- most pupils read satisfactorily by the end of Year 9; the remainder usually make reasonable progress.
- the majority of pupils throughout the school listen carefully to their teachers and to one another.
- pupils' social development is now promoted satisfactorily overall.
- pupils in Years 10-11 now have satisfactory access to GCSE courses and a wider choice of optional courses.
- pupils generally respect the school's fabric and facilities (but a minority spoil the toilets).

Insufficient progress has, however, been made in improving the following weaknesses identified in 1997:

- pupils' spiritual development is better, but still not broad enough.
- there are still considerable deficiencies in books and equipment, despite the school's high spending on them.
- the school's site is attractive, but its physical environment is drab overall, in parts bleak, and generally poorly decorated – a long-standing problem.
- statutory requirements are still not met for religious education in Years 10-13, for daily collective worship or for staff appraisal. Additionally, not enough design and technology or information technology (IT) is taught.

Pupils' overall standard of attainment in GCSE examinations is broadly similar to that at the last inspection and is usually close to the national average. It dipped in 1999, but reflected pupils' attainment on entry. Achievement at GCE Advanced level is still a little below average. The school's teaching has improved. Overall, since 1997 the school has shown a good capacity, but with some important gaps, to improve its practice. Its senior management has (rightly) identified the need to ensure even greater consistency of performance and sustained improvement across the school in the future. Under its present leadership the school is set to make sound progress in the future.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 years olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	C	D	E
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	D	

Key	
<i>Well above average</i>	A
<i>Above average</i>	B
<i>Average</i>	C
<i>Below average</i>	D
<i>Well below average</i>	E

The school's results at levels 5+ and 6+ together in the national tests for 14 year olds in 1999 were broadly average in English, but below average in mathematics and science. A significantly smaller proportion of pupils reached the higher level 6 than generally do nationally. The 1999 results were below average for schools of a similar kind (as measured only by the proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals). Standards have risen over the 1996-1999 period, in line with the rise nationally. By the end of Year 9



standards in the school are average in most subjects. They are below average, however, in design and technology, IT, modern foreign languages and religious education (RE). Pupils made satisfactory progress overall in their studies from Year 7 in 1996 to Year 9 in 1999.

Results in GCSE were close to the national average over the 1997-1999 period for the proportion of pupils achieving at least five grades A\*-C, but dropped in 1999. They were slightly below average for the proportion achieving five or more grades A\*-G over the 1995-1999 period, but on a trend that rose to average in 1999. The overall standard (as measured by "points scores") was well below that generally achieved in schools of a similar character in 1999. The strongest subjects in GCSE in 1998 and 1999 were English, biology, chemistry, art, (specialist) IT, business studies and sociology. Double science, design and technology and French were the weakest subjects. Pupils generally make a satisfactory rate of progress between Year 9 and the end of Year 11.

In the sixth form, achievement at GCE A-level has been below average over the last few years, partly because of the school's wide-intake policy. On General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in the sixth form at both Intermediate and Advanced levels, achievement was good and above average.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The vast majority of pupils are positive and diligent. A minority are casual and lazy.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most behave sensibly and cooperatively, but a minority are troublesome and impulsive.
Personal development and relationships	Most pupils continue to grow into pleasant adults in an orderly community. Strong racial harmony.
Attendance	Much improved (except in the sixth form), but unpunctuality is a widespread problem.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
in the lessons seen	Satisfactory	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.*

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons, good in 46 per cent and very good (or better) in 18 per cent of those seen. Six per cent of lessons had unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is good in English and usually in mathematics. In well-taught lessons pupils make good progress through effective class management, a brisk pace, penetrating discussions and rigorous work. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by insufficient control over pupils, low intellectual demand or a slow pace.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Generally broad and balanced. Improved, but not enough design and technology, IT or religious education. Teaching time low.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Also improved. Good quality work with individuals, who make sound progress. Satisfactory links with subjects, strong with parents.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are accurately identified and assessed. Teaching very well organised, effective and deployed efficiently. Most pupils make good progress. Good teamwork and pupil commitment.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good overall. Clear moral stances taken and encouraged. Friendly relationships amongst staff and pupils in a close multi-ethnic community. Reasonable cultural and travel opportunities. Thin spiritual development and poor buildings are the main weaknesses.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils feel safe and valued in a clear and secure framework. Pupils have access to good advice, guidance and support.

The school works closely with parents and tries to keep them well informed, but there is more work to be done to strengthen the links. The school provides a satisfactory range of extracurricular activities and good careers advice. The incomplete range of subject content prevents design and technology, IT and religious education from meeting statutory curricular requirements. The school works hard and patiently to give good support to all its pupils, cooperative or otherwise.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	A previous weakness turned into a strength. The headteacher's vision and professionalism substantial in turning the school round. Strong support from diligent senior managers. Most middle managers show effective leadership and commitment. Further work still to be done.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	A core of very able and committed members who have actively faced the problems of the last few years. Now moving on to a tighter strategic plan. The full National Curriculum is not, however, in place.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Much improved in the last two years. Its databank of information and assessments, however, still lacks a few key analyses.
The strategic use of resources	Sound identification of targets and priorities. Close monitoring and wise spending. Solving the legacy of large deficiencies in books, equipment and buildings is an uphill struggle, but some progress made.

There have been major improvements to the school's management and leadership in the last three years. The school has sufficient, well-qualified staff. There are many shortages of books and equipment, especially up-to-date computers, despite high recent spending. The two widely separated buildings pose major problems, most of which the school tackles well. The two libraries have been recently improved, but still have deficiencies. The school looks carefully at how it spends its low budget, but has little room for manoeuvre.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The good quality of most teaching.</li><li>• Their children's achievements and progress.</li><li>• Their children's liking for school.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The amount of curricular information.</li><li>• Homework: some want more, some less.</li><li>• The range of extracurricular activities.</li></ul>

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views parents express. The school generally enables most pupils to make suitable progress. The quality of teaching is good overall and has improved significantly over recent years. Most pupils say they like school and find it friendly.

In contrast, inspectors agree that the school does not provide enough detailed information about the content of the curriculum. The volume of homework is occasionally high, especially when there is coursework and revision to do in Years 10-11. The amount of homework set is, however, on the low side in Years 7-9. It also has gaps, because its setting is insufficiently monitored. The range of extracurricular activities is judged to be reasonable.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. The overall standard of attainment of pupils in the school is close to (but a shade below) that expected nationally of pupils at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils' achievement in national tests and examinations is below average overall in the national tests in Year 9; slightly below average (in most years) in GCSE examinations; and below average at GCE Advanced (A) level. Since the last inspection in 1997 pupils' overall level of attainment in the Year 9 national tests has risen a little faster than the rise nationally, rose at GCSE until 1999 (when it dropped), and has fallen steadily at GCE A-level. The overall standard of attainment can be raised further.
2. When pupils come to the school in Year 7, their overall level of attainment is below (and usually well below) average. The limited evidence available suggests that, although there was a fall in pupils' overall level of attainment on entry to the school during the 1993-1996 period, it has been rising subsequently. In 1996, for example, the proportion of pupils reaching the national yardstick of level 4 in the national tests taken at the end of primary education was three-quarters of the national average. This proportion then rose each year, until by 1999 it was only very slightly below the national average. The proportion reaching the higher level 5+ over the same period, however, was much lower at about three-fifths only of the national average. Put another way, over half the school's pupils started their secondary education in 1996 with a standard in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science below the national benchmark of level 4. In 1999 this proportion had dropped to less than a third.
3. As pupils move through the school to the end of Year 9, they generally make satisfactory progress, although their level of attainment is, overall, still below average. For example, the proportions of pupils in Year 9 who attained level 5+ or level 6+ in the national tests in 1999 were a little higher than the relevant levels they had reached three years earlier. Pupils therefore made satisfactory progress overall, in line with the pattern nationally, over the 1996-1999 period.
4. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall level of achievement in GCSE over the 1995-1998 period was below, but close to, average and was at the national average in 1998. It dropped in 1999, however, to a point well below average. Nevertheless, taking into account their achievements in the national tests two years earlier, pupils made satisfactory progress as they moved through the school from Year 9 in 1997 to Year 11 in 1999. The same picture emerges from tracking pupils' overall level of attainment from the time they joined the school in Year 7 (at a point well below the national average) to their GCSE performance five years later.
5. In the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 the proportion of pupils who achieved the national standard of at least level 5 was above average in English, but below average in mathematics and science. The proportion reaching at least level 6 was a little below average in English and again below average in mathematics and science. On the average "points" that pupils scored over the 1996-1999 period, their attainment in all three subjects was below average by a similar amount overall. The trend of the school's results is broadly in line with the national trend.
6. Girls are consistently and substantially ahead of boys in English, especially at the higher levels, by the end of Year 9. In 1999 girls were, overall, also slightly ahead of boys in mathematics and science, but had been behind boys in both these subjects in 1998. Over the 1996-1999 period, with minor variations over the years, both boys and girls have performed in line with their respective sexes

nationally – albeit at a level slightly below average.

7. When these 1999 Key Stage 3 results are compared with those in schools which have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed worse than the average. At level 5+, for example, although attainment was well above average in English, it was below average in mathematics and science. At the higher level 6+, in contrast, attainment was average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science. Pupils' average points score for the three subjects was below average in both 1998 and 1999. As noted earlier, pupils made broadly reasonable overall progress from the time they joined the school, but did not noticeably close the gap from the national average.
8. In GCSE examinations in 1999 pupils' overall achievement was below average both for pupils' average points scores and for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C. The proportion gaining five or more grades A\*-G, in contrast, was very close to average and showed a clearly rising trend over the previous few years. Over the period 1994-1998 there was a rising trend in the school's average points score, broadly in line with the rising trend nationally, but the points average dropped significantly in 1999. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more of the higher (A\*-C) grades over the 1994-1998 period was 38-47 per cent against a national average of 41-45 per cent, but dropped to 35 per cent in 1999.
9. This decline in achievement of last academic year's Year 11 pupils coincided with the lowest level of the school's Year 7 intake of recent years in 1994. On other measures this year group achieved results that were generally in line with their previous attainments and at least as high overall as those in the "good" year of 1998. The 1999 decline pulled down from its previous "average" rating to "below average" the trend in the school's results over the 1994-1999 period. The school's GCSE targets and expectations for the current academic year are reasonable and in line with the national average.
10. In the core subjects pupils' achievement in GCSE in 1999 was below the national average in English and science, but close to average in mathematics. The results were lower than those in both 1997 and 1998. When pupils' performances in the other subjects they took in 1998 and 1999 are compared with one another, pupils did significantly better in both years in English language, biology, chemistry, art, IT, business studies and sociology, but worse in double science, design and technology, and French. No pupil achieved the highest A\* grade in 1999 in double science, (most aspects of) design and technology, geography, history, IT, French, German or business studies.
11. Girls achieved a much greater proportion of the higher A\*-C grades in GCSE than boys in 1999: the gap in the proportions gaining five or more of these grades doubled from seven percentage points in 1996 to 14 points in 1999 – largely as a result of girls maintaining their overall level of performance and boys doing worse over this period. In 1999 42 per cent of girls in Year 11, for example, achieved at least five of the higher grades in contrast to 28 per cent of the boys. The standard of attainment is above average on the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses at Intermediate level.
12. Based on pupils' average points scores at GCSE, both boys' and girls' overall results have been below the national averages for their respective sexes in the last few years. Girls' overall scores have been consistently higher than boys'. In 1998, however, boys' overall performance was at the national average for boys and close to the same average over the 1997-1999 period. Girls in this school have been below (only just in 1998) the national average for girls since 1995.
13. When the school's average points scores at GCSE are compared with those in schools with a similar "free school meals" background, this school's performance was similar to most in 1998, but well below average in 1999. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C was above the group

average in 1998, but below it in 1999. By the same measure, pupils' overall performance in 1999 was average in mathematics, below average in English, but well below average in science.

14. In the sixth form, overall results at GCE A-level for those pupils entered for two or more subjects have been consistently below average over the 1994-1999 period. They reached their highest level in 1996, when pupils' average points score was about nine-tenths of the national average. Since then the level of achievement has declined steadily to about three-quarters of the national average in 1999. In the last year the pass rate (85 per cent compared with the national rate of 89 per cent) was a little below average and the proportion of the higher A-B grades obtained well below average. The school's policy of increasingly accepting into the sixth form pupils with relatively low attainments at GCSE is partly responsible for the decline in the level of results at A-level.
15. All pupils who took the GCE A-level examination in 1999 passed in art, history, French, music, sports studies, drama, economics and sociology. Only one pupil failed in each of English literature, mathematics, chemistry, physics and computing. The pass rate was below two-thirds, however, in biology and was very low in general studies and geography. The level of success in the sixth form on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses at Intermediate and Advanced levels in 1999 was good and above average.
16. Pupils' progress on their GCE A-level courses, culminating in the summer 1999 examination, indicates a modest performance overall in the sixth form. Over two-fifths of pupils made satisfactory progress from their level of attainment in the same or similar subjects two years earlier in GCSE, and a further one third made good progress. The progress of about a quarter of pupils was, however, unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, the vast majority eventually go on to some form of higher education.
17. In work seen during the inspection pupils' overall standard of attainment was broadly in line with that expected nationally for pupils of similar ages. Achievement is fairly similar throughout the school, but slightly better by the end of Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. All available data indicate that, overall, pupils make satisfactory progress. Overall standards can, however, be raised still further, particularly by more rigorous and stimulating teaching in a minority of lessons and by greater punctuality from pupils.
18. In English the overall attainment of pupils is a little above average by the end of Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and a little below average at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils' attainment is, however, on a rising trend, at least in part owing to good departmental management and teaching. The standard of reading is average. The content of written work is average overall. In contrast, the standard of presentation and handwriting often falls below an average standard and could be better, especially in Key Stage 4. Pupils' range of speaking is generally average, but the quality of their discussions in class is of a higher standard than often found. Pupils usually listen well.
19. In other subjects across the school pupils' standard of reading is average overall for fluency, accuracy and expression. Pupils are generally competent in tackling a range of written material. Texts are, however, sometimes a little too demanding for low-attaining pupils (as, for example, in history in Key Stage 3) or require additional explanations and illustrations from teachers (as quite often in mathematics). Pupils are occasionally required to skim texts and do so satisfactorily. They quarry information for research competently in several subjects – as, for instance, in science, design and technology, geography, history, music and on vocational courses.
20. Pupils' standard of writing varies very widely, but is average overall. It is often higher than normally found in history and music, with some particularly good examples of extended writing in history in Year 9. Written work in design and technology is often constrained by the requirements of worksheets. In many subjects - as, for example, in art, history, music, religious education (RE) and vocational work

- pupils' writing is well structured, because teachers give clear guidance about what is required. Final versions of writing from redrafting are often of a good standard in art and RE and generally strong in information technology (IT) because of the use of word processing. Note-taking is average, but infrequently practised in most subjects: it is generally well used in art and music, but below average in science and in design and technology.

