

# INSPECTION REPORT

**LYNDON SCHOOL**

Solihull

LEA area: Solihull

Unique reference number: 104114

Headteacher: Mrs Selina Westwood

Reporting inspector: Geoff Headley  
1714

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> February – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2000

Inspection number: 184775

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Daylesford Road Solihull West Midlands
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor Brian Chapple
Date of previous inspection:	May 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Geoff Headley	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Physical education.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Norman Shelley	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Valerie Elliott	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
David Gutmann	<i>Team inspector</i>	Business education; Economics.	Other special features; School data and indicators.
Joseph Clark	<i>Team inspector</i>		Special educational needs; Equal opportunities.
John Morrell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
Russell Whiteley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
Allan Paver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
David Wasp	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
Graham Preston	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information technology.	
Roger Bailess	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
Kathy Hooper	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
David Benstock	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
Carmen Rodney	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	English as an additional language.
Phillip Armitage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Lyndon is a large comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16; there were 1162 pupils at the time of the inspection. The school is situated in the north west of Solihull, close to the border with the city of Birmingham; it admits pupils in comparable numbers from both areas. Approximately 5 per cent arrive or leave the school at other than the usual admission or leaving dates. The proportion entitled to free school meals is broadly average, as is the proportion from ethnic minority families. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 is very varied. Their Key Stage 2 test results show that attainment is sometimes average and sometimes below; however, other tests show that a large minority have a reading age which is two or more years below their chronological age. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement made by the local education authority, is in line with the national average.

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

The school is providing a good quality of education as a result of good teaching, good attitudes to learning of the vast majority of pupils, and a secure environment where relationships are effective for learning. Attainment overall is in line with that expected at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The school is well led and well placed to improve further. It is giving satisfactory value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Leadership is sharply focused on raising attainment.
- There are many effective teachers who enable most pupils to make good progress.
- High standards are achieved in English, where both boys' and girls' examination results are consistently above the national average. Pupils also do well in history and business studies.
- Literacy skills are promoted widely by the English department and by several other subject departments.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and there is particularly good provision for those who have a hearing impairment.
- The school cares well for its pupils and gives good support and guidance to help them achieve. Target setting is becoming more effective in promoting pupils' academic and personal development.
- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour help them learn and contribute to the school's positive ethos.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Some of the most able pupils do not attain as highly as they should, particularly in mathematics, science and geography.
- There are weaknesses in pupils' numeracy skills and there is no policy for improvement.
- There are long standing and continuing weaknesses in aspects of design and technology that need to be eradicated.
- The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are not applied consistently and rigorously. Some of the strategies for improvement are imprecise and not always included in planned developments of subject departments.
- The range of data, used well to monitor pupils' performance, is not used effectively by teachers to modify schemes of work and plan lessons.
- Whilst rapid improvements are occurring in the provision of information technology pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their information technology skills in most subjects of the curriculum.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1995. Since then the overall results of the Key Stage 3 national tests have risen at the same rate as other schools nationally. The GCSE results are much better than at the time of the last inspection, though improvement since then has continued at a slightly slower pace than nationally.

There has been a satisfactory response to the key issues in the previous report. There is now an action plan to achieve the targets for improving examination results. Use of resources is now efficient and effective. Teaching has been the subject of staff training, and there has been a big improvement in the overall quality. Assessment procedures have been refined recently and are now effective overall. Religious education is now taught to all pupils thus fulfilling statutory requirements. The requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.



## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	D	<i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E

Over several years, the school's Key Stage 3 results have moved upwards in line with the national trend. The most recent results show that pupils made very good progress from the time they took the Key Stage 2 tests in their primary schools. Very good English results have been maintained; mathematics results have improved slightly and science results have fallen slightly. At GCSE, the school's results are broadly in line with those of other schools nationally but below those of similar schools. Girls do better than boys, which is the case nationally, but over the last few years boys have tended to get closer to the national average for their gender than have girls. The target for examination results was achieved in 1999, and an appropriate target, which takes into account the prior attainment of the current Year 11 pupils, has been set for the year 2000. The English results continue to be very good; mathematics results have fallen from a position two years ago when they were in line with national figures; science results have fallen from above average two years ago. Results in history and business studies are consistently good, and the most recent Spanish and physical education results were very good. Pupils' performance in art was poor, and it was also poor in aspects of design and technology, where there have been low standards for several years. The standard of pupils' work seen during the inspection mostly reflects the wide variation in attainment and the average examination results. Most pupils make satisfactory or good progress. The 1999 cohort made satisfactory progress overall, when their previous performance in the Key Stage 3 national tests is judged against their performance at GCSE. The teaching of literacy is very strong, and good progress is made by the significant number of pupils who enter the school with low levels of reading. Standards of numeracy are unsatisfactory.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: attitudes in lessons are good overall. Pupils are interested and try hard; many are able to work independently. Pupils with a hearing impairment are particularly positive about their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: behaviour in lessons is most often good or very good. A very small minority of lessons are disrupted by a few pupils who exploit weak teaching. Pupils behave responsibly as they move around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good: pupils take responsibility and support one another. Relationships with each other and their teachers are constructive.
Attendance	Satisfactory: the school sets improvement targets which have been reached at Key Stage 3 but not at Key Stage 4, where several Year 11 pupils have recurring absences.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are strengths of the school and contribute to its positive ethos.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	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.*

English teaching is the strongest of the core subjects; it is good or very good in both key stages. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall, with much more good teaching at Key Stage 3. Science teaching is also satisfactory overall and is slightly better at Key Stage 4.

