

INSPECTION REPORT

RIDDLESDOWN HIGH SCHOOL

Purley, Surrey

LEA area: Croydon

Unique reference number: 101818

Headteacher: David Dibbs

Reporting inspector: George Knights
3268

Dates of inspection: 15th to 17th February 2000

Inspection number: 184189

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Honister Heights Purley Surrey
Postcode:	CR8 1EX
Telephone number:	0181 668 5136
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A J E Carter
Date of previous inspection:	December 1994

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Highly effective and efficient management at all levels ensures that the school is purposeful and focused on pupils' learning.

Each pupil is very well known and the individual needs of all pupils are fully provided for.

Very positive attitudes and relationships are fostered throughout the school community.

Excellent monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of its work help the school to improve.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Riddlesdown High School is a voluntary aided mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16. It has sixth form provision on site, administered in partnership with a neighbouring college. There are 1343 pupils on roll, making the school much larger than average. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Many live in three areas of South Croydon, relatively close to the school, but others travel from further afield. The school is heavily over-subscribed.

For several years the attainment of pupils on entry to the school has been broadly in line with the national average, though with fewer of the highest attaining pupils. The group of pupils currently in Year 11 entered the school with attainment below the national average. The pupils aged 11 to 14 in the school have attainment slightly above the national average.

Around 10 per cent of pupils have English as an additional language, which is above the national average, and around one fifth of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is well above average. Around 10 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is a little below the national average. Around one pupil in 10 is on the register of pupils with special educational needs and 12 pupils have statements of special educational needs. These figures are below national averages.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Riddlesdown High School is an excellent school. Exceptional leadership and management ensure that all pupils are educated to their highest potential. High standards result from demanding teaching. The school has many major strengths and only a few areas for further improvement. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Outstanding, visionary leadership has created a distinctive and very successful school which fully meets its stated aims.
- Standards are high and improving because high quality teaching enables pupils to learn very effectively.
- Highly effective and efficient management at all levels ensures that the school is purposeful and focused on pupils' learning.
- Each pupil is very well known and the individual needs of all pupils are fully provided for.
- Very positive attitudes and relationships are fostered throughout the school community.
- Excellent monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of its work help the school to improve.
- Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

What could be improved

- The contribution which each subject makes to the development of pupils' key learning skills across the curriculum.

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 improved considerably since the time of the previous inspection. Standards have risen steadily at both key stages and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are now much better. The school has made very good progress in those areas identified in the previous inspection report as requiring attention. In particular, teaching is now of much better quality and is consistently so throughout the school. The time allocation to subjects has been reviewed to secure a better overall balance. Achievement in mathematics has been improved and there is now better provision for lower ability pupils. Pupils' punctuality to lessons has improved considerably and very good use is now made of time in lessons. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation, including the building of

an 11 room technology building and a gymnasium and the development of a large library. Resource provision for design and technology has been improved. Health and safety issues in design and technology and science have been dealt with. Library provision has been improved considerably overall, though the stock in the fiction library needs to be improved still further. Great steps have been taken to improve information technology provision but more work remains to be done in terms of the development and application of information technology in subjects across the curriculum. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key stage 3 tests	B	C	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A	

At Key Stage 3, levels of attainment in English and science were well above the national average in 1999, while attainment in mathematics was above the national average. In all three subjects this represented an improvement on the previous year. When compared with schools for pupils from similar backgrounds, attainment in 1999 was well above the national average in English and science and above average in mathematics.

At Key Stage 4 GCSE results overall have been well above the national average in recent years. The number of pupils gaining 5 or more higher (A* to C) grades is well above the national average. Almost all pupils are entered for at least one GCSE examination and almost all gain at least five A* to G grades.

The overall attainment of pupils currently in the school suggests a continuation of this overall trend of improvement. Pupils currently in Year 11 entered the school with lower levels of prior attainment than previous groups of pupils but they are making good progress. Younger pupils in the school are achieving high standards in relation to their prior attainment. The school is likely to surpass its targets for attainment at the end of the current year.

There is little difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language are reaching good standards of work.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are highly motivated, with a real thirst for learning. Pupils want to achieve well, know what they need to do to improve and respond appropriately.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are consistently very well behaved, both in lessons and around the school. They have good levels of self-discipline.
Personal development and relationships	Opportunities for pupils' personal development in the school are very good. Relationships, both among pupils and between staff and pupils, are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance levels are above the national average and improving steadily. Unauthorised absence is low. Punctuality is very good.

