

INSPECTION REPORT

RUTLISH SCHOOL

Watery Lane, Merton

LEA area: Merton

Unique reference number: 102679

Headteacher: Karen Bastick-Styles

Reporting inspector: Mr Denis Pittman
16976

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th July 2001

Inspection number: 184368

Full 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 Controlled
Age range of students:	12 to 16
Gender of students:	Boys
School address:	Watery Lane Merton
Postcode:	SW20 9AD
Telephone number:	020 8542 1212
Fax number:	020 8544 0580
Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Elaine McCormack
Date of previous inspection:	6 th February 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16976	D Pittman	Registered inspector		<p>Characteristics of the school.</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements.</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9163	G Humphreys	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
23528	A Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	Assessment
11975	T McIntosh	Team inspector	English	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
21785	V Kerr	Team inspector	Science	
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography	
22458	G McGinn	Team inspector	History	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
13054	M Pennington	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Staffing

22491	L Small	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Design and technology	
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design Religious education	
12825	N Carr	Team inspector	English as an additional language Physical education	
31660	M Young	Team inspector	Music	Accommodation
15678	J Radford	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Rutlish is an inner city comprehensive school for boys from a diverse range of cultures. It is a Voluntary Controlled school. The school has closed an uneconomic sixth form since the last inspection. The school is part of a local education authority reorganisation programme to move to a two-tier system of primary and secondary schools. Attainment on entry has been below average, but the current profile of attainment indicates ability to be more in line with the national averages. Of the 793 boys on roll, above four per cent are refugees and 30 per cent have English as an additional language. Twenty-one per cent students are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. A total of 193 students have special educational needs, with 32 of them having statements of educational need, which is also above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Rutlish is a good school with some significant strengths. The outstanding leadership and management of the school promote a strong commitment to improvement and raising standards. Students make good progress, achieve well and have an enthusiasm for learning. The self-esteem of students is significantly raised through the work of the school. Relationships are good; there is a strong sense of community where everyone is valued. The school provides a caring, yet challenging environment, and encourages students' personal development. The quality of teaching is a strength; there are high expectations of achievement, which effectively promote students' learning. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The good progress made by students, and subsequent levels of achievement.
- Excellent leadership from the headteacher and the senior management team.
- Standards of teaching are good, and often very good.
- The quality of support and provision for students with special educational needs.
- The very effective support and care for all students, which build upon the very good relationships that exist within the school.
- Good opportunities for learning and personal development through the comprehensive personal and social education programme.

What could be improved

- Continue to raise standards of attainment in English and science in National Curriculum tests. GCSE performance, particularly in design and technology and modern foreign languages.
- Students' achievement and progress in science.
- The co-ordination of literacy and numeracy programmes.
- The planning of work to match the needs and abilities of all students.
- The greater consistency in marking, and ensuring the quality and relevance of homework tasks.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection the quality of education provided by the school went into serious decline, and reached a low point two and a half years ago. With the appointment of the

current headteacher at that time, there have been significant improvements in a number of areas. The quality of teaching has improved dramatically, and is now an emerging strength within the school. Standards of behaviour are better, a feature which is very positively commented upon by members of the immediate local community. The decline in standards of attainment has been halted; the recent 2001 National Curriculum test results show an improvement across the board in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. A detailed assessment policy has promoted greater coherence in the monitoring of students' work and progress. The school is making better use of targets to improve standards. Levels of attendance have improved. This has in part been in response to an improved curriculum for students of all abilities and the rigorous monitoring introduced. The culture of the school now reflects a greater respect for the individual, regardless of their ability or ethnic background. Students are more involved in planning, evaluate their work, and are encouraged to take on more responsibilities. The result is a more positive ethos within the school. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are well provided for, and have appropriate access to the curriculum. The Progress Centre is a very effective innovation and gives valuable support to students. Individual education plans are better used within departments. The school has developed an effective cycle of self-review. The quality of teaching is systematically monitored through lesson observation and evaluation. The introduction of performance management is achieving greater consistency and competency across the school. The school has a clear agenda for its development. It is very well placed to sustain the significant improvements it has made in a relatively short period of time. The school has already established, and continues to improve, its reputation within the local community.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum Tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
National Curriculum Tests	C	C	E	D
GCSE Examinations	D	E	D	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In 1998, the serious problems the school had in relation to its leadership and management and quality of educational provision, resulted in a significant number of parents removing their sons from the school. The ability profile of this group of students was radically altered and in part adversely affected the subsequent results in the National Curriculum tests in 2000.

In 2000, the overall attainment result in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests was well below the national average and below that for similar schools. In English and science attainment was well below the national average; it was below the expected standards in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, standards in English and science were also well below average but were above average in mathematics. The 2001 test results for the present Year 9 are approximately 10 percentage points better, in each of the core subjects, than in the previous year. This is a significant improvement; it reflects better standards of teaching and a more representative profile of pupil ability.

Overall, GCSE results were below the national average but were in line with similar schools. The attainment of students gaining five or more A* to C grades (33 per cent) was well below the national average. However, the number of students gaining five or more A* to G grades was below the national average and in line with comparable schools. The trend of improvement in GCSE performance is in line with the national picture. Relative to performance in other subjects there were above average standards in English language and literature, drama, history and mathematics. Standards in design and technology, modern foreign languages and ICT were significantly lower.

The school set an unrealistic target of 47 per cent for its GCSE performance at A* to C in 2000; subsequent results were well below this figure. The target for 2001 of 34 per cent is more appropriate and better reflects the potential of this cohort of students.

Standards seen in lessons are higher than the national test and examination results. The improvements in strategies for learning and the effective use of targets are as yet not reflected in national benchmark tests. At age 14 standards are above national expectations in mathematics, art and religious education. Attainment is in line with expectations for all other subjects apart from science and music where it is below. At the end of Year 11, attainment is above national expectations for the range of subjects as previously but also includes physical education; standards remain the same for nearly all other subjects. Attainment in music improves in Years 10 and 11 to become in line with expectations. However, attainment in lessons declines, in these later years, in science and modern foreign languages. Standards of literacy are generally improving; standards of reading are average but poor listening skills sometimes inhibit progress. Standards of numeracy are good in a range of subjects.

Students' progress is generally good in most subjects; it is very good in religious education and art. Progress is satisfactory in English, music, physical education and modern foreign languages. Achievement in science is unsatisfactory. The progress and achievements of students with special educational needs, refugees and those learning English as an additional language are good.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students enjoy school and demonstrate enthusiasm and high levels of interest in their work. They are proud of their school and keen to share their achievements with others.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students are polite and courteous to each other and towards adults. They are very aware of the impact that their actions can have on others.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between all members of the school community are very good. Students listen with respect to the opinions and ideas promoted by other people. They are very well prepared for the next phase of their education.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. Punctuality in the morning and throughout the day is satisfactory.

The behaviour in 'community' areas like the dining hall and assemblies is very good. Students are keen to take on responsibilities such as through the school council, a 'buddy' system of support for students with learning difficulties and the 'head boys' group. The instances of oppressive behaviour are rare.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. In lessons seen during the inspection, it was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of them. Teaching was very good or better in 35 per cent of lessons and good in 42 per cent. Four per cent of lessons were excellent and a similar proportion was unsatisfactory.

Good subject knowledge and high expectations of students are strong features of many lessons. Standards of teaching are good in most subjects. The quality of teaching in art and religious education is very good. The teaching of geography is generally satisfactory being better in Years 10 and 11. One in five lessons seen in science were unsatisfactory; these weaknesses were solely attributable to staff who are leaving the school. In most subjects the thoughtful planning of activities helps to sustain students' interest and involvement in their work. The effective management of students is particularly good in history, religious education, art and modern foreign languages. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily in most subjects but a greater coherence is needed in the teaching of these aspects.

Students' learning is predominantly good in most subjects. Their positive attitudes to learning ensure that they develop subject skills well. The interest and commitment shown in lessons produces good quality work, as in art, history, and design and technology. Overall, the school meets the needs of its students well, particularly those who require support for special educational needs and those students for whom English is an additional language.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The breadth and balance are appropriate to students' needs and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Statutory requirements are met, although National Curriculum requirements are not met in music through lack of ICT resources
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students are well supported in class and through withdrawal sessions to improve basic skills. Good extension to their courses through a skills and work-related programme. Short-term targets for individual education plans need to be more precise.

Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Effective use of specialist staff to give good support to both students and staff. A helpful 'buddy' system is used between early learners and more confident speakers.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. Moral and social development are very good. High expectations of behaviour and respect for the individual. Spiritual development is good. Daily life of the school clearly under-pinned by shared values but also reflects its multi-faith diversity. Cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	The support, guidance and welfare provided for students are very good. Teachers know and understand their students well. Students' academic performance is effectively monitored.

The links which the school has with parents are very good. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning. The school effectively involves parents when concerns over attendance or behaviour occur. The 'induction programme' for parents of new students is very good. The information provided for parents about their children's progress is also very good. Annual reports give a good indication of attainment and achievement.

The students' learning is effectively promoted through schemes of work of good quality in most subjects. There are good links with middle schools from which the students transfer. The personal and social education course is very good; it provides informative and challenging opportunities for discussion and study. The extra-curricular provision is generally satisfactory; sporting activities flourish but there are relatively few visits to theatres and museums. The school council encourages students to take responsibility and show initiative. The cross-curricular provision for ICT is improving but the absence of discrete lessons leads to some inconsistencies in the development of students' skills.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher is very effective and has clearly articulated educational values; she provides a clear vision and purpose for the school. Very good support is evident from the senior management staff, which promotes a good team ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors take a keen and informed interest in the school's work. They are appropriately involved in forward planning through their committee structure and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. Communication between the school and governors is open and productive. The school fails to comply fully with the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Procedures for evaluating performance are very effective. Monitoring programmes and subsequent reviews and support have improved teaching. The action taken to meet targets and the commitment to improvement are excellent.

The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources are efficiently deployed through detailed planning and a clear identification of educational priorities. New technology is used well to improve efficiency.
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The commitment and work of the pastoral teams are very good. The guidance and support provided make a significant contribution to the positive ethos existing in the school. The overall staffing provision is satisfactory. In most subjects, staff specialisms meet curricular requirements; the deployment of staff in design and technology and ICT has improved. The long-term difficulties of recruiting and retaining staff in science continue to have an impact on standards. The overall accommodation provision is satisfactory but in some areas there is insufficient display of students' work. Allocations for learning resources are satisfactory.

Financial planning is effective and relates well to the school's priorities for improvement. The school consults a range of people about financial matters and obtains resources at a competitive price. It uses them in the best possible way to meet its aims. The school is using becoming more efficient in using published data to enable comparison of its performance with that of other schools.

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 quality of teaching and the impact this is having on students' progress and attitudes towards learning. • The prompt and positive response by the headteacher and other staff to any issues raised by parents. • The high expectations promoted by teachers that are raising standards, particularly in mathematics, science and English. • The school's approach towards discipline and the resulting high standards of behaviour. • The quality of information provided, particularly with regard to students' progress. • The endeavours of the school to constantly improve the partnership with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistent use of homework to support learning. • A more interesting range of additional activities outside of lessons.

The inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents. The inspectors judged that the amount of homework set is satisfactory and provides adequate support for students' learning. The inspectors conclude that the range of additional activities during lunchtime and after school is satisfactory but that more 'cultural' visits could be arranged.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Standards of attainment should be viewed in the light of the following information. In 1998, the serious problems the school had in relation to its leadership and management and quality of educational provision, resulted in a significant number of parents removing their sons from the school. The ability profile of this group of students was radically altered and in part adversely affected the subsequent results in the National Curriculum tests in 2000. The low standards of teaching also had an adverse impact on GCSE performance during these years.
2. Overall standards of attainment on entry are below the national average. From the evidence produced in nationally recognised tests of ability, the profile of students has been improving very recently.
3. In 2000, the overall result in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests was well below the national average and below that for similar schools. In English and science attainment was well below the national average; it was below the expected standards in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, standards in English and science were also well below average but were above average in mathematics. The 2001 test results for the present Year 9 are approximately 10 percentage points better, in each of the core subjects, than in the previous year. This is a significant improvement; it reflects better standards of teaching and is more representative of current pupil achievement.
4. Overall GCSE results were below the national average but were in line with similar schools. The attainment of students gaining five or more A* to C grades (33 per cent) was well below the national average. However, the number of students gaining five or more A* to G grades was below the national average and in line with comparable schools. The trend of improvement in GCSE performance is in line with the national picture. Relative to performance in other subjects there were above average standards in English language and literature, drama, history and mathematics. Standards in design and technology, modern foreign languages and ICT were significantly lower.
5. The school set an unrealistic target of 47 per cent for its GCSE performance at A* to C in 2000; subsequent results were well below this figure. The target for 2001 of 34 per cent is more appropriate and better reflects the potential of this group of students.
6. Students' attainment in English is in line with national expectations at both key stages. Students, aged 14, have developed good speaking skills; they develop a wide vocabulary, and express themselves fluently. However, listening skills in general are unsatisfactory. Although most students are readily attentive, and concentrate appropriately, they do not listen carefully enough to teachers' explanations or to each other in general discussions. Standards of reading are satisfactory. Students are able to read aloud clearly and fluently. By the end of Year 9, attainment in writing is in line with expectations. In writing sports reports, many boys create lively images, by their effective use of descriptive language. At 16 years of age most students are confident and articulate in speech. Overall

standards of written work are satisfactory. The writing of higher attaining students is well structured, and they confidently use imaginative constructions. Levels of achievement by most students with special educational needs are satisfactory. The achievement of students for whom English is an additional language is good. Progress in both key stages, for all ability groups, is satisfactory.

7. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Standards of reading are average, and in most departments there are appropriate opportunities for students to read aloud. Most are able to cope with the demanding vocabulary, and understand the context of ideas in textbooks. Written work is neatly presented, and handwriting is generally clear. When given the opportunity, students make good use of ICT to improve the quality of their work, both in editing and in presentation. In English, science and physical education, poor listening skills inhibit progress in some tasks.
8. The standard of work seen in mathematics is above average by the end of Year 9. Students are able to grasp most concepts, and are able to describe these ideas well, as for example in Year 9, where students conducted an enquiry into right-angled triangles, and were able to explain the main principle of Pythagoras' Theorem. Numerical skills are good. Higher attaining students are able to use algebraic skills to solve a range of equations. Most students are able to make neat and accurate diagrams to support their understanding and learning. By the end of Year 11, the standard of work seen is above average. Numeracy and algebraic skills are effectively enhanced through this key stage. The level of achievement when handling statistical data is very good for groups of higher attaining students. Students take a systematic approach to investigative tasks and link their generalisations well to the physical problems. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, show an improvement in their numerical and spatial understanding. Achievement through both key stages is good.
9. The standard of numeracy in a number of subjects is good. In ICT lessons students make good use of their shape and space awareness when using programs to produce graphs. In modern foreign languages, students routinely use mental arithmetic in counting games, and for calculating bills. In geography lessons, there is an effective use of graphical skills to present data in a variety of ways. Students with special educational needs also make good progress in the development of their basic numeracy skills in a range of subjects.
10. By the end of Year 9 standards of attainment in science lessons are below average. Improved schemes of work are now enabling better experimental and investigative work, but there has been far too little practical work previously, and students lack the necessary skills to present and interpret the results of experiments properly, as for example in a Year 8 class, which was investigating onion cells. Achievement in Years 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is well below average. In Year 10, average and lower attaining students have a basic understanding of the effect of light in photosynthesis. Higher attaining students conduct effective experiments and are able to discuss their results well. However, overall achievement in both key stages is at present unsatisfactory.
11. Standards of attainment in religious education, physical education and art are above average. In all year groups the skills of art, particularly sketching and drawing, are good. Students use tone and texture particularly well. In Year 10, standards of work are high; students show a good understanding of composition and the quality

of three-dimensional work is impressive. In religious education lessons, students, aged 14, show a good knowledge and understanding of the major world religions. In their lessons they show an appreciation of the use of symbolism in religious practices and ceremonies. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is very good, and has been brought about by the introduction of specialist teaching into the school. In physical education by the end of Year 9, students have a good understanding of warm-up activities and can explain the action of different muscle groups. All groups of students show appropriate levels of confidence in a range of game skills, such as passing and throwing techniques. By the age of 16 students develop further their technical skills in field games. Standards in athletics are satisfactory.