21. Handwriting and the presentation of work are a little better overall than is typically found (as, for example, in science, art, history, RE and vocational work), but the standard of pupils' planners is often untidy. Vocational courses often pay close attention to spelling and punctuation. In these courses and in mathematics careful emphasis is placed on the correct spelling of key words, and in sociology in Year 10 a short spelling test effectively reinforced technical vocabulary. The standard of these aspects of writing is, however, below average in art, design and technology, and modern foreign languages.
22. Most pupils listen reasonably for most of the time. They listen intently when their attention is gripped by stimulating presentations and material – as, for instance by the teacher's skill as a raconteur in a history lesson in Year 9 on a politician's early life. Pupils' listening to instructions for future work, however, is a weakness: many do not concentrate enough on what the teacher requires and ask again what they are supposed to do, once they have embarked on their tasks.
23. Pupils' standard of speaking is average overall. Most speak reasonably clearly and expressively. The quality of class discussion is a little better than often found in many subjects, but is infrequent or weaker in science and modern foreign languages. Pupils' competence in sustaining an extended discussion is average overall, but a significant minority are hesitant to express a point of view because of shyness. The quality of discussion on vocational courses is often high.
24. In mathematics pupils' overall standard is average at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, but a little above average by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils' competence in numeracy in other subjects across the curriculum is reasonable, but is patchy because there is no policy (though planned) for its development across the school. Pupils' recall of multiplication tables and other number facts is average. Estimating is taught, but is not strong in practice, because it is not used routinely. The recording and interpretation of data are strong in many subjects.
25. In other subjects the overall attainment of pupils is broadly in line with what pupils achieve nationally. Their attainments are below average, however, at the end of Key Stage 3 in science; at the end of Key Stage 4 in science, modern foreign languages and RE; and by the end of both key stages in design and technology and in IT. In contrast, attainment is above average in art in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and is a little above average in history throughout the school.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

26. The attitudes, values and personal development of the vast majority of pupils are positive. There is, however, a small minority of troublesome pupils who find it difficult to conform and who present a distinct challenge to the school's framework of discipline. These pupils require considerable attention and support from staff to help them to take up the learning opportunities presented to them.
27. Most pupils are keen to attend school and enjoy the work and activities which are offered. Pupils are generally well behaved in class, showing good (and often very good) attitudes in about three out of every five lessons. In nearly one in ten lessons, however, pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory overall. In these classes a minority of pupils do not readily follow instructions, delay the onset or progress of work for the whole class, and often challenge the teacher's authority. The behaviour of a few pupils is inconsiderate and impulsive. In the best lessons, however, pupils' attitudes are

outstandingly good: they readily accept teachers' plans and make a strong contribution themselves to what they learn.

28. The school is, in general, an orderly community and daily life runs smoothly, despite the considerable distance between the two main buildings. The time taken to travel across the site tends to weaken further the commitment of the minority of pupils who are not well motivated. The fabric of the school and the property within it are well respected. Pupils generally form good relationships with one another and with their teachers and other adults. Pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds and communities relate very harmoniously to one another. This positive climate is a distinctive feature and strength of the school.
29. Where opportunities are offered, both in lessons and outside class, many pupils take on additional responsibilities. The sixth-form council, for example, is active and well supported: pupils, on their own initiative, have mounted a major fund-raising project in support of a hospice for children. An ambitious scheme has recently been launched for pupils in Year 9 to be trained as "peer mediators" in order to deal with such matters as disputes and bullying. Many pupils take on responsibilities for receiving and guiding visitors around the school and undertake these duties very responsibly and courteously.
30. The number of exclusions in the last academic year (two permanent and 46 fixed-term) is average for a school of this size, but represents a substantial decline from the corresponding figure three years ago (four permanent and 151 fixed-term). This significant reduction has been achieved by the introduction of clearer and more effective behaviour policies and by better management.
31. The level of attendance has risen noticeably and consistently each year since its unsatisfactory level of 88.7 per cent in 1995, owing to concerted and effective efforts by staff, both teaching and non-teaching, at all levels. This approach has been well supported by the effective use of a computerised system of registration for both half-day sessions and individual lessons. The attendance of pupils is now satisfactory overall in Years 7-11. In the last academic year pupils' overall attendance was 91.3 per cent and in line with the national average. In the Autumn Term of the current academic year overall attendance reached 93 per cent (including a high 94.3 per cent in Year 11).
32. The level of authorised absence in 1998-1999 (7.1 per cent) was close to, but a little better than, the national average. The amount of absence without good reason (1.6 per cent) in the same year was above average. This problem has, however, been tackled positively by the school, with the result that the amount of unauthorised absence is half what it was at the time of the last inspection in 1997. The above average amount of unauthorised absence is largely owing to a small number of pupils having very low attendance. Their absence is pursued vigorously by the school.
33. The present position over attendance records in the sixth form is unsatisfactory, because the level of attendance cannot be assessed accurately. This is partly because of inconsistent practices by staff in recording the nature of absences of those pupils who are allowed to start the school day later than other pupils, if they do not have lessons at the beginning of the day. It is also because of variations in recording the whereabouts of pupils carrying out assignments, especially on General National Vocational Courses (GNVQ). The statistical summaries of attendance available suggest a poor overall attendance in the sixth form in the current term of around 82 per cent, a clear drop from the recorded level of 89 per cent in the Autumn term. There is evidence, however, that the true figure for attendance is higher at close to 90 per cent.
34. The school's public documents urge parents to regard good attendance and punctuality as very important matters, and the school puts a high degree of emphasis on pupils' achievement of regular



attendance and punctuality. It has a thorough and effective computerised system for recording and analysing pupils' attendance and for pinpointing problems.

35. Pupils' punctuality for school is broadly satisfactory, but a significant minority of pupils are late in arriving. Punctuality for lessons is unsatisfactory overall. The need for considerable movement across the spacious site and the split set of premises (even with a five-minute break between lessons) result in a minority of pupils being late for lessons. The majority of pupils try to be on time, but a significant minority take advantage of the distances involved by loitering or by ambling along. This lack of punctuality reduces the shortish teaching week still further for both latecomers and those on time, because teachers have to repeat their explanations. In contrast, the school has sound and effective systems in place to combat truancy.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

36. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory in Years 7-9, and good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. It is satisfactory or better in over nine out of every ten lessons - satisfactory in three out of ten lessons and good in nearly half of them. Additionally, about a sixth of the school's teaching is very good (and occasionally outstanding). Fifteen out of the 240 lessons inspected had teaching that was unsatisfactory.
37. The quality of teaching has improved substantially over the last five years from a very low base. At the first inspection in 1995 33 per cent of the teaching seen, a very high proportion, was judged to be unsatisfactory. By 1997 the amount of unsatisfactory teaching had declined to about 17 per cent overall: slightly more than 20 per cent (a high figure) of that in Years 7-11 was, however, still not up to scratch and the quality of teaching was judged to be a serious weakness. In this inspection the overall quality of teaching is good and no longer a major weakness. Weaknesses do remain, but the amount of unsatisfactory teaching now (about six per cent) is much less than it was at the end of 1997. This improvement has come about through better management and monitoring in the school, careful thought given to the craft of teaching and through the turnover of staff.
38. Teachers generally have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. This enables them to select appropriate themes for study, illustrate them well and help pupils to see clearly the significance of what they study. In English work in Year 11 on the poetry of Simon Armitage, for example, the teacher's deep and sensitive knowledge of the poet's work enabled him to undertake very careful and imaginative preparation, to give a lively interpretation of the *Cataract Operation* and to elicit an enthusiastic response from the pupils – including unsolicited praise for how interesting the teacher made poetry lessons. Teachers' knowledge of the national programmes of study in design and technology, in contrast, is weak.
39. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are satisfactorily taught across the school. The English department has developed a coherent policy and practice for literacy (especially reading). Part of this involves very thorough preparation for the weekly reading lesson in Year 7, combining silent reading and subsequent oral reviews of the books read. This feature is part of the school's response to the weakness in pupils' reading identified at the last inspection. This and similar initiatives have seen pupils' performance in national tests in English in Year 9 rise significantly over the last three years. A numeracy policy is being considered, but is not yet implemented either across the mathematics department or the school. The attention teachers in other subjects pay to promoting literacy and numeracy varies considerably. It is satisfactory overall, but is insufficiently coordinated and could be better.
40. Lessons are usually well planned. Most teachers set out clear objectives for lessons (often in written form on the board) and incorporate a suitable range of teaching methods and resources. In the best

lessons they share their aims with pupils. Many teachers set out clear timescales for the different parts of lessons and keep well to them, so that pupils also can plan the time to organise their own work. In a French lesson in Year 11, for instance, the teacher had a very clear structure for pupils' work, gradually moving from relatively simple to more complex activities and giving all pupils the opportunity to make their contributions in French through all forms of the language. The same class worked at a good pace to the clear timescales the teacher gave them for the completion of work.

41. A minority of lessons, in contrast, are not planned with sufficient precision. In these teachers do not specify clearly what they want pupils to learn, do not make the lesson sound worthwhile and interesting, or do not provide sufficient guidance or structure to avoid confusion or uncertainty in pupils' minds. In a few cases teachers' lack of clarity in thinking and planning results in tasks being set that make little intellectual demand on pupils or require them to do little more than copy the material and views of others.
42. The majority of teachers set high standards and appropriately demanding targets. In the best lessons they use probing questions and require thoughtful, precise answers. They insist upon the correct use of technical vocabulary and on pupils justifying their points of view. They open up pupils' minds to a range of ideas and help them to form discriminating judgements. In an art and design lesson in Year 10, for example, the teacher's considerable knowledge of the *Bauhaus* movement enabled her to stimulate pupils' interest and debate, so that they understood its world-wide influence and significance and could make connections with their own work. In a mathematics lesson in Year 11 the teacher insisted on pupils explaining their calculations carefully. Rigour and thoroughness are the hallmarks of such lessons.
43. In a minority of lessons, however, pupils are not required to do much. They do not have to think hard, to formulate reasoned opinions or to justify their views. Much work in these classes proceeds at a leisurely pace. First thoughts or answers are readily accepted. The work set and teachers' delivery lack intrinsic interest and momentum. Pupils are allowed to remain too comfortable or complacent.
44. Most teachers use a sound range of effective teaching methods. A typically well-structured lesson has a brisk but comprehensive review of previous learning, clear exposition of new material, suitable work in pairs or groups and effective use of whole-class teaching. The best lessons conclude with a summarising few minutes in which the depth of pupils' understanding is checked and key points are reinforced. Throughout, teachers' interactions with pupils are incisive and encouraging. In a minority of cases too much time is spent on one kind of activity, often resulting in pupils' restlessness. In a few other cases teachers do most of the work and allow pupils to remain passive or coast along. The lack of ready access to such equipment as overhead projectors limits teachers' flexibility in developing ideas and knowledge with the whole class or, for instance, in providing each pupil with a photocopy of the results.
45. Lessons are generally well managed. Even with the small minority of children who have little self-control many teachers create a positive, friendly rapport and patiently explain the standards of behaviour they require, but stand no nonsense. Pupils arrive at some lessons in an excitable state, partly as a result of trekking in large numbers across the school's extensive site: the most effective teachers quickly calm pupils down and focus their energies successfully on productive work, whereas a small minority struggle hard to get pupils into a frame of mind for work, with the result that those classes makes less progress than they should.
46. Time is used satisfactorily on the whole. The majority of teachers sustain a suitably brisk pace within lessons, although few lessons run for the full hour because of pupils' travel around the very extensive site and the high level of their unpunctuality (including that of sixth formers). Illustrative materials are usually carefully chosen, but teachers are hampered in the majority of departments by a lack of

sufficient books and equipment – despite the school’s vigorous and costly efforts in the last two years to remedy the substantial backlog of poor provision from previous years.

47. The overall quality of teachers’ assessment of pupils’ work is satisfactory. Marking is usually up to date, appropriate targets are set, and teachers intervene sensibly at appropriate intervals to reinforce points and check understanding. Overall, marking is diligent and helpfully indicates to pupils what they should do to improve their work. In a few instances teachers accept called out answers rather than asking individuals or groups for their answers or explanations. Homework is generally set appropriately to reinforce or extend what has been learnt in school, but its quantity and frequency in Key Stage 3 are too variable (and often too low) to contribute as much as it could to pupils’ progress. The combination of homework, coursework and revision for modular tests sometimes produces considerable pressure on pupils’ time in Years 10-11.
48. Teaching is good overall throughout the school. It is very good in drama and in English in the sixth form. It is broadly satisfactory in Years 7-9 in mathematics, art, and design and technology; throughout Years 7-11 in geography; and at all stages of the school in science. In all other subjects and key stages it is good. Nearly all subjects have at least some teaching that is very good, but there is proportionately about twice the amount of it in Years 10-13 as in Years 7-9.
49. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in their studies in Years 7-9, both in lessons and over longer periods of time. They often make good progress in Years 10-11 and in the sixth form. The quality of learning is satisfactory in about a third of lessons, good in about half and occasionally very good. Learning is, however, below a reasonable level in nearly one in ten lessons. Pupils make a fairly similar rate of progress as they move through the school, but more in Years 10-13 than in Years 7-9. Girls, in general, make greater progress than boys. Pupils of Asian heritage generally make more progress than their white counterparts. The quality of learning and pupils’ rate of progress are closely related to their levels of concentration, punctuality and attendance.
50. The quality of pupils’ learning is broadly satisfactory in Key Stage 3 in mathematics, science, art and geography; in Key Stage 4 in design and technology; and in the sixth form in IT. It is unsatisfactory overall in Key Stage 3 in design and technology, in RE in Key Stage 4, and in IT in both key stages. Pupils’ learning is generally good in all other subjects and in other key stages and on vocational courses. Pupils with special educational needs usually make good progress in their studies in Years 7-9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10-11: teaching provision is made in flexible ways and progress is particularly good where additional teaching support is offered. Those for whom English is an additional language usually make good progress because of the high quality and consistency of the additional teaching they receive.

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

51. The curriculum provides a largely satisfactory range of opportunities for learning. At Key Stage 3 the breadth and balance of the curriculum are mostly satisfactory, but there are gaps. Most subjects of the National Curriculum and RE are appropriately covered. All pupils study personal and social education (PSE), drama and IT in Year 7. Two groups of higher-attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 study German as a second foreign language.
52. A largely satisfactory range of curricular provision is offered at Key Stage 4, but again there are unsatisfactory features. All pupils study the core subjects, design and technology, French, physical education (PE), RE and PSE. The previous restrictive and complicated option system, which led to inequalities of access and was identified as a weakness in the last report, has been improved. Pupils have a free choice of two subjects from the ten offered and in the next academic year will have a

choice between studying double science or three separate sciences. There are published plans to introduce courses in the next academic year in art and design, health and social care, and engineering for the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) at Foundation level. Those pupils for whom the full range of GCSE courses is inappropriate can take the well-founded “Challenge” course. As reported previously, there is no certificated programme of courses designed specifically for lower-attaining pupils.

53. The school has a clear strategy to improve pupils’ literacy. The provision is strong and effective in English where it is mainly taught: two-thirds of the pupils in Years 7 and 8 work in small groups to improve their literacy skills. This initiative is not fully complemented by work in other departments. A numeracy strategy is being formulated in the mathematics department, but is not operational.
54. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, except in design and technology and IT at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in RE at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There is no provision in the design and technology course for the teaching of the computer-controlled elements of the programme of study, as required by the National Curriculum. The timetable makes no provision for teaching IT in Years 8 and 9, or in Years 10 and 11 for those pupils not taking the GCSE course. Provision in other subjects across the curriculum is inconsistent. This is owing to the lack of staff training and difficulties of access to computers, and is insufficient to enable pupils to develop the full range of skills to meet statutory requirements. As reported at the last inspection, the lack of time for RE in Key Stage 4 and the poor quality of the scheme of work do not allow the Agreed Syllabus to be completed in sufficient depth to meet statutory requirements. There is no provision for RE in the sixth form.
55. The total teaching time each week is 24.1 hours, but this is significantly eroded by pupils regularly arriving late to classes where there is movement between buildings at the change-over of lessons. This teaching week is below the minimum of 25 hours recommended by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). There are firm plans to increase the total teaching time in the next academic year by 30 minutes. The time which pupils spend with form tutors when not in assemblies occurs at the end of the school day. This short period of time (15 minutes) is often reduced owing to the late arrival of pupils; its usefulness during the time of the inspection varied from good to unsatisfactory, but was broadly satisfactory overall.
56. All pupils have access to all subjects of the curriculum. The arrangements for teaching pupils in either mixed-ability or similar-attainment groups are generally effective. The match of work to the differing needs of pupils is generally at least satisfactory in all subjects except in design and technology and in IT. Higher-attaining pupils are not, however, fully stretched in all subjects. No pupil is disapplied from the National Curriculum. The school has a policy statement about gifted and talented pupils. Teachers work well with a few who have been identified, but there is no systematic identification and targeting of provision for such pupils.
57. The curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, has undergone a major review since the previous inspection. The procedures and structures for curricular planning are sound, but there is no formal policy statement to form a clear basis for future planning. There are sound links between the senior management team and faculties to monitor work and to provide a thorough system of consultation and decision-making. Schemes of work are very good in IT, music and drama, and good in science and art. They are satisfactory elsewhere, except in design and technology and RE. The individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs are clear and up to date, but inconsistently used across subject departments.