Staff and pupils share a vision of why they are in the school, fostering a high commitment to learning and to development. Relationships are built upon mutual respect, tolerance and courtesy, creating an ethos in which pupils thrive.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good

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

Teachers provide challenging activities for all pupils. Very high expectations of what pupils can achieve play a significant part in helping pupils make very good progress in their learning. The use of on-going assessment to guide teachers' planning and to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve is also a major strength. Teaching was very good or excellent in 49 per cent of lessons seen and was good in a further 41 per cent. It was satisfactory in all other lessons observed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum, which is broad, balanced and relevant, is framed around the school's aims and practice is set within a secure theoretical framework.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The needs of individual pupils are well known and work is well matched to these needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The level of support is good, with a clear focus on meeting the needs of each individual so that they can take part in the full range of opportunities offered in the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Many opportunities to enhance moral and spiritual development are provided in assemblies, in tutor groups and in lessons. Many varied opportunities for work beyond the classroom support pupils' personal and cultural development, including a considerable programme of trips and visits.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has excellent arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic and personal development. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and for child protection are very good.

The faculty structure helps ensure a very good balance and breadth to the curriculum, which meets all statutory requirements. Extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and in dance, drama and music, enrich pupils' overall curriculum experiences and contribute well to many aspects of their development. A very good programme of support and guidance, related to both personal and academic development, helps pupils feel secure and enables them to make very good progress in all aspects of their lives at the school. The arrangements by which pupils are able to continue their studies in the sixth form on the school site have had a wholly beneficial effect on the school as a whole.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Both leadership and management are excellent. A clear vision shared by all members of the school community provides a secure base for developments. Delegation at all levels is very effective and there is a remarkably high and shared commitment to succeed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are fully involved in shaping the current and future direction of the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and of what needs to be done to take the school forward.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent arrangements are in place for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work. At all stages evaluation is followed by the necessary actions to bring about further improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good strategic use of the resources available to it, both in terms of staff, buildings and equipment.

Leadership of the school is excellent. All staff share the school's aims, which underpin all aspects of the school's work. There is an excellent organisational structure in the school, providing delegation and accountability in equal measure. The faculty structure provides an excellent framework for meeting both the academic and personal needs of each individual pupil. The emphasis throughout the school is on learning. Delegation leads to very efficient and effective management, with the school operating smoothly and in the interests of the pupils. Throughout all its work the school seeks to apply the principles of best value and this it does very effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like coming to the school very much. • The school has high expectations of pupils which helps them make good progress. • Teaching is good in the school. • Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress. • The school works closely with parents and encourages them to approach the school with suggestions or concerns. • The school is very well led and managed. • The school encourages pupils to develop as mature and responsible young people. • The school provides a wide range of activities for pupils outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better guidance for pupils in managing and organising homework.

Inspectors agree wholeheartedly with parents' positive comments. With regard to homework, many parents were satisfied with the amount of work set but a significant number felt that pupils received insufficient guidance from teachers and tutors about how to organise their homework tasks through the week. Here too inspectors agree with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Outstanding, visionary leadership has created a distinctive and very successful school which fully lives out its aims

- 1 The main reason for the continuing success of the school is the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher, working closely in partnership with the senior managers and governors. The headteacher has a clear vision of the sort of school that Riddlesdown should be and has become. In turn the team of deputy headteachers and faculty heads have worked enormously hard with other staff to ensure that everything the school does is in accordance with this vision. The result is a school in which staff and pupils are jointly committed to working together to ensure that pupils achieve their best. Particularly significant is the way in which pupils, when talking about their life in school, effectively describe the school's aims. In other words what the school intends is at the heart of what pupils acknowledge are its strengths. Teachers have very high expectations and consistently provide pupils with high quality learning experiences. The overall result is that pupils of all levels of attainment achieve very high standards both in tests and examinations and in many other aspects of their development.
- 2 The governing body is fully committed to the development of the school. A comprehensive range of committees ensures the full involvement of governors in decision making. Governors are linked to the five faculties in order to ensure that they have close contact with the day to day life of the school and this means that they are well informed about its work. A detailed induction programme for governors helps them quickly to become well informed about the school so that they can get involved with its work. Individual governor strengths are identified in order that they can be fully used in support of the development of the school. Annual reviews of the work of the governing body and a yearly governor conference all serve to ensure that the members of the governing body feel fully involved and are able to make a whole-hearted commitment to the school.
- 3 A clear, long term development plan shapes the general direction and the work of the school in improving standards. This plan, built around the aims of the school, sets out clear targets for development which are challenging but achievable. Annual management plans are used to guide the detailed work of the school, with specific sections for each faculty, and regular review of progress is central to ensuring well focused development. The long-term development plan would be even more effective if success criteria and resource implications were more clearly identified.