12. Attainment in lessons is in line with national expectations for design and technology, history, geography and ICT. In Years 8 and 9, students develop a good range of practical skills in design and technology. However, their skills are less well developed in following a common process when they develop their own ideas. In Year 10, students show a wider range of investigation and research skills. ICT is well used to illustrate models for circuits. In history lessons, students have a satisfactory knowledge of key events, and understand chronology. Most are able to select and record evidence from several sources with accuracy. By the age of 16, the coursework of the best students contains examples of analytical writing.
13. In geography, Year 9 students are able to research information through books and computers, although atlases are not used well to support learning. Most students know about environmental issues, and understand the effects of economic development on people's lives. At age 16, students have a sound knowledge of physical geography. In ICT lessons, students show a competence in using desktop publishing software, spreadsheets and databases. Higher attaining students are able to explore the results of their calculations by varying the data when using spreadsheets. In Years 10 and 11, students demonstrate a good knowledge of the existing software in school, and the ability to sort data according to categories. Achievement in all these subjects is good at both key stages.
14. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment in music is below average, but improves to become in line with expectations at the end of Year 11. In modern foreign languages, attainment in Year 9 is in line with expectations, but is below average at the end of Year 11. In music lessons, Year 9 students are unable to identify notes on the stave, and translate them to the keyboard. However, achievement relative to their previous limited musical experience is satisfactory. In modern foreign languages, students' listening and speaking skills are strong. Most students can speak naturally and confidently in discussion with the teacher. They have an above average grasp of tense differences, and pronounce words well. In contrast, written work is not so well developed, and is below average overall. The best progress is being made in Year 8 German. In Year 10, students show an increasing self-confidence, and continue to develop their language skills. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.
15. Students with special educational needs usually attain the standards which their teachers expect of them, and sometimes do better than expected. The very successful and effective inclusion policy followed by the school is reflected in the good levels of achievement shown by students for whom English is an additional language. Good opportunities are developed for speaking and listening which involve students using English to gain attention, initiate exchanges and interact with others. Students are gaining a good awareness of the English language and are

provided with practical applications for a variety of writing styles which stimulate their imagination and a sense of the imaginary world to widen their range of words to express or elaborate their ideas. The analysis of these students' work shows that there are no significant issues emerging for them. Most students, including those who have been identified as gifted and talented, make good progress as they move through the school. Students with learning and behavioural difficulties make good progress in their withdrawal groups and in working towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans. In lessons they achieve well where work is carefully tailored to their needs and when they have well-focused support. However, some students do not achieve as well in science and modern foreign languages because work and classroom support is not effectively matched to requirements in large mixed ability groupings.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Students' attitudes towards school are very good. They enjoy school and demonstrate enthusiasm and high levels of interest in their work. They are proud of their school and keen to share their achievements with others. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting, and returned questionnaires, confirm that students enjoy school and have positive attitudes towards learning. They also express the view that behaviour is good and that they approve of the standards of discipline imposed by the school, particularly for new students when they start in Year 8.
17. When they start in Year 8 students quickly settle into school routines and respond positively to school expectations regarding discipline and learning attitudes. By Year 9 they are hard working and demonstrate a sense of purpose and determination to succeed. Positive learning attitudes, enthusiasm and high levels of interest were observed in both Years 8 and 9. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson students were relaxed and enjoyed the lesson but still sustained their concentration and effort and worked hard to achieve a good outcome. In art and history, students work well together and have good relationships with each other and the class teachers.
18. Year 9 students demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm in design and technology, enjoy modern foreign languages and in mathematics, engage in high quality discussion during a lesson that focused on the use of ICT. As students progress through the school their self-discipline, enthusiasm and interest in their work continue to develop. Year 10 students provide good examples of independent learning and enthusiasm in history and ICT. Students show high motivation in mathematics lessons, and in drama they exhibit a determination to improve their performing skills.
19. Although no lessons were observed during the inspection for Year 11, a group of students demonstrated very mature attitudes during an extra-curricular discussion with a visiting author on the understanding of characterisation through an extract of direct speech from a play. In an interview between an inspector and another group of Year 11 students they confirmed the high value they place on the quality of education and experience they receive during their time at the school.
20. Behaviour is very good. Students are polite and courteous to each other and towards adults. They hold doors open and stand aside to let others pass, and greet visitors to the school in a welcoming and confident way. Staff treat students with

respect and consideration and this is reflected in the confidence and maturity that students have in their relationships with others. The quality of relationships in the school is a real strength. Students have a very good understanding of the impact that their actions can have on others. They respect each other's values and beliefs. Students from different ethnic, historic and cultural backgrounds, some of whom have English as an additional language, are fully included in the life and work of the school. There is good racial harmony throughout the school.

21. There were no instances of bullying or harassment during the inspection. Neither students nor adults tolerate unacceptable behaviour. The good standards of behaviour and the expectation of freedom from bullying were confirmed during the interviews between inspectors and selected students from each year group. In the past year there have been 98 fixed period exclusions, involving 64 students, but these have not resulted in any permanent exclusions.
22. Students respond very well to the many opportunities for them to show initiative and take responsibility. Year 8 students elect their own pupil council. It maintains a pivotal role in ensuring that the newest and youngest students in the school are consulted in regard to their needs and have an effective communications channel to the senior management team. At the top end of the school there is a head boys group that is consulted over changes in school policy and works alongside staff to carry out projects to promote the school and raise its profile in the community.
23. The school operates an effective 'buddy' scheme for students who have English as an additional language. Within each year group students are encouraged to organise their own events and presentations. For example, during the inspection, Year 9 students were observed during a rehearsal of a self-prepared presentation on their achievements since joining the school, in front of an audience of teachers and other staff. Another group of Year 9 students conducted a debate on the environment during one lunch break, before an invited audience of staff and parents. All appropriate initiatives by students are welcomed and encouraged by the school.
24. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. Punctuality in the morning and throughout the day is also satisfactory. Learning attitudes, now very good, have improved since the last inspection when they were judged to be good. Behaviour has also improved since the last inspection when it was also judged to be good as compared to very good now. Overall very good attitudes to learning and behaviour make a positive contribution towards students' achievement. They develop as mature individuals who are well prepared for the next phase in their education and have well-established social and moral values.
25. Most students with special educational needs have positive attitudes to their work and to school life in general. They usually behave well and have good relationships with their teachers and fellow students. Students using the Progress Centre respond very well to the high quality of care which they receive from the team of staff working there.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The overall quality of teaching is good. This results in good learning in lessons. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons; it was very good or better in 35 per cent of them and good in 42 per cent. Four per cent of lessons

were excellent and a similar proportion was unsatisfactory. The standard of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now a strength of the school. There is a firm emphasis on adding variety to teaching methods and concentrating attention on how students learn.

27. Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects. This is used very well in art and design, modern foreign languages and English. In art, teachers are very skilled in showing students how to apply coloured techniques in a variety of media. In modern foreign languages, teachers have a very good command of the native language. Lessons are conducted through the spoken language, and students are required to add detail to their answers. English teachers use their subject knowledge to stimulate and enthuse students to be creative in their prose and poetry.
28. The teaching of basic skills is generally satisfactory. Students in Year 8 have received a weekly lesson dedicated to literacy. These lessons are devoted to grammatical concepts, which are not taught in relation to examples from texts. Frequently too many different ideas are incorporated into a single lesson, and students do not clearly understand the essential features of different parts or figures of speech. However, in other subjects students are given regularly opportunities to speak and to discuss ideas as for example in English, art, drama, music and religious education. Students frequently read aloud in lessons. Numeracy is taught well in geography lessons, where frequent use is made of graphs and charts to present information. In art and design, spatial concepts are taught effectively, and include illustrations of geometrical designs and models. Modern foreign language lessons frequently include counting and calculations in French or German.
29. Relatively few lessons have unsatisfactory features. The teaching of some science staff showed weaknesses in planning and in the management of students; this resulted in unsatisfactory learning. For example, learning objectives were not clearly identified, and the tasks set were not always sufficiently adapted to challenge and meet the needs of all students. Generally departments need to be more aware of adapting resources and teaching styles to address the full range of ability in their classes. In mathematics, the effectiveness of assessment procedures is unsatisfactory. Work marked by students is not monitored, and there are frequent instances of unrecorded grades. Homework often lacks suggestions to support learning, and poor work does not receive appropriate admonishment. Students are unclear about the marking criteria being used. In modern foreign languages, marking is not sufficiently informative about the standards students have reached, or how to progress through the National Curriculum levels. Information from assessments is not used sufficiently well in planning for the needs of individual students.
30. Detailed lesson planning is a good feature of many lessons, particularly in art and religious education. In religious education the effective structure of lessons enables students to learn the facts in order, and form opinions based on the knowledge and understanding gained. The lively and dynamic quality of all lessons captures students' interest, and promotes learning in the subject. In mathematics, lesson objectives are shared with students, which helps to maintain a focus for the lesson. In art lessons, work is planned in stages so that students build systematically on their skills. Lesson planning in design and technology is usually good but higher attaining students are not set sufficiently challenging tasks to extend their understanding. In geography there is a similar issue of a lack of planning to meet

the different requirements of students. In general, the clear structure of most lessons effectively supports the development of students' learning.

31. Teachers have high expectations of students' performance; staff usually make every effort to provide an environment which promotes success. In most subject lessons, teachers move briskly from one task to another. This ensures that students sustain their concentration. In modern foreign languages, the target language is used for most of the lesson to challenge the students and to make them think. In science most staff have a good understanding of the capabilities of students and gear the students' work appropriately to reflect these expectations. In history, teachers have high expectations of students' skills of historical analysis, which is shown in the range of sources students are required to use. In most subjects students try hard and produce good quality work relative to their ability level; learning proceeds at a good pace.
32. The active involvement of students helps to sustain interest. Most English lessons usually hold students' interest levels well but on occasions overlong explanations become counter-productive and essential points are missed by students. In mathematics, the best lessons include structured and challenging questions, which hold the students' attention, and develop understanding. In art, tasks are effectively chosen which engage students' interest and enable them to be successful. In geography there is a strong, practical fieldwork element which involves students in their own learning and links class study with real experience. The range of music studied from different countries stimulates the interest of students and leads to their enjoyment of lessons.
33. The management and control of students in lessons is generally good. The good relationships between students and staff help to create a positive climate for learning in most lessons. Staff use praise in an effective manner to raise students' self-esteem, and confidence in their abilities. In history lessons, classroom management and control are of a high standard and is built upon the foundation of good relationships. In modern foreign languages lessons, relationships are good and teachers know their students well. In design and technology, students have a clear understanding about the high expectations of standards of behaviour.
34. Time and limited resources are used well by most teachers. In English classes students use computers to improve their drafting skills but access to this technology is sometimes limited. However, more subjects are now using ICT effectively to extend students' experiences. For example, in physical education, students are able to simulate games and explore issues relating to health, fitness and performance. In mathematics, resources are used well but there is too much emphasis on the use of published worksheets which is de-motivating because of its repetitive nature. The effective use of visual aids such as photographs, video extracts, maps and graphs adds variety to the learning experience of students in geography.
35. The use of assessment in teaching shows some inconsistencies between subjects. In mathematics, whilst procedures for assessment are satisfactory, the monitoring of marking is weak. However, in art, all students get individual attention and assessment gives a systematic analysis of their skills. Marking in geography is regular with appropriate praise given for effort but there is insufficient comment as to how students can improve upon their performance. In ICT, a detailed assessment strategy has been introduced but currently does not give a complete profile of students' competencies.

36. The teaching for students for whom English is an additional language is good. Teachers have developed effective strategies, which ensure appropriate gains in English. This is helping students to achieve well in other subjects. Students are making worthwhile progress in number work, measurable progress in writing, and greater progress in speaking. These advances are raising the self-esteem of each individual pupil. The exercises prepared for students are sequential and the vocabulary checked for its complexity. Some lessons concentrate on texts that are impersonal and with language that is formal. Teachers use their own approaches to handling difficult vocabulary and stylistic variations and they have their own preferred ways with the structures. All are very effective and promote reading at differing levels of skill. Encouragement is given to the use of the students' first language where this is possible and beneficial. The use of language is promoting verbal problem solving, for example, initiating and taking account of others' views. Teachers include good 'life' contexts for counting, matching, measuring and mathematical language.
37. Students with special educational needs are generally well taught. Teachers are usually successful in matching their teaching styles and learning materials to students' requirements. Staff ensure that students know what they need to do to achieve well. This is especially true of teaching in some of the small group withdrawal lessons where the high expectations of work and behaviour and the good relationships between teachers and their students have a very positive impact on students' learning. Students have good opportunities for personal development through lesson activities. These activities are designed to improve their social skills such as through group discussions, working with older students in paired reading sessions and expressive art classes, and functioning as members of a team in physical education. Students are also given strong encouragement to develop their capacity for independent learning in such work as the football project in Year 9 and the individual spelling programme in Year 8.

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

38. The school provides a good curriculum, which is well suited to the differing needs of all its students. In Year 8 all students are taught in mixed ability groups. In Year 9 there is some re-organisation to accommodate subjects classes of broadly similar abilities. Music, art, drama and physical education continue to be taught in mixed ability groups. Overall, these groupings provide well for students' needs.
39. The time allocated to subjects is satisfactory in most subjects. However, although time allocated for French meets minimum recommendations, additional time would ensure better coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. Students are able to move into different groups if the results of regular assessments indicate this to be helpful to their future development. In Year 10, students have an appropriate range of choice and can study up to ten subjects at GCSE. They have the opportunity to begin German, and have a choice of electronics, resistant materials or graphics in design and technology. All students take a short course in religious education. A good provision is made for able students to take GCSE in statistics in Year 10.
40. The school has a clear policy for providing for students who have been identified as gifted and talented. Activities such as debates and talks from outside speakers give students good opportunities to hone their speaking and listening skills. However,

the policy is still in the early stages of implementation. The curriculum is accessible to all students on the special needs register and the school makes good provision for students who are in need of extra help. The policy for special educational needs is now being updated to meet forthcoming requirements in relation to the revised Code of Practice and recent legislation on inclusion. Lessons for small groups and activities such as reading in pairs give students effective opportunities to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Individual education plans ensure that students' particular needs are suitably identified and catered for. However, some targets are not always sufficiently precise to allow for effective monitoring. The school successfully promotes the inclusion of reluctant learners in Years 10 and 11 through a range of carefully planned courses. For example, the work experience project and the youth award scheme allow for creativity and flexibility in teaching and learning, and they also lead to appropriate accreditation.