58. A satisfactory range of extracurricular activities enhances the curriculum. Out-of-school residential visits include exchange and ski visits to France and an opportunity for Year 7 pupils to visit Switzerland. Music groups meet regularly and there are visits to local theatres. The school mounts a successful production each year, involving a large number of pupils. A sound range of activities, including revision and homework clubs, enhance what is taught in class, particularly in English, mathematics, science, art and modern foreign languages. A quarter of the pupils take part in a good range of inter-school sports, with a strong commitment from nine members of staff.
59. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. A carefully planned and relevant scheme is effectively organised by the careers coordinator and taught within the PSE programme; the Leicestershire Vocational Framework (LVF) course is taught in Key Stage 4. The careers course is enhanced by an annual convention for pupils in Year 8 (focusing on an introduction to the world of work) and in Year 11, with employers providing support on job applications and interview techniques. Impartial careers guidance is given by the careers service. The programme of guidance is well focused on those pupils in greatest need in Years 9-11 and for pupils seeking employment in Year 12. In addition the school provides a personal interview with senior staff for all pupils in Year 11.
60. All pupils in Key Stage 4 participate in well-organised and successful work experience. It has a soundly based programme of preparation. All pupils complete a diary and are visited during the placement by a member of staff. The careers library forms part of the main school library and recently received a Careers Mark standard for the quality of the provision, although there is still a need for more materials designed for pupils with special educational needs. Careers information is also available on computers in the library and on the school network. The school's curricular provision for pupils' personal development, including sex education and guidance about substances harmful to health, is good.
61. There are satisfactory links with the local community and with industry. In support of the careers programme and GNVQ courses, employers take part in conventions and support the Young Enterprise group as well as projects in the art and the design and technology departments. Good relationships are maintained with local contributory primary schools, but curricular links are weak. Links with colleges and institutions of higher education are limited, although good relationships are maintained with those involved in initial teacher training with the school.
62. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The promotion of pupils' spiritual development, however, is unsatisfactory. This was a weakness that was also identified at the last inspection. At present, RE is not taught to all pupils for sufficient time in Key Stage 4 and there is no teaching of RE in the sixth form. Where RE is adequately provided (in Years 7-9 and for a minority of pupils in Years 10-11), pupils study and consider such matters as explanations of the after-life and concepts of reincarnation.
63. The school has recently increased the number of assemblies and introduced themes and thoughts for each week – as, for example, on friendship, healing and fasting. Although some assemblies provide an atmosphere which is conducive to reflective thought, others are used primarily to convey information or deal with administrative matters and are noticeably lacking in spiritual content. Overall, the school is far from meeting the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The school celebrates the major religious festivals of Christmas, Hanukkah and Diwali. It sets aside prayer rooms for those who wish to worship. In a few subjects pupils are given the opportunity to experience deep feelings. In art, for example, they look carefully at patterns in fruit or study Bauhaus design. In English, drama and music beliefs and pupils' self-knowledge are very sensitively explored. In spite of recent efforts made by the school, however, the spiritual dimension does not feature strongly in most subjects.

64. Provision for pupils' moral education is good. Teaching and other staff lead by good example and pupils are encouraged to use reason in forming positive moral attitudes. The school's system of rewards and sanctions works well. The code of conduct is prominently displayed in the prospectus, in classrooms and around the school. Moral themes are clearly presented in assemblies, in personal and social education and in RE. These include notions of responsibility, open-mindedness and stances against bullying. In other subjects, too, pupils encounter the notions of right and wrong as, for example, in history when they study the practice of slavery or in PE where they experience fair play and team work. Moral themes feature very strongly in English. Pupils study, discuss and dramatise situations connected with protest, especially against racial discrimination; this topic is very seriously addressed in many lessons.
65. Pupils' social development is well promoted overall. Very good relationships are established and maintained amongst pupils of different ethnic origin. Teachers are approachable and set a good example of courtesy towards, and respect for, all pupils. Good relationships are also fostered in a reasonable range of extracurricular activities, especially in music, PE, dance and drama. These range from an informal keyboard club in music to an Asian girls' dance group which performs to a very high standard. Drama groups feature strongly in the school's extracurricular provision.
66. Pupils have opportunities to exercise responsibility by being involved as school receptionists. In subjects such as music and PE they are trained to help with the preparation of equipment for lessons. Sixth-form prefects help at parents' evenings and pupils represent year-groups as school councillors to help formulate the school's policies. The overall provision for pupils to exercise responsibility and citizenship is not, however, strong in the school.
67. A broadening of teaching styles throughout the school since the last inspection has resulted in better opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs or groups. This happens very regularly in music and PE, and is also fostered in subjects such as English, mathematics, design and technology, and drama. Social issues are studied and discussed in art (where community and industrial connections are made) and in RE where pupils consider issues such as rites of passage.
68. The physical features of the school are not, unfortunately, conducive to pupils' social development. The site is attractive, but many parts of the buildings are bleak and are poorly maintained and decorated. Although some toilet provision on the Gill site has been upgraded, its condition remains poor. Displays around the school are very variable in quality. Overall, they do not provide satisfactory aesthetic stimuli for pupils.
69. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The school itself is a very positive multicultural community, in which pupils from a very wide variety of ethnic and social backgrounds share their own traditions and beliefs. Particularly good opportunities for such sharing are promoted in English, art, music, RE and drama. The school organises evenings where the arts and foods of different cultures are enjoyed; one of these evenings recently centred on the festival of light.
70. In connection with linguistic studies, pupils visit Germany, France and a French car factory in this country. Subject departments and year groups also organise visits such as that to Charnwood Forest. Pupils in Year 7 have residential visits which give them valuable cultural experiences in new surroundings. Within the curriculum, pupils are introduced to a wide range of cultural topics, including poetry from around the world, African and Aztec art and design, meals from a variety of cultures, and the traditions associated with the major religious beliefs.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

71. Overall, the school creates a positive environment in which pupils feel safe and valued by staff. Recent improvements in the school's systems and procedures for care offer pupils a clear and secure framework in which to negotiate the many challenges and opportunities of school life.
72. The school has a satisfactory policy statement for matters of health and safety. The oversight of this policy, however, is delegated to the school's premises officers and is not adequately monitored by senior staff to ensure that risks are regularly assessed and corrective action taken on a systematic basis. There are some aspects of the school which fail to achieve a consistently high level of safety: external paved areas and some stairways have uneven surfaces and an access for pupils to some art and design rooms passes through a workshop containing loosely stacked materials as well as machinery such as a circular saw and a bandsaw; this latter problem requires corrective action, as was indicated during the inspection.
73. Arrangements for child protection are otherwise good. Very effective use is made of the school's own welfare officer, who reports to a deputy headteacher on these matters. She provides a skilled and sensitive service for the school and for pupils who may be at risk. Other staff are aware of their own responsibilities in these matters and the procedures conform with local and national requirements.
74. The school has introduced new policies and sanctions to manage pupils' behaviour. These allow both staff and pupils to understand clearly what conduct is unacceptable and its consequences. Both pupils and staff express appreciation of this sharper framework.
75. Programmes for personal, social and health education are consistently good throughout the school. This work is well coordinated and soundly structured. Staff receive careful briefing on their responsibilities. The quality of teaching these courses is always sound and usually good. Pupils value the wide range of themes available to them, including the full attention given to the vocational aspects of their development.
76. The school provides effective support and advice for pupils. Form tutors work well in year teams and retain responsibility for pupils as they progress through the school. Tutors closely monitor pupils' academic progress as well as their behaviour and personal development. They help individual pupils to establish targets for their academic work, although the basis on which the assessments of pupils are made is not sufficiently thorough, particularly in Years 7-9. There is generally a good match between the provision made by the school for pupils with statements of special educational need and the requirements of their statements.
77. The school's assessment policy provides satisfactory guidance on the assessment, marking, recording and reporting of pupils' work. Within subject departments the quality of day-to-day assessment ranges from satisfactory to good, but there are weaknesses in mathematics, design and technology and RE. In mathematics, for example, insufficient use is made of the individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs, and in design and technology and RE pupils' progress is not reviewed well enough. In English and mathematics assessment data are used carefully to place pupils in GCSE groups and in art it is used well to identify gifted pupils.
78. In Key Stage 3, assessments relate satisfactorily to National Curriculum levels of study in all subjects except design and technology and IT – weaknesses also identified in the last inspection. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, assessments relate firmly to the requirements of external examinations; as a consequence, they give clear indications of pupils' progress as well as providing targets for improvement. Although subjects adopt different procedures for assessing pupils' work,

some consistency is maintained across the school by transcribing the results into a common grading system which is clear to pupils, teachers and parents. This grading system is especially helpful in the interim reports to parents which are compiled at least twice a year. The quality of marking ranges from satisfactory to good, except in design and technology where it is unsatisfactory.

79. The sets of data recorded throughout Key Stage 3 are represented by a grade on a scale of 1-4. National Curriculum levels achieved at the end of Year 9 are also used to evaluate pupils' progress. This combination of methods is an improvement on the system at the last inspection, but does not enable the school to monitor progress precisely enough throughout Years 7-9 or in the longer term, because no uniform yardstick is used across all subjects or year-groups.
80. Interim and annual reports to parents are presented in a common format. Overall, they convey clear and reliable information about pupils' attainment and effort. In English, IT and PE many written reports give clear, precise indications of pupils' progress. In some other subjects the written comments do not always convey with full clarity what standards of attainment have been reached or the progress that pupils have made.
81. Records of achievement include a collection of data from Year 7 onwards and are finally completed in Year 11. They provide suitable information relating to pupils' achievements, target-setting and achievements outside the taught curriculum. For pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language assessment procedures and practice are high: tests are well used and assessments are regularly updated.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

82. The school has maintained a satisfactory level of partnership with parents and has made some improvements since the last inspection. Whilst the pre-inspection parental questionnaire indicated that a small minority did not feel that the school worked closely with parents, the school does provide generally good information about pupils' progress and offers reasonable opportunities for parents to find out more. The school does not, however, have a policy statement to indicate clearly all the ways it intends to use to maintain close links with its multi-ethnic body of parents and which it could publish to them. This is a weakness.
83. The induction process for Year 7 is well organised and effective. There are now three occasions throughout Year 7 when parents are offered information about their children's progress. For other year groups the "snapshot" system gives useful outline information about pupils' progress at least twice each year. In response to parental views, the school has now established a sensible gap between parents' evenings and the issue of annual reports. The certificates of achievement and letters of congratulation sent direct to parents are also an improvement on previous practice. In contrast, little detailed information about the curriculum is supplied to parents and the use of pupils' personal planners and homework are insufficiently exploited, especially in Years 7-9.
84. The school is very aware of factors such as distance and patterns of working which cause some parents difficulty in attending parents' evenings or coming to the school at other times. In order to smooth liaison with parents, the heads of year telephone parents to discuss appropriate issues and the school's welfare officer provides a positive link with homes. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed and consulted about their children's progress: annual reviews are well managed and sensitively conducted. The home-school agreement and the introduction of a more robust attendance and behaviour policy enable the school to respond positively on these issues.



85. Although the Parents' Association is not active, the school's regular newsletters are informative and interesting. The annual concert production is popular and well attended. The range of extracurricular activities is reasonable. The governing body is increasingly representative of the width of pupils' ethnic backgrounds.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

86. There has been a significant improvement in the quality and impact of the school's leadership and management in the two and a half years since the last inspection. They are no longer a serious weakness, but a strength. Key structures and procedures have been revised, so that the school is well placed to meet its major targets and objectives. There is substantial evidence that the school's leadership has been effective in remedying many of the deficiencies outlined in the last inspection report. Managers, at all levels of the school, are growing in confidence and competence.
87. The headteacher has a clear and realistic vision of how the school needs to improve. He is accessible to all the groups served by the school and strongly in evidence around the school. He has made a significant difference to the school's performance and effectiveness since his appointment in 1996. He has faced squarely and decisively up to difficult situations and has set pertinent priorities. He has also backed up decisions firmly and supported those charged with leading the process of change. Key aspects of pupils' behaviour and of the school's ethos have been positively addressed. Staff, parents, pupils and governors recognise the considerable achievements registered by the headteacher in a relatively short period of time.
88. The senior management team has been reduced in size and now has a more focused set of tasks. The work of the two deputies and senior teachers covers not only whole-school issues, but also the day-to-day responsibility for two widely separated and virtually self-contained sets of buildings. The team is committed, cohesive and well motivated.
89. The quality and effectiveness of the leadership of subject departments and of pastoral work ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is good overall. Team work, effective communications and good planning are hallmarks of the work of middle managers. The headteacher and the governing body have helped to promote this better performance by setting up on-site management training and commissioning an in-house master's degree in business administration (MBA). The leadership of work for pupils with special educational needs is effective and influential.
90. The school has reviewed its basic aims well after wide consultation. These involve a clear commitment to equality of opportunity, positive relationships in the school and signalling the importance of high achievement. The daily life and work of the school generally reflect these positive values.
91. The governing body and managers at all levels are alert to the need not only to remedy past failings, but also to plan actively for the improvement of the school. Their record over the past three years of eliminating many deficiencies indicates that the school has a good capacity to achieve further improvement. This good progress has partly been secured by the readiness of senior staff to delegate responsibility (with appropriate accountability) to other leaders and to offer support and training to them in pursuit of their goals.
92. The governing body has a core of very able and committed members who have actively confronted the problems of the past few years. They are beginning to develop a strategic plan for the school's future. This involves the establishment of an accurate appreciation of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further. The governing body has not, however, ensured that the full

requirements of the national curriculum are met in design and technology or in IT, or the statutory requirements for RE.

93. Teaching is monitored and evaluated by senior managers. This work has contributed positively to the recent improvements in the standards of teaching across the school. The school's current system of teacher appraisal does not satisfy statutory requirements, but does contain the key elements of an effective system of performance management.
94. The school's system of identifying goals and forming plans to meet them is sound. These plans are frequently reviewed and flexibly adapted in the light of experience. Planning in subject departments is generally sound, but the framing of targets, costings and priorities is not sufficiently precise to enable progress on these aspects to be monitored easily.
95. The school's educational priorities are well supported through sound financial management and planning. The governing body is well informed about the school's spending patterns and monitors expenditure carefully. The school does not have any budgetary surplus to carry forward. This means that there is little scope to plan for contingencies or for the long-term replacement of capital equipment. The school has received a small allowance to compensate for its split site only in the past year. The sixth form operates efficiently and is not subsidised by the rest of the school. The recent external financial audit did not identify any major weaknesses and the school has already responded effectively to most of the points which were raised.
96. Departments receive their capitation through a formula based on the number of pupils taught. Alternative methods of devolving funding to departments are currently being investigated. The spending by heads of departments is carefully monitored. The funding for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language has been used effectively. The school does not make sufficient use of new technologies such as e-mail, CD-ROMs and the Internet, although the decision to invest in a computerised system for registering pupils has proved effective in helping to raise attendance. Spending on services such as water and electricity is monitored, but several minor inefficiencies have not been dealt with. The decision to enable the school's own premises staff to do minor repairs and maintenance has proved cost-effective.
97. The proportion of the school's budget spent on teaching staff is below average. Teaching provision is largely good, but there are insufficient specialist staff to teach food studies. The majority of lessons are taught by specialists. There are sufficient qualified or experienced support staff for the pupils with special educational needs who are withdrawn for teaching, but insufficient support in the classroom. Technical support is satisfactory, with the exception of that for design and technology. There is sufficient administrative support. The time teachers spend in lessons is above average and the pupil-teacher ratio is broadly average. The total teaching time of 24.1 hours per week is below that recommended nationally. The distance which pupils frequently have to walk between the two parts of the school leads to inefficiencies in the use of time during the school day.
98. There is an effective programme of induction to the work of the school for teachers new to teaching. Opportunities for the professional development of staff are used well. Effective use has been made of training funds to improve the quality of middle management, which was judged a weakness at the last inspection. The good overall standard of teaching in the school indicates that the school has the potential to be an effective provider of initial teacher training. The school does not fulfil current statutory requirements for the appraisal of staff.
99. There has been some improvement in the provision of accommodation since the time of the last inspection. The sixth-form social area and the accommodation for science, IT and music are all of good quality. Much of the rest of the accommodation, however, is drab and poorly decorated.