Teaching is good overall because teachers use their secure subject knowledge well. They usually inform the pupils of what they are to learn, and set challenging and interesting tasks. Effective questioning and a brisk pace are common features of the best lessons. In the few weak lessons, teachers do not manage the pupils effectively or monitor their understanding and progress. Teaching is most successful in English, history and business studies, and is the reason for consistently high examination results in these subjects. No subject has unsatisfactory teaching overall. Literacy skills are very well taught in English and promoted effectively in several subjects, particularly history and science. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good teaching, and their progress is enhanced by effective

support from classroom assistants. Planning is good overall, but the ablest pupils do not always receive sufficiently challenging work, and as a consequence they do not always reach the levels of which they are capable. This weakness is particularly marked in mathematics and science; low standards in geography are as a result of past weaknesses of this kind.

Ninety four per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better; 61 per cent is good or better; 6 per cent is unsatisfactory or poor. Most pupils make good progress as a result of their good attitudes and largely effective teaching.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: an appropriate range of subjects and other learning opportunities is provided for all pupils. Extra-curricular provision is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good: support is well targeted to pupils' needs and ensures that they make good progress; individual education plans need refinement to be more subject specific.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory: the small amount of support in classrooms is effective.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall: good provision for personal, social and moral development; spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory; cultural development is satisfactory but pupils' awareness of our multi-cultural society needs to be developed further.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: the school provides a secure environment and helps pupils make progress in their academic and personal development.

The school's relationship with parents is satisfactory overall. The information provided by the school is of good quality and sufficient in quantity. Parents are consulted on various matters to do with school policy, and there is appropriate communication with them regarding their children's achievements, behaviour or attendance. The time allocated to teaching is below the national recommendation. There are some shortcomings in the way the curriculum is organised which result in discontinuity in learning in design and technology, drama and information technology; the latter is not taught enough in other subjects and in this respect the requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met. Overall, good guidance and support are provided for pupils; target setting is increasing in effectiveness, and procedures for assessing their progress are good.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall: the headteacher provides clear direction with a sharp focus on raising standards. Procedures for monitoring the work of the school need to be applied consistently and with rigour by other senior managers. Middle managers are mostly effective and they are developing their roles.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: the governors are increasingly involved in monitoring the school's work. They have a sound understanding of its strengths and weaknesses but they have been slow to deal with some of the weaknesses identified in the last report.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: a wide range of data is used to assess the school's performance.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: staff are deployed appropriately, accommodation has been improved and learning resources are sufficient and used well.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate overall. Previous disruptions to staffing have affected standards in some subjects, but these difficulties have been largely overcome. Carefully planned developments have resulted in steady improvements in the accommodation. The library stock and learning resources for information technology are being enhanced significantly. There are some important shortages affecting a minority of subjects.

The strengths of the leadership are the clear direction given by the headteacher, the emphasis on school improvement and the procedures already in place to ensure that it happens. The weaknesses are the inconsistency and lack of rigour in applying the monitoring and evaluation policy.

The school applies the principles of best value when buying goods and services and a wide range of data is used to check the school's performance in relation to local and national standards.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A very high proportion of parents who replied to the questionnaire think that the school expects their child to work hard and that their child is making good progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three out of ten parents do not believe that they are kept well informed about how their child is getting on at school.</li> <li>About a quarter of parents think that the school could work more closely with them, and that their child does not get the right amount of homework.</li> </ul>

Just less than a quarter of parents and carers returned a questionnaire. Inspectors confirm their favourable views about the school. They do not agree that parents are not kept well informed about pupils' progress. The written reports are generally good, and the arrangements to meet parents are adequate. The school makes reasonable attempts to involve parents in a range of events and tries to work with them. Inspectors found that homework is generally appropriate, although communication with parents via the homework diaries is unsatisfactory. The concerns about variability and inconsistency of homework, expressed by parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting, were borne out by inspection.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Attainment in the Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) in 1999 was in line with the national average and the average for similar schools. Over several years, the school's average points score has moved upward in line with the national trend. The most recent results show that pupils made very good progress from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 3. In English, the proportion gaining Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above was very high when compared with all schools and similar schools. The results in mathematics were in line with national figures, but in science they were below; pupils performed below the average of similar schools in both subjects. Over several years, pupils have done well in English, always achieving better results than in mathematics and science. In English, both boys and girls perform consistently above the national average for their gender; in mathematics, both are in line. In science, however, girls are close to the average but boys fall below.

2. The pupils taking the GCSE examinations in 1999 made average progress in the two years from the end of Key Stage 3 to the end of Key Stage 4. Their results are broadly in line with other schools nationally but below similar schools. Forty two per cent of pupils achieved grades A\*-C in five or more subjects compared with 46 per cent nationally. The results reported in the last inspection were below the national average, and since then they have been marginally above and sometimes marginally below national figures. The percentage gaining five or more A\*-G grades has been consistently above other schools nationally. The school has also been successful in decreasing the proportion of pupils who leave without a single examination pass. In 1999 just over 1 per cent did so.

3. There is fluctuation in the performance of girls and boys in relation to the national results for their gender, although over the last three years boys have been closer to the average than girls. The overall trend in improvement in results is slightly below the national trend.

