

INSPECTION REPORT

ALCESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Alcester

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125770

Headteacher: Mr A W Shearn

Reporting inspector: Mr J Plumb
16930

Dates of inspection: 8th – 11th February 2000

Inspection number: 184251
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (Selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Birmingham Road
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Warwickshire

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr L Last

Date of previous inspection: December 1994

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time students:	739 (smaller than average)
Students with English as an additional language:	1 (0.13%) (well below the national average)
Students entitled to free school meals:	7 (0.94%) (well below the national average)
Students on the register of special educational needs:	28 (3.78%) (well below the national average)
Average number of students per teacher:	21 (broadly average)

The school has become a three-form entry as opposed to a two-form entry since the last inspection and so has increased in size. There has also been a very significant increase in numbers in the sixth form (339 students). Attainment on entry in Year 7 is above the national average. However, the attainment on entry to the sixth form is not typical of a Grammar School and many students (65 per cent from other schools) enter with four or less GCSE passes at grade C or above.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Alcester Grammar School is a very good school with a number of excellent features. Outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher creates a culture in which students are keen to learn. Challenging teaching for all students results in very good learning and high standards of achievement. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Outstanding leadership sets a clear direction for the school in raising standards.
- Standards are very high and often excellent because of the very high quality teaching.
- Excellent behaviour, attitudes and personal development leads to very good learning.
- The induction procedures for post-16 students are excellent.
- Excellent extra-curricular activities support and enrich a very broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.

What could be improved

- Students could achieve higher standards in design and technology (resistant materials) at Key Stage 4.
- The provision for religious education in Key Stage 4 and at post-16 could be improved.
- The accommodation for physical education could be improved.
- Teacher appraisal is not linked to performance management.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There have been very significant improvements since the school's last inspection in December 1994. GCSE and A-level results have improved very considerably since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and is now outstandingly good throughout the school. There has been very good progress in respect of all the areas for action identified in the last inspection. Improvements in the accommodation impact very positively on the

quality of education provided and the very good learning. However, the frustration of inadequate accommodation for physical education remains despite the energetic efforts of the headteacher and governors to do everything possible to address this problem. The school development plan is now a very good tool to manage change. The induction procedures for students entering the sixth form are excellent. Although significant improvements have been made in the provision of religious education the school is aware of the need for further development and so this is a priority on the school's plan. Under the leadership of an outstandingly good headteacher and governing body the capacity for further improvement is excellent.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16- and 18-year-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	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	B	B	A	N/a

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

Results in the national tests for 14-year-olds have been consistently very high in relation to the national average in English, mathematics and science over the last three years. Girls achieve better than boys but the gap narrowed in 1999. The national test results in 1999 were well above those in similar schools for English and science and closely matched with those of similar schools in mathematics. In 1998 the mathematics results were also well above the average for similar schools, the 'one-off blip' in 1999 being caused by less students achieving the higher Level 8. Standards seen in English, mathematics and science during the inspection were high.

GCSE results have shown a remarkable improvement since 1994 and are well above the national average and also well above the average for similar schools. Girls' results are very high with some girls achieving the best set of results in 1999 in the history of the school. Almost all subjects showed an improvement since 1998. All students achieved an A*-C grade in English, physics, German and food technology with 98 per cent achieving an A*-C grade in mathematics, biology, French and history. The lowest proportion of A*-C grades occurred in design and technology (resistant materials) but even in this subject results improved on 1998. In 1999 no student achieved less than 5 GCSE passes at A*-C and all bar two students achieved 9 passes at A*-C. The gap between girls and boys (6.4 points) is higher than it is nationally (5.3 points) but there were some exceptionally gifted girls in the 1998-1999 Year 11 cohort. In the 1999 Year 11 cohort three girls achieved 11 passes at A* three achieved 10 or more passes at A* and two gained 8 passes at A*. Ten girls achieved straight A/A* passes.