Toilet provision is inadequately maintained and is poorly treated by a minority of pupils. Although there are some displays to improve the interior, much of the interior of the buildings lacks educational or aesthetic stimulation. The school has had some (though limited) success in solving the problem of litter around the site, a weakness identified at the last inspection. Access to most of the school is difficult for people with disabilities.

100. The school's spending on resources has been well above the national average (at about ten per cent of the total budget) for the last two years. Resources for learning were described as inadequate at the time of the last inspection; they remain so, despite the high spending, because of the considerable backlog from previous years. The provision of books is unsatisfactory in all subjects except music in Key Stage 3, and in all subjects except mathematics, history, IT and music in Key Stage 4. The provision of books is better in the sixth form, but is still unsatisfactory in English and art. The provision of equipment is unsatisfactory in English and in design and technology. Audio-visual resources are poor in English, mathematics, design and technology, IT and history. The provision of resources for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, except for working IT and for audio-visual equipment.
101. There has been some improvement to the libraries on both sites since the time of the last inspection. They still, however, have unsatisfactory features and do little to help pupils to learn independently. The main library in the Gill building has a good range of books, an improvement since the last inspection, but the provision of IT, audio-visual resources, newspapers and magazines is poor. There is no access to the Internet in the Gill library. The library in the Wyvern building is small. The stock of books is unsatisfactory, but there is access to the Internet. Both libraries are used as teaching rooms for part of the week, and the library at Wyvern is often closed. The careers library is satisfactory. The school has plans to develop a learning resource centre that promises to remedy some of the existing deficiencies.
102. Centrally provided IT is unsatisfactory. The number of computers in the school is well below average. The provision of IT within departments is poor overall and limits the effective provision of cross-curricular work in IT. Access to the centralised IT facilities is not always available at times convenient to departments.

## **THE SIXTH FORM**

103. The school has a large sixth form of about 280 and over 60 per cent of pupils from Year 11 stay on for at least one year. The school is successful in its aim to provide access to post-compulsory education to as many pupils as it reasonably can. The courses of study that pupils follow are spread across a wide range of GCE A-level and four GNVQ courses. About half the pupils take GCE A-levels, but there is little separate provision at AS-level. Over 90 per cent of those taking two-year courses proceed to some form of higher education.
104. A sufficient and balanced range of subjects is offered, but some have not attracted enough pupils to run in the current academic year: there are no classes, for example, in modern foreign languages, history or RE in Year 12. The school does not meet statutory requirements for RE or collective worship for sixth-formers. Opportunities are offered in the school for proficiency in ethnic minority languages to be accredited, if there is a demand. Most classes are of reasonable size, but a few groups are small - notably A-Level physics and history. General Studies is offered, with some teaching support in Year 13, but only for a few pupils who require an additional subject. No courses are offered in collaboration with other schools or colleges.
105. Of the four GNVQ courses offered at Intermediate or Advanced level, business studies attracts a large number of pupils at both levels. Smaller groups currently take art and design, health and

social care, and leisure and tourism at Intermediate level. Some pupils follow a BTEC course in childhood studies (nursery nursing). Results in these vocational courses are above the national average: all pupils passed at Intermediate level and in BTEC, for example, in 1999. Results on GCE A-level courses, in contrast, are below the national average.

106. Attainment in social sciences at A-level, whilst below the national average, is above the average for A-levels in the school overall. At GCSE a similar pattern exists. In both cases girls outperform boys overall and represent two-thirds of the candidates entered for sociology. Teaching in these subjects is at least satisfactory. Late arrival in class also occasionally causes disruption. In all lessons the clear structure of aims and learning objectives is made explicit to the class. A good pace of work is maintained, with regular checks on understanding. Praise for good work is invariably given. There is frequent emphasis on good habits of study and the means of achieving good quality performance in examinations. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves.
107. In Year 12 a substantial group of pupils retake English, mathematics and biology alongside a GNVQ course and then continue the latter course into a two-year programme. The vast majority of these pupils progress to higher education. The main studies of all pupils are supported by a strong programme of personal and social education and careers and by opportunities for regular tutorials, during which pupils' progress is regularly monitored.
108. Lessons during the week of the inspection concentrated on preparation for examinations in most subjects. Teachers were assiduous in preparing pupils through tests, "mock" examinations, the discussion of topics, timed answers and reminders about study skills. Teachers regularly refer to learning targets. They also follow an increasingly effective system for monitoring progress and for alerting parents to any problems that arise in academic work. Vocational courses have well-organised systems for monitoring and giving feedback on progress with assignments and for the assessment of key skills. Attendance in the sixth form is, however, lower than in the rest of the school, its registration is inadequate, and pupils' performance is lowered by lateness in arriving at classes. These weaknesses contribute to the underperformance of a minority of pupils.
109. The opportunities for extracurricular activities include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, sport, first-aid training and IT certificates – all of which were available during the inspection. Opportunities exist at other times for work in the community or with younger pupils, for work experience, for debating and for contributing to social provision for sixth formers through their elected council. A prefect system also operates.
110. Pupils speak very favourably of their experience in the sixth form. They (rightly) commend the school's systems for setting academic targets, monitoring their performance and mentoring. They appreciate the friendly and supportive atmosphere evident in their spacious common room and in classrooms, as well as the absence of bullying or racism. Sound planning is in hand to respond to the national changes in the structure of the post-sixteen curriculum scheduled for September 2000. The school is also well organised in its plans to extend the teaching and accreditation of "key skills" to all sixth formers.

## **PUPILS FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE**

111. The school's provision for these pupils is good. In 1999 the school's annual review identified 922 pupils for whom English is not their home language (EAL). Of these 278 pupils were assessed as having a competence in English at language level 3 or below. Fifty pupils were further identified as having the greatest need of language support. At present two full-time, experienced and qualified teachers serve as language support teachers. One of these teachers is responsible for coordinating the work.

112. Pupils are accurately identified and assessed. The support teaching is very well organised and is deployed effectively and efficiently. The school adopts a team-teaching approach: pupils are not withdrawn from lessons, but have regular lessons with their class teacher who is joined by a support teacher. Lessons are planned and taught jointly. Both these teachers and the English department as a whole are responsible for the monitoring of pupils' progress.
113. Overall, pupils who receive EAL support make good progress, and a minority make very good progress. The rest of the school's pupils for whom English is an additional language, but who do not receive specially targeted support, usually make at least satisfactory progress; the majority make good progress. There are, however, instances in a few lessons other than English where necessary language support is not provided.
114. The teaching in lessons where extra support is provided ranges from good to very good and is good overall. Both the class teachers and support teachers are very clear about what exactly is to be taught. The joint planning and preparation of lessons are good. Good teamwork ensures that each teacher's input in class is sensitive, relevant and helpful to pupils. Lessons achieve a very good balance of emphasis on speaking, listening, reading and writing. Teachers use a good variety of methods, including whole-class instruction, individual and group discussion, and individual speaking and writing practice. Lessons involve pupils closely in formulating both spoken and written language. Very detailed records of pupils' attainment and progress are to hand in lessons, in order to ensure good monitoring.
115. The great majority of these pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour in lessons is good. Most of them quickly come to take a major responsibility for their own learning: they apply what they learn in English lessons to other activities in which the spoken and written word are essential.
116. Team-teaching within the regular classes ensures that these pupils benefit from the whole school curriculum. Work within English lessons is not only geared well to technical competence in English, but is also well matched in content to pupils' interests, needs and levels of maturity. A group of sixth-form pupils, for example, were shown war photographs as a stimulus to discussion and writing about power, nationalism and racism. In another lesson, pupils were asked to write an "agony aunt" letter from the point of view of a character from *Romeo and Juliet*.
117. Contact with parents is arranged through the school's normal pattern of parents' evenings. Where necessary, translating facilities are provided. The EAL support team also works in close partnership with the education welfare officer.
118. The school has anticipated a shift of responsibility for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) away from its local authority in April 2000 and is undertaking an investigation into the achievements of particular ethnic groups such as black Caribbean pupils and those of dual heritage. The present EAL staff are involved closely in both this investigation and the in-service training of other staff.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

119. To improve and build upon the satisfactory quality of education that pupils already receive, the governors, senior management and all staff of the school should:

(a) improve still further pupils' attainments and progress by

- removing the weaknesses in a minority of teaching identified in the main body of the report (## 17 37 41 43-44 48);
- ensuring that work set is demanding enough in all subjects for the needs of higher-attaining pupils (## 10 56 137 146 166 169 186 209-210);
- improving significantly the punctuality of pupils in all year groups for lessons (## 17 35 46 49 55 106 108 161 185 215 235 264);
- implementing policies for literacy and numeracy effectively across the curriculum (## 39 53 134 157 223);
- increasing the amount of homework in Years 7-9 and ensuring that it is set appropriately and regularly, according to the published timetable (## 47 83 152);
- continuing to ensure that widespread shortages in books and equipment are addressed (## 46 54 100-102 130 155 178 180 184 186-187 199 201 212-213 218 223-224 226 234-235 246 262 270);
- collating, interpreting thoroughly and acting appropriately upon a comprehensive set of data about pupils' attainments, in order to judge accurately both the progress of pupils throughout their time in school (and especially across Years 7-9 and in the sixth form) and the performance of the whole school (## 76 78-79); and
- increasing teaching time to at least the minimum 25 hours per week recommended nationally (## 35 55 97).

(b) improve the immature and anti-social behaviour of a small minority of pupils who lower their own and other pupils' learning and progress (## 26-27 45 106 129 163 167 185 188 196 198 241 243 252).

(c) enhance, in association with other partners, as appropriate, the school's physical provision by

- improving the decoration and appearance of the school's buildings, in order to promote pupils' personal, social and aesthetic education better (## 68 99 178 256); and
- ensuring that toilets are serviced and maintained to an acceptable level (## 68 99).

(d) enhance pupils' spiritual development across the school (a key issue also from the last two inspections), by

- ensuring that the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is met;
- teaching religious education to all pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form for a sufficient period of time;
- planning its appropriate incorporation into all other subjects of the curriculum; and
- subsequently carrying out an audit of how it is promoted effectively in practice (## 54 62-63 92 104 258 262 268-269).

(e) ensure that other statutory requirements are met by

- teaching in both key stages more information technology and the computer-controlled elements of design and technology (## 54 92 130 213 223 225); and
- having an active and fully audited assessment of risks to health and safety (## 72 178)

(f) register and monitor the attendance of sixth formers better (## 33 46 108).

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 18-22 24 55 57 60-61 66 72 78 80 82-83 93-94 96-97 99 113 and in subject paragraphs.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	240
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	181

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	17	46	29	6	0.4	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. The percentages do not total 100 per cent because of "rounding".

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1380
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	206

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	34
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	230

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	840

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 1998-1999.



### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	114	107	221

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	70	62	49
	Girls	88	64	53
	Total	158	126	102
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (56)	57 (50)	46 (49)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (18)	24 (31)	13 (22)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	66	69
	Girls	80	76	73
	Total	130	142	142
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (63)	64 (60)	64 (67)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (22)	35 (52)	37 (33)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1998.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	112	102	214

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	31	101	108
	Girls	43	91	95
	Total	74	192	203
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	35 (46)	90 (88)	95 (96)
	National	46 (45)	91 (90)	96 (95)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1998.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31.3 (36.5)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

Figures in brackets refer to 1998.

***Attainment at the end of the sixth form***

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	46	50	96

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	12.2	14.1	13.2 (14.0)	0.8	0	0.4 (3.0)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to 1998.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	Advanced -24	92%
		Intermed. - 42	100%
	National – Intermed. Level		73%

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	30
Black – African heritage	11
Black – other	40
Indian	850
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	5
White	432
Any other minority ethnic group	7

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	<b>Fixed period</b>	<b>Perman-ent</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	11	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	25	1
Other minority ethnic groups	2	1

*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 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	86.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1
Average class size	21.9

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	498

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998 -1999
	£
Total income	3,081,066
Total expenditure	3,085,604
Expenditure per pupil	2,236
Balance brought forward from previous year	52,099
Balance carried forward to next year	47,561

***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1380
Number of questionnaires returned	143

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	50	41	4	2	3
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	6	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	35	12	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	38	12	8	2
The teaching is good.	42	45	9	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	48	13	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	42	6	5	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	37	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	25	48	13	8	6
The school is well led and managed.	34	46	8	4	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	47	8	3	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	31	17	10	19

**Other issues raised by parents**

There were additional comments from parents on nine of the 143 questionnaires returned.

Amongst the positive points mentioned were:

- the good quality of most of the teaching.

Amongst the very few concerns expressed in questionnaires were:

- inadequate supervision of pupils outside lesson times; and
- inconsistency in the setting of homework.

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

### **ENGLISH**

120. Pupils' overall standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above that found nationally. In the national tests in 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving at least level 5 was above the national average. The percentage of those achieving at least level 6 was a little below average. The results were above the average for schools with a similar percentage of free school meals. Girls performed better than boys: their average points score was above the national average for girls, whereas that of boys was below the boys' national average. These results are significantly better than those in 1998 and continue the marked upward trend over the last three years. Taking into account their low average level of literacy on entry to the school, pupils make good progress by the end of Key Stage 3. Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection.
121. The general standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is slightly below average. In GCSE for English language in 1999 also the percentage of pupils achieving grades in the range A\*-C was below the national average. Girls did better than boys. Results were not as good as those in 1998, when they were above average. In English literature, from a reduced entry, results were above the national average and girls again performed better than boys. Pupils did better in 1999 in both language and literature than in most of their other subjects. The level of attainment is relatively lower than at the end of Key Stage 3 because pupils' earlier attainments were also lower than the most recent cohort in Year 9.
122. Attainment in the sixth form meets course requirements well. In A-level in 1999 both the percentage of pupils achieving high grades and pupils' average points score were well above average. These results show a marked improvement on those at the time of the last inspection. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are generally well motivated to learn, and make good progress.
123. The great majority of pupils throughout the school listen attentively and work together very productively in small groups. The overall quality of speaking is in line with that found nationally, but there is some work of above average standard. Average-attaining pupils in Year 9, for example, when studying *Romeo and Juliet*, all asked audible, coherent and well-informed questions during a "hot seating" of Romeo about his experience at the ball at which he met Juliet. During their lively discussion of the use of persuasive language in advertising, high-attaining pupils in Year 11 put forward articulate, cogent and powerful arguments in defence of their opinions. When talking to adults, pupils are courteous and confident.
124. Attainment in reading is in line with that found nationally. In response to findings in the last inspection, much effort has been made to improve the school's reading culture. Lessons are regularly set aside in Year 7 for the improvement and broadening of pupils' reading. Pupils read attentively and enthusiastically and keep a careful record of the books studied. They also talk about their reading to the whole class and often give extended, critical commentary which demonstrates good comprehension and understanding of the text. This initiative is helping to raise the standard of reading throughout Years 7-9 and contributes to the improving results in national tests.
125. Throughout the school pupils study a wide range of literary and non-literary texts. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils read, in great detail, plays, poems and novels, and make well-informed comments upon elements of plot, character, themes and the use of language. In the sixth form, pupils show mature

and sensitive appreciation of texts as when, for example, in their study of *The Tempest* pupils talked perceptively about important themes in the play and the relationships between key characters.