41. The initiative for Work Related Learning has been effectively integrated into all subject areas. Its principal focus is to ensure clear direction within mainstream education for students who may become disaffected but, because it is featured in all subjects, it successfully avoids isolating and identifying any particular group of students. All subjects include in their teaching consideration of their relevance to the world of work, either by direct association, as in English, science, mathematics and geography, or by visits from outside speakers such as professional musicians and artists who are specialists in their field. The ASDAN project, which is directly related to challenges set by local businesses, is another important focus for students for whom a wholly academic curriculum is not appropriate. Good links have been established with local employers and with Merton College of Education. A small number of students attend work-related sessions in school hours. The direct result of these initiatives has been an improvement in attendance and a reduction in truancy and authorised absence figures, while the numbers of students permanently excluded has dropped to zero. This is being further developed through the Life Skills course, which expects to be supported by the Merton Business Education Partnership in the near future. With the introduction next year of a GNVQ course in art and design, there will be improved opportunities for qualifications for those students for whom GCSE, in every subject, is not appropriate.
42. The school is committed to providing equal opportunities for all its students and teaching and support staff. This commitment is evident in every aspect of the school's work. For example, sport is available to individual students irrespective of their level of ability. Each pupil has an opportunity to learn a musical instrument within the confines of the budget. There are no academic barriers to any pupil taking part in dance, drama or school trips. However, the lack of a school bus does place a limit on the number of activities in which the school would like to participate within physical education. Equal opportunity is central to the school's commitment to comprehensive education and the educational inclusion of all students and adults who work in the school. The education provided at the school caters for the needs of all students. There are good, workable policies and strategies to help students achieve as much as they can and derive maximum benefit from what the school provides.
43. There is good provision for students for whom English is an additional language. The specialist teacher, whose time is shared with another secondary school, devises a range of materials to improve communications between subject teachers and students. Individual help is provided if their knowledge of English is at an early

stage of development. Whenever possible a partner system is set up between an early learner and a more confident speaker, and the specialist teacher will also support individual students in particular lessons. Their progress is carefully tracked. Students are encouraged to take as an additional qualification the GCSE examination in their home language; the results are usually very successful.

44. Through its 'Enrichment and Enhancement' programme the school provides a range of alternative tasks for its gifted and talented students. These students are identified in all subjects. However, in those subjects set by ability, extension work within lessons is not always fully planned. The school provides a number of lunchtime activities for these and other students and there is an increasing programme of extra-curricular activities, field trips and theatre visits which further raises the challenge for students.
45. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) which includes education about substance abuse, careers and sex education. Emphasis is laid on students making choices and exercising responsibility without succumbing to pressure from outside influences.
46. Provision for careers education is good. The school has good contact with the careers service of the local authority, and students have individual interviews in Year 10. Some students who appear to be displaying signs of disaffection are also put into contact with careers advisers in Year 9. There are two weeks of work experience for students in Year 10. Students visit local colleges for 'taster' sessions and an evening of advice and information presented by Merton College of Further Education takes place annually. Representatives from the armed services give talks on careers in the services, and members from the local business community and from more specialist fields, such as art, drama and sport, give talks on their employment experiences. The school library houses a good collection of information on a wide variety of career options, and students are encouraged to research these further, using the Internet.
47. The good links with the local community offer a range of opportunities to broaden students' experience. In addition to the contributions made by representatives of local businesses there is support for the Young Enterprise initiative. During the week of the inspection the priest from one of the local churches conducted an assembly for students of all faiths. Parents become involved in the school's paired reading scheme and support students' learning in school in other ways. A small group of parents has formed the 'Friends of Rutlish' association which promotes fund-raising activities.
48. In the previous inspection, the curriculum fully met statutory requirements except in the time allocation for religious education for students in Years 10 and 11. In addition, the curriculum guidance was not followed in physical education and ICT was not used or assessed in all subjects. The content and position of the programme for PSHE was ambiguous, and the contribution from cross-curricular themes and skills needed clarification. At that time, the school day consisted of four periods; this arrangement was not effective in teaching the curriculum across all key stages.
49. The key issue to ensure that the requirements for teaching physical education are met has been resolved, and there is now sufficient time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11. In ICT, although this is now an integral part of

schemes of work in all subjects, assessment procedures are at an early stage of development. The programme for PSHE has a dedicated time on the timetable, and the school day has been efficiently re-organised into five one-hour lessons with a shortened afternoon period.

50. The school's principal concern is to secure the position of ICT. Currently this is not taught as a discrete subject, and although all students have their basic entitlement this subject remains a priority for improvement. The lack of ICT equipment in music means that this aspect of the students' course cannot be fully covered; it is a disadvantage for GCSE students who do not have the appropriate computer software at home.
51. Overall, the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has taken steps to improve this aspect since the last inspection: better organised assemblies and more frequent opportunities for reflection are promoting spiritual development, and there are far more opportunities for students to assume responsibility which helps their moral and social development.
52. Students' spiritual development is good overall. The school has a clear school policy on collective worship and assemblies. These now include an act of worship or moments for reflection, often with outside speakers such as the local vicar and community police officer. A prayer room is set aside for Muslim students. The annual Commemoration, Remembrance and Carol Services are given high priority in raising students' spiritual awareness. A well-structured programme of thought for the week acts as a stimulus for form tutors when their class is not attending assembly. Opportunities are provided for reflection on moral and social issues such as the law and child poverty. Though good examples of encouraging awareness of morals and values take place, the quality of the work varies. This is mainly because of the inconsistent implementation of these arrangements. The school still does not meet fully the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
53. The strong moral tone promoted by the school encourages students to respect each other's views, feelings and values. More departments than previously now make a positive contribution to spiritual development. In art, Year 9 students reflected on how to express their own feelings on conflict in a creative way when examining Picasso's 'Guernica'. In history, serious discussion took place in Year 9 on the killing of the Jews in Auschwitz. Year 8 students in English used ghost stories to maturely reflect on the notion of revenge. Religious education lessons provide good opportunities to consider the existence of God and the purpose of life. Contributions from nearly all other departments are generally satisfactory.
54. The provision for moral education is very good. Students have very good role models provided by the many staff and adults they meet in school. Most lessons provide a secure and consistent teaching environment in which students behave in a calm, orderly manner. Teachers constantly remind students of the behaviour required and set high expectations. Students therefore have a strong sense of right and wrong and generally respect and value each other. The school has clear and successfully implemented policies on anti-bullying and behaviour management, and effectively encourages and celebrates achievement through a popular merit system. There are strong and sympathetic arrangements for caring for and monitoring the students' progress. These policies help to raise their self-esteem and confidence. The many opportunities now provided for students to take initiative and

responsibility also build up their self-respect and maturity, which in turn promote self-discipline and good behaviour.

55. All departments provide a good moral structure for the students and aspects of the curriculum promote decency and moral values. In games, for instance, students are strongly encouraged to abide by the rules, play fairly and accept the official's decisions. In geography, they consider the consequence of man's actions on the environment. Year 9 students in a history lesson discussed the justification for dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Students in a Year 9 PSHE class maturely offered solutions to potential problems they might meet in Year 10.
56. Contributions to students' social development are very good. A determined effort has been made, since the last inspection, to increase the opportunities for students to take responsibility and to be more involved in the day-to-day running of the school. The school's well-planned 'Enrichment and Enhancement' programme provides a wide range of opportunities for extra activities, many involving responsibilities. An effective council for students has been formed; older students act as mentors and reading partners for younger students; a head boys leadership team has shown strong initiative in areas such as sport, environment, organising charity events and successfully representing the school at public functions. The 'Able Pupil Enrichment project' fosters confidence and raises horizons by encouraging higher attaining students to organise balloon debates and quizzes with other schools. Students' confidence and involvement in a breadth of experiences are promoted through the annual Year 9 Industry Day, the whole-school Activities Day and the regular Year 8 weekend residential visits to Hindleap Warren. Social skills of speaking and listening and co-operation are encouraged through paired and group work in many subjects, such as geography, history, physical education, modern foreign languages, art and music. They are more limited in English and mathematics. The very well organised and well-taught PSHE programme emphasises the development of social skills and strong awareness of social problems. Students clearly enjoy the subject and take it seriously.
57. The range of activities to raise students' cultural awareness is satisfactory. Students experience their own culture through reading a range of literature. Regular visits by Will Self, the writer, encourage this. However, the English department arranges few theatre trips. Good opportunities to study British culture occur through the history curriculum, though there are no visits to historical sites or museums. Cultural visits in art and music are also limited, though students' artwork is well displayed and they have painted murals in local stations. Tom Robinson, the musician, has been a regular visitor to the school. Awareness of multi-cultural aspects is stronger. The German department has a visit to Germany and e-mail links with German departments in many parts of the world. However, there are no exchanges with foreign schools. Students study the Black Peoples of America in Year 9 in history. Geography students study Japan in Year 9 and Kenya in Year 8. Photographs of international sports-people celebrate the 'rainbow' nature of sport. The PSHE programme has a multi-cultural element, enhanced by the students' contact with a Zimbabwean school. These good influences and the strong moral tone generally within the school encourage a calm atmosphere of racial harmony where the beliefs and customs of all are clearly respected.
58. Newly arrived foreign students and refugees are well supported. Activities are provided to give them the widest possible opportunity to participate in a social and learning context and become confident users of English. A club meets at lunchtimes

to channel support for their learning. It is an effective collaborative approach, which is proving responsive to students' language needs and abilities. Students themselves contribute materials such as games from their heritage country. Teachers go round the clubroom joining in the activities, helping students having difficulty with the English language or supporting the less confident.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

59. The support guidance and welfare provided by the school for students are good. Teachers know and understand their students well and the school provides support for a wide range of individual needs through an effective pastoral system. The procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are good.
60. Parents attending the pre-inspection meeting, and those who returned questionnaires, confirm that the care and support for students has improved significantly over recent years. They consider that students are now highly motivated and well supported by the school through an improving range of opportunities for them to learn and develop in different contexts. Examples provided include introducing celebrities, such as authors and musicians, into class activities, weekend geography field trips that develop the social skills of Year 8 students, the special 'Activities Day' for Year 10 students and the range of extension activities provided for high achievers.
61. Child protection procedures are effective and all members of staff are well trained and alert to the needs of students. An assistant headteacher is the child protection co-ordinator and there are well-established links with outside agencies served by the school.
62. Health and safety procedures are diligent and include good arrangements for first aid. A fire incident, during the inspection, required the evacuation of the school and this was conducted in a calm and well-controlled manner. The behaviour and response by students to the emergency were very good. Some procedural weaknesses identified during the evacuation were drawn to the attention of the school. Health and safety issues raised during the last inspection have all been appropriately dealt with.
63. A very good quality of personal, social and health education is provided through a timetabled programme and the science and religious education curriculum. The programme has a very good scheme of work taught well by tutors to their own groups. Good presentations are given to year groups from external specialists including the community police and representatives of the youth offending team. The quality and consistency of the PSHE programme have improved significantly since the last inspection.
64. The policies and procedures for promoting and monitoring behaviour are very good. The management of behaviour is consistent throughout the school and any incidents of unacceptable behaviour, such as bullying or harassment, are dealt with effectively in a positive and sensitive way. The policy of rewarding and celebrating achievement, good attitudes and behaviour effectively encourages students. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity through its curriculum and through recreational and welfare activities.

65. The procedures for promoting and monitoring attendance and punctuality are good. The school works closely with the allocated education welfare officer and has rigorous procedures for following up on unexpected absence, poor punctuality and any attempted truancy. Due to these endeavours attendance is now in line with the national average; this is an improvement over recent years.
66. Procedures for monitoring and assessing students' progress are good. The school has a detailed school assessment, recording and reporting policy. Effective systems are in place to collect data about students' achievements. The school tests all students in Year 8 on entry to establish standards they have reached. This information is shared with departments to assist in their planning and organisation of students' learning. Students conduct a self-assessment of their progress made against targets, which were established in their last meeting with their tutor. Most students have tangible signs of progress. Information regarding students' levels of attainment and achievement is given to parents through written reports and consultation evenings. Once students commence their GCSE courses in Year 10, target grades are agreed and actual performance in relation to target grades is monitored regularly. Pupil interviews indicate the recent introduction of the policy has been helpful in boosting the self-esteem of the students and contributed to improved examination results.
67. The school monitors the achievement of students with special educational needs and those who learning English as an additional language in a very effective way. The systems for identifying and monitoring students in need of extra help are very good. Assessment information is very well used to guide planning, as for example in identifying issues about reading and the spelling workshop. Individual education plans give clear information on support arrangements and the planning learning activities. However, not all subject departments have suitable resources for students with special educational needs. Support staff know students well; monitoring diaries provide a detailed record of students' academic and personal development. The good relationships, which they build up, make an important contribution towards students' general well-being.
68. The use of assessment data to guide curricular planning is good. At a whole-school level, a Progress Centre has been established where lower attaining students' performance is tracked and a 'needs analysis' identified, resulting in alternative curricular programmes being provided. For example, 'Springboard' mathematics has been introduced to help Year 8 lower attaining students. Pupil groupings are reviewed regularly at both key stages. In Years 10 and 11 an alternative to combined science has been successfully introduced for a group of lower attaining students. Assessment data is effectively used as a focus for academic tutoring days, and procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are very good.
69. At department level, assessment data is available to subjects, but its use in informing classroom practice is not of a consistently high quality, principally because of the significant staff changes in some subject areas. Assessment is good in art and design, religious education, ICT, physical education, geography and special educational needs. In these subjects, data is used to track students' progress, and students are given relevant information about the standards they are achieving. In other subjects, such as science, the marking of students' work is variable and the collection and use of assessment data to identify students' strengths and weaknesses are at an early stage of development. In music, assessment

procedures are imprecise; students do not have a consistent picture of their attainment levels.