A/S- and A-level results were well above the national average in 1999 and this is an improvement on the last two years. In 1999 at A-level 26.7 per cent achieved an A grade, an increase of 14 per cent since 1997. In the same year 94.9 per cent achieved passes at grade

A-E, an increase of 4 per cent since 1997. Achievements in GNVQ Advanced Business and GNVQ Advanced Art and Design have been exceptionally good over the three years for which the courses have been running.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Throughout the school students have a thirst for learning. They respond enthusiastically to the exciting and stimulating teaching. Attitudes are excellent.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in and out of lessons is outstandingly good. Students take responsibility for their own behaviour. They respect each other.
Personal development and relationships	Students take responsibility for their own learning. Their personal development is enhanced through their involvement in raising funds for charity and they have a very good understanding of the importance of citizenship. Relationships among students and between students and teachers are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is excellent and contributes to the very good learning and high standards. Attendance is well above the national average for secondary schools because students enjoy coming to school to learn and to participate in a wide range of exciting extra-curricular activities.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good and often excellent	Very good and often excellent	Excellent and often quite inspirational

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

The teaching of English, mathematics and science in Key Stages 3 and 4 is consistently very good and often inspirational. Literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology skills are taught exceptionally well across all subjects. Teachers provide excellent challenging activities for students. Expectations are very high and teachers' excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm lead to students learning at a very good rate. Teachers' excellent use of questioning extends students' knowledge and helps them improve their understanding. A very significant strength in the teaching is the exceptionally good relationships between teachers and students that creates a secure learning environment in which students are prepared to risk failure and learn from their mistakes.

The very best teaching occurs in the sixth form. For example, in a Year 13 physics lesson

excellent subject knowledge combined with a very effective teaching methodology resulted in students learning Rayleigh's criteria at a depth of understanding well above course expectations. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory. It is at least good in a staggeringly high 96 per cent of lessons and at least very good in 71 per cent. In 20 per cent of lessons teaching is both excellent and inspirational. This very good and often inspirational teaching contributes to very good learning and very high standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	All students have access to an excellent curriculum with very considerable breadth and balance except for religious education in Key Stage 4 and at post-16. There have been exciting and successful GNVQ developments at post-16. Extra-curricular activities are outstandingly good.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Although provision for students with special educational needs is good because this is a very caring and supportive school, not all of the paperwork required to meet the needs of the Code of Practice for SEN is in place. Teachers do not have individual education plans in their teaching rooms to inform their short-term lesson planning.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	There is only one student with English as an additional language, an exchange student from Japan. The school has bought in language support to enable her to access the courses she studies.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Opportunities to promote citizenship through working together to raise money for charities are excellent.
How well the school cares for its students	Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are excellent. Teachers know the personalities of the students and plan their teaching to play to the students' strengths. Particular and careful attention is paid to any student who shows signs of disaffection and lack of motivation including visits to students' homes where necessary.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior managers provide outstanding leadership. They create an excellent ethos where all staff and students are valued and this results in very good learning and very high standards of achievement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive and set priorities to improve the quality of education for students. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities well except for ensuring provision for religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher, deputy headteachers, head of sixth form and governors have a very good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The programme of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is at an early stage of development, but in some departments such as mathematics it has already led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes excellent use of all the resources available to it. There is very careful long-term strategic planning. The governors and headteacher apply the principles of best value exceptionally well, for example in the building developments and catering contract.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The integrity of the headteacher who sets the school's tone and ethos by the quality of his values and attitudes. • The fact that there is so much to celebrate in the school and that stems from the headteacher. • The fact that communication with the school is excellent. • They consider that the quality of relationships within the school contribute to the very good learning and result in high standards of achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is concern about inadequate accommodation for physical education. • They would like to know whether the relative performance of boys and girls is rigorously monitored.

Inspection findings support parents' positive views of the school. The excellent ethos promotes very good learning and contributes to the very high standards achieved. The school monitors the relative performance of boys and girls rigorously and has introduced strategies to improve standards for boys. Parents are justified in their concern about the inadequate accommodation for physical education and the headteacher and governors are doing all that they can to address this unsatisfactory situation.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Outstanding leadership sets a clear direction for the school in raising standards