Standards are high and improving because high quality teaching enables pupils to learn very effectively

- 4 The standards achieved by pupils at the school are high and are well above the national averages for tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations. In the national tests for 14 year olds results have steadily improved in English in recent years while results for mathematics and science have fluctuated slightly but have remained above the national average. Girls have performed better than boys in national tests over the past four years. The results at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above the average for similar schools. These results are particularly creditable when

taking into account the fact that there are relatively fewer of the highest attaining pupils in these year groups.

- 5 Results in GCSE examinations are also well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. These standards have been maintained over many years with a steady improvement at a faster rate than nationally. As at Key Stage 3 girls' results are slightly better than those of boys. There is little variation in standards from subject to subject, though over the past three years results in science, sports studies and German have been slightly better than in other subjects. Relatively lower results have been achieved in art and design and in drama during this period. In the 1999 examinations three fifths of pupils obtained five or more higher (A* to C) grades with over a quarter obtaining 10 or more higher grades. The school ensures that almost all pupils are entered for GCSE examinations, which makes comparisons with national figures all the more admirable. Last year all pupils who were entered for GCSE gained a grade G or better in at least one subject and almost all obtained five or more A* to G grades.
- 6 The standard of work seen in lessons during the inspection was high, particularly in Key Stage 3. This reflects the commitment of staff to presenting challenging and stimulating lessons, to which pupils respond with enthusiasm and a keen desire to make good progress. The focus of all the school's work is on helping pupils to learn and there is a strong desire to enable pupils to achieve academic success within the context of a balanced curriculum.
- 7 Many good examples were observed of pupils being able to develop their research skills. Similarly, pupils develop good investigative skills, especially in science. When given the opportunity pupils are capable of considerable independence in their learning and work in many subjects is beginning to foster this still more. This is still not the case in all subjects, however.
- 8 Steps have been taken to improve pupils' reading skills, to considerable effect, and pupils' oral skills are well developed across the curriculum. Many examples were observed both in English and in a range of subjects of pupils talking fluently and animatedly about their work. The school is encouraging the development of pupils' writing skills across the curriculum and here too many examples of good work were seen, though progress here is less effective than in speaking and reading. Pupils are also given opportunities for the application of their numeracy skills in a range of subjects but work here is less advanced than in literacy. The school has taken a deliberate decision to teach information technology within the work of the technology faculty. This is successful in ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to learn the full range of skills within this subject and pupils' standards are good. Good progress has been made in developing contexts for this work in other subjects, for instance, by the inclusion of data logging in science and database work in history and geography. Such opportunities for the development of these skills in other subject contexts and for the application of them to support learning across the curriculum do not yet extend to all subjects of the curriculum. A group of staff is currently looking at how this provision could be improved further. Some good work is already being done. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where a computer programme was very effectively used to help pupils see that the sum of the interior angles of a polygon remain the same as the polygon changes shape and in a Year 10 business studies investigation related to fast food outlets.
- 9 Pupils are exhilarated by the high levels of personal progress they make. Teachers work very closely with pupils, using their on-going assessment of pupils' work to give their learners a clear idea of how well they are doing and how they can get better.

Pupils respond very well to the challenges implicit in this process and make great efforts, intellectually, physically and creatively, in search of higher levels of performance. Staff encourage a climate wherein pupils constantly seek to improve on their previous best and this leads to a high quality of work.