4. Subject results vary greatly, and in some there is great variation from year to year. Pupils build on the high standards developed in English at Key Stage 3, and the proportion achieving a grade in the A\*-C range at GCSE is consistently above the national figures in both English and English literature. History results are also always well above average. The proportion gaining A\*-C grades in mathematics has been below average for the last two years, whereas in 1997 it was in line with other schools. The science results fell from an above average position in 1997 to below in 1998. Although there was improvement in 1999, the science results remained below the national position. In other subjects, good results were achieved in home economics and business studies in 1999, and very good results in Spanish and physical education. Business studies results were very good in the previous year. In contrast, the results in art have been well below average for the past two years, and results in aspects of design and technology have been low for several years. In 1999, information technology and geography were also below average, while drama was well below. In other subjects, the difference between the national and the school's results is less marked.

5. When attainment in a subject is compared with the average results of the same pupils in all of their other subjects, business studies and Spanish are seen to be doing particularly well and drama particularly badly in 1999. There is no discernible pattern over time except for mathematics, which has done worse than other subjects.

6. The target for GCSE passes in 1999 was reached. This was an appropriate target, taking into account the prior attainment of the current Year 11 pupils. Key Stage 3 targets are challenging, particularly for English, where standards are already high.

7. Inspection evidence from observing pupils in lessons, talking to them and looking at their work shows that the attainment of current pupils varies widely and reflects the pupil profile of the school. Attainment is slightly higher at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, which reflects the increased seriousness of pupils' attitudes and teachers' emphasis on GCSE requirements. Attainment is highest in English, history and business studies, the three most successful GCSE subjects. Standards displayed in art at Key Stage 3 are commensurate with national expectations, a healthy sign in the light of poor GCSE examination results over the past two years. There is a considerable proportion of classes in religious education and design and technology where attainment is below the expected standard. In both cases, low standards are more common at Key Stage 4; in aspects of design and technology the weaknesses have led to poor examination results over time. Attainment in physical education is below expectations in a significant proportion of classes, in contrast to very good results achieved by a relatively small number of pupils entered for the GCSE examination, and the high standards achieved by the pupils who gain representative honours in particular sports. There are below average standards in Key Stage 4 music, partly caused by previous disruption to staffing; a factor adversely affecting some other subjects. Below average attainment is evident in several mathematics and science classes at Key Stage 3. In both mathematics and science, the ablest pupils are under-achieving because they are not challenged sufficiently. To varying degrees, this is also a shortcoming in other subjects, most notably geography. In contrast, there is good provision and good outcomes in history through extension work. In information technology, higher-attaining Key Stage 3 pupils are being challenged by work more commonly seen at GCSE level.

8. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in Key Stage 3 because of the high level of support they receive, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Satisfactory progress is made in Key Stage 4 where direct support is reduced. Overall, pupils attain higher standards than their reading scores and other test results predict. In some cases, their reading improves by as much as 15 months. In both key stages, pupils who have a hearing impairment and who receive support in the special unit or in classrooms make good progress. Six per cent of pupils have English as an additional language, although only two pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. The school receives very little additional funding to support these pupils, but they make appropriate progress because they benefit from the good teaching throughout the school.

9. Standards of literacy are good overall at both key stages. Speaking and listening skills are very good; in most subjects pupils speak with confidence and understanding, using constructive criticism to evaluate their work. Pupils analyse and debate their work in many subjects. They are challenged to develop good oral skills when arguing their view points in subjects such as English, art, design and technology, history, music and religious education. Good use is made of role-play to develop their work in history and modern foreign languages, and in science and history pupils are encouraged to make deductions, comparisons and hypotheses when looking at evidence.

10. Strategies to develop literacy have been introduced, but, though these are good, their effectiveness needs to be closely monitored and evaluated. The English department has taken a leading role in training the whole staff on, for example, how to use literacy reading boxes in Year 7 and 8 classrooms, and how to promote a weekly focus on a specific language skill. The focus on literacy is strengthened through the use of subject vocabulary in some subjects, such as history and science. Most pupils read accurately with expression and understanding, although there are limited opportunities in most subjects for pupils to read aloud. Research skills and independent learning are actively encouraged in art, English and history. Pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences and they write at length in many subjects. There is good original creative writing in modern foreign languages and religious education. In religious education, however, pupils find extended evaluative writing difficult. At both key stages, pupils do research projects; they can make notes, plan and redraft their work, but only the high-attaining pupils revise and edit their work independently. Handwriting is legible and most spell reasonably well, but grammatical errors mar their work, particularly the lower-attaining pupils. Number skills are not well developed; unlike literacy there is no whole school approach, and, with a few exceptions, opportunities are missed outside mathematics lessons. Information technology skills are very varied as a result of past staffing difficulties, but current teaching is enabling pupils to make a rapid recovery. Many Key Stage 3 pupils are achieving the expected standard and some are performing at a higher level. There are, however, more weaknesses at Key Stage 4 where pupils have more ground to make up. In both key stages, the limited use of information technology across the curriculum is an obstacle to higher attainment.



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

11. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good, and levels of attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Similar findings were reported at the previous inspection.

12. Almost all pupils say they like school and that they enjoy their lessons. The vast majority have positive attitudes towards their education. In two thirds of lessons, their learning was enhanced because their attitudes and behaviour were good, very good and occasionally excellent. In a small proportion, about 5 per cent, attitudes and behaviour were negative, typically when pupils exploited weak teaching. Pupils with special educational needs generally show a willingness to learn and respond well in lessons. They mix well with other pupils and integrate into the life of the school. Pupils from the hearing impaired unit also have a very positive attitude, and relationships with their teachers are very good. Most pupils with special educational needs are adaptable and can work equally well with different teachers.

13. The many activities of the school are well supported, and pupils take pride in the many successes that the school achieves in areas such as competitive sports and public performances. Pupils' behaviour, in and out of classrooms, is good overall, with examples of exemplary behaviour in some lessons, particularly English. A few pupils, especially in Year 11 fail to exercise sufficient self-discipline; they seek attention and disrupt the progress of others.