1. A very significant factor in the success of Alcester Grammar School is the outstanding leadership provided by the senior management team and the governing body, and especially by the headteacher. The headteacher brings a very clear vision of what sort of school Alcester Grammar should be. This ensures that all students achieve their very best. He has created a learning environment where all teachers use their excellent subject knowledge and love for learning to motivate students to do well. Teachers and students are committed to learning and have high expectations. The excellent relationships between teacher and student contribute very significantly to the very good learning and this results in high standards. This school is never complacent and always seeks to do better.
2. The governing body uses its committees very effectively to establish priorities and to set realistic and challenging targets for school improvement. The headteacher is open and consultative and he furnishes the governing body with quality information about the school so that they can make informed decisions to bring about improvements to the quality of education for all students.
3. The excellent ethos and family atmosphere contributes to the very high standards achieved. Teachers care about every individual student and provide teaching that challenges all of them and so enables them to do their very best.
4. The headteacher's excellent management, high expectations and sensitive professional relationships with staff and students set the standards for all within the school community to follow. He leads by example and presents an excellent role model of hard work and he pervades a sense of joy for learning. The school is very successful in enabling students to take responsibility for their own learning. It also enables them to develop into mature adults who achieve high academic standards. Alongside high academic achievement students also become very good citizens who care about others as much as about themselves.

Standards are very high and often excellent because of the very high quality teaching

5. The standards achieved by students at the school are very high, and are well above the national averages in both the national tests for 14-year-olds and in the GCSE results. In 1999 the A-level results were also well above the national average. In the national tests for 14-year-olds, results have been well above national averages in English, mathematics and science for the last three years. Girls have done better than boys. The national test results at age 14 in 1999 were well above those from similar schools in English and science and in line in mathematics. In 1998 the mathematics results were also well above similar schools, the 'blip' in 1999 being caused by fewer students achieving the higher Level 8.
6. GCSE examination results have improved very significantly since 1994 and the results for boys and girls in 1999 were well above the national average and also well above the average for similar schools. A-level results in 1999 were also well above the national average. The school is very successful in the number of students who achieve the

highest GCSE grades A* and A. Students performed less well in GCSE design and technology (resistant materials) than other subjects in 1999, but nonetheless the results were an improvement on 1998. The GNVQ results in the sixth form are exceptionally good and this reflects the very good teaching of the courses. In 1999 the success rate was 100 per cent and six out of eleven students achieved a distinction.

7. The standards of work observed in lessons during the inspection were also very high. This is because the very good and often excellent teaching challenges and motivates students to learn at a very good rate. Staff and governors have created a climate where all enjoy learning and also where students take increasing responsibility for their own learning. The excellent relationship between teachers and students contributes very significantly to the very high quality learning. The school's emphasis on promoting high achievement among boys has been effective in narrowing the gap in results in the national tests for 14-year-olds and also at A-level. However, the gap remained wide in the 1999 GCSE results but this partially reflects the fact that there were some very high achieving girls in the 1998–99 Year 11 cohort. Strategies such as girl/boy pairings in lessons have been introduced in an attempt to narrow the gap in achievement between girls and boys.
8. Students' literacy skills are excellent. They are confident readers for enjoyment and are able to research complex information using a wide range of texts in lessons and for homework. Students speak clearly and use a rich vocabulary to express themselves, as was the case in the Year 10 discussion on death in a religious education lesson. They are very fluent and accurate in their use of language and have an excellent grasp of the technical words used in the different subjects. The debating society makes a very significant contribution to the students' excellent speaking and listening skills. Writing is also of a very high standard, and there are examples of writing for a wide range of purposes. In a Year 12 English lesson on Shakespeare's play 'King Lear' students were enabled to make moral judgements on the character based on the Elizabethan concept of order. This allowed students to appreciate the subject of morality as a counterpoint to the text. They grasped the layers of complexities of meaning. In another English lesson on the differences between written and spoken language excellent questioning on the part of the teacher enabled students to make perceptive, analytical and extensive comments on the difference between written and spoken English. These students engaged successfully with comments such as how irony may be best expressed in written and spoken form. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson students used language very precisely to express: 'We are not saying a trapezium is a square but a square is a trapezium'. This was stated in a relaxed and humorous atmosphere that contributed very significantly to these students' very good learning on special types of quadrilaterals and also to an increased depth of learning and understanding of their definition and properties.
9. Students' numeracy and information and communications technology skills are also excellent, and are developed well across all subjects. In a Year 9 science lesson on breaking bonds students monitoring skills were developed. Excellent use is made of the internet to research information, for example at post-16 in geography to find out information about the permafrost zones. Students' measuring, weighing, predicting and data handling skills are developed well through science, geography and food technology.
10. The very good and often excellent teaching is the main reason why the school is so successful. Teachers love teaching and want every student to realise her/his full potential. The climate for learning is outstandingly good and contributes very significantly to the very high quality learning that results in high standards. Lessons are conducted at a very brisk pace and teachers have high expectations of what students will achieve.