- 10 Teachers make a huge contribution to the success of pupils. They have worked enormously hard since the previous inspection to improve the quality of their work. All teachers know their subjects very well and planning is very thorough and effective both at departmental and lesson level. Assessment of pupils' performance, coupled with a high level of commitment to evaluation of the effectiveness of lessons, guides this planning. From these plans emerge lessons which are stimulating, challenging and well matched to the needs of the pupils. Teachers use a broad range of teaching strategies, matched to specific needs, to maintain the interest of the pupils, and levels of expectation of what pupils can achieve are high. In many lessons teachers share the objectives with their pupils and these objectives then provide a structure for a review of progress toward the end of lessons. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, often providing clear notes to pupils on how they can develop their work further. Pupils are encouraged to extend their studies beyond the classroom. Homework is set consistently and tasks are relevant to the work in lessons. Guidelines for how much work should be done are given, but occasionally pupils do not manage these tasks as well as they might. Subject teaching is supplemented with some very good work in tutor groups. Links are effectively made with subject teaching, as in a Year 9 tutor group where the teacher helped pupils make effective links with their work in social, religious and careers education as they prepared for a stimulating and effective exploration of aspects of racism. Tutor group time, generally, is very well used, with teachers providing stimulating and challenging tasks which further help in pupils' self-development. A significant and positive feature of these sessions is the explicit attention given to pupils' target setting.
- 11 Pupils are given opportunities to excel beyond the classroom. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities and events enriches pupils' experiences and gives them opportunities to display and develop their talents. Sporting activities are prominent, as are opportunities to perform in music, dance and drama productions. Across the curriculum, other activities enable pupils to pursue their interests and many pupils benefit from participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in stimulating trips and visits, often abroad. In all of these activities and events the focus is on the enjoyment which is associated with learning or developing skills, talents and abilities to the highest level that each individual can achieve.

Highly effective and efficient management at all levels ensures that the school is purposeful and focused on pupils' learning

- 12 The headteacher is committed to ensuring that all staff, whether teaching, offering support or working in administration, play a full part in helping achieve the school's stated aims and purposes. Staff, particularly faculty heads, are empowered and enabled to play a full part in shaping and developing the direction of the school. All staff understand their tasks well and are provided with very good opportunities to make a full contribution. Responsibilities are delegated very effectively and accountability through regular review is a key feature in ensuring the success of this management strategy. Alongside delegation and accountability an excellent programme of support for professional development ensures that staff are fully prepared to undertake their work.

- 13 A highly effective faculty structure is the cornerstone of the school's management system. The five faculties have high levels of autonomy, with faculty heads responsible for budgets, staff teams and the care of accommodation and resources where they work. Each faculty has two main roles. The first is to provide pupils with a range of curriculum experiences. The faculties have been established to work on different aspects of pupils' development, such as communication skills, human relations, technological skills, scientific development and the expressive arts. The second role of each faculty is to provide the pastoral care for a year group of pupils. This enables staff to work together for both curriculum and pupil support work, fostering a strong and effective team spirit.
- 14 In order to ensure that this high level of delegation is well co-ordinated, a range of cross-school groups meets regularly. Most important of these is the highly effective senior management team, formed by the headteacher, deputies and heads of faculties, which meets on a weekly basis. Here, an overview of the work of the school is undertaken, along with detailed discussion of developments in the school. The heads of faculty are central to ensuring in their daily meetings with their tutor teams that there is good information flow throughout the school. Regular, often daily, individual contacts between the headteacher and each member of the senior management team keep the headteacher well informed. The headteacher, ably assisted by his deputy heads, thus provides a powerful hub for all the work of the school.
- 15 All school documentation, which is thorough and characterised by its clarity, emphasises the main purpose of the school which is to ensure that all pupils achieve the highest standards of work and behaviour and have the opportunities to achieve excellence. Highly effective evaluation procedures ensure a culture of continuing development. It creates a climate where to ask questions about how well the school is doing has become second nature. The commitment of all staff to working together creates a co-operative energy which arises from exceptionally high levels of trust.
- 16 The school runs extremely smoothly on a day to day basis. Administration is excellent with staff performing their roles with courtesy, friendliness, commitment and high levels of efficiency. The management of resources, buildings, staff and finances are very effective, ensuring that pupils and teachers are able to work together in comfortable, pleasant surroundings and with the necessary resources. All of these factors have a direct and positive impact on pupils' learning and development.