70. The previous inspection report identified assessment as insufficiently related to National Curriculum attainment targets. There were also inconsistencies in marking and recording assessment data. The introduction of an assessment, recording and reporting policy has addressed some of these issues with all students being well informed of their levels of attainment at half-termly intervals. The lack of consistency in marking and inadequate comments on how to improve performance remain as an issue for some departments.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

71. The consensus view of parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting, and returned questionnaires, is that the quality of teaching is good and has a positive impact on students' progress and their attitudes towards learning. They appreciate the prompt and positive response by the headteacher and other staff to any issues raised and the high expectations of teachers that are helping to raise standards, particularly in mathematics, science and English. They feel that the school's approach towards discipline results in high standards of behaviour and that the quality of information provided, particularly with regard to students' progress, is very good. The parents expressed the view that the school is constantly endeavouring to improve the partnership with parents. The inspection team agrees with these positive views.
72. A few parents stated that they would like the school to set more homework and provide a more interesting range of additional activities outside of lessons. The inspectors judged that the amount of homework set in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory and provides adequate support for students' learning. In Years 10 and 11 students are required to complete coursework assignments in addition to homework and together this is a full and structured programme that supports the GCSE examinations. The inspectors conclude that the range of additional activities during lunchtime and after school is satisfactory and provides adequate opportunities for students to extend their interest in academic, sporting and social activities.
73. The school works hard to continue to develop a close working partnership with parents. The home school agreement clearly defines the expectations of the school, the parents and the students. The school provides regular information about the curriculum and additional activities. There is a very good induction programme for new parents and students. New parents are invited to meet with the tutors early during the first term. There are regular consultation evenings when parents can discuss their children's progress with the subject teachers and tutors. In addition there are review meetings for students and their parents to enable both to participate in the selection of GCSE subject options, and to discuss work experience and transfer to sixth form colleges.
74. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. Annual progress reports provide an indication of the National Curriculum levels being achieved by students together with clear targets for future attainment. Year 11 students receive a progress report in the January of their final year that provides the grades achieved in the mock GCSE examinations, predicted grades for the final examination and specific guidelines as to what areas need to be improved if the predicted grades are higher. Through the combination of pupil mentoring, tutor support and consultation

evenings with both students and parents, everyone involved in the teaching and learning partnership should have a clear understanding of what is expected and what can be achieved.

75. Overall the effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good and the contribution that they make to their children's learning, and their involvement in the work of the school are good. The partnership between the school and parents is now stronger than it was at the last inspection and relationships have improved significantly over the last two years.
76. The school has a good partnership with parents of students with special educational needs and those parents from ethnic minority backgrounds. Parents of new students are visited before their children come into the school, and many parents contribute their own observations on their children's achievement for the formal reviews of progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

77. The quality of leadership and management in the school is now excellent. Since the last inspection the quality of education provided by the school went into serious decline, and reached a low point two and a half years ago. The appointment of the current headteacher at that time and changes in the senior management team have led to significant improvements in a number of areas within the school. The effectiveness and quality of teaching have improved dramatically. Standards of behaviour are better, a feature which is very positively commented upon by both parents and local residents. The decline in standards of attainment has been halted; the recent 2001 National Curriculum test results show an improvement in standards in English, mathematics and science. A revised assessment policy now promotes a more effective monitoring of students' work and progress. Subject data on students are used well to establish targets to raise standards. Levels of attendance have improved. The culture of the school now reflects a greater respect for the individual, regardless of their ability or ethnic background.
78. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is fully committed to raising standards in the school. Her enthusiasm and vision have established a clear direction for the school's work and the identification of its priorities for development. Central to her approaches to management are the principles of commitment, collaboration and delegation of appropriate responsibilities. To this end a very good team spirit has been created at all levels of its activities. The headteacher has worked hard to establish good relationships and equality of opportunity. Other members of the senior management team, whose individual skills complement those of their colleagues, support the headteacher very well. The senior management team are very effective in monitoring and supporting the work of the departments for which they have a designated responsibility. The management structure operates well and enables strengths to be recognised and areas for development and improvement to be identified.
79. The overall quality of leadership at middle management level is good. It is particularly strong and effective in mathematics, art, religious education, special educational needs and geography. The management of the science department has improved significantly. Middle managers have established a clear direction for their subjects and efficiently monitor the work of their departments. The quality of documentation in departments is good. ICT is used variably within departments,

and requires a more consistent approach in English, science, history and music. The implementation of literacy and numeracy strategies needs a sharper focus within departments. The very effective pastoral staff successfully promote the school's objectives to support and guide students' personal development. The commitment by all staff to improve standards within the school is excellent and clearly evident

80. The governing body has a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and supports the school well. It takes an active role in monitoring the work of the school through its various committees. It has an effective programme of subject reviews. Governors work well with the school's management team in identifying areas for development, setting targets and monitoring progress towards those targets. However, the governing body does not have its own 'development plan' to identify training needs. The governing body have been reactive to circumstances rather than taking the initiative on issues. Governors have made an appropriate provision for working groups to take responsibility for special educational needs and performance management. The governing body effectively fulfils its statutory responsibilities for the curriculum. However, the school does not fully comply with the requirements for a daily act of worship. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents have improved, and now contain all the required statutory information.
81. The Progress Centre is very well led and managed with excellent educational direction. The improvement since the last inspection has been very good indeed, as exemplified in the appointment of a full time co-ordinator for special educational needs and the setting up of the centre itself. Governors and staff have a shared commitment to the welfare of all students and work very effectively together. Despite the short time in which the head of the centre and the present co-ordinator for special educational needs have been in post, they have been very successful in building up a strong team spirit among the staff who work in the centre. Complex routines in the centre usually run smoothly and staff respond swiftly to students' daily concerns. Statutory requirements in respect of students with statements of special educational needs are met. Priorities for the immediate future include the implementation of the policy for gifted and talented students and staff training for the changes in special educational needs provision embodied in the revised Code of Practice. The school is also aware of the detailed planning which will be required in view of the local education authority's proposals for the introduction of a number of placements for students with moderate learning difficulties.
82. The procedures for the monitoring and support of teaching are good. These comprehensive strategies have become a major and successful component for implementing change in the school. The school has made significant progress in promoting improvements in teaching since the last inspection. The headteacher and leadership group effectively carries out a programme of classroom observations. Departmental reviews are regularly arranged, examination results are discussed and action plans drawn up to support subjects. The results of this approach are evident in the improvement in the quality of education provided and the improvement in students' progress and learning.
83. Development planning at a whole-school level is excellent, with clearly identified priorities. These are effectively linked to raising standards and improving the educational experiences of students. There are procedures to compare the performance of departments in examinations with each other. The school sets

challenging objectives for both the standard of teaching and the standards which students are expected to achieve.

84. Financial management and the planning of the use of resources are more efficiently connected to the school's priorities than at the time of the last inspection. A higher proportion of the school budget is now allocated to learning resources for departments. In financial administration, there are appropriate divisions of responsibility and good procedures for ordering, receiving and payment for goods and services purchased by the school. The last financial audit indicated areas for improvement in financial efficiency. These have been corrected. Specific funding for the support of students with special educational needs, and for those in the early stages of learning English as an additional language, is used to good effect. Some expertise is shared with other schools, and the overall quality is good. Competitive tendering is used for the ordering of goods or services, and the school works hard to achieve the best value in its financial decisions.
85. Given the significant improvements in the quality of teaching, the improving standards in National Curriculum tests, the good progress students make and the continuing commitment to improvement in attainment, the school provides good value for money.
86. Generally, resources for learning are satisfactory. Resources are very good for students with special educational needs, particularly in the well-equipped Progress Centre. Elsewhere, resources are good in English, religious education, art and physical education.
87. However, resources are unsatisfactory in science, music, design and technology and ICT because of insufficient equipment. Book resources are inadequate for some GCSE courses. The money the school spends on providing learning resources is above the national average and supported by small, additional grants from the Rutlish Foundation. The allocation of money to departments is based on pupil numbers and there are good procedures for monitoring the quality of expenditure.
88. The learning resources centre is an attractive area for study and is well stocked with a range of resources. It has a computer network for group and individual research, reading material for different ethnic groups and a modern language area that encourages initiative and independent learning. The ratio of books to students, excluding textbooks, at 10:1 is below the national average. However, the school's policy to broaden the range of reading materials to include audio-tapes, CD-ROMs and newspapers is appropriate as it supports the different learning needs of students. The ratio of students to computers is below average; there are few computers in departments and this reduces learning opportunities in many subjects such as music and work in computer-aided design in ICT.
89. Since the last inspection satisfactory progress has been made in improving learning resources in the school. Good progress has been made in developing resources in the expressive arts and in physical education. The Progress Centre is making a good impact on learning of students with special educational needs and two computer suites have been established. There is, however, a continuing need to further develop computer resources in the school and improve the textbook provision in some subjects.

90. The school is staffed appropriately. The profile of teaching staff has improved significantly in two years as a result of management's prompt and effective action. Over three-quarters of the current staff have been appointed in this time. There is now a more suitable balance of gender, age and experience, and, in most subjects, a good match of expertise and qualification. Deployment is now satisfactory in design and technology and ICT. Problems of recruitment to shortage subjects have been largely overcome, although long-term difficulties of recruiting and retaining teachers of the necessary quality continue to have an adverse affect on standards in science.
91. The school uses its staffing budget to allow teachers a relatively large amount of non-teaching time at the expense of some class sizes which are larger than average. In adopting strategies to improve the support in classes for individual students' needs, the school will wish to consider whether smaller groups would be a more appropriate principle on which to base its spending.
92. Arrangements for performance management are good. This scheme forms part of the school's very good continuous professional development programme for staff which requires them to take some responsibility for their own training needs. It also entitles them to the school's support where appropriate and feasible.
93. The programme of induction and support for newly qualified teachers is good. In previous years the school has taken over the organisation of the scheme on behalf of the borough with recognised success.
94. The overall accommodation provision is satisfactory. The school occupies a variety of different buildings that are spread over a wide area. They vary in age and condition with some having listed status that restricts the amount of improvement and refurbishment that can be carried out. This means that limited improvement has taken place to some buildings since the previous inspection. The site contains many mature trees and shrubs that are well maintained and enhance the pleasant outlook from several of the buildings. The site managers work hard around the site to remove any rubbish, with damage or graffiti dealt with immediately.
95. The classrooms for subject areas are appropriately grouped together. The accommodation in the humanities block is good; rooms are of an adequate size with good storage facilities. The Progress Centre has excellent accommodation offering a variety of classrooms, all of which are brightly decorated and carpeted. The spaces can be adjusted to meet the different needs and numbers of students. Wall displays celebrate students' achievements. All departments do not, however, consistently take the opportunity for display. Good examples celebrating pupil's work are found in the art and design, modern foreign languages and humanities departments. Design and technology, English, mathematics and science departments do not display students work enough.
96. The learning resource centre is housed on the first floor of the main building and is a light airy room with a range of computers used regularly by students. This room, in common with many others, benefits from the introduction of flowering plants and other greenery.
97. The pavilion and sports fields provide good facilities; however, the gymnasium is inadequate, being too small for its purpose. The mathematics teaching rooms are too small for the numbers of students and this impacts on teaching and learning.

The music department suffers from being housed in a listed building. Some of the practice rooms are shabby with redundant wiring left in other rooms and a lack of appropriate storage facilities for instruments.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

98. In order to raise standards the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- Improve standards of attainment in English and science in National Curriculum tests by:
Using assessment data to identify targets for students
Reviewing teaching materials and resources
Identifying different learning styles.
[Paragraphs: 3, 10, 99, 132]
- Improve GCSE performance, particularly in design and technology and modern foreign languages by:
Establishing targets for Year10 and review for Year11
Reviewing coursework and moderation procedures
Achieving consistency in homework assignments and marking procedures.
[Paragraphs: 4, 156, 182]
- Improve students' achievement and progress in science by:
Developing consistency in quality of teaching, sharing good practice
Monitoring the quality of students' files and coursework
Using assessment data to inform curricular planning.
[Paragraphs: 10, 133, 136, 137]
- Monitor the implementation of the literacy and numeracy programmes by:
Specifying the brief of the respective co-ordinators
Ensuring that subject schemes of work identify strategies for dealing with literacy and numeracy.
Arranging relevant staff training and courses.
[Paragraphs: 28, 79, 113, 116, 127, 193]
- Improve the planning of work to match the needs and abilities of all students by:
Developing teaching and learning styles
Organising staff training.
[Paragraphs: 29, 44, 124, 137, 158, 178]
- Monitor consistency in marking, and ensure the quality and relevance of homework tasks by:
Arranging regular work scans
Specifying departmental policies
Reviewing by senior management.
[Paragraphs: 29, 35, 69, 70, 164, 187, 193]

Other issues for consideration

- Ensure that ICT is fully embedded into subject areas. [Paragraphs: 50, 150, 155, 159, 179, 191, 209]
- Create more opportunities to enhance cultural development. [Paragraphs: 57, 172]
- Write a development plan for the governing body. [Paragraph: 80]
- Achieve greater consistency in the implementation of a daily act of collective worship. [Paragraph: 52]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	121
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
4	31	42	19	4	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	2000 – 2001	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	793	n/a
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	133	n/a

Special educational needs	2000-2001	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	32	n/a
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	193	n/a

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	238

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

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	204	0

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	120	88
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	79	120	88
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	43 (49)	59 (60)	44 (49)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (20)	36 (35)	16 (24)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	140	109
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	95	140	109
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	47 (43)	68 (66)	53 (48)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (18)	39 (32)	25 (29)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	191	0	191

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	59	169	178
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	59	169	178
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	33 (33)	88 (89)	93 (95)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	34
	National	38.4

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

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	52
Black – African heritage	60
Black – other	43
Indian	34
Pakistani	31
Bangladeshi	22
Chinese	12
White	457
Any other minority ethnic group	82

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	20	0
Black – African heritage	11	0
Black – other	26	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	37	0
Other minority ethnic groups	4	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: 2000 – 2001

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	46.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: 2000 - 2001

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	246

Deployment of teachers: 2000 - 2001

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	62.7
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Average teaching group size: 2000 - 2001

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	28.3
Key Stage 4	25.6

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2 544 593
Total expenditure	2 552 216
Expenditure per pupil	3 128
Balance brought forward from previous year	403
Balance carried forward to next year	-7 220

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	790
Number of questionnaires returned	97

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	42	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	54	36	7	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	36	11	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	37	18	6	3
The teaching is good.	50	39	5	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	63	24	9	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	23	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	24	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	63	33	2	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	63	28	6	2	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	33	3	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	33	18	1	8

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

ENGLISH

99. Standards of attainment in English in 2000 of students at the age of 14 were well below the national average and well below average in comparison with schools with similar characteristics. These results were worse than those of previous years. Evidence from the most recent National Curriculum tests in English indicates a marked improvement on these results. Standards attained in English are in line with those in science but below those of mathematics. Students enter the school with below average standards of attainment and in comparison with the results of national tests, taken at earlier stages in their school career, make satisfactory progress.
100. The proportion of students attaining A* to C grades in GCSE in English language in 2000 was below the national average for all students but above average in comparison with boys nationally. Attainment in English literature was below average. After a static pattern in preceding years the trend has risen slightly. Results in 2000 exceeded both the department's and the school's targets.
101. The standard of work of students in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. This represents an improvement in attainment in comparison with previous years, and good progress from earlier stages. Standards in speaking are good. Students develop a wide vocabulary and express themselves fluently and often eloquently. They are prepared to form opinions and defend their ideas with reasoned argument. In a Year 8 lesson, students discussed the rights and wrongs of 'revenge' and made mature comments on the underlying motives, showing an understanding of understandable but misguided reactions. One pupil commented, "Revenge is often a matter of preserving pride and dignity". Lower ability students in Year 9 conducted a debate on environmental issues with good composure in front of an invited audience. In drama lessons students are able to develop insight into different types of personalities and, by using techniques such as 'hot-seating', learn to think in character and respond quickly.
102. Students' listening skills in English lessons are, however, unsatisfactory. Although in some lessons they are readily attentive and concentrate well, many students do not listen closely either to teachers' explanations and instructions or to each other in open discussions or question and answer sessions. This has a direct effect on their confidence in their ability to cope effectively with subsequent written work.
103. Standards of reading are satisfactory. Most students are able to read aloud clearly and fluently, and few have difficulty in understanding set texts. Students who come into school with poor standards in reading are well supported and by the end of Year 9 are achieving well. Reading aloud is generally fluent and expressive and very few students showed difficulty in understanding text or were reluctant to read. Throughout Years 9 and 10 develop confidence in reading for meaning and implication, and learn to form opinions and draw inferences and conclusions.
104. Standards of written work by the end of Year 9 are average. Students make good progress from their work in Year 8 where vocabulary and constructions are often simplistic. Initial stages of written work are often slow, with many students reluctant to commit ideas to paper or uncertain how to begin to express themselves. This is

usually either because they have not listened sufficiently closely to directions given by the teacher, or because too much time has been spent in receiving information before the planned task has begun. In consequence the initial enthusiasm and interest in the task has been lost. Students of higher ability in Year 9 develop a lively style and learn to use language for specific purposes. In writing sports reports many students created lively images by their effective use of appropriate descriptive language. The achievement of less able students is very good; their work improves in coherency and in the quality of presentation, and their responses to poetry in particular are imaginative and sensitive.