Teaching focuses on helping students to make very good progress and extending their thinking. Students are constantly challenged through demanding and interesting activities. In a Year 7 music lesson the teacher used his extensive knowledge of music and teaching skills to encourage students to find out for themselves ways of changing the nature of the sounds they were making. Through guided discussion and very challenging questioning, students began to experiment by varying the pitch and rhythmic balance of their playing to achieve better balance of tonal colour. They also sectionalised (using instrumental solos or duets) to achieve a more interesting structure of sound to represent mood or feeling. This led to the start of understanding and appreciating the nature of the 'programme' of music at a standard well above that expected of an average 11-year-old.

11. Teachers' planning is excellent. In a Year 9 chemistry lesson on bond making and bond breaking the teacher planned a range of interesting experiments that successfully motivated all students to learn. The pace of the lesson was outstandingly good as the teacher set realistic but challenging deadlines for completing each task during the lesson. Very good evaluation sessions at the end of lessons help teachers to sum up precisely what students have learned, as for example in a Year 10 biology lesson on anaerobic respiration.
12. Teachers are very good at using discussion within groups of students to extend their skills and understanding. They enable students to gain confidence in addressing an audience, for example in a Year 7 history lesson students made presentations to the whole class on aspects of village life in Medieval England. Other students added sensible contributions to the presentations through sharing information that they had researched and they made very good gains in their learning by asking questions of the group that presented a particular aspect of life, such as farming, in a typical medieval village. This resulted in collaborative learning of a very high quality.
13. A very significant strength is the use teachers make of questioning to provoke thought and test out students' understanding. Questioning used in a Year 10 religious education lesson on death provoked very deep thinking and mature responses from students using wonderfully descriptive vocabulary and revealed their understanding of the use of euphemisms. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson the teacher used questions very skilfully to draw out the thread of the mathematical argument from students' answers. The effectiveness of teachers' questioning is based on their excellent knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and their commitment in translating these into very worthwhile opportunities for students. Teachers use humour and creative/imaginative techniques to inspire students to take an interest in their learning, for example in a Year 10 biology lesson when students were asked to raise their arms in the air to experience the building up of lactic acid in their muscles. Students' quest for knowledge is fuelled by the infectious enthusiasm teachers have for their subjects and their love of imparting their depth of knowledge to their students.
14. Students make very rapid gains in their learning at Alcester Grammar. They learn new skills and develop their understanding in lessons very well because of the interesting and demanding work they are given. The very good learning students make contributes to the very high standards of achievement throughout the school. They make very significant gains in their subject knowledge and understanding. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson they learnt the 'acid' test to confirm that the definition of a shape is correct because of the pragmatic advice given by the teacher. Students gain creative language and practical skills.
15. Students are very keen to succeed and make strenuous efforts to do so. In a Year 8

physical education lesson students improved their defence skills whilst playing a game of basketball through the continuous efforts and perseverance they made. Students' strong commitment to learning and their perseverance help them reach high standards.

16. Through excellent guidance given by teachers students gain their own understanding of what they need to do to improve their own work. In a Year 10 art lesson, students worked independently and were skilled at assessing their own work at various stages to decide how to move forward. Self-assessment is supported in almost all lessons by clear summing up/evaluation of the learning that has taken place at the end of the lessons. Teachers' written comments on students' work also help them to improve and they are always willing to answer students' questions at the beginning and end of the school day, a reflection of the excellent relationships and ethos within this very good school.

Excellent behaviour, attitudes and personal development leads to very good learning