14. Pupils conduct themselves in an orderly manner when moving around the school. This is particularly commendable in view of the number of pupils, the width of the corridors and the distances they have to walk. They are usually polite to each other and always to adults. Whilst pupils generally have respect for property, many fail to use litter bins and a significant amount of litter is dropped. Their own property and belongings can be safely left unattended.

15. The number of fixed period exclusions last year was high due to the school's strict adherence to its discipline policy and, to some extent, the behaviour of some pupils who had transferred from other schools from which they had already been excluded. The number of fixed period exclusions so far this year has substantially decreased, and the improvement is at least partially due to the application of the school's assessment and support systems for personal development, such as targeting improved attitudes and behaviour.

16. Pupils' personal development is good, partly because staff give good quality pastoral support and guidance to individual pupils. Pupils respond well to responsibilities such as form or team captaincy and being members of the school council. Twelve pupils have undertaken training to be peer counsellors, and there are many instances of pupils giving support to others, for example with reading. Educational excursions, including residential experiences, extra-curricular activities, considerable charitable support, and in some cases mentoring, are examples of other contributions to pupils' personal development.

17. Relationships between pupils and their subject teachers and tutors are constructive and supportive, making pupils feel secure and valued. Relationships between pupils are mainly good. There are excellent examples when for example, pupils are able to express sensitive views confidently and receive critical observations in good spirit during a debate. On the other hand, there are occasions when pupils fail to exercise sufficient tolerance in social situations, although these are rare.

18. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory overall and in line with the average for secondary schools in England. Improvement targets for this year were met by Key Stage 3 pupils in the autumn term, but not achieved by the pupils of Key Stage 4, who also have higher levels of unauthorised absence and lateness. The attainment of several older pupils is adversely affected by recurring absence and lateness. The school works closely with the educational welfare service to improve attendance.

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

19. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons. In 61 per cent it is good, very good or excellent; it is particularly strong at Key Stage 4 where 70 per cent of lessons are good or better. There was good or very good teaching in all subjects except drama, which was taught by a temporary teacher. All or almost all lessons in English, history, art, business studies and music were at least good; one excellent lesson occurred in English. As the examination results suggest, English teaching is the strongest of the core subjects and is good overall; mathematics and science teaching is satisfactory overall. In mathematics, the best teaching occurs at Key Stage 3, whereas in science teaching is more effective at Key Stage 4. The 6 per cent of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory were spread across mathematics, science, design and technology, drama, geography, physical education and religious education, and were mostly attributed to teachers whose teaching in other lessons was satisfactory or good. Occasionally, temporary teachers were unable to pitch a lesson at the appropriate level because they did not have sufficient knowledge of what the pupils had covered previously. For the most part, poor class control, low expectations, slow pace and insufficient monitoring of pupils' understanding resulted in unsuccessful lessons.

20. Teaching is good overall because teachers have secure subject knowledge, which they use well to demonstrate, guide and explain. They disclose the learning intentions, use resources well, set challenging activities and mostly have appropriately high expectations of the pupils. Effective questioning and a brisk pace are common features of the best lessons. Combinations of several positive features allied to good planning resulted in pupils learning well in more than half the lessons. The quality of teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection, when more than 20 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. The previous inspection's requirement to introduce a wider range of teaching styles has been met, although there are still shortcomings in the provision for more able pupils.

21. There are several reasons why English teaching is good. For instance, when Year 7 pupils were introduced to a script of a play, they were encouraged to interject and ask questions so that their understanding could be checked. Challenging questions asked effectively by a mathematics teacher contributed to the success of a Year 8 lesson on straight-line graphs. A Year 11 science lesson on how humans affect the environment had clear

objectives and stimulated discussion among the pupils. The art teachers, working to overcome past difficulties, including low attainment, were seen to be effective in using a variety of methods to prompt and encourage individuals; this was apparent in a Year 7 lesson in which pupils were working on facial expressions. An enthusiastic approach and the promotion of the school's literacy policy through the use of specialist vocabulary in design and technology were reasons why Year 7 pupils learned well in a textiles lesson. One of the most effective geography lessons also advanced Year 8 pupils' literacy skills through a range of sharply focused and well supported writing tasks connected with water supply and demand in Britain. Strong subject knowledge, an enthusiastic approach and skilful monitoring of pupils' progress ensured good learning in a Year 10 information technology lesson. In one of many good history lessons, the teacher of a Year 10 class presented a strong challenge and used group work very effectively to help pupils understand the 20<sup>th</sup> Century ideologies which led to the Cold War. Very good use of a video recording and quick fire oral work resulted in a stimulating Spanish lesson taught to Year 11 pupils. Good presentation of video material was also a feature of a Year 10 GCSE physical education lesson on sports' injuries; the balance between the teacher's input and challenging questions ensured good learning. A Year 11 music lesson was very successful because the teacher set realistic targets and then acted as a facilitator and motivator, enabling pupils across a wide ability range to make progress. In a religious education lesson, a good visual stimulus and skilful class management resulted in a group of Year 7 pupils with special educational needs gaining knowledge and understanding about the Islamic faith. A reason for good examination results in business studies was evident in a Year 11 lesson, where pupils were given firm guidance and also expected to show initiative when considering what travel agents should take into account when deciding a location in a shopping area.

22. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Most teachers have detailed knowledge of their needs. The quality of individual education plans has significantly improved since the last inspection. Most teachers use them effectively when planning work but the plans need to be more subject specific and set short-term attainable targets against which progress can be more easily and more frequently measured. Much of the teaching is enhanced by the high quality work of the classroom assistants. They offer valuable support to special educational needs pupils, including those from the hearing impaired unit. The specialist teaching support staff are knowledgeable and highly skilled, and provide mostly interesting and challenging work for pupils. Provision in classrooms for the wide range of attainment among the pupils is uneven. For example, it is good overall in history and modern foreign languages but unsatisfactory in religious education because in some lessons the higher-attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. The lower-attainers are neither stretched nor supported and as a consequence gain only bare facts without really understanding religious and moral questions.

23. There is good promotion of literacy in many classrooms. Although there is inconsistency across the school, many teachers routinely emphasise correct use and spelling of key words in their subjects. In several subjects, teachers give guidance on note-taking and require good presentation of written and oral contributions.

24. Teachers' use of marking as a means of monitoring pupils' understanding and progress is uneven across the school and within some departments. For example, in science there is insufficient marking overall, although in some cases the marking of course work is detailed and helpful to pupils. There is also inconsistency in design and technology, where it is particularly unhelpful at Key Stage 4. In contrast, pupils benefit from rigorous marking in religious education where they are told how they are doing. In English, constructive marking sets targets for the improvement of written work. The use of homework is generally appropriate, with good examples of it being used well in English, art, music and religious education. Parents' views that it is better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3, when pupils are given work that is not demanding enough, are partly borne out by inspection evidence.

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

25. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has breadth and balance and is sound overall. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, and some enrichment through drama and two modern foreign languages. There is good provision in discrete information technology lessons, but opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to practise the skills they have learned is patchy. For example, there are good opportunities in mathematics, but provision in art and music is weak. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum, including the use of information technology.

26. The Key Stage 4 curriculum offers good breadth and choice. It is well planned to meet pupils' different needs and aspirations. There is a good range of academic subjects and courses with vocational relevance. The GNVQ health and social care course offers opportunity for pupils to gain a vocational accreditation. The weaknesses in provision for information technology are the same as in Key Stage 3. A key issue in the last inspection was to ensure that religious education was available to all pupils. This has been dealt with by providing a GCSE course, which all pupils now study.

27. There are some shortcomings in the organisation of the curriculum. The school's total teaching time is below that recommended nationally. A carousel arrangement for teaching drama and information technology at Key Stage 3 causes discontinuity and impedes progress. There is also discontinuity in learning in design and technology, because pupils have to study different aspects in rotation. The timing of the school day results in discrepancy in time allocated to subjects. This affects some optional subjects at Key Stage 4, where some pupils have one lesson fewer than others for the same subject.

28. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The Code of Practice is fully in place, and the needs of pupils with a statement of special educational need are well met. The curriculum at Key Stage 3, including that provided for those supported by the hearing impaired unit, meets statutory requirements and provides a very good foundation for pupils to make progress. All special needs pupils have full access to the curriculum, and it is appropriately modified for particularly sensitive pupils in the hearing impaired unit. The individual education plans are well constructed although each subject department needs to indicate how the pupils' targets will be achieved. In addition to the National Curriculum, pupils benefit from individual literacy programmes, language booster programmes, a

computer-based enhanced learning programme, paired reading opportunities and homework and reading clubs. Good provision is made in Year 7, where pupils are taught in small groups in some subjects, including English and mathematics. This is enhanced in Years 8 and 9, where there is a mixture of small group and in-class support, for example, in science. In addition to GCSE courses, Key Stage 4 pupils with special educational needs benefit from an accredited communications skills course, which involves them in the Young Enterprise Scheme. Some in-class support continues. The school acknowledges the need to give attention to gifted and talented pupils, but there is little special support for those who are very able, either as discrete provision or in mainstream classes.

29. Literacy has a high profile and is a strength of the school. There is good provision so that pupils make good progress, especially those who enter the school lacking in basic skills. Nevertheless, the additional period allocated to English for the development of communication skills in Year 7 is not used as effectively as it might. Teaching strategies are effective and pupils' progress is enhanced in many subjects. Curricular provision for numeracy is unsatisfactory because there are too few opportunities for pupils to use number in subjects other than mathematics.

30. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities during and after the school day. Many staff are involved, and pupils express appreciation of the variety offered. This includes a good range of competitive sport, music, drama, art and activities in other subject areas. There are good arrangements to support homework and private study. Pupils also have good opportunities for day and residential visits. Overall, this good provision meets the varying needs of different ages and abilities, including those with special educational needs.

31. Provision for careers education and guidance is good. Pupils receive timely advice on option choices. They are given help with their self-assessment and provided with information about work opportunities and further education. All pupils have access in Year 9 to a useful computer programme, which supports research into different career opportunities. There is a good work experience programme and pupils take part in practice interviews with the assistance of members of the community.

32. Provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory overall. Although the programme covers appropriate aspects of health, drugs and sex education, and relationships, it is not consistently co-ordinated across all years. Not all pupils have access to the full programme. One group in Year 8, for example, has not done any written work since Year 7.

33. The quality and effect of community links on pupils' learning are good. The school is well used by the community. Links are especially strong in music, with the presence of the music centre on site, and also in art. Many local employers give effective support by providing pupils with work experience. Other useful links include those with some employees of the locally based Land Rover group, who have mentored Year 7 pupils to improve their information technology skills. The GNVQ health and social care course is also enhanced by various links with the local community. In contrast, there are not enough links between religious education and local faith communities to enhance pupils' understanding of how religion affects daily life. There are also insufficient links between the science curriculum and industry.