126. The overall standard of written work is average, but there are marked variations in quality. At Key Stage 3 writing is, in the main, carefully presented with neat handwriting. On occasions, even rough work is legible and accurate. A significant minority of written work in Key Stage 4, however, is poorly presented: handwriting is untidy and little thought is given to precision of expression. This weakness is found in the work of pupils of a wide range of attainment and is not limited to the work of low-attaining pupils. The best writing of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is carefully planned and structured, skilfully crafted, accurately presented and of well above average standard. In the sixth form, some written work is of outstanding quality, combining thorough knowledge with subtle insight into the authors' intentions. Throughout the school pupils write for a range of audiences and readerships. The majority of pupils draft their work effectively, but a minority do not pay sufficient attention to the final presentation of their writing.
127. The quality of teaching throughout the school is never less than satisfactory. It is good in two-fifths of lessons and very good (occasionally outstanding) in a further two-fifths. It is marginally better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 and is very good in the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good, with especially high academic standards in the sixth form. The planning and preparation of lessons are very good, and pupils are always clear how their tasks fit into a scheme of work. Teachers explain tasks in detail and pupils know exactly what is expected of them.
128. Relationships in almost all lessons are mutually respectful. Pupils are confident that their views are valued by staff and so respond in a lively and cooperative way. Teachers skilfully match the difficulty of tasks to pupils' level of attainment. Classroom management is good and pupils are encouraged to assess their own performance. Teachers throughout the school ask rigorous questions and insist upon detailed answers. In their discussion of *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Wolfe, for example, pupils in the sixth form were pressed, through searching questions, to explore broader thematic implications, but always relating their views to the text. Teachers share high expectations of both attainment and behaviour. As a direct result of teachers' positive and lively approach pupils almost always respond with enthusiasm and interest.
129. Pupils' behaviour is good overall. The great majority of pupils sustain concentration well and are properly motivated. There is, however, a small number of pupils who easily lose concentration and, occasionally, disturb the learning of others. An especially noteworthy feature of pupils' behaviour throughout the school is in group work, where they demonstrate patience, tolerance and respect for the opinions of others. Such good standards of behaviour are a direct and positive result of the good quality of teaching in the department.
130. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Departmental documentation is thorough and informative. The quality of assessment is good and is soundly based upon conscientious and consistent marking of pupils' work, alongside thorough record-keeping. Increasingly detailed information about pupils' progress is now available. There is little use of IT, because there is no equipment within the department and access to central resources is limited. Not enough complete sets of reading books are available to allow pupils to take them home.
131. The monitoring and assessment of teaching within the department are thorough and formative. The time set aside for the monitoring of lessons makes a noticeable impact upon the standard of teaching. This good practice is better than is generally found nationally. Relationships in the department are positive and teachers share the same aspirations for pupils. The department is very well managed and is led with great energy, skill and vision.

132. In the majority of subjects across the curriculum, pupils generally listen attentively, but in art and in design and technology pupils do not pay enough attention. Pupils are encouraged to use discussion as an important way of learning, but in science and modern foreign languages insufficient opportunities are provided. There is wide variation in the clarity and audibility of pupils' oral work: it is average overall, but the high standards found in drama are not evident in the majority of subjects.
133. In all subjects the reading comprehension of the great majority of pupils is adequate to enable them to understand their textbooks and other printed materials. The initiative to improve reading in Year 7 has a positive impact across the curriculum. In a few subjects the range of reading is limited by the overuse of worksheets.
134. In general the quality of written work across the curriculum is appropriate to the tasks set. The quality of presentation of writing varies considerably, but is good in science, art, history and vocational subjects. There are different expectations and standards across subjects, however, in these matters. These inconsistencies across the curriculum highlight the need for a consistent, whole-school policy on literacy.
135. **Drama** forms part of the faculty of physical education and expressive arts. The standard of attainment at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4 is above average. In GCSE in 1999 results were well above the national average.
136. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils achieve a high standard of self-discipline and group work in the drama studio. Pupils listen attentively, work effectively together and make decisions quickly and efficiently. Pupils in Year 7, for example, asked articulate, perceptive and relevant questions during a "hot-seating" exercise and showed sensitive understanding of the theme of racism. In their study of the isolation of an individual within society, pupils in Year 9 showed good spatial awareness in preparing presentations. The quality of their movement was sound and some pupils produced improvised dialogue of a high standard. During the presentation pupils remained convincingly in their roles and showed good control of body language, gesture and facial expression.
137. In Key Stage 4 pupils show increased maturity in their response and high levels of achievement in a wide range of activities. In their groups they discuss assignments quickly and with total confidence in their ability to make decisions. The quality of discussion is above average, with issues of great sensitivity and emotional significance covered in a relaxed but serious manner. Pupils in Year 11 work at pace to meet strict time-targets. The voice projection of a few pupils is below average, but groups produce intense and sometimes moving presentations. Pupils' attitude to their work is very positive throughout Years 7-11. They are committed and enthusiastic, and behave very well.
138. The quality of teaching is always very good and in the majority of lessons is excellent. Lesson planning is very thorough. Pupils know exactly how each lesson fits into the scheme of work. Tasks are clearly explained and pupils know precisely what to do and how to behave. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is outstandingly good and their control in the studio is very strong. Pupils clearly respect the high quality of teaching and also appreciate that their ideas are taken seriously. The ethos within the department is one of mutual respect and concern for others, both within school and outside. A class in Year 7, for example, was totally enthralled by a very skilfully managed beginning to a lesson on slavery. A series of cleverly linked activities retained pupils' concentration. The impact of the uniformly high standard of teaching upon pupils is evident in all lessons.
139. Departmental documentation is very thorough and helpful. Display in the studio is lively and informative. In its work the department makes a powerful contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspect of the whole-school curriculum. Schemes of work are based upon key issues

such as racism; these are handled in lessons with great sensitivity. Theatre groups visit the school offering, for example, a well-attended workshop on an Afro-Caribbean interpretation of *Macbeth*. There are many visits to theatres. Pupils perform in two major, local theatres and a group are helping a university department. Drama makes a vital contribution to the cultural life of the school through regular, major productions created by the faculty. The subject is very well managed and is led with great enthusiasm and energy.

## MATHEMATICS

140. Overall attainment in the subject has remained relatively steady since the last inspection in 1997. The proportion of pupils achieving the basic or higher levels expected of 14 year olds in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was in line with national norms in 1996, but was below average in subsequent years. Teachers' assessments in 1998 and 1999 were much higher than pupils' test scores. Comparisons with attainment of the same pupils on entry to the school suggest that there was some underachievement in the 1998 tests, whereas the 1999 results indicate sound progress. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.
141. The proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A\*-C in GCSE examinations fluctuated over the 1997-1999 period, but overall results were close to the national average. The performance of girls was about the same as that of boys. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A\*-G was below average in all three years. Many pupils retake GCSE in the sixth form and a significant proportion of these attain grade C. Examination results at GCE A-level have generally been satisfactory. They were good in 1999, when nearly three-quarters of the pupils achieved grades A-C.
142. In Key Stage 3 pupils generally make satisfactory progress in lessons, and by the end of Year 9 their overall level of attainment is close to average. In Year 7 most pupils have a basic understanding of number and of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages, although some lower-attaining pupils have an insecure understanding of "place value". All pupils learn simple algebra, but this aspect is insufficiently developed with the more able pupils. Data-handling and the learning about shape and space are consolidated effectively at level 4 for the majority of pupils. The more able pupils, however, are insufficiently challenged by these aspects of their work and do not achieve their full potential. In one lesson in Year 7, for example, a girl who had already attained level 6 by the end of primary school was given simple work at level 4, along with the rest of the class, on the areas and perimeters of rectangles.
143. Higher-attaining pupils make better progress in Year 8. They solve linear equations, use directed numbers accurately and show a secure understanding of transformation geometry. The majority of pupils use the vocabulary of probability with confidence. In one class, for example, when dropping two counters onto a board numbered from 1-8 and adding the scores, pupils were able to suggest that the positioning of the numbers favoured certain scores, so that the results were biased.
144. By Year 9 the highest-attaining pupils understand mathematical work of at least level 7 standard - as, for example, in solving simultaneous equations and in using Pythagoras's Rule appropriately. Most pupils achieve satisfactory levels of skill in the routines of calculation, simple algebra and data-handling. They know the difference between simple and compound interest and can successfully calculate and compare them. Pupils with special educational needs make mostly good progress over the key stage. They understand, for example, how to collect data accurately in a survey and present the results in the form of bar charts and pictograms. All pupils have regular opportunities to practise mental skills in tests. The recall of number facts has improved as a result, but many pupils are not confident when using negative numbers.



145. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is a little above average. Their progress is generally good and the quantity of work produced by many pupils is impressive. In the top sets algebraic techniques are consolidated and pupils add considerable depth to their understanding of mathematical processes. Trigonometric ratios are applied confidently to solve geometric problems and graph work shows a high standard of care and accuracy. In one lesson in Year 11, for example, pupils sketched graphs of a range of functions by using their knowledge of intercepts, gradients and symmetry. Results were checked on graphic calculators and some pupils were able to generalise families of curves.
146. At intermediate level pupils solve linear equations expressed in a variety of forms, using algebraic or graphical methods. They find the areas and volumes of solids and use standard index form correctly. At the foundation level pupils understand simple linear equations and use formulae to solve straightforward problems. Pupils of all abilities pursue a mathematical investigation for their GCSE coursework. Some of the work produced is of a very high standard, beautifully presented and logically developed, with powerful generalisations achieved.
147. In the sixth form, A-level work is of a very good standard in Year 13, where the majority of pupils have sound prospects of achieving a high grade. In Year 12 there is a wider spread of ability in the A-level classes and the overall standard of work is not as strong as in Year 13.
148. The quality of teaching is good overall. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form all teaching observed was at least good and two-fifths of it was very good. In Key Stage 3, although satisfactory overall, teaching is much more variable and in a quarter of the lessons seen was unsatisfactory.
149. Teachers are well qualified, hard-working and very knowledgeable about the subject. Between them they have a good spread of skills and experience and their expectations of pupils are usually high. Their planning is generally good and they identify clear learning objectives for each lesson. These objectives are commonly written on the board – as, for example, “by the end of this lesson you should be able to multiply decimals by numbers less than 1”. This practice gives pupils a clear target to achieve and a means of evaluating their own progress. Learning is reviewed at the ends of lessons, although sufficient time is not always allowed for this. The individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs, however, are insufficiently used.
150. In the best lessons teachers manage their classes well and use skilful questioning to develop pupils' learning by encouraging them to participate in discussion and to explain their ideas fully. In a lesson in Year 10, for example, the teacher presented a “model” investigation for GCSE coursework. Pupils were given the criteria for assessing the work and, through the teacher's careful questioning, held a good class discussion about which levels to award and why. Pupils were then handed back their own investigations, which had been annotated in detail, and comparisons were made with the model. Finally, pupils exchanged their work with their neighbour and discussed differences in their methods and the grades awarded. This approach enabled pupils to gain a very clear idea about the requirements for coursework and to know what they needed to do to improve their work. The obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment conveyed by the teacher and her high expectations of the pupils contributed further to the effectiveness of the lesson.
151. In the minority of lessons in Key Stage 3 that were less effective, the work set did not match the needs of all pupils in the class. Too often in Year 7, for example, teachers set the same work to the whole class, although the spread of what pupils already knew covered three levels of the National Curriculum. This restricted the progress of the higher-attaining pupils in particular. Teachers' questions are sometimes restricted to a few pupils and do not engage the attention of the whole class. In a lesson where the objective was to calculate perimeters and areas from drawings where

some dimensions were missing, pupils were allowed to spend too long on unnecessarily accurate scale-drawings without getting to the learning task; this resulted in insufficient progress.

152. Teachers usually plan to have extension work available for those who finish early. Insufficient thought is, however, sometimes given to widening the range of ways used to meet the differing needs of pupils, particularly in those groups where the spread of ability is the greatest. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and many write particularly helpful diagnostic comments, which the pupils value greatly. Homework is set regularly, but its frequency is not in accordance with the school's policy.
153. The schemes of work were being revised at the time of the inspection. Those for Key Stage 3 currently identify learning objectives and provide a good framework, but lack the necessary detail on teaching methods, use of resources and ways of matching work to pupils of different levels of attainment. A wide variety of teaching and learning styles is evident across the faculty and most are used to good effect. End-of-year tests and National Curriculum tests for practice in Key Stage 3 give pupils good preparation for the national tests in Year 9. Other tests are given by some teachers, but are not in common use across the teaching groups. They are not therefore a reliable basis for making accurate comparisons or monitoring pupils' progress.
154. The head of the faculty provides enthusiastic and effective leadership and has created a clear vision of where the department is heading. The faculty responded to the 1997 inspection in an emphatic and well-directed manner. It has become more open and collaborative in the way it works and has the collective will to make further improvements. Educational aims are clearly stated and reflect those of the whole school. The development plan has appropriate priorities, but insufficiently sharp targets or timescales. The new procedures for staff development, for monitoring and evaluating teaching, and for sharing successful practice are helping all staff to improve their teaching.
155. There are significant deficiencies in resources. Despite some recent purchases, the supply of textbooks is barely adequate and pupils cannot take textbooks home. There is only one overhead projector in the faculty and no other audio-visual equipment. The teachers have considerable, up-to-date expertise in IT, but this resource is largely wasted as the faculty has no computers of its own and cannot get easy access to the school's computers.
156. Accommodation has been improved by bringing all teaching of the subject together in one suite of rooms, but the overcrowding in some rooms restricts the way classrooms are organised. Rooms have been made more attractive and stimulating through some creative displays of pupils' work. Staff have no private working space, although this was indicated as a priority in the action plan after the last full inspection.
157. There has been an increased focus on numeracy within the department. Regular mental tests have been implemented and number skills are improving in Key Stage 3. Pupils display an average knowledge of mathematical facts in other subjects. Estimation is taught, but there is little evidence of pupils using it routinely to make approximations and check results within the department or elsewhere. The standard of graphical work is generally sound and is used to good effect across a range of subjects, but there is as yet no whole-school policy for developing numeracy across the curriculum.

## **SCIENCE**

158. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is just below average, but has improved since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement in the 1999 national test in Year 9 at the significant levels of 5+ and 6+ was below the national average; this reflected the lower than average attainment

of pupils on entering the school in 1996. When this achievement is compared with that of pupils from similar schools (as measured by the criterion of free school meals), it is below average.

159. Over the period 1997-1999 performance in the tests has risen and fallen with the national trend, but has always been below it. Pupils with English as an additional language do as well as other pupils. There is very little difference in the performance of boys and girls. As pupils move through Years 7-9 they gain a sound knowledge of ideas such as chemical reactivity - a considerable achievement in view of their performance on entry.
160. At the end of Key Stage 4 overall attainment is usually below average, although the work of pupils presently in Year 11 is average overall. In the 1999 GCSE double science examination less than one third of the pupils gained a grade in the range A\*-C, a result that was well below average. When the results of those pupils studying triple science are taken into consideration, however, the level of achievement improves, although still to a level below average and a little lower than that in 1998. This drop can be partly accounted for by the lower earlier attainment of pupils, although pupils did less well in double science than they did in many other subjects. In the period 1997-1999 there has been no discernible trend, and little difference, in the performance of boys and girls. When the school's results are compared with those of schools with a similar intake of pupils, the performance is below average.
161. The standard of work from the pupils at present in Key Stage 4 is of broadly acceptable quality. Whilst most pupils recall important terms and begin to understand the nature of chemical bonding, genetics and the importance of photosynthesis, for example, others have difficulty linking ideas together to form a coherent pattern; this problem prevents them from attaining the higher grades in the GCSE examination. Their retention of scientific ideas is hindered by poor motivation and punctuality in lessons. In both key stages pupils use mathematical techniques such as percentages and graphical representation well to illustrate the results of their experiments and investigations.
162. In the sixth form, performance in the A-level examinations has been variable, but broadly average overall. Whilst the number of entries in physics has been too small of late to make significant comparisons, earlier results were below national averages, particularly at the higher grades. On the other hand, performance in chemistry and biology has been creditable, with the proportion of higher grades comparable with the picture nationally. The present sixth formers have a sound grasp of the fundamentals of current electricity, chemical behaviour and the operation of organs in biology.
163. Pupils, in general, are interested in their lessons. Those in the sixth form are deeply involved in their studies. In Key Stage 3, pupils are enthusiastic, but at the same time some (boys particularly) are easily distracted, so that they interrupt other pupils' concentration with uncontrolled outbursts and disrupt the smooth flow of well-planned lessons. The atmosphere in classes is generally relaxed, and this in itself requires more self-discipline than some boys can achieve. Pupils cooperate well in practical lessons and usually relate productively to one another, except when a minority become silly. Most pupils behave responsibly.
164. In Key Stage 4 most pupils behave well and relationships are generally good. Some boys (and a few girls) find concentration hard and soon become disengaged from their studies. In most lessons, however, pupils maintain their interest and rise to the intellectual challenge of learning new ideas. They relate well to one another and discuss their experiments sensibly. In the sixth form, pupils discuss topics thoughtfully and in so doing improve their own learning significantly.
165. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7-11 and good in the sixth form. In all lessons it is at least satisfactory and is good or very good in nearly half of them. Most of the good teaching is in the sixth form and Key Stage 3. Teachers know their subject well and in the sixth

form relay this knowledge with confidence and enthusiasm. All lessons are well planned. Learning goals are stated in notes for lessons and in some cases are shared with pupils.