Each pupil is very well known and the individual needs of all pupils are fully provided for

- 17 When pupils join the school they are placed as a year group within one of the five faculties and they remain there for the five years they are in the school. For many they will have the same tutor and the same head of faculty. This enables each pupil to be well known and provides a very strong framework by which good working relationships are developed between teachers and parents. Pupils are very positive about these arrangements, recognising the great benefits which emerge from such a system.
- 18 The tutor system is the key to the excellent arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic progress. All staff involved in teaching undertake regular assessments of the work and progress of pupils and the outcomes of these assessments are used to help plan lessons which cater for the specific needs of individual pupils. In addition, tutors collate information from each subject teacher so that they have a broad and

clear view of how well each pupil is progressing. Regular discussions with pupils help them to set targets for improving their work and progress on meeting these targets is also systematically reviewed. When pupils occasionally need additional support and encouragement in some aspect of their work or behaviour daily report sheets are provided for teachers to indicate pupils' responses on a lesson by lesson basis for later collation by tutors. Tutors and parents work closely together both through the annual cycle of reports and meetings and through individual contacts when particular needs arise. This partnership between teachers, tutors, pupils and parents is very strong and plays a very significant part in helping pupils produce high levels of achievement.

- 19 Arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic achievements and progress are complemented by very good procedures for reviewing the personal development of each pupil. Careful records are kept of pupils' achievements in the wide range of activities beyond the classroom, including sporting and musical activities and involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.
- 20 The curriculum provision for all pupils is broad and balanced. All pupils have equal access to all of the subjects on offer in the school and good advice is given to pupils as they enter Year 10 and select the courses they are to study for GCSE examinations. Alongside these examination subjects the school is careful to maintain additional courses which help to ensure that all pupils follow a rounded curriculum. Thus all pupils are able to continue to take part in a recreational physical education course. In addition, the social, religious and careers education, which operates for pupils throughout the school, offers many very good insights into aspects of personal development beyond what would be covered in other subjects. These very good learning experiences are all complemented by an excellent programme of activities in tutor periods and by assemblies which provide a very good focus on living harmoniously together within both the school and the wider community.
- 21 The needs of specific groups of pupils are well known and successfully met. Very detailed individual education plans are kept for pupils with special educational needs and the details within these are well known to teachers. These plans are reviewed regularly with the involvement of both parents and pupils. The arrangements for the support of these pupils is very well structured with a committed team of staff and support for these pupils is very effective. Similarly, work to support pupils with English as an additional language enables them take full part in their lessons and to make good progress. The school is aware of the needs of gifted and talented pupils and has established a group of staff to explore how these pupils can be helped to achieve their full potential. The school has recently welcomed and accommodated a number of Kosovan refugees and these pupils are being helped and encouraged by both class and support teachers.

Very positive attitudes and relationships are fostered throughout the school community

- 22 Throughout the school pupils adopt very positive attitudes to their work. They are highly motivated, they have a real thirst for learning and they want to achieve well. One significant factor in this desire for success is the very detailed, careful and consistent way in which pupils are helped by their teachers to focus on how well they are doing and on what specifically they need to do to improve still further. A second factor is the tremendous commitment of staff in providing both very well structured and stimulating lessons and giving freely of their time out of classrooms, either in

individual support for pupils needing help or in providing a wide ranging and stimulating programme of extra-curricular activities.

- 23 Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is very good. Pupils are self-disciplined, conducting themselves in a mature way and showing great respect for the framework of rules which operates. This framework is regarded as fair and helpful in setting clear guidelines, which pupils appreciate and respond well to. Pupils value the many opportunities provided for taking responsibility which contribute well to their personal development.
- 24 Relationships are excellent both among pupils and between pupil and teachers. Teachers set the tone by showing high levels of respect for pupils, which is reciprocated. Pupils co-operate well together, with many very good examples observed of girls and boys working together in lessons. Similarly, there is no racial tension and many tangible examples of high levels of collaboration between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
- 25 These positive attitudes and excellent relationships help to create a harmonious school community characterised by mature, self-disciplined, friendly and relaxed pupils working alongside a dedicated, caring and concerned staff who clearly enjoy their work. The overall result is a culture of commitment to high levels of achievement by all in each aspect of the school's life.