34. Links with other institutions are good. There is effective liaison with the many primary schools from which pupils are drawn. There is a thorough programme of visits for the induction of new Year 7 pupils and good transfer of information about them. Several subjects have useful curricular links. The science department, for example, shares schemes of work, and primary school pupils can take part in a science experience day. There are also sound links with local colleges of further education, for example, through the science and the GNVQ courses. For instance, in the latter, staff from the local college worked with pupils on resuscitation techniques. The school hosts the local education authority's secondary hearing impaired unit, and this brings considerable benefit to pupils whose needs are well supported.

35. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Provision for their moral and social development is good.

36. The climate of the school is one of openness and trust. Pupils are well inducted into the principles of right and wrong through assemblies and through subjects such as English, history, art and music. For example, pupils learn about the dilemmas relating to patriotism in assemblies. Moral positions are explored through events in history and situations in literature through English. In science, they learn about the constraints and possibilities of protecting the environment. Some teachers reinforce well, pupils' understanding of right and wrong through their informal contacts with them in lessons. For example, pupils are encouraged to respect other people's property and to consider the work of support staff, such as cleaners, by clearing up well at the end of lessons.

37. Provision for social development is good overall. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibilities and relate positively to others. Pupils are given responsibilities such as form representatives, and through these they learn to understand about people's responsibilities and rights. Bullying is dealt with thoroughly and promptly and pupils are encouraged to consider the social consequences of this form of intimidation. In lessons, teachers use a good range of strategies, such as group work, which encourage pupils to work productively together. The school has very good links with the community, and these enable pupils to participate profitably in local affairs. Assemblies, form periods and the school's personal and social education programme all play a part in helping pupils to develop good social skills. However, there is variable practice among teachers, for example, with respect to the organisation of form time and some pupils have more productive experiences than others. The content of the personal and social education programme is appropriate although it lacks effective co-ordination across the school.

38. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils develop a clear understanding of religions through their work in religious education and art. There are good opportunities to consider some fundamental questions in history and geography. One very good example occurred in a Year 9 lesson in which pupils watched a video of a landslide caused by an earthquake. When the pupils saw the mountain top explode, it created a moment of intense drama, leaving them reflecting on the awesome power of natural forces. This led them to produce some exciting writing about the event. Lessons on literature in English also make valuable contributions to this aspect of pupils' development. However, the school's policy is not sufficiently broad with respect to this aspect. The result is that assemblies tend to emphasise moral and social aspects rather than spiritual ones. Assemblies do not contain sufficient opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own attitudes and values or to consider the notion of a supreme being. They do not meet the legislative requirement for an act of worship; this was also the case in the last inspection.

39. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are many opportunities to visit museums and to appreciate the natural world through art, music and geography. Pupils study the art of different cultures and benefit from experiences involving visiting artists. Through English, they have opportunities to visit the theatre and work with local poets. Pupils work in the community with senior citizens and very young children. However, there are limited opportunities to consider the attitudes and beliefs of others within a multicultural society. For example, there are too few multicultural texts used in English.

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

40. The school provides a secure environment in which pupils can make progress in both their academic and personal development. The arrangements for pupils' health, safety and welfare are satisfactory overall. The provision for educational and personal support and guidance to raise pupils' achievement is good.

41. Health and safety procedures are generally effective for situations both in and out of school. For example, appropriate records are kept of injuries and fire drills. There is good provision for first aid and medical attention, and the school is well served by external specialists. Nevertheless, routine risk assessment needs further development in order to identify potential hazards more efficiently. Evacuation routes, in the event of fire, should be more clearly signed in some parts of the premises, in order to identify the whereabouts of the nearest exit. The use of handheld radios by staff adds to the school's ability to respond rapidly to urgent needs.

42. Child protection procedures are widely understood and adhered to across the school. Relationships between adults and pupils are respectful and trusting, enabling pupils to refer confidently if they require assistance or guidance. Pupils report that they feel secure and know whom to turn to for help.

43. A good induction programme ensures that pupils enjoy a smooth transfer from their primary school. The arrangement for them to remain with their tutors and year co-ordinators throughout their time in school ensures that they and their families are known to staff.

44. The procedures for monitoring and supporting personal development are good. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are graded. Tutors annually review pupils' progress, and conduct counselling sessions with individuals or small groups. Frequent informal reviews take place to check and promote progress. Pupils know that extra help is available to them if they request it. Significant or persistent underachievement is identified, and if the school's intervention is ineffective contact is made with parents to engage their support for improvement. A substantial number of pupils in Year 11 who are underachieving have accepted the offer of individual mentoring. The scheme is proving to be very successful in developing more positive attitudes and increasing pupils' efforts and application to study. As a consequence, improved GCSE grades are anticipated for the majority of pupils.

45. Good behaviour is successfully promoted by effective classroom management, a system of rewards and sanctions that is understood and supported by pupils, and by regular recognition and celebrations. Discipline is consistently applied, and pupils who have been placed on report are efficiently tracked.

46. Rigorous procedures to monitor and promote attendance and punctuality have been introduced. Targets have been set, and some progress has been made towards achieving them. Attendance performance by form groups, year groups and individuals is displayed around the school and in reports and newsletters. Early contact with parents of absentees has started, but has to be developed further. The use of the school's computerised system also needs further development. Its potential for identifying patterns of non-attendance and monitoring the attendance of particular groups is not yet realised.

47. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The previous report identified as a key issue the need to secure a full and consistent implementation of whole-school policies for assessment. The school has been slow to respond to this issue, but has recently revised the assessment, recording and reporting policy. There are now clear guidelines on the implementation and monitoring of assessment procedures, which are reflected in departmental documentation. A good range of base-line data is used. Consistency across departments is sought through training days and through the involvement of departmental and pastoral staff at all stages in the process. The system is operated well, and departmental policies for assessing attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. They are particularly effective in English, business studies, design and technology, art and music.

48. Assessment information is carefully recorded so that pupils' academic progress is well monitored in most subjects. However, this information is not used effectively to guide teachers in planning work that meets pupils' identified needs. The records reflect both academic and personal development and inform the target-setting process which is a key feature of the school. A refined system has been introduced recently in Years 9, 10 and 11. This is currently being put into operation at departmental level and is having a positive impact on the monitoring and support of pupils' progress, particularly in English, history and business studies. In other subjects, such as mathematics, science, religious education and geography, this aspect of assessment needs further development and a sharper focus. Pupils' underachievement or potential underachievement at Key Stage 4 is being tackled through a mentoring scheme. Self-assessment is used well to provide pupils with a sense of ownership in terms of their academic progress and personal development. Their personal progress files, started in Year 7 and carried through to Year 11, contribute to this.



49. There are clear procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs to enable staff to bring concerns to the attention of the learning support team. In addition to entry data and the results of tests administered in Year 7, use is made of teachers' observations and information from parents and external agencies. Pupils placed on the special educational needs register are tested at regular intervals and taken off the register when they have made sufficient progress. Support from external agencies is used when appropriate, and full use is made of the local education authority's behavioural support advisor.

50. The staff attached to the unit for pupils with hearing impairment provide strong and effective support for pupils' emotional needs, as well as demonstrating a high level of communication expertise. Several outside agencies are used to supplement the work of the unit staff. Pupils speak highly of the support they receive.

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

51. The majority of parents have positive views about the school. They believe that teaching and pastoral care are good, that pupils make good progress and that their behaviour and personal development are good. These views are endorsed by inspection findings. A significant proportion of parents who replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire are not satisfied with the information they receive about their children's progress, the amount of homework set and they say that the school does not work sufficiently closely with them. The inspection revealed that the written reports are generally good and the arrangements to meet parents are adequate. Reasonable attempts are made to involve parents in a range of events. Inspectors found that homework is generally appropriate, although there is variability and inconsistency, a concern expressed by most parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting. Communication between the school and parents via the homework diaries is unsatisfactory; teachers do not use them well and the number of parents who sign the diaries decreases as pupils get older.

52. The school's links with parents and the impact of their involvement on their children's learning are satisfactory. The information provided for parents is good, and enables them to have a good understanding of the work of the school and their children's progress. The prospectus and governors' annual report comply with requirements. The twice-monthly newsletters are very attractive publications, which include a wide range of interesting and valuable information. Several booklets are issued to parents throughout their children's time in school. The selection includes an initial information handbook, another which sets out what is to be taught in school, and one which details the various courses available to older pupils.

53. Annual and interim reports advise parents of the progress pupils make. Consultation evenings are arranged for parents, but attendance is not high for all year groups. Appropriate information and discussion opportunities are provided for parents about subject choices and pupils' aspirations for careers or further education.

54. Parents have been consulted about the recently introduced home/school agreement and uniform policy. Other than parent governors, parents are not invited on to working parties to review policies related to pastoral matters. Considerable communication takes place between school and many parents about concerns for individual children's underachievement, misbehaviour or attendance. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept informed about individual education plans, although they need to be more involved when the plans are drawn up. Parents are mostly very co-operative and supportive, but a significant minority withdraws their children during term time for family holidays, and this interrupts the continuity of learning for those concerned. Pupils' homework diaries enable parents to be aware of the school timetable and keep in touch with teachers. However, teachers do not use these diaries well as a means of communication, and the number of parents who sign them decreases as pupils move up the school.

55. The school receives good financial aid for resources from its school association, although the number of regular supporters is small and decreasing. Some parents have difficulty supporting the school because they live some distance away.

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

56. The headteacher, who has been in post for two years, leads the school well and gives clear educational direction. The pastoral qualities of the school, identified in the 1995 inspection report, have been carried forward and a strong focus on raising attainment has been introduced. The head has engendered a shared commitment to improve the school, despite a few staff who are resistant to change. There are procedures in place for monitoring the work of the school, such as curriculum and pastoral reviews and a programme for the observation of teaching and learning. The work of senior staff has been redefined to support the process, although their line management of departments and other sections of the school is not carried out consistently or with sufficient rigour. Although their discussions with middle managers are supportive, they rarely result in the identification of precise strategies to raise standards.

57. Much analysis of data takes place to assess pupils' attainment on entry to the school, and the information is increasingly used to set targets and monitor their progress. At the moment this information is not used enough to plan units of work and individual lessons to help pupils reach the set targets. A responsibility of a recently appointed senior manager is to help staff, particularly middle managers, to understand how the data can be used to assist individual pupils and the school as a whole to achieve at a higher level. This work is developing well, but has yet to impact on the middle managers, who are otherwise largely effective.

58. The attention given to observing teachers in classrooms is paying dividends, evident in the low proportion of unsatisfactory teaching found during the inspection. Observation now needs to be more sharply focused on specific issues that the school has to tackle, such as the performance of the ablest pupils and shortcomings identified within particular departments.

59. The method of planning the whole school's development is clear and involves staff at all levels. The priorities are appropriate, and are mainly to do with raising attainment at both Key Stage 3 and 4 and improving attendance overall; there are other priorities attached. The quality of department plans varies greatly, and in many there is not enough emphasis on the key aspect of raising attainment. The outcomes of reviews are not always featured, and the strategies to be adopted by departments to achieve their own and the whole school priorities are often imprecise. Monitoring to ensure successful implementation of the plans needs strengthening through the line management system.