105. The range of attainment in writing by the end of Year 11 is very wide, but standards of written work are satisfactory. Students of higher ability acquire a sophisticated style and an extensive vocabulary. Their writing is well structured, and they confidently employ apt turns of phrase in an imaginative and often entertaining manner. Their narrative writing is authoritative and engages the audience. Essays on the characters of Beatrice and Benedick in Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing' showed clear insight into the development of these characters and their impact on the plot. They competently explore linguistic devices and interpret figurative language used in poetry. This group of students includes a significant number for whom English is not their first language. Students of average ability achieve well, developing a sophisticated vocabulary and a secure use of structure. They do not always maintain a sense of audience and their technical accuracy is not reliable. Students of lower ability write extended and well-organised narrative pieces but their independent responses to literature texts are limited to accounts of events without sufficient interpretation, opinion or reference to the text concerned. In the single excellent lesson and in the very good lesson these weaknesses were either absent or much less of a barrier to progress. Handwriting is well controlled and work is well presented. Some students make good use of ICT to create final drafts of their work but access to computers is limited and only students with special educational needs who have more ready access to ICT make regular use of it.
106. Students with special educational needs and students who learn English as a second language are well supported both in lessons and in separate sessions and make good progress. Classroom assistants are well informed about students' needs and intervene unobtrusively to ensure that work is properly understood. The teacher for English as an additional language develops a range of relevant material and wherever possible puts in place a system of pairing to enable students to understand and communicate with the class teacher.
107. The quality of teaching overall is good; although a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in each key stage, there were several very good lessons and one excellent lesson. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan and organise their lessons with meticulous attention to detail. Year 10 students readily empathised with the sense of humiliation conveyed in 'You Will Be Hearing From Us Shortly' by U. A. Fanshawe, as a result of carefully directed analysis of the poem. In the most successful lessons expectations both of co-operation and achievement were high, challenge was appropriate, pace was well judged and time was used effectively. In addition students were given time to formulate and express their contributions without the teacher intervening to prompt or anticipate the pupil's full answer. The pervading atmosphere was relaxed but purposeful and students fully understood what was expected of them because the underlying objectives were clear and constructive. When too much time was taken up by explanations or extended discussions, with the balance of activities becoming distorted as a result,

students became overwhelmed with the amount of information they had received and were unable to select the most important points. In these circumstances only the most able were confident in starting written work, enthusiasm waned and valuable time was lost. In some lessons not enough attention was paid to the importance of students developing good listening skills. Although on occasion teachers do not employ a wide enough range of strategies for managing noisy or vociferous students, classroom control is usually very good. Students arrive promptly, are courteous, concentrate well and adopt positive attitudes to their work.

108. Leadership and management within the department are satisfactory. Recent improvements in moderating procedures have led to more accurate prediction of examination grades, particularly for students in Year 9. Classes are organised into ability groups and most lessons cater effectively for the different abilities within each class. Assessment is not yet used to ensure those more able students and students whose second language is English are achieving in line with their overall abilities. Strategies for raising the challenge in lessons for more able students and for improving the achievement of younger students of average ability require further development.
109. Examination results in the intervening years since the last inspection have declined from the previously 'above average' standards of attainment. However, with improved students' attitudes and higher attainment on entry, the gap between these two levels is now considerably reduced, particularly at GCSE. The good quality of teaching has been maintained. Generally, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

DRAMA

110. Standards of attainment in drama in the GCSE examination in 2000 were below the national average but the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was in line with those obtained in English and above those of both mathematics and science.
111. Achievement in drama across all year groups is good. The subject makes a good contribution towards developing students' self-esteem and their abilities to learn independently. In Years 8 and 9, students have good opportunities through appropriate topics and challenges to explore themes and issues and to examine personal attitudes. Students develop good habits of working co-operatively in groups and communicate their ideas confidently. Students with higher ability in the subject make very good progress in using dramatic devices of body and facial expression, and readily draw from their personal experience to create and sustain character. They modulate their use of voice to adapt speech appropriately and to use space in a controlled manner. In Years 10 and 11, skills are further developed in line with the abilities of individual students. More able students become competent in a wide range of stagecraft, and students of average ability develop and interpret ideas and impressions and learn to communicate these to an audience.
112. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have clear objectives and communicate their own enthusiasm; students clearly enjoy the work. Although they listen attentively as an audience, they are not always given clear guidelines on their conduct in whole-class discussions. As a result, co-operation has to be re-established, time is lost and the pace of the lesson suffers.

LITERACY

113. The school has put in place a whole-school strategy in order to improve students' reading and writing. There has been a small amount of in-service training and most subjects make reference to literacy skills in lesson plans. Specific subject language and key words are often featured prominently in classrooms, although the practice varies within and across departments, including the English department.
114. In most departments there are regular opportunities for students to read aloud. Generally students are able to read without hesitation, cope with a demanding vocabulary and understand the text. Some Year 10 students help younger students who have difficulties in reading. Students have regular access to the library and have lessons in library skills, and for those students for whom English is a second language there is a growing range of books and newspapers. Although the library has a good range of non-fiction, borrowing books for reading for pleasure is infrequent. An attempt to encourage students to read by providing books in tutor rooms and dedicating tutorial time to silent reading is not effective. Frequent interruptions distract concentration, the pleasure of reading is lost because the activity is seen as obligatory, and, because there is no system for lending books for reading at home, continuity is lost.
115. Written work is neatly presented and handwriting is generally clear, although in physical education poor handwriting impaired the quality of some work. When given the opportunity, students make good use of ICT to improve the quality of their work, both in editing and in presentation. In English, students organise their work well and write extended pieces with generally good technical accuracy. The personal and narrative writing by students of higher and average ability is vivid and often evocative. In some lessons students lack confidence in their ability to express themselves in writing.
116. Students in Year 8 have received a weekly lesson dedicated to literacy. The scheme for this has not been consistently developed, and currently these lessons are devoted to grammatical concepts, which are not taught in relation to examples from texts. Frequently, too many different ideas are incorporated into a single lesson and students do not clearly understand the essential features of different parts or figures of speech or appreciate the value of this knowledge. The school's senior management is aware of current inconsistencies in the teaching of reading and writing. A co-ordinator for the teaching of literacy has been appointed to address these issues.

MATHEMATICS

117. In 2000, standards of attainment in mathematics were below the national average for students at the age of 14 and broadly in line with the national average at the age of 16. Attainment on entry is improving but is still below the national average. The students' achievement at the ages of 14 and 16, in relation to their prior attainment, is good.
118. In 2000, the results in the tests for students, aged 14, were below the national average but were above when compared with similar schools. The levels of attainment achieved by students are in line with teachers' assessments. Attainment in mathematics is better than that achieved in English and science. Students' achievements by the age of 14 are good. Over the last three years, average points

scores have steadily declined. However, in 2001, the proportion of students achieving level 5 and above has increased significantly, together with an increase in the proportion of students achieving the highest levels of attainment. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. Those students who are learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

119. In 2000, the proportion of students at the age of 16 achieving GCSE mathematics grades A* to C and grades A* to G are broadly in line with the national average. Compared with the national averages for all students, the average points scores for 2000 in mathematics are better than English and science. The students' achievements at the age of 16 in 2000 are good when compared to levels of attainment achieved by the same group of students at age 14 in 1998. Over the last three years the rate of improvement of students achieving A* to C grades is better than that nationally.
120. Standards of the work of students at the end of Year 9 are above average. Students' uses and applications of mathematics are satisfactory. They can extend a concept and articulate their thinking through set tasks; for example, Year 8 students investigated the outcomes from tossing two dice and were able to predict probabilities correctly. Average attaining students in Year 9 conducted an enquiry into right-angled triangles, which resulted in identifying Pythagoras' Theorem. Numerical skills are good although an appreciation of the power of estimation prior to using the calculator is not common. The highest attaining students in Year 8 have a good understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages. The students' knowledge and understanding of the rules of algebra are very good. The lowest attaining students in Year 9 are able to solve straightforward questions on Pythagoras' Theorem well ahead of national expectations, and to construct graphs of linear functions. The highest attaining students can solve simultaneous and quadratic equations. Knowledge and understanding of shape, space and measurement are good. Neat and accurate diagrams promote the students' understanding of transformation geometry. Knowledge of probability and handling data is very good. Year 9 students can determine the probability of single events, understand and use the probability scale of 0 to 1, distinguish between discrete and continuous data and interpret scatter diagrams correctly. In particular, high attaining Year 9 students can calculate the inter-quartile range from a cumulative frequency curve. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers, particularly when being helped by a learning support assistant.
121. Standards among 16 year olds are above average and the students achieve well. Knowledge and application of numeracy skills by the highest attaining students are well above average; students understand the concepts of surds, standard form and negative indices. The lowest attaining students are given many opportunities to reinforce their basic numerical skills in a variety of contexts, such as calculating the perimeter and area of compound figures, and fractional values of fixed quantities, and conducting investigations. Levels of attainment when working with algebra, shape and space are above average. For example, low attaining students in Year 10 can construct triangles and plot the loci of sets of points. Higher attaining students have a very good understanding of statistical methods. For example, the students can construct tree diagrams, interpret regression lines, compare experimental and theoretical probability and calculate permutations and combinations of events happening. The lowest attaining students use such words as 'fair', 'certain' and 'likely' to demonstrate an understanding of the probability of single events, reinforcing their knowledge of number and, like others, are achieving well.

122. The standard of literacy in mathematics is satisfactory. The attention to literacy issues is more evident in coursework than in normal lessons. Investigative work involving speaking and listening skills appears at both key stages but is not common. Reading and writing skills are reinforced through appropriate exercises and texts. The students' positive attitude to learning creates an ethos where all feel secure in volunteering answers which contributes significantly to how well students achieve.
123. Achievement in mathematics is good at both key stages. This is the case for all students including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. High expectations of students coupled with challenging questions that engage students' thinking and demand intellectual effort, contribute to raising the students' level of achievement. At the age of 14, many students' skills, knowledge and understanding of mathematics are broadly in line with national expectations. Students' achievement in numeracy skills is good. Students, at the age of 14 and in Year 10, make good progress in their understanding of algebra, shape, space and measurement. Achievement in handling data is very good; this has led to an early entry, by the highest attaining students, for the GCSE statistics examination at the end of Year 10.
124. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall at both key stages, with some examples of very good teaching involving the use of ICT. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The teachers' planning of lessons is effective; however, the large numbers of students in some classes result in not all students' needs being catered for. Lesson objectives are shared with students, providing clear purpose for the duration of most lessons. Opportunities to review completed work with the students at the end of lessons are missed. The teachers' expectations of the students are very high, making good use of open and closed questions, which challenge students' thinking and extend their knowledge base. Teachers' good exposition and explanation promote intellectual effort and conceptual understanding. Opportunities for extending the gifted and talented students in the higher order skills are not so evident across both key stages. There are clear expectations of high standards and good behaviour. The focus is on work for the duration of lessons.
125. Relationships between the students themselves and with the teacher are very good. Specialist teachers' use of time is effective; for example, work for the lowest attaining students at the age of 14 is broken down into 'bite' size activities to take account of their capacity to concentrate. Students' attitude to the subject is very good; for example, students are prepared to persevere with difficult problems. Resources that are available are used well but emphasis remains on the published worksheet. Learning support assistants are employed effectively to support the learning needs of students with special educational needs. Homework of an appropriate standard is given regularly but lacks imagination and rigour to challenge intellectually the gifted and talented students. Opportunities for using homework as a preparation and stimulus for future lessons and reinforcing literacy skills are overlooked. Procedures for the assessment of students are good but the quality and use of ongoing assessment are unsatisfactory. Work marked by students is not monitored and homework that is marked is frequently without any recorded grades. Homework often lacks diagnostic and evaluative comment to support learning and poor work often goes unchallenged. Students in Year 9 are aware of their level of attainment but are unclear about marking criteria and how they can progress in terms of raising their level of attainment further. The use of printed half-termly 'work

plans' for students is applied inconsistently. The students self- knowledge of their learning at the age of 16 is satisfactory with GCSE targets for improvement established early in Year 10.

126. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Achievements by students are good given their prior levels of attainment. The department has made very good progress in addressing the issues raised in the previous inspection. Subject specialists work well together and there is a clear commitment to raising standards. The department handbook and schemes of work are good. Evaluation of the subject's performance through analysis of national and department data is very good. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of the students' performance, and resultant effective action are unsatisfactory. Accommodation is adequate, although some rooms are cramped when full classes are in attendance and this reduces the range of teaching methods that can be employed. With the exception of ICT, the availability of new technology resources, such as graphical calculators, to promote learning more effectively is unsatisfactory. The displays of posters and students' work in classrooms and the quality of books in the library to support learning are satisfactory. Overall, the department is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and, supported through regular line manager meetings, is capable of improving on its present success.