Excellent monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of its work help the school to improve

- 26 The school is very good at knowing how well it is doing and what needs to be improved further. Review is at the heart of management at all levels of the school's work. Arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school are excellent. The headteacher and his deputies maintain an effective overview of general progress and development, constantly referring back to the school's purposes to ensure that developments are moving the school in the right direction. They constantly challenge, question, probe and prompt to ensure that the agreed plans are being implemented. Governors too play a full part in this review process. In addition to reviewing the effectiveness of their work they regularly monitor progress on the development plan with senior staff. Alongside this, careful monitoring of the budget leads to an effective evaluation of the impact of their financial decisions.
- 27 The crucial aspect of the monitoring and review programme is, however, the work undertaken within each faculty. The work in different subject areas is regularly reviewed against tight, agreed criteria. Successes are identified together with points for improvement. Staff in that subject are then involved in developing action plans to bring about the necessary changes. Further monitoring of progress on these plans helps ensure that the necessary improvements take place. A very good example of this process is the work currently being undertaken within the expressive arts faculty to improve the teaching of music in the curriculum. This example highlights the willingness of senior staff where necessary to call upon the services of external support when the rate of improvement is not as fast as might be expected.
- 28 Alongside subject review teaching quality is regularly evaluated. Each member of staff is observed to agreed criteria about three times each term. Identified aspects in need of improvement are then worked on jointly between the teacher and the member of staff, usually the head of faculty, undertaking the review. This

programme has been central to bringing about the vast improvement in overall teaching quality in the school since the previous inspection.

- 29 The culture of regular review pervades all aspects of the school's work. There are regular checks to ensure that what is happening in the school is in line with the policies which have been agreed. Arrangements for a range of procedures such as monitoring of attendance are kept under regular scrutiny with, always, a perspective on 'how can we improve further?'

Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection

- 30 The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection in December 1994. Standards of attainment have improved steadily at both key stages. The school is increasingly popular and its popularity is enhanced by arrangements which have enabled pupils to continue their studies in the sixth form on the school site. The presence of this sixth form provision has been wholly positive both for staff and pupils, especially in providing a sharper focus for work in Key Stage 4 and in ensuring continuity into sixth form study.
- 31 Great improvements have been made to the buildings, most significantly in the development of a design and technology building and a range of modifications to other key areas of the school. Attendance levels have improved steadily directly as a result of close monitoring of absence and providing pupils with exciting opportunities to learn when they do attend. These improvements have helped raise standards in the school.
- 32 The response of the school to the key issues for action identified in the previous report has been very good. Most significant has been the exceptional improvement in the overall quality of teaching and in the greater consistency in this quality throughout the school. This is mainly a consequence of the development of a rigorous and comprehensive programme of evaluation of teaching, coupled to very good opportunities for professional development of teachers. The improvement in teaching is the central reason for the continued improvement in pupils' learning opportunities and in their success.
- 33 The balance of the curriculum has been kept under review and arrangements have been put in place to enable linguistically able pupils to study two modern foreign languages in Key Stage 4. Provision for mathematics has been improved, partly by adjustments to the time allocation and partly by changes in the scheme of work, coupled with a sharper focus on improving work leading up to examinations. As a result of these two measures pupils are able to follow a wider range of courses and attainment in mathematics has improved overall.
- 34 Good steps have been taken to improve levels of punctuality to lessons. The provision of warning bells coupled with a greater sense of urgency on the part of both teachers and pupils means that lessons now start on time. Considerable strides have been taken to improve resources in the design and technology faculty and health and safety procedures in science and design and technology have been well attended to. The main school library has been re-located to a central position in the school. It is well resourced and has been developed into a very effective study area. The stock in the fiction library housed in the back of an English classroom is still not extensive.

- 35 A cross-curricular group has been established to help improve the use of information technology in other subjects. Schemes of work have been reviewed in order to identify where information technology can be integrated and some subjects are providing contexts for teachers in the technology faculty to use in the much improved teaching of the full range of information technology skills. Further scope exists for extending the range of opportunities to apply these skills across the curriculum, particularly when pupils are engaged in increasingly independent work and enquiry, both at Key Stage 3 and in coursework for examinations, and for broadening the range of contexts in which they are taught. The school still does not provide pupils with a daily act of collective worship.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The contribution which each subject makes to the development of pupils' key learning skills across the curriculum