166. Some lessons in Key Stage 4 lack challenge for the more able pupils and fail to stimulate their minds to engage in further learning. Some of the best lessons at this stage, however, fully involve the pupils and develop well their skills in investigations and research. Teachers use a wide range of approaches. These include demonstrations, practical work, videos to stimulate interest and, where available, computers to give added depth. Overhead projectors are, however, seldom used with, for example, transparencies of worksheets employed to focus pupils' attention. Teachers are well supported by the reliable technical staff and the fair range of suitable equipment.
167. Teachers generally manage pupils well. In a significant minority of classes, however, there is too much unnecessary noise and this lowers the concentration of pupils: the department does not have a concerted view on what are acceptable levels of behaviour and noise. Homework is set and marked appropriately, but is seldom used as a basis for further study. In most lessons pupils' depth of knowledge and understanding are insufficiently explored, so that their actual learning depends much on their individual commitment to study.
168. The department is well organised. It has clearly stated policies and a strong ethos towards improving pupils' attainment. The departmental development plan has realistic targets to raise pupils' performance, helped by schemes of work which show objectives to be attained. The marking of pupils' work, in contrast, is variable: there are good examples of helpful and supportive comments by teachers, but in a few cases marking consists only of ticking and sparse remarks.
169. Teachers have a wide range of expertise, but this depth is not used to its full extent to challenge, motivate and enlighten pupils. Since the previous inspection developments in assessment, teaching and management have improved pupils' quality of education. The mentoring system has proved particularly useful in enhancing teachers' professional expertise. The provision of technicians is just sufficient in view of the split site. This separation of teaching rooms puts a heavy strain on resources, many of which have to be duplicated on meagre funding.
170. The quality of the accommodation varies from good in the Gill building to worn and barely adequate in Wyvern, in spite of attractive displays of pupils' work. The department has few modern computers. This shortage, coupled with the scarcity of textbooks, greatly inhibits the promotion of science as an exciting subject.

## **ART**

171. In 1997 and 1999, GCSE results were below average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A\*-C, but were above average in 1998. Results in the range A\*-G have varied from above average in 1998 to average in 1997 and below average in 1999. Girls achieve more of the higher grades than boys, although in 1998 boys achieved a good proportion of the higher grades. Pupils' overall performance in this subject in 1998 and 1999 was above what they achieved in many of their other subjects. Fewer pupils take the subject in this school compared with the national picture.
172. In the sixth form, A-level results were above the national average in 1997 for the proportions of pupils gaining grades in the ranges A-B or A-E. Over the period 1998-1999, however, results were below average for the highest (A-B) grades, although still above average for A-E grades. Pupils on GNVQ courses attain above average standards at Intermediate or Advanced levels.

173. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is average overall. In Year 9 pupils' observational drawing skills are often good. Pupils with special educational needs, although lacking confidence, often attain average standards in drawing. Skills in three-dimensional work, as seen in clay models of the human head, are average. Higher attainers read worksheets well and respond appropriately. Lower attainers and those for whom English is an additional language, however, often misunderstand the ideas which are presented to them. This is particularly evident where teachers use no visual reference to aid pupils' understanding – as, for example, when considering the chemical and physical changes to clay on being heated in a kiln. Where pupils' imagination is stimulated, as in the application of strong Expressionist colours in the portrait project, the majority of pupils achieve well. The lack of sketchbooks limits opportunities for problem-solving, research and reflection, and thereby constrains the level of attainment of all pupils.
174. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is usually above average. In Year 11 higher attainers create very personal responses to the artists studied. Pupils show growing individualism in their choice of artists (as diverse as Cezanne and Beryl Cook) and in their interpretation of the works of these well-known artists in their own paintings. Pupils are generally confident and competent in researching topics for an examination, although those with special educational needs do not easily focus on what is needed. The mismatch between current pupils' interests and the examination paper they have just received is reducing motivation and may account for some of the differences between examination results and the higher standard of work seen. The inconsistent use of sketchbooks in this key stage limits pupils' opportunities for solving problems and for experimental activities.
175. At the end of the sixth form A-level pupils' attainment in graphics is very high. They use IT software very well to communicate and improve their ideas, but their hand-drawing is less competent. Pupils' attainment is usually very good, although covering a narrower range of experiences than is often seen at this level. Pupils on GNVQ courses have above average attainment in textiles and graphics, but below average attainment in ceramics. Spelling is often poor in GNVQ assignments.
176. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are satisfactory overall. Some pupils in Years 7-9 arrive very late to class and slow down the start of lessons with their unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes. This significant minority, in all year groups, adversely affects both what is learned and the standards reached. Many pupils in Key Stage 3 enjoy the subject: few, however, currently consider it as an important career choice and the majority fail to understand its potential as a life-enriching process.
177. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to excellent. It is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9, but at its best in Years 10-11 and in the sixth form. There is some good and very good teaching in Years 7-9, but also too much unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and enthuse many of their pupils to do well in drawing, painting and three-dimensional studies. The majority of teachers are competent in teaching IT and this enhances pupils' learning in graphics. Innovative ideas for time-management, such as the GANNT charts, are used with Year 10; whilst not all pupils can manage more than one task at a time, many recognise that these procedures help them to learn more effectively. The excellent teaching and learning seen in Year 12 gave pupils new and exciting challenges and launched them into their projects, before they were encouraged to exercise more initiative: pupils were encouraged to work on a large scale as well as to consider the finer details involved in creating form and surface texture in an abstract composition.
178. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory overall. Department documents reveal a clear vision for the subject. Schemes of work reflect both National Curriculum requirements and examination criteria. Assessment, recording and reporting procedures are good. Links with industry are very good and lead to valuable opportunities for pupils, particularly in graphics. No sketchbooks,

however, are provided for pupils in Years 7-9, although this is a National Curriculum requirement. Resources for art history are poor. Weaknesses within the teaching team have led to imbalanced staff timetables, lower motivation in Key Stage 3 and lower standards for pupils. Accommodation is cramped and pupils' access through a wood preparation room is unacceptably hazardous. Both technical help within ceramics and classroom assistance for pupils with behavioural problems are low. The quality of display is good within the department, but poor in the rest of the building.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

179. At the end of Key Stage 3 the overall attainment of pupils is below average. Teachers' formal assessments at the end of Year 9 suggested that pupils' performance was in line with the national average for the proportion of pupils achieving at levels 5+ or 6+, with significantly more girls working at the higher level than boys. When, however, pupils' overall level of attainment is compared with the required knowledge and understanding set out in the National Curriculum programme of study and the standards of performance expected, it is below average because of the gaps in teachers' coverage of subject knowledge and skills. This was reflected in the standards of work seen during the inspection both at the beginning and end of Key Stage 3. This inadequate coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study limits pupils' attainment and progress; statutory requirements for the subject are not met. Overall attainment is at the same level as it was at the last inspection and should be higher.
180. By the end of Year 9, pupils generally have a sound understanding of designing skills (an improvement since 1997), but they have insufficient knowledge and understanding, especially of electrical, electronic, mechanical and pneumatic control systems and of structures. Pupils have suitable experience of designing and construction in food and textiles but, as at the last inspection, inadequate experience in a narrow range of wood, metal and plastics for their designs. Pupils rarely test their products as they develop against specified criteria. Graphical skills are good and higher-attaining pupils use these to good effect to explain their ideas for designs. Pupils have little experience of computer-aided design or computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) because the department does not have suitable equipment. These deficiencies arise mainly because of the financial constraints facing the school, as well as recent changes in staffing.
181. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below average overall, although in a minority of cases (mainly girls) it is average and sometimes above average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations almost two-fifths of the Year 11 group gained a grade in the range A\*-C; this proportion was below that in 1998, when it was marginally better than the national average.
182. Pupils' performance in GCSE varies across the different elements of the subject. Only in textiles technology, taken mainly by girls, were results well above the national average in both 1998 and 1999. In the GCSE food technology and the graphics products examinations taken in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving a grade in the range A\*-C (one third) was similar in both subjects; the results were below average. In resistant materials results for this range of grades were well below average at 23 per cent, largely owing to a change of staffing. Over the last two years girls have achieved better results than boys in all courses; ten per cent of boys did not achieve the lowest grade (G) in the 1999 examination. The results in the subject are not as good as pupils achieve in most of the other subjects they take and are significantly below the average for schools with a similar intake.
183. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils work independently to design and make products with increasing confidence. They think creatively to produce their designs and achieve good standards of drawing - as, for example, for product designs for children's toothbrushes or textiles for a gift shop. Higher-attaining pupils undertake thorough research, including good links to industry. Written work is generally well presented, using an appropriate range of styles. Pupils use IT competently (where they have access) for

graphic design and thereby improve the presentation of their work. Pupils do not, however, always understand what is needed to gain higher grades - such as how to extract significant information from their research and not simply copy information without understanding. Some pupils allocate insufficient time to manufacturing activities. Instead they misdirect their energies to presentation, with unnecessary drawing, at the expense of depth of subject content, so contributing to their underachievement.

184. Overall standards are below average, much as at the last inspection, and should be higher. With the exception of textiles technology at GCSE, there has been insufficient progress in the subject. Some aspects such as electronics are omitted because of a lack of staff expertise or inadequate resources. Performance in the sixth form has been variable: there were no entries in GCE A-level examinations in 1999. In 1997 and 1998 small numbers were entered: all passed, but few achieved high grades. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
185. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally satisfactory in both key stages. Occasionally they are very good - especially in lessons where teaching provides good stimulus and challenge. In Key Stage 3 extra adult support in some lessons enables pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language to benefit well from the teaching. Pupils usually take interest in their work, cooperate well and share tools and equipment responsibly. Some pupils tend to arrive late for lessons, take rests and gossip and do not achieve the standard of which they are capable. A minority of pupils with behavioural difficulties are rude and aggressive and interrupt the flow of lessons, but they are sensitively managed by teachers.
186. The quality of teaching is usually satisfactory in Key Stage 3, but is better and good overall in Key Stage 4. Teaching was at least satisfactory in most lessons and was good (occasionally very good) in about two-fifths of them. This is a considerable improvement since 1997, when half the lessons had unsatisfactory features. One lesson in Year 9 and another in Year 10 were unsatisfactory, owing to lack of class control, insufficient match of work to pupils' needs, low expectations and inadequate coverage of National Curriculum requirements. No good or very good teaching was seen in Key Stage 3, partly because the very limited resources restrict the development of pupils' designing and making skills. The better lessons in Years 10 and 11 provided good scope for pupils to think rigorously, to use IT appropriately and to make investigations and experiments to produce their product designs. Work is insufficiently matched to the needs of all pupils, however, especially for higher-attaining pupils in both key stages.
187. Some tasks in food technology are too narrowly planned and restrict pupils' learning. Although lessons are generally carefully planned with clear targets, work is not always adequately matched to National Curriculum requirements. Teachers' uncertainty about the expected levels of working limits some teaching and results in underachievement. Teachers work hard and resources are used effectively in most lessons, but the required teaching in control (CAD/CAM) is omitted, mainly because of insufficient resources. Assessment is insufficiently used to ensure progression in pupils' learning across the subject. Links with the local community and industry are good and enhance both teaching and learning.
188. Management of the subject is unsatisfactory, following changes in staffing. There are insufficient full-time specialist teachers and the planning of the subject is fragmented. Some non-specialist teaching does not advance pupils' progress enough. There is no comprehensive scheme of work to ensure that statutory requirements are met, including suitable schemes of work for pupils of all abilities. The shortcomings in split-site accommodation are recognised in the imminent building reorganisation. There are insufficient resources (including sewing machines) for control (CAD/CAM) and insufficient textbooks for GCSE classes. Technical support is good in resistant materials, but is insufficient in food.

## GEOGRAPHY

189. Pupils' overall level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national expectation. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3, their results indicated that pupils achieved an overall level above the national average and that girls achieved better than boys. During the inspection, however, in four-fifths of lessons pupils were working at levels in line with what is expected nationally.
190. In 1999 GCSE results were well below the national average. This represents a decline since the last inspection, but is an improvement on the results in 1998. Pupils' performance at GCSE was broadly in line with what they achieved in many other subjects in the school. During the inspection pupils towards the end of Key Stage 4 attained levels in line with the national average. The department reviews GCSE results annually and has implemented appropriate systems to raise standards. Results in GCE A-level in 1999 were poor, with over two-thirds of pupils failing to gain a grade. At the time of the inspection no pupils were studying for GCE A-level in the subject.
191. Pupils describe what landscapes and climates are like, but have difficulty in giving the reasons for the features they describe. In one lesson in Year 10, for example, pupils studied a weather map. They used the weather symbols accurately to describe the weather pattern shown on the map, but had difficulty in explaining why this weather pattern had occurred. Pupils have a sound understanding of the changes taking place in rural and urban environments and the effects of these changes on the lives of the people living there. A group of pupils in Year 11, for instance, discussed the effects a new housing development had on people living nearby from a range of viewpoints, using their geographical knowledge effectively.
192. Pupils have sound skills in collecting and selecting information from resource materials. They understand, analyse and accurately recognise features on aerial photographs. One group of pupils in Year 9, for example, used an aerial photograph to identify correctly the main features of a local industrial and shopping development and accurately assessed its impact on the area it served. In Key Stage 4 pupils competently complete a fieldwork enquiry. They collect and analyse information to produce an extended study of the land use of an urban area. In Key Stage 3 these skills are not developed to a high enough standard. Pupils structure extended pieces of written work carefully and use simple geographical terms correctly. Higher-attaining pupils write fluently, spell accurately and include good detail in their essay work. Pupils' numerical skills are satisfactory. They draw a narrow range of graphs accurately and analyse them effectively.
193. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and includes some good teaching. It is similar in both key stages. Teachers are well prepared and organised, enabling lessons to start promptly and proceed smoothly. They have a good knowledge of the subject and provide clear explanations, with good illustrations often taken from the local areas. In a minority of lessons the teaching fails to gain pupils' interest and questioning neither involves all the pupils nor is rigorous enough. Relationships with pupils are generally good (and often very good), creating a calm and orderly working atmosphere.
194. Lessons are planned with clear aims and a good variety of individual, paired and group work. They proceed at a good pace. In one lesson in Year 8, for example, pupils studied geographical changes in villages. The lesson started promptly, with the teacher informing pupils of the aims of the lesson and moving on to a brisk review of previous work. Pupils then worked in pairs to identify differences between a picture of a village taken 100 years ago and one taken recently and discussed their findings with the rest of the class. The pupils continued to make good progress in extending



their understanding of geographical change as they studied information of a variety of people's views of these changes in preparation for a purposeful homework. The lesson concluded with a review of how far the aims of the lesson had been achieved.