NUMERACY

127. The school is committed to raising standards of numeracy. Initial details of the National Numeracy Strategy have been shared with teaching staff to raise awareness. The department improvement plan includes a numeracy week organised through Years 8 and 9, tutor groups, participation in the junior and intermediate mathematics challenge competitions, the sale of mathematics equipment to students, key word displays and the development of a numeracy policy. The school calendar for the forthcoming academic year includes a day set aside for in-service training. The school has appointed a numeracy co-ordinator with responsibility for mathematics across the curriculum. A numeracy summer school for approximately 30 students each year, involving middle school teachers and mathematics department staff, has become a regular event. The curriculum includes an additional mathematics lesson in Year 8 devoted to numeracy. Analysis of baseline assessment data is used to target students whose basic skills are weak and who receive support through the school's Progress Centre. There is at present an outline whole-school numeracy policy but no numeracy audit has been conducted that may highlight issues for action.
128. The standard of numeracy in a number of subjects is good. In ICT, students make good use of geometric skills when programming shapes graphically. In modern foreign languages, students routinely use mental arithmetic in counting games, the calculation of bills and setting one another arithmetical problems. In geography, students make good use of graphs and pie charts, collecting, organising and presenting data in various forms to measure changes in population growth over time. In art and design, there are strong links with the mathematics department over the production of geometrical designs and models.
129. Students with special educational needs make good progress in basic numeracy skills, knowledge and understanding and are able to benefit fully from the school's curriculum. The achievement of students with special educational needs working in the Progress Centre and those who receive additional support from learning support

assistants is good. The calculator is used constructively in mathematics lessons to aid learning, although estimation prior to using the calculator is not common. A number of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs lack confidence in their numerical capability and rely on the calculator for computing basic calculations.

130. Subjects that make good use of numeracy are mathematics, art and design, modern foreign languages and geography. The majority of departments include a numeracy policy with clear opportunities for developing numeracy in the scheme of work. For example, in modern foreign languages, reference is made to dates, currency conversion, distances, prices, bills, time and telephone numbers.

SCIENCE

131. Over the last three years, the science department has suffered an unusually high level of staffing problems. Sickness, long-term absence and problems with recruitment have resulted in the management of the department being seriously compromised. Most classes have experienced frequent changes in teacher and some have been taught by a succession of temporary teachers. Of the seven staff teaching during this inspection, five have joined the school at various times during the last 12 months. The present head of department was appointed in January, following a period without anyone in the post. This series of changes has disrupted the pattern of students' work and, during this time, they have not achieved as much as they should have done.
132. Results in the tests for 14 year olds in 2000 were well below the national average and well below those of students in similar schools. Standards in these tests have declined steadily over the last five years. Results in science are close to those in English but below the results in mathematics. As students enter the school with standards below the national average in science, the results at age 14 represent unsatisfactory achievement by all groups of students. Currently, standards of work are significantly better. The test results for the present Year 9 are approximately 10 percentage points better than the results in 2000. The work in students' books and in lessons is below, rather than well below, the national expectation. As a result of radically improved schemes of work and more consistent teaching, students are improving their standards in all aspects of science, but particularly in experimental and investigative work. In recent years there has been far too little practical work resulting in students lacking the skills necessary to present and interpret results of experiments properly. This deficiency is being rapidly overcome. For example, students are now learning how to select the appropriate type of graph, draw it accurately and use it to form conclusions.
133. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were well below the national average and well below the results obtained by students who were of a similar standard at the age of 14. The results were below those of students from similar schools. The proportion of students obtaining higher grades (A* to C) has declined rapidly over the last three years, falling from 43 per cent in 1998 to 28 per cent in 2000. Attainment across the full range of grades is better. In 2000, the proportion of students obtaining a grade A* to G was close to the national figure. Results in science are below those in mathematics and English. This level of attainment is unsatisfactory achievement by most students. Because of the specialist support and the arrangement of teaching groups, students with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language achieve satisfactorily. Standards

evident in the inspection were better. Analysis of the records and coursework for the present Year 11 indicate that their results will be at least as good as in 2000 and probably slightly better. Remedial action taken by the newly appointed head of department ensured that the syllabus was fully covered and coursework completed. Year 10 students are working consistently at appropriately high standards. The top set skilfully completed an experiment showing the catalytic effect of manganese oxide on the decomposition of hydrogen peroxide, and was able to discuss their results with secure understanding. Students of lower attainment, many with special educational needs, are achieving a mastery of electrical circuitry that should guarantee a GCSE grade next year. The standards and the rate of progress evident in Year 10 students indicate that the results in 2002 will be significantly better than in 2000.

134. Three quarters of the teaching was good or very good but, in some lessons, weaknesses in planning or the management of students resulted in unsatisfactory learning and dictate that overall, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Most teaching is based on tremendous commitment to the needs of students. This aspect has been most evident in the extra lessons provided under the leadership of the head of department. It is no exaggeration to say that a potentially disastrous position for the present Years 9 and 11 was avoided by the rapid and effective action taken by the head of department. Most lessons are now planned in detail and include a variety of learning opportunities and an appropriate amount of experimental work. Students are responding well to this enriched diet, are enjoying their science and becoming productive and effective learners. Year 8 students concentrated well and worked with great enthusiasm on the adaptations of organisms because the lesson was illustrated by the imaginative use of human and other skulls. A feature of almost all teaching is the high expectations teachers have of what their students can achieve. This is based on accurate understanding of students' intellectual and social strengths and weaknesses. Work is pitched at a level of difficulty which challenges students but does not overwhelm them. Different sorts of learning opportunities are carefully designed to maintain interest throughout the lessons. In a Year 9 lesson, students had a basic understanding of the relationship between reactivity in elements and their position in the periodic table. The lesson included whole-class discussion, observing an exciting demonstration, making their own readings of pH values and small group discussions with the teacher. Their written work was evaluated during the lesson, giving them immediate and very motivating feedback.
135. During the period of staffing instability, students understandably developed negative attitudes towards the subject, behaviour deteriorated and learning was seriously affected. Since the appointment of the new head of department attitudes have improved dramatically. Students who had lost heart now trust their teachers and are giving of their best, and the quality of learning is rapidly improving.
136. The use of ICT to enrich the learning of science is limited by lack of equipment and appropriate access to computers. In particular, there is no use of this technology to measure directly the results of experiments. This situation has an adverse affect on students' progress.
137. In Year 8, where there is a wide range of attainment, teachers are not always able to provide suitably different work for all the students. Despite the teachers' sensitivity and concern, the needs of students with special educational needs are not always met in these large classes. In Years 10 and 11, such students are in

small groups and taught by teachers who are very skilled in helping them to overcome their emotional and learning difficulties.

138. The science department now benefits from excellent leadership and very good management. Actions taken by the head of department, supported by senior management, have already addressed the weaknesses evident in teaching. These measures include establishing effective procedures to ensure that high quality schemes of work form the basis of lessons. The syllabus followed for GCSE has been changed to one that more appropriately reflects the strengths of students. Proper systems have been established to assess students' work accurately. Assessment now forms a solid basis for tracking the progress of students, for informing them of their areas of weakness and for ensuring that the effectiveness of teaching can be rigorously monitored. Morale in the department is now high and teachers are working in partnership with the dedicated and very effective technicians to raise standards. Perhaps most importantly, students now have faith in the department and are raising their own aspirations.
139. This is a very well led and improving department. Given successful resolution of the remaining staffing problems, including the appointment of a second in department, there is no reason why the rise in standards evident during this inspection should not continue apace.

ART AND DESIGN

140. Most students enter school with below average skills in art and design. At this stage they have a simple knowledge of colour and some knowledge of the works of well-known artists such as Van Gogh. They have poor skills in presentation. At the age of 14 the standard of work of most students is above average. Teachers' assessment of the standards achieved by students in 2001 show 91 per cent of students at level 4 and above, 74 per cent at level 5 and above and 28 per cent at levels 7 and 8.
141. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A* to C in GCSE has fluctuated from above average in 1999 to well below average in 2000. There has been a very significant improvement in the past year and the present Year 11 are on course to achieve a little above the national average in the higher grades A* to C. There is also a significant improvement in the number of students gaining the highest grades this year. Achievement in both key stages is very good.
142. Work in sketchbooks is particularly good in all years. Students use their sketchbooks well to explore and experiment with ideas and techniques in a range of media. They show very good initiative, and imagination. These aspects are well promoted by teachers in all lessons.
143. In all year groups the skills of art, particularly sketching and drawing, are good. The use of tone and texture are particularly good. These aspects are taught formally. Students benefit from having a wide range of examples of how to use lines and other marks to achieve the illusion of texture and they learn to apply these effectively. Standards of work in Year 10 are high. All students display a good understanding of composition and of the impact that can be created by the arrangement of shape and space, particularly in three-dimensional work. Most have the potential to reach A* to C grades if they maintain work at the present pace.

144. In Years 8 and 9, assessment is used as a good motivating factor and contributes to raising students' standards of attainment. Students are given clear written information on how their work is assessed and marked. The meaning of the criteria for marking in key stage tests is explained to them so that they know what to aim for in their work. The work of other artists is well used for inspiration in all units of work in Years 8 and 9 and in GCSE coursework. The presentation of work is very good in all years.
145. Literacy is promoted well in lessons. Students are encouraged to use subject-specific words correctly and to make critical comments as they make notes on their work. For example, they are encouraged to explain their difficulty in achieving a 'slimy' effect in drawings of texture.
146. Numeracy is also promoted well in art, particularly with regard to three-dimensional constructions that involve detailed measurement and an appreciation of shape, space and proportion. The head of department maintains good links with the mathematics department in specific units of work as in repeat patterns and geometrical designs.
147. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in art with specific concentration on artists' mission, beliefs and compassion, in works such as Picasso's painting of war and modern concerns about issues such as equality in the work of modern artists.
148. Teaching is very good. Both teachers are graduate specialists in the subject and have very good knowledge and understanding that they transmit to their students. Teachers manage classes well and maintain discipline with apparent ease. This calm atmosphere enables students to settle to work quickly and concentrate fully on the tasks set. Teachers' very good organisational skills mean that paint, glue, knives and other equipment are given out with a minimum of fuss and students can find what they need quickly as everything is in place. The teachers work hard to make lessons interesting, giving tasks that are designed to engage students' interest and to enable them to be successful. There is good structure and pace in all lessons; the lessons are planned in stages so that students build systematically on their skills from one stage to the next. Teachers know their students well and identify high and low attaining students and give help and support as appropriate. All students get individual attention in class and all make very good progress, building systematically on their skills, knowledge and understanding.
149. The leadership of the department is very good. The head of department exudes a composure that is transferred to the students. Planning is very good. All documentation, including schemes of work and lesson plans, are in very good detail. The head of department has forged close links with the local College of Art and practising artists come into school to work with students on specific projects. Students from the College of Art also work with students in school. These links help students to see the professional and commercial sides of art as well as gaining extra expertise and experience in practical work. Close links exist with the local community and students have painted large murals at the local railway station that provided them with additional experience. Money from this project was used to purchase an IMAC computer for art.
150. Although ICT is used for research, in some units of work it remains an area for further development. Standards could be raised by more use of modern technology

such as the digital camera and scanner. There is no provision for ceramics and this represents a weakness.

151. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection. A new head of department and specialist teacher have recently been appointed. All tasks are demanding and of value. Students with learning difficulties now receive good support. Teaching is more focused and contains appropriate diagnostic criticism of students' work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

152. The design and technology department has been subject to staffing difficulties and this has resulted in a number of non-specialist and temporary staff being employed over the last year. This has clearly had a negative impact on standards. However, the newly appointed head of department, who started in April 2001 and other full-time staff to the department, are having a positive effect, but it is too early to assess the full impact of their work.
153. Teachers' assessment of students' work at the end of Year 9 show that the school's results are well below the level achieved by students at this stage nationally. Currently, students are beginning to produce work that is broadly in line with national expectations. This is mainly due to the structured courses and development of sound practical skills that have been introduced recently by the department, for students in Years 8 and 9.
154. There is a good balance of projects within the design and technology curriculum. Students in Years 8 and 9 design and make products in resistant materials, basic electronics and graphic products. Students develop a good range of practical skills in making products, but their skills are less well developed in following a common process when they develop their own design ideas. They show an ability to analyse and draw conclusions from existing products.
155. Students' achievement in Years 8 and 9 is good. Examples of their assignments include: a Victorian toy, novelty speakers, a 'swatch package' and a fragrance package. This work is effective in developing their design experience. All students analyse existing products and propose ideas of their own. They test and evaluate their own products at stages of its development. Students are well supported in planning their work by using detailed worksheets. Some students design surveys to gain the views of others as part of their work and they use numerical data in the form of charts, graphs and calculations to produce products that have been tested by others for the commercial market. As part of the graphics course, students develop a range of two and three-dimensional drawing skills. All students extend their skills and techniques considerably and also apply them in other areas of technology. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, students used graphics skills to design a good range of novelty speakers. Higher attaining students combined these skills well with notes to explain each stage of their work. All students used a good range of technical vocabulary in their written tasks and when explaining their work. Lower attaining students applied all the basic skills to improve the overall presentation and quality of their work. Students are beginning to use ICT more to research and present the information they used in their design projects as well as processing information they collected on surveys. However, this is inconsistent across the subject and opportunities to use ICT to raise the standard of work in design and technology need to be developed further.

156. The GCSE results in 2000 indicate that the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A* to C was well below the national average and those of similar schools. There has been a decline in the results since 1999. Students achieve less well in their GCSE examination in design and technology than they do in other subjects in the school.
157. In Year 10, students show significant improvement, which is a result of better planning by the new staff in the department. Students are now working broadly in line with national expectations. This is higher than the standards suggested by the GCSE results in 2000 and reflects the trend of improving standards this year. This represents good achievement. Students use a wider range of investigation and research skills and evaluate strengths and weaknesses effectively as they progress with their design ideas. They develop work of good quality, including considerations of large-scale manufacturing processes. For example, a Year 11 pupil worked closely with a commercial printing company. He designed and produced a package for a computer game and demonstrated very high quality in both the development as well as the production of the end product. All students work well to extend the depth and accuracy of their planning. Coursework includes a good level of numeracy in both the planning and making as well as collecting and processing the views of others. They considered the data well in the development of their own ideas and presented the information using ICT to show how it was used to influence their work. Good use was made of ICT, in modelling circuits, in a Year 10 electronics class. Students used a specialist program to design and test various circuits before producing their own as part of their coursework. Higher attaining students produced good quality products supported with accurate, well-developed plans. All the work reflected a high degree of research. Students evaluated their work well against the specification they formed for the designs. Higher attaining students worked accurately and in depth. Lower attaining students designed products well suited to the courses and were supported by their teachers to complete work that was well matched to the examination requirements.
158. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use interesting methods, enabling students to understand basic skills. In a Year 8 resistant materials lesson, the teacher used a Victorian 'Zoetrope' as a basis for students to develop the basic skills of measuring, marking out, cutting and drilling wood as well as increasing their knowledge of mechanisms using belts and pulleys. The students worked enthusiastically and learning was good. Teachers usually plan their lessons well and have high expectations of their students. However, higher attaining students are not always challenged sufficiently to extend their knowledge and skills. Their progress in the mixed ability classes is less secure. Middle attaining students and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the individual support that they receive. Some teachers succeed in stretching students of all levels of attainment, but this is not consistent across the department. The department has recognised the need to increase strategies to raise the level of achievement but this is at an early stage of development. All teachers place a good emphasis on developing technical vocabulary at the introduction to lessons, when they explain their work and when students record their findings; this is having a positive effect on the development of the students' literacy skills. Students form good relationships with their teachers and work hard for them. They behave well because they know what standards are, and are not, acceptable. The pace of lessons is appropriate in most lessons.

159. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are now in line with national expectations. Achievement overall is now good. Teaching is also good. There is still the need to develop work in computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture, which has not been addressed. Although there is now a technician, he works only on a part-time basis and this is not sufficient to fully support the work of the department.
160. The newly appointed head of department has worked well with other newly appointed staff to improve the quality of planning and teaching. There is a strong focus, shared by all, on raising standards in what has become a strong departmental team. Although leadership and management are satisfactory, there have been considerable improvements in planning, teaching and standards more recently. There is an appropriate system in place to monitor and record attainment. The use of targets is becoming a stronger part of the work with students. This is beginning to have a positive effect on standards although it is in the early stages of development. The opportunity for students to become more fully involved with their own assessment is still underdeveloped.

GEOGRAPHY

161. Students' standards at the age of 14 are broadly average in relation to national standards. Teachers' assessment of students' work at the end of Year 9, in 2001, show that attainment is below the national average. This is due to a lower attaining cohort of students and to inconsistencies in the standardisation of assessments. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in the 2000 GCSE examination was below the national average but they were in line with expectations at grades A* to G. The standards students achieved were comparable with attainment in other subjects and results are consistent with those achieved in recent years.
162. Achievement at the age of 14 compared with attainment on entry to the school is good because teachers make high demands on students in terms of effort and commitment. Most students show good attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. Students acquire a range of geographical skills and improve their knowledge of places. They research information through books and computers, although atlases are not well used to support learning. Students know about environmental issues and understand the effects of economic development on regions and on people's lives. Year 9 students, for example, are aware of the consequences on the local population of cutting down the tropical rain forests in Brazil and how it affects climate change. They write 'letters' to express concern about developments but many students do not write in sufficient detail or explain the reasons for developments. Students enjoy film presentations; they watch and listen carefully and write notes about what they learn except for some lower attaining students who find writing difficult. They gain knowledge of topics studied, such as 'population' and are able to draw and describe graphs about the growth of world population. Many are aware of the moral issues such as China's 'one child policy' and understand the impact of economic development on the way of life of people such as the Amazon Indians.
163. Standards at the age of 16 are average for the GCSE course but achievements are good compared to students' earlier attainment. This is because of good teaching and high standards in GCSE coursework. Students have a sound foundation of knowledge of physical geography. In studies of coastlines, for example, they identify features and explain how they have been formed using examples they have

seen and studied. Students consolidate map skills and conduct research into assignments such as the impact of the new tramway at Wimbledon. The work is mostly well organised, making very good use of computers in graphics and to present work. A minority of students, however, do not develop reasons or explain what the maps and data tell them in reaching conclusions. Many students understand the different factors that affect the development of urban areas such as in north-eastern England, but the quality of writing is sometimes weak because they answer in general terms without using examples.

164. The quality of teaching and learning of students in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory. The aims of lessons are fully explained and students know exactly what they are learning. Teachers are experienced, maintain good discipline and make effective use of resources. Year 8 students, for example, improved their understanding of the growth of tourism in Spain with the help of video film, while their knowledge of earthquakes was extended through the use of computers for research and presentation. Teachers expect high standards of effort and attention to tasks and, in the most successful lessons, they set challenges that engage and generate enthusiasm, resulting in good progress being made. On other occasions, however, teachers talk for long periods and students are not actively engaged in learning, resulting in loss of concentration and insufficient progress is made. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, but they make good progress when additional adult support is available in class because their needs are constantly met. Teachers use different levels of resources to meet a range of learning needs but lesson planning is not consistently good in meeting the different requirements of students. Marking is regular and praise is given for effort, but there is much 'tick' marking without correction or telling students how they can improve their standards. The quality of teaching and learning of students in Years 10 and 11 is good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully with regular reinforcement of earlier studies, but progress is slower when occasionally students are insufficiently challenged. Learning is enhanced through practical fieldwork and this stimulates students' interest and links class study with real experience. Consequently much is achieved in lessons and written work is improved through knowledge of places. Teachers manage students well; they set high standards and give careful guidance on the course requirements. Students respond well to advice and the standards of assignments and of coursework are now rising as a result.
165. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has made substantial progress since being appointed two years ago. The schemes of work have been re-written and give clear guidance to teachers in the preparation of lessons. The priorities for improving standards in the subject are appropriate, and are kept under regular review by the school. Provision for developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experience is good, but teaching is inconsistent because specific guidance is not given in planning documents. The procedures for the assessment of standards and of progress that students make are good, but the reliability and use of information to plan the curriculum and monitor progress are at an early stage of development and not yet helping to raise standards. The resources for learning have been much improved, particularly of books for GCSE students, and this is extending learning opportunities through homework. The accommodation is good and enhanced with displays of work that set high standards for students. There are sufficient teachers to meet curricular needs but the monitoring of teaching is not yet leading to improved standards of students aged 12 to 14 years.

166. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the department are now very good, particularly in identifying priorities and planning developments. Resources have improved and are now satisfactory, except for shortage of atlases. Good use is being made of computers and standards of work seen are higher as a result for students of all ages, particularly for GCSE students. Inconsistencies in marking continue to be a weakness.

HISTORY

167. Significant improvements have taken place in the department since the last inspection: in Years 8 and 9, standards of attainment and behaviour have improved, and students' attainment in history by the end of Year 11 is one of the best in the school. These developments have been largely due to the improvements in teaching and assessment which are now of a high quality.
168. Standards of attainment are in line with the national average at both key stages. At the age of 14, standards of work are in line with national expectations, which match the assessments made by teachers in 2000 and 2001. Standards, as indicated by teachers' assessments, have been improving over the last three years. Students achieve well compared with their below average level of attainment when they enter the school.
169. Standards of attainment at age 16 are in line with the national average. This is better than the latest GCSE results where attainment was below the national average, though in line for those attaining A* to G grades. The proportion of students attaining the very highest grades of A*/A was also as high as that for boys nationally. Over the last three years, students have done better in history than in nearly all of their other subjects. Students with special educational needs and those with English as a second language also make good progress over both key stages, helped by tasks and resources suitable for their needs, as well as effective, additional support in the classroom. This represents good progress in the level of achievement by students of all attainments compared with their prior attainment at the end of Year 9.
170. By the age of 14, most students have a satisfactory knowledge of the key events and understand chronology. Students have at least competent basic skills of note making, and select and record evidence from several sources with accuracy. The recently introduced opportunities for detailed enquiry work in Year 9, such as the assassination of President Kennedy, have helped develop research and organisational skills. Higher attaining students interpret the evidence and analyse various sources for bias and reliability. This leads to high quality writing with independent and well-supported arguments. Literacy skills are also being well developed in average and lower attaining students. In Year 8 students write competently in various forms, often with strong empathy such as imagining giving a speech to Parliament against child labour in 19th century factories. Group discussions on the meaning of anti-Hitler cartoons help to develop speaking and listening skills. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make valuable contributions to these discussions, helped by materials to match their needs and the effective help of learning support assistants. By the age of 16, higher and middle attaining students build on their skills of enquiry and organisation. They can analyse different sources effectively. In doing their coursework, the best students write analytically at length, with relevant

evidence to support their conclusions. Although lower attaining students find tasks requiring evaluation difficult, they receive good support from the teacher to help address this. Numeracy skills are also developed when figures for industrial output and population in Germany and Russia between the wars are recorded in graph form.

171. The quality of teaching is good in over two-thirds of lessons and is never unsatisfactory. It is better in Year 10. This is a significant improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. Teachers use a wide range of activities, managed at a good pace, usually with clear deadlines, that stimulate and maintain interest. Teachers provide tasks that match the needs of students at all levels of attainment. This helps to improve the literacy skills of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs. Lessons are well planned, with clear objectives shared with the students so that they know exactly what to do and settle quickly to the task. High expectations are set, with a strong emphasis on developing skills of historical analysis. For example, a Year 9 class enjoyed the challenge of interpreting different primary and secondary sources on the Nazis' attitude to women and then writing a pamphlet opposing it. Classroom control is good, with high expectations of good behaviour, quick reaction to inattention and warm relationships with students. This leads to an enthusiastic and co-operative response and good behaviour in nearly all lessons. Attention only wanders when the teacher's exposition is too long or activities are inadequately varied. Students' achievement is celebrated well with good displays of their work. Regular and informative marking tells the students of their progress and sets clear targets for improvement. As a consequence of the good level of teaching, students make good progress in their learning at both key stages. Consequently, they enjoy the subject and the uptake at Key Stage 4 has risen significantly.
172. The improvements in teaching and the good progress in achievement at both key stages reflect the commitment, good organisation and clear educational direction provided by the head of department. The school's aims of raising standards and the students' awareness of moral, social and personal values are to be clearly seen in the department's aims, the well-revised schemes of work and teaching. Students' academic progress is well monitored through good assessment procedures at both key stages: regular assessments, accurately moderated to National Curriculum levels, provide evidence for a portfolio of students' work and for effective individual targeting. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection, but requires further development. A programme of outside visits to enhance the curriculum and the learning experiences of the students has not yet been developed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

173. The ICT department has been subject to staffing difficulties, which has had a negative impact on standards. As a result the school has had to deliver ICT for students, within subjects in Years 8 and 9. During the last year a new head of department has been appointed and new initiatives are now being implemented. The appointment of an additional full-time teacher to the department means that the school will be able to introduce separate ICT lessons for Year 8 and 9 students in September 2001. It is too early at the time of this inspection to assess the full impact of all the new initiatives within the department.
174. The results for the GCSE short course taken by all students in 2000 show that the proportion of students attaining grades A* to C was well below the national average.

The results of the GCSE full course in 2000 show that the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C is also well below the national average and the results of similar schools. There has been a fall in the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C since 1999. Students achieve less well in GCSE ICT than they do in other subjects.

175. Teachers' assessment of students' work, at the end of Year 9, in 2000 indicate that the proportion of students achieve well above the national average. These results were found to be an overestimation, in comparison to the students' current work. The results achieved by Year 9 students in 2001 are broadly in line with the national average, which is closer to the level of current work.
176. Currently, students at the age of 14 attain standards in line with those expected nationally. This represents good achievement when compared to their levels of attainment on joining the school. This is a result of more effective planning in lessons and the support of the newly installed network system and software resources. In lessons, students demonstrate competence in using desktop publishing software, spreadsheets and databases, and they cover a small element of control technology within design and technology. They search for information using both CD-ROM as well as the Internet. The present curriculum provision relies on students developing their ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum. This work is well co-ordinated by the head of ICT who gives classroom support to students and subject staff. Students at all levels of attainment achieve basic competence in the skills covered in subjects. For example, in mathematics, students use a specialist program to control movement and create shapes 'on screen'. They developed greater depth in their understanding through a practical application. Students can use databases and spreadsheets and are able to set up a spreadsheet, enter data and use formulae to calculate results. Higher attaining students are able to explore the results of their calculations further by varying the data they used. Students at all levels of attainment are able to explain the work they are doing and have a good level of understanding. They use a good range of vocabulary appropriately and accurately when describing the detail of their work.
177. Students at the age of 16 achieve standards in line with the levels expected of them at this stage nationally. This represents good achievement when compared to their prior attainment. Students apply a range of skills and demonstrate greater depth in their understanding. They are able to evaluate and comment on their progress and overall success of their own achievement as well as identify ways of improving further. Students increase the complexity and depth to which they worked and this was seen in a Year 10 lesson where students were setting up various spreadsheet models. For example, students were designing systems to monitor and calculate the sale of CDs and computer games suitable for use by a shopkeeper. All students demonstrate good knowledge of the software and the ability to set up a complex system with the ability to sort according to various categories. They are able to use formulae to perform the calculations they need. Higher attaining students are confident and are able to test their designs and to identify how they could improve their models.
178. The quality of teaching is good overall. This brings about good learning in lessons. Teachers show a good level of planning and preparation and are well organised for lessons. In most lessons there are clear objectives which help give a focus for students' learning. Teachers explain the technical language of the subject and encourage students to use it correctly, both in their work and when they talk about

their work. This is particularly important where there are students with lower than average reading skills who benefit from the opportunity to extend their vocabulary. Teachers produce worksheets that are helpful in moving the students' learning forward when they work through projects. These do not always, however, challenge higher attaining students fully. As a result, higher attaining students do not always work at a level that is suitable for their needs. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and direct their questioning well to assess how much the students learn and understand. This also helps to raise the level of concentration of students in lessons. Teachers use interesting topics on which to base the learning, and as a result students respond well to work in class. However, students' having to share computers in lessons often slows the pace of learning.

179. The use of computers in other subjects is increasing. This situation is enabling the development of skills and supporting students' progress. In mathematics, teachers use ICT well to promote the understanding of concepts. Students use a specialist program to control movement 'on screen' which develops their skills in creating sequential commands. They also use spreadsheets when handling mathematical data. In physical education, students use ICT effectively to simulate games such as tennis, explore health, and research information relating to drugs, smoking and alcohol. In religious education, students use ICT to support project work on various religions, and present information using multi-media presentation software. They also use desktop publishing, including the use of digital cameras, as well as spreadsheets. In art, students use ICT to research information, use the digital camera and have been working on 'Patterns', which is a combined project with mathematics and ICT. In English, students use word processing for their writing, including examples of poetry. They also use desktop publishing to produce their own newspapers. In science, students use desktop publishing to present information and ICT is now beginning to feature in the work being planned within the department. However, there is no hardware to allow work on measurement and data logging. ICT is underdeveloped in modern foreign languages and music.
180. The school has addressed a number of issues since the last inspection and has made satisfactory progress. A new school computer network promotes ICT in the curriculum, but the number of computers in the school is still below the national average. A systematic assessment scheme is now in place but is in the early stage of development. All students in Years 10 and 11 need to be assessed and their progress reported to parents. Schemes of work are developing but they do not yet include guidance on planning work for students with different educational needs.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

181. Standards of attainment among the school's 14 year olds in 2000 were below the expected standard for boys, but the school's provisional figures for 2001 show an improvement. In 2000 fewer than half of the Year 9 students were assessed at National Curriculum level 4 and above; the expected standard. Results for the current Year 9, however, match the national average figure.
182. The school typically enters nearly all its 16 year olds for a modern language at GCSE, mostly in French, with about a fifth in German, and overall more than is the case nationally. However, students do less well in modern languages than in most subjects, and less well compared with boys in other similar schools. Since the last

inspection, after a gradual improvement towards the national average for boys, the overall A* to C success rate declined during 1999 and 2000 to well below average, and was poor in German. Standards suffered from frequent changes of staff. During the last academic year, there were unfilled vacancies for two of the three department posts. Results across the full A* to G range are closer to the national average.