17. The behaviour of students of all ages is excellent. About the school generally they are courteous and go out of their way to help visitors who are unfamiliar with the school's geography. Parents confirm this and say that it helps to establish a friendly environment. The students' commitment to the school and their involvement in its life is reflected in their very good attendance and the high numbers that participate in the many extra-curricular activities that are offered. They behave in a very mature way, particularly in the sixth form, and are sensitive to one another's views and feelings. They sustain high levels of concentration because teachers structure their lessons effectively and have high expectations. Their excellent behaviour makes a very significant contribution to their very good learning and the high standards achieved throughout the school. This was particularly evident in a mathematics lesson where students learned how to use algebraic equations to resolve trigonometry problems very efficiently because the pace of the lesson was sharp and the nature of the work challenging.
18. Students' attitudes are excellent. They are very positive in their approach to the school generally and to their work in particular. Relationships between teachers and students are of a very high quality and are the basis of every teacher's class management style and that leads to a situation of mutual and respectful equality, happily enjoyed by all. These outstandingly good relationships contribute to the very good and often excellent learning that takes place in lessons and this in turn results in very high standards of achievement. This is noticeable out of lessons as well. In the junior orchestra rehearsals, excellent relationships between staff and students contribute to the development of students' confidence and from that to their playing with greater enthusiasm and freedom. Students feel that they are valued as individuals and that teachers genuinely care about them.
19. Students are fully engaged by the work of their lessons. This is directly attributable to the level of class control, the challenge of the work and the interest engendered by their teachers' commitment, knowledge and enthusiasm. They respond well to interactive work with their teachers, exploring the nuances of text analysis in English literature, discussing the views of differing historians on the development of factional groups in Tudor England and in structured role play about shopping in France. Their strong mutual respect for peer performance is manifest in the way they discuss each other's work on tonal coloration in art and individual contributions to ensemble work in music.
20. They participate with enthusiasm in a very wide range of extra-curricular activities in many of which the students themselves play a major role in their organisation. 'Club'

officers are elected from amongst their numbers and this gives opportunities to develop leadership, management and inter-personal skills. Teachers' expectations are high and work set is challenging. The positive response of students to this indicates that they have accepted responsibility for their studies and will work collaboratively with their teachers. It is reflected in a very high level of 'reading around the subject' in history, their willingness to experiment in their painting and their articulation and fluency in explaining the technical problems of playing in public interactively with sound pedals, synthesisers and computer-generated sound. It is particularly apparent in the self-disciplined way a music class of Year 7 students could be relied upon to work in five different rooms in an organised and productive manner with the minimum of direct supervision.

The induction procedures for post-16 students are excellent

21. The large open access sixth form offers courses at A-level, AS-level and GNVQ. Although the school is selective in Years 7 to 11, its sixth form is not and consists of internal students (students from its own Year 11), and external students (65 per cent), who come from other schools in the area. The minimum admission requirement is four GCSE passes at grade C. It is not a rigidly applied standard, but it means that, although a substantial number of students have very high grades, a considerable number also have mostly, or even exclusively, lower grades of pass, which are not a strong qualification for A-level studies. The fact that students achieve overall rates of pass at the end of Year 13 that are significantly above the national average for all maintained schools is a compliment to the very high quality of the teaching which is provided by the school's very committed teachers.
22. Admission of both internal and external students into the sixth form follows a very well organised and structured procedure, at the heart of which lies a genuine concern for the individual student. Substantial consultation with teachers, parents and particularly the students themselves is the basis of the procedure to select their courses. Many students select the equivalent of four subjects and the timetable is constructed to reflect each student's choice. To supplement the course selection procedure there are a series of very supportive events. These include visits by sixth-form staff and former students to speak to prospective students at the four main feeder schools and a well organised and effectively structured two-day induction meeting at Alcester Grammar School, at which students are able to meet each other and attend subject taster sessions. The students regard these two days as extremely helpful as they are very informative and socially significant. The procedure is supported by advice from officers of the careers' service. Sixth-form tutors have all undertaken in-service training in advising on careers in order to be more helpful to students when completing their higher education applications and students find them very helpful, particularly in Year 12.
23. The induction procedure is excellent but it is under constant review, a reflection of a school that is never complacent and always looking to see how it can improve. It is evaluated from the students' standpoint through a questionnaire. The teachers' perspective of how successfully the transition from Key Stage 4 to post-16 education in each subject has been achieved, is also evaluated through a staff and student review undertaken at the end of the first term in Year 12. Results to date of both are very positive.