195. Work is pitched at an appropriate level. In the best lessons additional materials are used to enable the teacher to match the work closely to the needs of all the pupils. Marking is up to date, with positive comments that explain precisely where the work is good and how it can be improved in the future.
196. Pupils learn satisfactorily overall. They learn better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, where the learning of a minority of pupils has unsatisfactory features. They make good gains in acquiring knowledge and understanding, when lessons are planned to involve all pupils in a variety of well-structured activities and proceed at a good pace. In Key Stage 4 pupils are diligent and confident, make good progress and play an active part in lessons. Teachers' positive support and skilful management, based on good knowledge of their individual needs, enable pupils with special educational needs to make satisfactory progress. A minority of pupils in Key Stage 3, however, make little contribution to the lessons, quickly lose concentration and are easily distracted, particularly if the lesson contains long periods of similar work.
197. A strength of pupils' learning is the skill with which they work in pairs or groups. In one lesson in Year 7, for instance, pupils working in groups organised their tasks quickly, listened carefully to one another, shared resources, cooperated effectively in research tasks and made good gains in learning about a natural hazard.
198. Pupils generally have a positive attitude to the subject, especially in Key Stage 4. The majority are well behaved, show keenness and work hard. Many take pride in the presentation of their work and maintain their books in good order. A minority of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3, have little real interest in the subject, settle slowly to work, depend on the teacher to keep them working and are a distraction to others.
199. The scheme of work is sound and meets national requirements. The small amount of fieldwork in Key Stage 3 does not provide a coherent programme to develop pupils' understanding of geographical enquiry or provide support for later GCSE coursework. There is no effective programme for the use of IT in the subject, owing to the lack of staff training and difficulties of access to computers. The system of assessment is sound, although the method of assessing pupils' level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is not rigorous enough. There is no central record of attainment and assessment is not used systematically to guide individual pupils.
200. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. There is good monitoring of teaching and marking, and this is helping to raise standards. The three staff who teach above this level are all experienced and well qualified. Accommodation is satisfactory and rooms are grouped together within the humanities area. Pupils and staff have tried to enhance the bleak environment with satisfactory displays of work.
201. Resources are barely adequate. There is an insufficient range of textbooks in Key Stage 3, an inadequate quantity and range of textbooks in Key Stage 4, and not enough up-to-date atlases throughout. The department responded effectively to the previous report and has improved its teaching, marking and monitoring. It is now in a position to make further improvements.

## HISTORY

202. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' overall level of attainment is a little above that expected nationally, an improvement on the standard reported at the time of the last inspection. Teachers assessed their pupils as being a little above the national average in 1998 and 1999. The overall attainment of girls is higher than that of boys and in 1999 was assessed as well above that expected nationally. Boys' attainment was in line with the national average overall in 1999, but the proportion reaching the very top levels was below the national average.
203. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection at the end of both key stages was a little above that seen nationally. The majority of pupils reach standards which are appropriate for their abilities. Pupils in Key Stage 3 see and explain historical causes and effects and use a range of sources effectively to extend their knowledge and understanding about the past. Higher attainers successfully explain the feelings and attitudes of people in the past – as, for example, in their production of imaginary diaries written by soldiers, nurses and women workers in World War One; these showed both good understanding of the period and high levels of literacy. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is in line with what is usually seen nationally.
204. Pupils taking the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 reach an overall standard which is a little above the national average, a standard similar to that reported at the time of the last inspection. The percentage achieving grades in the range A\*-C in 1997 and 1998 was above average, but fell in 1999 to a point in line with the national average. This was owing to a decline in boys' overall attainment, which fell from above average in 1997 and 1998 to below average in 1999. This fall reflected the earlier attainments of these pupils. The attainment of girls has been above the girls' national average for the past three years. The percentage of pupils who gained A or A\* grades was above the national average in 1997 and 1998, but fell in 1999 to below average.
205. The overall standard of work seen in Key Stage 4 during the inspection was a little above what is typical nationally. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs was in line with the national expectation. Pupils taking GCSE see and explain competently the causes of past events and the motives for actions taken. They use a range of sources, including statistics, effectively to extract information and make deductions about the past. Pupils in Year 10, for instance, interpreted graphs very competently to evaluate the relative success or failure of Soviet economic policy between 1929 and 1932.
206. Examination results at GCE A-level have fluctuated over the past four years, but only in 1997 were they below average. In 1999 achievement was above the national average. With the exception of 1997, the percentage achieving grades A and B in the past four years has been above the national pattern. Only a very small amount of work at A-level could be seen during the inspection, but the standard was good.
207. The quality of teaching is good overall, occasionally very good and never less than satisfactory. The very best teaching was seen in Key Stage 3. This overall standard is similar to that seen at the last inspection. The range of teaching methods, however, which was judged to be too narrow then, has been extended; most teachers now use an appropriate variety of approaches, including group and paired work, and involve pupils actively in lessons. Teachers know their subject well at all levels and, as a result, pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding about the past.
208. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and emphasise firmly the need for a quiet, working environment. All pupils are expected to work hard; most do so, thus making satisfactory,

and often good, progress in their work. Teachers manage pupils effectively: they use appropriate ways of dealing with the behavioural problems sometimes posed by a small but significant number of pupils, and use praise and encouragement suitably to reward good behaviour and hard work. Relationships are good. The atmosphere in lessons is pleasant, but when necessary the discipline is effectively enforced.

209. The work set for pupils in Key Stage 3 is often suitably matched to what they can do. It is usually appropriately challenging for higher attainers. In a small number of lessons, however, teachers do not involve pupils sufficiently in ways that enable higher attainers to develop greater depth of understanding. In the majority of lessons seen there was no use of alternative sources or tasks for lower attainers. In lessons on urban conditions in the 19th century, for instance, the effective use of pictorial sources did enable lower-attaining pupils to extend their understanding of health hazards in towns, but did not provide much depth of understanding for higher attainers. In contrast, another lesson on the same topic, in which complex textual evidence was the main source of information, did not enable the lowest attainers to make good progress.
210. The work set for pupils taking the GCSE course is appropriately demanding. Higher attainers have opportunities to complete work which leads them towards the top grades, although in some lessons the work is based more on the acquisition of information rather than on analysis and explanation. In a lesson on Stalin's early life, for example, pupils gained a lot of knowledge about Stalin, but they were not asked to consider the potential impact of some of the events on his later actions. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and thoroughly, and there are frequent formal tests which give pupils good experience of examination requirements. The teaching of A-level makes appropriate demands on pupils and enables the highest attainers to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to reach the top grades.
211. Statutory requirements are met at Key Stage 3. The leadership and management of the department are good and have contributed much to the improvements made since the last inspection. The relatively new head of department has identified areas of weakness in the department and is implementing plans to deal with them. There is a clear commitment to improvement and to raising still further the level of achievement in public examinations. Assessment is satisfactory.
212. The provision of resources is poor. There are insufficient textbooks for pupils in Key Stage 3, although there has been an improvement in provision in Key Stage 4 since the last inspection. There is insufficient audio-visual equipment and no up-to-date computer within the department. Access to centrally provided IT, especially for use of the Internet, is not always easy at times convenient to the department. As a result, little progress has been made since the last inspection in the effective use of IT.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

213. The overall level of attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is below that expected for pupils of similar ages. The sparse resources in the school limit pupils' achievement in all areas of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Despite some upgrading to industry-standard computers, the pupil to computer ratio (16:1) is significantly worse than average and similar to that in 1997. Too little time is given to the subject in Key Stages 3 and 4, and as a result pupils' overall attainment is below average and low for their capabilities. This was reflected in the standards of work seen during the inspection, both at the beginning and the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. National Curriculum requirements are not met. In the sixth form, however, attainment is in line with the requirements of courses.

214. In Key Stage 3, attainment by the end of Year 9 has been variable. In 1999 teachers assessed pupils' attainment at the significant levels of 5+ and 6+ as well below average, because of reductions in the time given to IT and of gaps in teaching. In 1998 attainment was assessed as above average. Girls' overall attainment in Key Stage 3 is consistently higher than that of boys (similar to national trends), although the difference between the sexes is small. Standards in computer graphics have improved at Key Stage 3 since 1997 because of the new computer network and better resources, such as CD-ROMs, for research. Pupils' attainment in word processing, desktop publishing, handling information in databases, and the use of spreadsheets is below average by the end of Year 9. It is well below average in computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) largely because of the lack of equipment.
215. At the end of Key Stage 4 overall attainment is below average. In the 1999 GCSE examination in IT the proportion of pupils in Year 11 gaining a grade in the range A\*-C (35 per cent) was well below the national average, although the proportion of pupils achieving a grade in the range A\*-G was near average. Analysis of IT results against pupils' average scores for all subjects shows that more than half the candidates gained a higher score than their average, a third achieved a score in line with their average, and the remainder were just below their average - a sound achievement.
216. Boys' overall attainment in GCSE in 1999 was higher than that of girls, contrary to national trends, and was close to their own national average. Few girls entered the examination and their results were well below the national average for girls. Six per cent of pupils did not achieve the lowest grade (G) in the 1999 examination. The results in 1998 were near average, and girls' overall attainment was higher than boys. Over the 1997-1999 period GCSE results reflect the changing of syllabuses to meet new requirements, a short course introduced and stopped, and a falling entry at GCSE from a half to a quarter of the year group.
217. In the sixth form, examination results at A-level in 1998 and 1999 were below average. Although there was an improvement in 1999, attainment was still below average. The percentage of those who gained the highest (A-B) grades has been well below the national average for the past three years, but the proportion achieving grades A-E has been close to average. Taking into account the fact that pupils had a wide variety of earlier learning experiences and capabilities, they achieved well. Sixth formers passing GNVQ courses achieve the standards expected in a range of IT activities at Intermediate and Advanced levels.
218. On entry to the school in Year 7 most pupils' experience in IT is shallow. In taught lessons in Year 7, pupils begin to understand the basic skills of handling information and data as, for example, when working with databases. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress with the sound teaching they receive and from effective support from classroom assistants. Some pupils with English as an additional language make slow progress because they have difficulty in understanding the technical terms and abbreviations used in some worksheets - for example, about car registrations and the speed of travel (m.p.h). In Years 8 and 9 pupils have insufficient teaching and make slow progress. In both Key Stages 3 and 4 IT is rarely used to support work in other subjects, because resources are limited; in consequence, pupils' progress is held back.
219. About a quarter of the pupils take GCSE and make satisfactory progress, mainly in handling information and data. In Year 10 standards improve for all pupils in a short, skills-based course of well-structured tasks, which also contribute to their linguistic and numerical skills and have links to business. Pupils work with increasing confidence to select and use a variety of software to demonstrate how it could be used as, for example, in the running of a company or travel agency. Pupils in Year 11 have no separate lessons in the subject. In a design and technology lesson, however, pupils learned to enhance their GCSE coursework effectively by using computer-aided graphics. Higher-attaining pupils are confident in working independently (often at home) to

maintain their skills, which are mainly in word processing and desktop publishing. Overall provision is, however, unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4 and standards throughout the school are not high enough.

220. The progress made by pupils on the A-level course in IT is good. They achieve high standards in producing, interpreting, critically evaluating and improving their work by using IT. For example, pupils in Year 12 demonstrate a good grasp of advanced methods of designing information systems for others to use, such as for running a golf club. Pupils in Year 13 confidently discuss the theory of operating systems and developments in recent years.
221. Pupils' attitudes in Key Stages 3 and 4 are satisfactory overall. They are good (and often very good) in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form where IT is taught separately or used to support their learning in other subjects. Most pupils arrive promptly for lessons, although some have a tendency to drift in late, interrupt the teaching and show little sense of urgency. In Year 7, pupils show interest and work carefully to master new skills, but are easily distracted and restless when they are not sure what to do. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are keen to learn: most show responsible, mature attitudes to study, although some are content to work at a leisurely pace. Pupils respond willingly to teachers' questions, discuss ideas thoughtfully, take notes carefully to plan theory questions, and learn from one another. In all years relationships are good.
222. The quality of specialist teaching is good overall throughout the school and remains much as found in 1997. In over three-quarters of the specialist-taught lessons teaching is good (occasionally very good), and in the remainder is never less than satisfactory. Specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge and others with confident expertise teach a small number of lessons in Key Stage 3. Lessons provide a good balance of teacher-directed and self-directed work. The main strengths of the specialist teaching in Years 10-13 are teachers' high level of knowledge and skills in the subject and the easy sharing of this expertise with pupils in lessons that are well planned to enhance their standards of work. In good lessons teachers ensure suitable breadth and depth of cover, use information in different forms for specific purposes, and employ a suitable variety of activities; these include practical work, writing up information, research, and discussion of the best ways to use the resources available. Assessment is used well in IT lessons, but is inconsistent and unsatisfactory in other subjects.
223. The good quality of specialist teaching enhances pupils' progress considerably, especially in the period before external examinations. In examples of good teaching seen pupils built successfully on their knowledge of information systems by practical investigation, well-focused discussion, examining the uses of IT in business, using IT well for both creative and functional purposes, rigorous research and the sharing of ideas. Aspects of control (CAD/CAM) are omitted in all years because of insufficient resources; the school does not therefore meet National Curriculum requirements. Access to the Internet and e-mail by a single computer on one site is woefully inadequate. Integrated systems of learning support in literacy and numeracy are insufficiently exploited.
224. Most teachers in other subjects are confident in using computers for their own needs, but overall do not have the expertise, training or resources to ensure pupils' progression across the range of subjects. The teaching of IT is satisfactory in business studies and economics, on GNVQ courses, in design and technology (graphics products) and modern foreign languages. It is unsatisfactory in most other subjects, because departments have limited resources and central provision is heavily used for taught courses.
225. The department is well led and managed. The coordinator has a strong vision for the subject. There are clearly stated policies and effective management structures in place to maintain and improve

pupils' curiosity, enjoyment and (for the most part) standards in the subject. Schemes of work are well presented, but do not meet statutory requirements in Key Stages 3 or 4, because not all pupils have taught lessons or sufficient opportunities to use appropriate IT in other subjects. A system of centralised planning, monitoring and assessment in IT across the curriculum is at an early stage of development.

226. Although computer equipment has been updated to a higher specification, the ratio of pupils to computers is well below average. The school is currently waiting to hear the result of its bid for external funding to improve its provision for Key Stages 3 and 4. Technical support is highly skilled.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

227. Pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is close to average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in both 1998 and 1999 indicated an overall attainment near to the national average. Pupils currently near the end of Key Stage 3 achieve average standards in reading and listening to French. Higher-attaining pupils also speak and write French effectively, but the overall standard in these two skills is below average. A group of higher-attaining pupils also study German in Key Stage 3 and achieve above average standards.
228. In 1998 and 1999 the percentage of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in full-course GCSE examinations in both French and German was well below the national average, as was the average grade that pupils obtained. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-G was similar to the national figure. No pupil gained either of the two highest grades (A\* or A). Pupils did significantly less well than in most other subjects in the school.
229. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are currently below average overall. Some higher-attaining pupils show good understanding of both spoken and written language. They speak well when their work has been carefully prepared and write reasonably well, although their writing often lacks accuracy. Lower attainers have limited skills in listening and speaking, and their writing consists mostly of copying and gap-filling exercises. In their reading they make reasonable sense of texts for which they have been carefully prepared.
230. Standards at the end of both key stages are similar to those noted at the time of the last inspection. Currently no pupils study foreign languages at A-level, but in the last two years the small number of pupils who did attained grades well below the national average.
231. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good, but it ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. In a small number of lessons the work of some pupils is disturbed by the unsatisfactory behaviour of others. In a few lessons pupils display very good attitudes to their work, listening carefully and making effective contributions both orally and in writing. In many lessons, however, pupils work at too slow a pace, concentrate poorly and show little interest in their work. In a French lesson in Year 8, for example, pupils made unsatisfactory progress, despite the enthusiasm and hard work of the teacher, because they put in too little effort and refused to be involved in the work.
232. Teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is predominantly good in both key stages and has improved since the last inspection. The best features of the teaching include good planning and the use of a suitable variety of teaching approaches, good knowledge of pupils' attainments and the appropriate setting of homework. In some lessons, however, the pace of working is slow and pupils are given too little opportunity to hear or use French or to become independent learners of the language. In almost one lesson in ten seen the teaching was unsatisfactory, because a few pupils

were allowed to take up too much of the teachers' attention, causing the progress made by the majority of pupils to be too slow.

233. In one lesson in every eight seen, teaching was very good. In these lessons teachers expected pupils to work hard. They used the foreign language for the major part of the lesson and carefully planned lessons so that pupils also could do so. In a French lesson in Year 9, for example, pupils of average attainment made very good progress in learning to talk about future events, because the teacher presented new learning well and provided a range of interesting activities, giving pupils plenty of opportunity to practise the language. Teachers are competent users of French or German, although in a few French lessons small errors of grammar or pronunciation lowered the pupils' learning of the language. In some lessons teachers do not give pupils enough opportunity to hear or speak the language.
234. The department meets the statutory requirement to teach the National Curriculum programmes of study, but the lack of easy access to IT equipment means that there is insufficient use of IT in the learning of the languages. Some pupils undertake the study of two foreign languages from Year 8, but few continue with two into Key Stage 4. Currently no pupils have continued to study either language in the sixth form.
235. Management of the faculty is good. The emphasis on high quality teaching and learning, together with the support provided for teachers to improve their skills, are leading to better learning for the pupils, although this has yet to show itself in public examination results. There are now sufficient permanent staff to teach the curriculum - a major improvement on the situation at the last inspection. The school also benefits from the good work of a part-time French *assistante*. There are sufficient audio-visual resources, but too few textbooks or dictionaries to enable pupils to make effective progress. Most of the teaching takes place in a group of closely-situated rooms, but the need to move from one part of the school to another on a regular basis means that significant parts of lessons are lost.