183. Current standards in Year 9 reflect the very significant improvement brought to teaching and learning by the newly appointed staff. At the end of Year 9 students' attainment in class is now in line with expected standards. In relation to their ability and prior attainment, most students achieve satisfactorily, and well in listening and speaking. These skills are unusually strong because it is accepted practice to hear and use the spoken language for as much of the lesson as possible. Most students can speak naturally and confidently in routine exchanges with the teacher, for example, about the weather, or current sporting or world events, or about how they are feeling, and ask questions of other students on familiar, rehearsed topics. The higher attainers link their answers into longer statements, can speak from memory and are beginning to improvise. Most students use number confidently in frequent counting games and mental calculation routines, have an above average grasp of tense differences and pronounce acceptably. In contrast, written work, both in class and in the sample of work, is not so well developed and is below average overall. The very highest attainers use the expected range of structures and link ideas freely, and in some cases are entered for GCSE in Year 9. The typical pupil, however, is at National Curriculum level 3, limited to short paragraphs and sentences, and too reliant on support when adapting a given model or making agreements of verb and adjective. In general, students do not write enough at length or from memory. The best progress is made in Year 8 German, where in one year many students are already reaching standards of understanding and speaking well in advance of those expected of their age, responding instantly and accurately with well-formed accents to a range of stimuli.
184. In Year 11, written work, although still below average, shows some improvement from GCSE results of recent years. One or two more gifted students are securely above the grade C standard, with a secure understanding of tense differences and a confident if unambitious application of other structures. As in Year 9, achievement overall is satisfactory in relation to prior attainment, but the disruption of recent years has clearly depressed the standards of many students. The majority are therefore predicted to reach grades D or E. They know and recognise vocabulary in practised topics, which enables them to understand the detail in short recordings and texts, but their speaking relies heavily on what they have written and learnt. Receptive skills and speaking in Year 10 show increasing self-confidence and an acceleration in progress.
185. There is no discernible difference in achievement between students from different ethnic backgrounds, or between the more gifted students and those learning English as an additional language and the majority. Most students with special educational needs, however, are the exception, and do not achieve as well as they could because they do not receive enough specific help. No provision is made for additional in-class support in the subject, and, although teachers adapt questioning and sometimes provide suitable support for reading and writing, their planning does not fully meet individual needs, especially in large classes with a broad range of ability.

186. Teaching is consistently good and is a significant strength. None is less than satisfactory; in half of the lessons it was very good and in a quarter outstanding, an exceptionally high proportion. The teachers' strengths are their very good command of the languages they teach, and their very good management of students' behaviour and learning. Expectations are consistently very high: good learning and attitudes, often very good, are the result. Lessons are conducted through the spoken language, students are required to add detail to their answers, and in the best lessons activities change seamlessly at pace, with students actively engaged at every moment. They are therefore alert and ready for their turn, which they know will come. Students co-operate sensibly, and practise their speaking at every opportunity, even where, in Year 10, a few may still prefer not to. Activities are very well prepared and organised, time often maximised with objectives displayed and answer grids distributed in advance. Oral drilling is disciplined and rigorous, and practice often enjoyable in question and answer chains around the class, although there need to be more opportunities for creative pair and group work. The best learning occurred in an excellent Year 8 German lesson where, as part of a sequence of games practising phrases for favourite leisure activities, all students were challenged individually in a rapid exchange of questions and answers cued by soft ball, mime or visual clue. Here the teacher used expertise across a wide repertoire of skills to promote high achievement through fun and challenge. In Year 10, similar teaching has improved students' learning, so that some are becoming more independent speakers and many have now acquired satisfactory attitudes to the subject and make the necessary effort.
187. Where teaching can be improved, more needs to be done to encourage all students to speak and write from memory. There is too much copy-writing which is not subsequently learnt and tested. Marking is not focused often enough on informing students of the standard they have reached and, for example, how to progress through National Curriculum levels. Information from assessments is not used sufficiently to plan more appropriately and regularly, for the needs of individual students.
188. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and rapid within the last year. Following a period of staffing difficulties the department is now in a more realistic position to achieve its targets. In order to raise standards further for all students, the school needs to increase curriculum time in Year 8 or 9 from minimal to recommended levels. There have been major improvements in teaching and in assessment procedures, and recent innovations such as the international e-mail links and the dedicated reading corner in the learning resource centre are important indicators of a team now confident to take initiatives. The department is staffed well, written coursework for GCSE is to be introduced from the beginning of next year, and provision has been made for a group of second linguists in Year 10. The number of textbooks in the department has also improved. There is a commitment to improvement, and an enthusiastic approach to teaching and learning which ensures a positive ethos. The work of the department meets the school's aims well. Provided that staffing remains stable the department has the capacity to maintain its improvement.

MUSIC

189. For two years prior to last September, there was no full-time music specialist teaching at Rutlish School. The present head of department has been in post for almost a year. The absence of specialist staff has had an effect on the attainment

of students and the development of the music department.

190. The standard of work is below expectations for students at the age of 14. Teachers' assessments of students' work at the end of Year 9 are overly optimistic and based mainly on the end of year examination. Using this method does not give an all-round picture of the students' musical ability, and several students judged as achieving a high level do not have the musical ability to justify this level. This means that students cannot identify notes on the staff and translate them to the keyboard, and do not know how to construct chords or use correct finger technique when using keyboards. Despite staffing problems, students have continued to study music for GCSE examination. A high proportion of students achieve A* to C grades and predicted results for this year indicate that this trend should continue. During the inspection no lessons for Year 11 students were seen and there was only very limited samples of their work available. Listening to these pieces shows that standards are in line with expectations and some pieces of work are above expectations. One piece demonstrated a good understanding of composing for violin and viola through the musical form of rondo and jig. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language continue to make good progress. Currently, there are no Year 10 students studying music.
191. Teaching in Years 8 and 9 is good and this is mirrored in their learning. Lessons are well planned and take into account the lack of information regarding previous music lessons. This means that Year 9 students have many gaps in their musical knowledge and as a result the work is below the standard expected for these students. The teacher uses questioning regularly to ensure understanding of musical information and how students can use this during practical work. Students are encouraged to write self-evaluations of their work and to develop their musical language when discussing their own and others' work. This helps students develop their understanding of musical language and justify their musical preferences. A good relationship exists between students and the teacher and their individual musical abilities are known. Students are encouraged to support and help each other in order to demonstrate their understanding of the task involved. In Year 8 students worked co-operatively to produce an improvisation based on Gamelan music. One pupil had realised how hard he needed to listen and concentrate during a performance so that his part fitted into the whole piece. It was a whole team performance. Students enjoy their lessons and experience a wide range of music from different parts of the world. The music department has limited resources and this affects the variety of teaching that can take place. At times not all students can work with similar instruments. There is no access to ICT equipment for composing and recording, so students are at present unable to develop this aspect of music. Singing is not taught regularly and this area needs to be added to music lessons. Learning support assistants are aware of the aims for each lesson so that they are able to support students. Work sheets when used are designed carefully, which ensures that all students work at the appropriate level and are sufficiently challenged.
192. Students enjoy music lessons and there are good relationships. It is hoped that with the generous funding available from the school foundation more students will be able to have instrumental lessons next term. Students enjoy new activities held during the lunch hour and after school. A successful concert was held during the inspection where students performed within a variety of ensembles. Several of these students no longer have music lessons but enjoy the subject as an extra-curricular activity.

193. The department benefits from the able and enthusiastic leadership of the recently appointed teacher. She has a clear vision, and determination and enthusiasm to take the department forward. Much has already been achieved. Department documentation is newly written and is under review to reflect changes to the curriculum. The revision will enable this area to be considered and changes made so that all areas of music are taught. At present there is no systematic approach to recording students' practical work; doing this regularly would help the monitoring of individual progress. The department contributes well to the teaching of literacy through written and oral work but less well to the teaching of numeracy. The school is fully aware of the unsatisfactory and inadequate accommodation for students taking instrumental lessons or rehearsing in small groups. The improvement needed to the quality of this accommodation is hampered by the listed status of the building. Some of the rooms are shabby and there is a lack of suitable storage for instruments. Resources are limited and this affects the variety of teaching undertaken. At the time of the previous inspection there were no computers in the department and this continues to be the case. A good start has been made towards developing the department and the head of department has the determination to succeed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

194. GCSE results in 2000 were in line with the national average. Students obtained results that were similar to those in a few of the other subjects, and better than most other results for A* to C grades.
195. Currently students are attaining standards that are in line with the level expected of 14 year olds nationally, and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement given their prior attainment. Students are attaining standards that are slightly above the level expected of 16 year olds nationally in their programme of work. All groups of students make progress at a similar rate.
196. By the time they have reached the age of 14, most students have a good understanding of the purpose of warm-up activities and can explain which muscle groups are working during stretching exercises. Through carefully planned sessions students are introduced to the correct techniques associated with sprinting. Opportunities to lead warm-up sessions or to plan their own responses are effective as they extend both students' confidence and skills appropriately. All groups of students show competence in a range of games skills. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme and make steady progress. Students competed according to ability, for example, in a 100 metre timed race. There are good alternative arrangements for students with physical disabilities. Students of all abilities talk knowledgeably about playing technique, using technical language accurately. There are developing opportunities for students to comment on their own performance and those of others. Year 8 students were given the opportunity to analyse and feedback on their partner's performance at sprinting and to suggest simple ways to improve techniques. The performance of high attainers is well illustrated by the Under 13 football team, which has successfully represented the school in local competitions. By the age of 14 students display a good ability in passing and throwing techniques. In cricket, students are particularly adept at moving to receive a ball, often catching off balance or one handed. Students possess a good sense of rhythm in dance. Students demonstrate their creativity and versatility in movement.

High attainers demonstrate grace in their movement irrespective of the activity. Students respond to challenging tasks. A greater focus on health and fitness aspects in lessons would raise overall performances in games. Students appear to enjoy hard work when playing games such as volleyball. The teaching of such games makes big demands on students' stamina. There are good opportunities to take part in extra-curricular work and high attainers excel in many games.

197. In Year 10, standards in most games are slightly above the levels expected nationally; overall achievement is good. In cricket, students master the basic knowledge, skills and understanding of the rules and of effective play. Most students demonstrate good technical skills in field games. The higher attainers can organise their own activities effectively, officiate and play fairly. Students make satisfactory progress in athletics which has been a focus for development within the department. Year 9 students worked in pairs. They measured how far they could sprint in three, six and nine seconds. Using the data gathered they examined the differences between the distances ran in the specified times. They all discovered the reasons for the differences. Good standards are achieved in extra-curricular sport and about a third of the school population participates regularly in an extensive programme of special events, clubs and competitions. The links between the school and St Mary's College are well established and help to update students on coaching techniques.
198. The teaching and subsequent learning of students is good. Good relationships exist between most students and staff. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In Year 10 volleyball games, students demonstrated previously learned skills and the teachers clearly understood the rules, tactics and their application. This knowledge was effectively developed in students' skills involved in volleyball. Activities are well managed and lessons are taught at a good pace, matched to students' previous experience and capabilities. Teachers make good use of resources to ensure that lessons are challenging and exciting. A Year 10 softball game produced sustained enjoyment combined with skill development. Students are given opportunities to show initiative and leadership and reinforce their skills. In all lessons objectives are clear and shared with students and, as a result, most students are well motivated and track their own progress. Tasks are well matched to students' capabilities and teachers monitor progress closely and intervene sensitively to ensure students of all abilities achieve their goals. Year 10 volleyball students using video analysis used their knowledge to help improve their partner's performance. Lessons are well planned with well-sequenced activities so that students build effectively on previous learning. Teachers effectively develop co-operation amongst students by working them in pairs. Examples include students devising ways to improve performance through active experimentation of various running styles for a 100 metres sprint. Assessment data is used to help individuals raise their skills according to their level of ability. Students respond positively to the care and support provided for them by their teachers. The ESSA award scheme helps most 12 to 15 year olds.
199. The management of the subject is good. There is energetic and enthusiastic leadership, which has developed standards and created a positive ethos in the department. The emphasis placed on monitoring the subject's performance has led to the development of effective coaching and teaching.
200. Progress, since the last inspection, has been good. There has been progress in assessment methods and an improvement in the standards of work attained. The

quality of teaching has also improved. The curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that it meets statutory requirements for physical education. The proposed introduction of the Sports Leaders/Community Leaders Award is a further indication of progress in curriculum development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

201. Students' attainment in religious education at age 14 is above the standard expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Spoken answers are in much greater depth than written work and show a good knowledge and understanding of the major world religions. Students understand the importance and principles of giving to the poor in Islam. They can understand the importance of marriage as the foundation of family life in Judaism. They learn the order and the significance of the marriage ceremonies in different religions. In all lessons they learn the meaning of the subject-specific words and the use of symbolism in religious practices and ceremonies. They are expected to learn the subject-specific vocabulary and use this vocabulary correctly.
202. All students took the GCSE short course for the first time in 2000. Seventeen per cent achieved the higher grades A* to C and 73 per cent achieved a pass grade. This represents satisfactory achievement in the initial stage since these students did not have specialist teaching in Years 8 and 9. There has been a very significant change in the structure of the religious education department in the past 18 months when a new specialist head of department was appointed. Up to that time the subject was not co-ordinated and was taught by a number of non-specialist teachers. Only a small group of students took GCSE in after-school lessons. The subject is now taught by a specialist head of department and two non-specialists teachers, also recently appointed to the school. All these teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and are committed to teaching religious education.
203. No Year 11 lessons were seen. However, all students followed the short course GCSE and 43 per cent are estimated to get the higher grades and 98 per cent are predicted to pass. Their written work supports these estimates. In Year 10 lessons standards are at least average. Students studying social harmony in relation to women in religion are aware of the main issues and can refer to the historic background. They can analyse questions on prejudice and make good personal responses.
204. There is very good achievement in all year groups. Teachers are aware of the needs of higher and lower attaining students. They are identified in the teachers' planning and they are given appropriate support and help, particularly with reading and written responses.
205. Teaching is very good in all years. All teachers maintain a good working atmosphere so that their students concentrate fully. They work hard to make the lessons interesting and relevant to the lives of the students. All lessons are very well planned with a good structure so that students can learn the facts in order, and form opinions based on the knowledge and understanding gained. Teaching has a good academic approach and work is done in good depth. The lively and dynamic quality in all lessons captures students' interest and promotes enthusiasm for the subject.

206. Students have very good attitudes to this subject in all years. They show respect for the subject. They listen attentively to their teachers and answer readily in class. They are keen to read aloud and ask and answer questions appropriately.
207. A good emphasis is given to promoting literacy skills in all lessons, and students are given opportunities to make personal responses in writing in all topics. This extended writing enables them to show their skills of analysis.
208. The leadership of the subject is very good. The new head of department is energetic and enthusiastic and creates a vibrant joy in learning that is transferred to the students. Planning is very good. The schemes of work have been newly written in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus, a shortcoming identified in the last inspection report. Lesson plans are in very good detail so that the subject is taught in good depth. A new range of high quality textbooks has been purchased and these are contributing significantly to students' learning.
209. There is insufficient use of ICT at present although it is used for research in topics such as Hindu and Islamic marriage ceremonies and political and social issues. However, students are encouraged to use ICT in homework.
210. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by looking in depth at the spiritual elements of the major world religions, and moral and social issues such as war, poverty, human rights, abortion and euthanasia. The cultural aspects of the major world faiths are also explored in good depth and students can see links and similarities between different cultures including modern British culture.
211. There has been a very significant improvement in religious education since the last inspection. The unsatisfactory staffing situation has been rectified. Teaching has improved; there is no poor teaching. Students' achievement has improved and all students are given the opportunity to do the short course GCSE. Time is being increased next year and all students will then have the opportunity to do the full GCSE course. Clear targets for achievement are set in all lessons and this practice is leading to improvements in standards.