Excellent extra-curricular activities support and enrich a very broad, balanced and relevant curriculum

24. The curriculum is enriched and extended by a wide range of excellent and exciting extra-curricular activities, which are offered both at lunchtime and after school. Outstandingly good opportunities are provided daily for students to take part in a variety of sport and music activities. Many other activities take place on a weekly or termly basis, for example debating, drama productions, Christian Union and Young Enterprise. Many of these are organised and run by the students themselves. This involvement in running clubs contributes very significantly to students' personal development. The very good curriculum is broadened further with a variety of residential trips both in this country and abroad. Apart from many field trips and theatre visits for students throughout the school, the sixth form has the opportunity to visit European cities on an Art Culture visit. There are also exchanges with French and German schools, and a bi-annual ski trip for the lower school. In November, for those not on work experience or on a residential Outdoor Education visit, a block week of activities allows all students to take part in pursuits which extend their experiences further and broaden their knowledge. The rich programme of extra-curricular activities offered by the school makes an excellent contribution to students' very good learning and also encourages them to take on responsibility for themselves and others.
25. In this school the excellent range of extra-curricular activities is well supported by a dedicated and caring staff. The activities offered make this school very special by helping to support the outstandingly good ethos, as they contribute to excellent teamwork and help create a very happy school. The organisation of raising funds for charities by the students themselves as part of their extra-curricular activities is very impressive and develops their awareness of the importance of citizenship.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Students could achieve higher standards in design and technology (resistant materials) at Key Stage 4

26. Standards are not as high as they should be in resistant materials in Key Stage 4 because students' making skills are comparatively weak at the beginning of the key stage, and too little emphasis is given to improve them. The requirements of the GCSE are not systematically addressed. Students' work is not monitored often enough during the key stage, or with sufficient rigour to allow all students to make the greatest possible progress of which they are capable. The department does not make full use of the wide variety of skills the staff have to offer in order to promote students' learning more effectively.

The provision for religious education in Key Stage 4 and at post-16 could be improved

27. There is insufficient time allocated to religious education in Key Stage 4 and so the Programme of Study as required by the locally agreed syllabus cannot be delivered. The newly appointed head of department, in post since September 1999, has recognised this problem and has planned a solution from September 2000. She has started a GCSE short-course in Year 9 and will carry this through into Key Stage 4 so that these students will be accredited with a meaningful qualification at the end of the key stage. This strategy fits the flexible requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and so will ensure that the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education in Key Stage 4 will be met. However, it still means that the Year 11 cohort 2000–2001 will not

receive their entitlement to religious education and this is unsatisfactory. To raise the status of religious education in Key Stage 4 the head of department is also offering a full GCSE course from September 2000.

28. The creative and hardworking head of religious education is well supported by the senior management team in her plan to improve the credibility of the subject within the school. She introduced an A-level course in the sixth form from September 1999 and although there are only a small number of students taking the subject it is proving to be a successful course. The group of students following the A-level course at the outset joined the school from other schools at the start of the sixth form. However, recently a student who came up through the school from Year 7 has joined the A-level group. The provision of statutory religious education for post-16 students not following the A-level course is unsatisfactory. Historically the head of religious education has not had input into this course and that is part of the problem. The personal and social education (PSE) package in the sixth form does not give sufficient coverage of religious education and so the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for post-16 students are not met. The head of department for the subject has recognised this problem and is planning with the teacher responsible for the Post-16 PSE programme to improve the situation.
29. In order to fulfil her vision and realise her plan the head of religious education requires an additional religious education teacher from September 2000 and this is recognised by the headteacher and governing body.

The accommodation for physical education could be improved

30. The indoor facilities, for physical education, are limited in their scope and do not sufficiently support the full range of activities for students of both sexes as prescribed by the National Curriculum. Apart from a small fitness suite, which has limited curricular applications, the only significant accommodation facility is the gymnasium and its small extension.
31. Although the gymnasium is equipped suitably for most physical education activities, its use is restricted by the fact that it doubles up as the school hall. As such it is needed for assemblies and examinations, meetings where visiting speakers can address groups of more than thirty students and for drama productions and concerts. Of greater significance, however, is the volume of its use as a hall, which severely limits its use as a gymnasium to about half of the year. Further, when the hall is being used for examinations and meetings, the silence required also prohibits the use of its extension area for most activities. All the problems of limited gymnasium usage are exacerbated on every occasion that the weather is too bad for activities to take place outdoors on the fields or the hard play areas. Because of the dedicated work of the teachers, and very much to their credit, the teaching of physical education and games in the school is very good and the number of extra-curricular sporting activities is very high, despite the limitations caused by the unsatisfactory on-site accommodation arrangements.
32. The accommodation facilities are barely adequate for the delivery of all strands of the National Curriculum, for example dance. The high incidence of unavailability, exacerbated by inclement weather, means that there is insufficient time to deliver all of the strands of the National Curriculum to the depth desired by the physical education staff and indeed the management of the school. In order to improve the high standards of physical education teaching and to meet National Curriculum requirements at greater depth, provision of a sports hall is essential but funding such a building is a serious problem. The school governors and the headteacher have made strenuous efforts to

find a way forward and are currently working on a scheme, which may well help to resolve that funding problem and provide the school with the proper facilities it has lacked for so long.