## MUSIC

236. By the end of Key Stage 3 the overall attainment of pupils is in line with the national average. Pupils perform and compose music to a fair standard. They use electronic keyboards, voices and percussion to reproduce pieces or to invent pieces based on known works – as, for example, the popular theme from *Carmina Burana*. Through practical activities they learn how to build simple chords on the keyboard. A few pupils use first-inversion chords with confidence. They study various musical devices such as drone and ostinato and use them suitably in their own compositions. Pupils are familiar with both musical notation on the stave as well as graphic notation which they use well in composition and performance, after the style of modern minimalist composers.
237. Pupils also acquire at this stage a fair background knowledge of rhythms and melodies in the style of classical Indian music, knowledge of the Blues and a broad acquaintance with music from the main European historical periods. For example, they compare performances of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* in both authentic and jazz versions of the work. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 have improved since the previous inspection.
238. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average. In the 1996- 1998 GCSE results taken together, 32 out of 46 pupils gained grades in the range A\*-C. One of these gained an A\* grade. There were no candidates in 1999. This pattern of examination success accords with the standards of work seen during the present inspection. Standards have been maintained since the 1997 inspection.

239. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils perform, with varying degrees of skill, on solo instruments and on keyboards. Most develop sufficient skill on the keyboard to help them with their general musical understanding and as an aid to composition. By the end of the key stage they compose in a range of styles and understand how pieces may be arranged. They also learn to improvise from given ideas such as specific rhythmic patterns or short melodic progressions. Pupils acquire a fair working knowledge of Western music from the main historical periods together with music from Africa and Latin America. Music is mostly studied from a practical angle: for example, having listened to a repeating bass line used by Purcell, pupils make their own pieces, employing a similar structure. In both key stages those pupils who receive lessons on solo instruments attain satisfactory standards of performance, as exemplified by Associated Board examination results.
240. The quality of learning in both key stages is good overall. Pupils acquire knowledge and understanding of music largely through practical work. In almost all lessons they prepare performances and compositions in pairs or groups and then play these to the whole class for evaluation. Their learning achieves a good balance between practical expertise and theoretical understanding. This range represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.
241. In most lessons pupils listen well to instructions and work purposefully at a fair pace. This successful learning results from well-structured teaching. Many pupils work well independently in adjacent practice rooms without the need for the teacher's immediate attention. A minority of pupils in Key Stage 3, however, have not developed satisfactory habits of working independently. These pupils sometimes cause minor disruptions in lessons and take up an unreasonable amount of teachers' time and attention. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with very varied learning experiences, but their overall attainment on entry is below average. Very well constructed schemes of work and consistently good teaching ensure that the majority make good progress through the key stage.
242. In Key Stage 4 the attitudes of some pupils are very good. They show a keen interest in their work and some pupils say how much they enjoy the subject. Pupils with relatively high musical talents have good opportunities to perform and compose at their own level and are often called on to accompany or advise their peers. In this key stage pupils respond to good challenges set by the teacher. They identify styles and periods with a fair degree of accuracy – as, for example, whether a particular Beethoven sonata belongs to the late classical or early romantic period.
243. In most lessons in both key stages pupils' attitudes in lessons are good. Most pupils show a genuine interest in their work and listen and respond well to their teachers' questions and instructions. In many lessons pupils help with setting out equipment. Most cooperate well with one another in their regular work in pairs or groups. Behaviour is good overall, although a minority come into lessons already intending to work at a lazy pace or to engage in irrelevant chatting. By the end of Key Stage 4, with ongoing guidance, almost all pupils have acquired a good level of self-discipline for successful study.
244. Teaching in both key stages is good overall and some very good teaching was seen. Teachers know their subject well and have competent skills as performers, accompanists and conductors. Teachers' background knowledge of music is good, as is evident in the GCSE work. Discipline is good in lessons and time is used efficiently. Sections of lessons are apportioned a time limit and this leads to an appropriate sense of urgency. The department adopts a common lesson format which also helps to achieve a good pace and consistent approach. Lesson materials are very well selected and much good work has gone into producing the department's own musical material for study. This material is produced to a professional standard.



245. The department is well led. Unusually, this is achieved jointly by two teachers, one of whom works part time. Recently revised schemes of work are very detailed, realistic and well conceived. Both long- and short-term planning are good and lessons are well prepared. Teachers know the pupils well, make good use of individual education plans and pay suitable attention to the language levels of pupils for whom English is an additional language. All work is assessed regularly. Day-to-day assessment is good. Overall assessment is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. A team of visiting teachers covers the main categories of instruments and approximately 40 pupils receive individual lessons.
246. Both the accommodation and resources for teaching the subject are good. The department has insufficient computing equipment, however, to ensure that all pupils have good opportunities to work with notation on screen, and ultimately to compose. A fair range of extracurricular activities regularly involves up to 40 pupils. This number significantly increases when pupils take part in concerts and productions as, for example, in a recent performance of *Adiemus*. Music makes a very good contribution to the social and cultural life of the school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

247. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in games and athletics is broadly in line with that expected nationally. Most pupils perform competently the basic skills of passing and catching, and many apply these skills competently in games. Higher attainers have a good understanding of tactical play and move well on court, making good use of space. In a basketball lesson in Year 8, for example, many girls displayed shooting skills that were well above average.
248. By the end of Key Stage 4 the vast majority of pupils have developed and refined their skills and participate skilfully in the full adult version of at least one major competitive game – as, for instance, a small group of Year 10 boys in a basketball lesson. The success of the school's teams in a range of sports is further evidence that overall standards are sound and in line with those found nationally.
249. All pupils achieved at least a pass grade in the GCSE examinations in 1998 and 1999, but only seven per cent of pupils passed at the higher (A\*-C) grades in 1999. This was well below the national average and significantly down from the high 50 per cent achieved in 1998. The main cause for this decline was the policy of restricting entry to the course to lower-attaining pupils, a policy that is to change for future year-groups. The pupils currently following the course are lower attainers, and this is reflected in their largely below average knowledge and understanding of the theory of the subject.
250. Since 1997 small numbers of pupils have taken the subject at GCE A-level. In both 1998 and 1999 all pupils achieved a pass grade. Pupils currently in Years 12 and 13 have a sound knowledge and understanding of the psychological aspects of the acquisition of skills.
251. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make largely good progress in what they learn both in lessons and over longer periods of time. Pupils steadily increase their range of skills and their understanding of what they have to do to improve. In nearly all lessons pupils work with enthusiasm and sustained commitment. They listen carefully, observe demonstrations perceptively and are keen to answer their teachers' questions. In several lessons pupils commented clearly on the quality of the performances they had observed. When working in groups or teams, pupils help and cooperate with one another through sound comment and by carefully measuring and recording their achievements – as, for example, when they practise the athletic activities of jumping and sprinting.

252. There are exceptions, however, to this good overall picture. A significant minority of boys in Year 7 do not always behave well. In one gymnastics lesson the behaviour and response of virtually the whole class were very poor. In a GCSE theory lesson the silly behaviour of a small group of girls continually disrupted the learning of the majority. In both of these lessons very little was learned. The response of these pupils was in stark contrast to the excellent attitudes of a class of girls in Year 10 who worked cheerfully and hard through a badminton lesson and consequently made very good progress.
253. The quality of teaching is good overall (and sometimes very good) throughout the school. In two lessons, where the teachers did not establish good discipline and control, it was unsatisfactory or poor. There is no significant difference between the quality of teaching in either key stage. In the sixth form it was good in both the lessons seen. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and in most lessons expect much from pupils. Lessons are planned carefully and often in considerable detail. In many lessons teachers make very good use of question and answer sessions to ascertain the level of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the activities. In most lessons teachers set tasks that challenge pupils appropriately, but do not always make enough use of grouping pupils of similar attainment together. Pupils who, for whatever reason, do not participate in practical work are usually given appropriate work that involves them in the lesson. In a few lessons, however, their progress was restricted, because they were not required to observe demonstrations or to join in question and answer sessions.
254. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met, although the time allocated for dance and gymnastics in Key Stage 3 is minimal. The programme of work for pupils in Key Stage 4 has reasonable breadth and balance. Pupils' work is assessed accurately and consistently. Good use is made of IT to store assessment data, which is carefully used to provide profiles of attainment for individual pupils. There is insufficient use made, however, of the data to guide planning of the curriculum.
255. In the two previous inspections it was reported that too little time was available in Key Stage 4. It remains at four per cent, but the school's timetable and the length of lessons make it difficult to increase this figure without significantly exceeding the national average. The department is now part of the faculty of PE and expressive arts and receives strong, thoughtful leadership from this arrangement. This system of management finds favour with all the teachers involved and has been a significant factor in the production of a sound development plan, an omission that was commented upon adversely in 1997. The plan now includes a sound section on the development of IT. Schemes of work, however, are too brief and make no reference to the National Curriculum. The department has a wide range of written policies, but they are very brief and the policy for safe practice is inadequate. A formal assessment of risks to health and safety has not been completed.
256. The amount and quality of accommodation for the subject were described as "inadequate" in the 1995 inspection and "just adequate" in 1997, when accommodation was also described as "shabby, often dirty, and in need of refurbishment and redecoration". The number of indoor specialist teaching spaces is insufficient, restricting the curriculum offered and pupils' opportunities for learning. The department relies heavily on the availability of the two school halls (one of which offers very limited space for practical work). Only when these facilities are not required for examinations can it be said that facilities are "barely adequate". On occasions, the best use is not made of outside facilities, with the result that there is unnecessary doubling-up of classes in the gymnasium. The condition of the gymnasiums and changing rooms is much the same as reported in 1997. During the current inspection there was dirt and dust in the gymnasium on the Wyvern site, where the store room was very untidy and dirty. The lack of a toilet adjacent to the boys' changing room is totally unsatisfactory.

257. Nearly a quarter of pupils are regularly involved in one or more of a sound range of extracurricular activities; these include good opportunities for Asian girls, who respond positively. Nine teachers, including all specialists, give up much time to coach, supervise and officiate at these activities, which afford pupils many good opportunities to enhance their skills and their personal and social development.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

258. All pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 pursue a course of study based on the Agreed Syllabus for Leicestershire. There is no provision for the subject to be taught in the sixth form. In addition, pupils in Key Stage 4 may also choose to pursue a GCSE examination course in religious studies. In 1999 the attainment of the small number of pupils entered for the GCSE examination was well above the national norm for all maintained schools. The proportion of pupils gaining grades in the A\*-C range has increased significantly since the previous inspection.

259. By the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment of the majority of pupils pursuing the Agreed Syllabus is in line with its expectation for their age. They have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices, and of how religious beliefs and values affect ways of living. They also have a sound understanding of religious language, ideas and symbols, and an awareness of the spiritual dimension of life. They can evaluate religious insights satisfactorily and apply them to their own experience of life and that of others.

260. At the end of Key Stage 4, however, pupils' overall attainment is below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus for their age. In Year 10 they gain a limited understanding of a moral issue of their choice through an extended project. In Year 11 they study the Holocaust and prejudice, and again pursue a project of their choice arising from it. These studies are, however, essentially social and moral in nature and give insufficient weight to the religious dimension required by the Agreed Syllabus. For example, the content of a Year 11 project seen was essentially social history, being a study of the Home Front in World War Two. Pupils' study of religious beliefs, values and practices, and of how they affect ways of living, effectively stops short at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils do not fully cover the Agreed Syllabus in Key Stage 4 and at its end their attainment cannot fulfil its expectations for their age.

261. In Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils pursuing the Agreed Syllabus, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in their studies both in lessons and over the whole of the key stage. During their first year in the school, for example, they pursue work which is fundamentally descriptive and explanatory in nature on topics such as festivals in Judaism, Hinduism and Christianity. By the end of Year 9, however, they have progressed to being able to grasp and evaluate highly abstract concepts, such as samsaric existence and the soul and its liberation in Hinduism.

262. In Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils pursuing the GCSE examination make very good progress. In contrast, although the majority of pupils pursuing the Agreed Syllabus show good progress in individual lessons, their progress over the key stage as a whole is unsatisfactory. This unsatisfactory progress is not a reflection on the quality of teaching or on pupils' attitudes towards the subject. It is a consequence of the inadequate time allocated to teaching the subject (which is under half of that usually required) and of poor schemes of work. The two factors together impede adequate coverage of the Agreed Syllabus. Progress over time is further hindered by the poor provision of textbooks and by poor access to IT.

263. In both key stages pupils show good skills of collaborative working as, for example, in Year 9 when small groups of pupils planned the stages of the Hajj. Good skills of individual research and enquiry were evidenced in Year 11's work on prejudice. Pupils sustain concentration well in a range of contexts from whole class to individual work. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainments are satisfactory at GCSE level, but are otherwise unsatisfactory. This is because they are inadequately related to the attainment targets of the Agreed Syllabus and do not help pupils to understand how to raise the standards of their work.
264. In both key stages the large majority of pupils are well motivated and come to lessons keen to learn. Their behaviour is good and they enjoy good relationships with one another and their teachers. They listen with respect to one another's views and opinions in discussion and respect the beliefs of others. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, Moslem, Hindu and Sikh pupils felt able to speak freely, from their own experience, about the rites associated with death and mourning in their respective faiths. There is a very small minority of pupils, however, in some classes who are less keen to learn and arrive late for lessons.
265. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It is now good in both key stages, with an element that is very good. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a good grasp of their subject and know clearly what they wish their pupils to learn. They communicate their aims clearly to them, linking them with previous work, as was seen in a Year 8 lesson on Gautama Buddha's search for enlightenment. They plan their lessons effectively to achieve their objectives.
266. Teachers set and maintain a brisk pace from the outset of lessons, as in a Year 8 lesson on Islam which began with a crisp review of previous work based on a video about Mecca. They have high expectations of pupils and engage and hold their interest through a variety of interesting and challenging activities and tasks. For example, pupils in Year 8 worked in small groups to map out the stages of the Hajj, using a range of formats from diaries to maps, for presentation to the whole class. Pupils in Year 9 studying Christian marriage worked with the support of a local parish priest in the classroom to prepare a simulated marriage ceremony for enactment in the local church.
267. Teachers use good questioning skills to extend pupils' understanding. For example, pupils in Year 8 were led in discussion to an understanding of the concept of suffering and the causes of suffering in Buddhism. Teachers draw effectively on pupil's own experiences of their faiths as a resource as, for example, in Year 8 on fasting in Islam. Teachers raise pupils' self-esteem through good use of praise. They make good use of regular homework to extend work done in class and mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly. This good teaching is underpinned by the very good relationships, based on caring and mutual respect, which teachers enjoy with their pupils. Pupils feel valued by their teachers and respond positively to the high expectations of them in both work and behaviour.
268. The teaching in individual lessons in Key Stage 4 is of good quality, but pupils' coverage of work is unsatisfactory over an extended period of time. The low time allocated to teaching the subject in the classroom, the unsatisfactory schemes of work and the lack of resources all constrain teachers from covering the Agreed Syllabus appropriately. What is taught is taught well, but the overall content does not meet the requirements of the syllabus by the end of the key stage.
269. The previous inspection identified weaknesses in the school's provision for the subject in the sixth form. The school has not addressed this issue and still does not meet its statutory responsibility to ensure that the Agreed Syllabus is taught in the sixth form. Provision in Key Stage 4 was also identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. Although the time allocated to teaching it is still well below the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, the school has firm plans to increase the time allocated next academic year.

270. The recently appointed head of department has begun to review the content of what is taught in the classroom. In order to raise standards of attainment further, there is an urgent need to review schemes of work to comply with the Agreed Syllabus and then to improve procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in the light of its requirements. The school's poor provision of textbooks and poor access to IT also restrict pupils' progress.