- 36 Considerable work has been undertaken to help pupils develop their literacy skills in all subjects across the curriculum. Pupils' reading skills have improved as a result of this attention. So too have pupils' oral skills. Pupils are articulate and confident speakers who are keen to explain and describe their work, often at considerable length. Much attention has been given to pupils' writing and spelling skills, both in English and in other subjects. Many classrooms, for example, have displays of key words and lower attaining pupils are provided with a range of prompts to help them shape what they want to write. The many examples of good work serve to highlight the fact that there is scope for an even greater contribution to be made to the development of literacy skills in all subjects.
- 37 A similar picture exists in the development of pupils' numeracy skills. The mathematics department is making good progress in helping pupils become more confident in their ability to handle numbers and to perform calculations. Work in several other subjects also provides opportunities for pupils to apply their numerical, graphical and data handling skills in a range of contexts. There is as yet no consistent approach to ensuring that teachers in all subjects are maximising the contribution to the development of these skills.
- 38 In both numeracy and literacy there are cross-faculty groups which are working hard and successfully to bring about further improvements in provision. There is also a cross-faculty group to co-ordinate the development of pupils' information technology skills. Concerned that pupils might not acquire a full range of information and communications technology skills, the school has brought all the teaching of basic information technology skills within the remit of the technology faculty and this move has been successful. Two aspects of provision now need further attention. The first of these is to ensure that teachers in other subjects fully exploit opportunities to use information technology to enhance learning in their subjects. The second is to ensure that teachers working in the technology faculty have a full range of contexts from other subjects to use in order to enrich their teaching of the basic skills.
- 39 The school has identified the need to provide all pupils with greater opportunities for the development of independence in their learning. Good examples of pupils undertaking independent research and investigation exist in several subjects and there is an agreement across all faculties to work to develop these further. The high level of pupil commitment to their learning indicates that they would take these opportunities in their stride and that their overall personal development would be enhanced, alongside an enrichment of their curriculum experiences.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40 Staff, supported by the governing body, should work together to build on the very good work already being undertaken in the development of a range of key skills. In particular, they should:

- build on the very good progress in the development of pupils' literacy skills by ensuring that all subjects provide as wide a range of opportunities as possible for pupils to develop and refine their reading, writing and speaking skills;
- explore how the development of pupils' numeracy skills can be enhanced by their application in an extended range of curriculum contexts;
- develop the provision for pupils to learn and apply their information technology skills by ensuring that all teachers use information technology where appropriate to support learning in their subjects and by providing a broad range of subject contexts for technology teachers to use in the development of these skills;
- build on the work already being undertaken to provide further opportunities for pupils to develop independence in their learning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
16	33	41	10	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1343	0*
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	131	

* - sixth form students in the school are not officially on the school's roll.

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	138	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	102

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	46

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	8.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.2

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	127	127	254

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	98	86	89
	Girls	119	97	100
	Total	217	183	189
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (65)	72 (64)	75 (66)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (32)	41 (33)	35 (35)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	99	64	91
	Girls	124	86	104
	Total	223	150	195
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89 (54)	60 (59)	78 (61)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	45 (22)	24 (31)	41 (37)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

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	123	124	247

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	63	115	118
	Girls	81	120	124
	Total	144	235	242
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	58 (57)	95 (97)	98 (100)
	National	46 (44)	91 (90)	96 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46.8 (46.6)
	National	37.8 (n/a)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	87
Black – African heritage	26
Black – other	2
Indian	53
Pakistani	17
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	11
White	1025
Any other minority ethnic group	51

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	5	1
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	2	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	7	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	80.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	492

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	21.0

Financial information

Financial year	1998 –99
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	£
Total income	3,546,268
Total expenditure	3,230,524
Expenditure per pupil	2,348
Balance brought forward from previous year	160,127
Balance carried forward to next year	475,871

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 65.9%

Number of questionnaires sent out	1343
Number of questionnaires returned	885

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	58	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	35	58	5	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	59	8	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	55	19	4	1
The teaching is good.	30	61	4	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	54	14	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	41	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	40	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	54	14	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	40	50	5	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	56	7	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	50	6	1	7

Other issues raised by parents

The 58 parents who attended the parents' meeting with inspectors confirmed the views expressed through the questionnaires. Around 20 per cent of questionnaires had additional comments attached, mainly expanding on the views expressed within the questionnaires. No significant additional points were raised.