Teacher appraisal is not linked to performance management

33. Teacher appraisal is in abeyance as the school awaits guidelines from the DfEE about performance management. The headteacher and governing body acknowledge that this is an unsatisfactory state of affairs and have identified the development of a new appraisal scheme as a priority on the school development plan. A governor with very considerable experience in performance management has been given a lead role in overseeing this sensitive and important initiative. He also has a lead responsibility in monitoring and evaluating the system once it is put in place. There is a documented plan showing the intention to link teacher appraisal with the school's business plan for Investor In People, for which the deputy headteacher pastoral has a lead responsibility. As soon as the governors receive guidelines from the DfEE on performance management they plan to weave the advice into their appraisal scheme.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

34. The school should now:

- i. Improve standards in design and technology (resistant materials) in Key Stage 4 by:
 - more systematically meeting the requirements of the GCSE examination;
 - monitoring students' progress through the key stage more frequently and more rigorously; and
 - making better use of the wide variety of skills staff have to offer within the department.
- ii. Improve the provision for religious education by:
 - introducing a GCSE short course in Key Stage 4;
 - introducing a GCSE full course as an option in Key Stage 4;
 - ensuring that there is planning in place to enable Post-16 students to access the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus; and
 - continue to build on and develop the recently introduced A-level course at post-16
- iii. Pursue the provision of discrete physical education accommodation.
- iv. Implement a teacher appraisal system that is closely linked to performance management in line with the new regulations as laid down by the government.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
20	51	24	4	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 students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	400	339
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	7	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	1	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	15	13

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

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.23
National comparative data	5.7

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.17
National comparative data	0.5

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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999(1998)	30(23)	31(41)	61(64)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	29(23)	30(23)	30(23)
	Girls	30(41)	30(41)	30(41)
	Total	59(64)	60(64)	60(64)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	97(100)	98(100)	98(100)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	89(95)	98(100)	92(100)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30(23)	30(23)	30(23)
	Girls	31(41)	31(41)	31(41)
	Total	61(64)	61(64)	61(64)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	100(100)	100(100)	100(100)
	National	64(61)	64(64)	60(61)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	92(97)	95(95)	98(98)
	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(1998)	31(25)	29(38)	60(63)

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	31(25)	31(25)	31(25)
	Girls	29(37)	29(38)	29(38)
	Total	60(62)	60(63)	60(63)
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	100(98.4)	100(100)	100(100)
	National	46.3(44)	90.7(90)	95.7(95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	70.5(66.4)
	National	37.8(36.8)

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

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 (1998)	68(55)	76(83)	144 (138)

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	17.5(16.5)	21.8(19.3)	19.9(18.3)	2.9(3.3)	4.3(3.0)	3.3(3.2)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9(16.5)	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	11	100
	National		82.5

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	1
Indian	4
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	709
Any other minority ethnic group	13

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	3	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	47.1
Number of students per qualified teacher	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	407.25

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	26.09
Key Stage 4	20.34

Financial information

Financial year	98/99
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	£
Total income	1,978,968
Total expenditure	1,970,126
Expenditure per student	2,880.30
Balance brought forward from previous year	43,508
Balance carried forward to next year	52,350

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	739
Number of questionnaires returned	267

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	32	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	31	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	45	1	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	50	6	0	3
The teaching is good.	62	37	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	37	4	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	19	0	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	85	14	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	45	2	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	79	20	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	30	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	39	3	0	4

Other issues raised by parents

Parents asked if the final report would influence the school's budget allocation, which they felt was insufficient. They also stated that there is so much to celebrate within the school and that this is due to the headteacher whom they all considered to be a person of integrity, who sets the school's tone and the ethos by the quality of his values and attitudes.