60. Overall, governors carry out their duties well, although they have been slow to deal with some of the key issues identified in the previous inspection. There is an appropriate level of delegation to committees, which have proper accountability to the whole governing body. The chair of governors is a very experienced local politician, who is knowledgeable about education and uses this well to support the headteacher and lead other governors. The experience and expertise of other governors are used effectively. They are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring the work of the school and developing their role as critical friends. The chair, in particular, is aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and is explicit in his opinion that the current headteacher can bring about improvement. The performance management targets set for senior staff are appropriate and sufficiently demanding.

61. Routine administration of the school is good. Support staff are effective and contribute fully to the life of the school. Direct action has been taken to strengthen financial policy and practice. The accounts are now well maintained. The business manager, a member of the senior management team, oversees a strong system of financial control and also contributes to many other areas of the school's work. Financial planning is sound overall and improving, as teachers begin to recognise that expenditure must be linked to priorities. Governors are provided with adequate information to enable them to set the budget, make strategic decisions and monitor expenditure. The school applies the principles of best value when buying goods and services, and data are used to check the school's performance in relation to local and national standards. The income per pupil is broadly average; all resources available to the school are used appropriately. The amount of money carried forward at the end of a financial year is at an appropriate level. Taking into account pupils' socio-economic circumstances, their attainment when they are admitted to the school, the quality of education provided and the outcomes achieved, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

62. The number, experience and qualifications of teachers and support staff match the needs of most subjects and provision is satisfactory overall. In mathematics, more than half the teachers are not qualified mathematicians and this adversely affects standards. This is also the case in science, where most of the teachers are biologists, with only one qualified in chemistry and none qualified in physics. Several staff teach outside their subject expertise, but most cope well so that standards are not affected significantly. Long term absences and other staffing difficulties have disrupted pupils' learning in mathematics, science, information technology and music; staff absence has also affected the teaching of design and technology but to a lesser degree. Nevertheless, current arrangements have brought about significant improvements for the most part. The staff contains a good balance of very experienced teachers, some of whom have spent all, or almost all, of their career in the school, alongside those who are young and/or new to the school. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by specialist teachers, though this is off-set by the shortage of classroom assistants. New teachers benefit from good induction procedures, including classroom support. Other training opportunities are available to all staff, although they are not closely related to needs identified through professional development interviews or priorities in the whole school and department development plans. There is no system for evaluating training and judging its impact on the quality of education or on pupils' attainment. Formal appraisal is in abeyance. The school holds Investors in People accreditation, and is now making use of its future assessor to bring its procedures up-to-date in advance of the review.

63. Despite several shortcomings, accommodation is satisfactory overall and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The school buildings occupy a large site, and the many additions have created a disparate and dispersed number of teaching areas. The site is well managed and maintained. Despite a lack of capital investment, the school has endeavoured to improve its accommodation in recent years. It has continued to create suites of specialist rooms in the majority of areas. For instance, English now has excellent, newly refurbished accommodation, and science benefits from refurbished laboratories. There has been considerable investment to create a new open learning centre that has yet to open, but it will contain a range of learning resources and incorporate the school library and a large suite of networked computers. This accommodation has been well planned and early indicators point to good management of the resource with the potential to enhance pupils' learning considerably. The concerns in the previous report about the dispersed accommodation for teaching humanities have been largely overcome. The different subject areas that make up design and technology continue to be dispersed, although the school, with the support of the local education authority, has investigated the feasibility of creating a single and more coherent departmental area. One of the music rooms is inadequate for teaching the subject. Displays are well used to enhance pupils' learning in several subject areas, for example, in history, modern foreign languages and religious education.

64. The school's current expenditure on learning resources is high compared with national figures. The quality, quantity and use of resources are satisfactory overall, but there is considerable variation between subjects. For example, the range of resources is good in history and modern foreign languages and, in the latter case, this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. In English, for instance, recognition of their needs has led to appropriate materials being purchased. The unit for the hearing impaired pupils is also well stocked with books, videos and computers. Pupils have access to up-to-date textbooks and other materials in business studies. In contrast, there is a lack of full size keyboards as well as pitched and non-pitched percussion instruments in music; reference books are also in short supply. In geography, there are insufficient textbooks for each pupil in a class and the need to share books inhibits pupils' progress. A significant shortcoming in design and technology is the lack of artefacts and products to stimulate the design process.

65. The library is currently closed for refurbishment to create the new open learning centre, consisting of a two-storey facility of books and computers. This most recent development reflects in part the efforts of the school to address a concern raised in the last report, namely a lack of a whole-school approach to the acquisition and sharing of learning resources. Also in response to the criticism, and to avoid unnecessary expenditure, departments now have to justify why particular pieces of equipment are needed. Currently the library stock is modest. This situation is now being improved, along with the previously limited information technology facilities that are being expanded to provide a networked computer suite with Internet access. The school is making a large financial commitment to develop this area of work and to encourage pupils to use computers more independently in their research and presentation work. At the time of the inspection, old computers with limited software inhibited pupils' learning. However, where a suite of workstations is already in place, Key Stage 3 cross-curricular work is developing well in mathematics and modern foreign languages, and pupils with special educational needs are also benefiting from the facility. In most subjects, however, information technology resources are inadequate to promote pupils' learning as expected by the National Curriculum. The ratio of computers to pupils is currently below the national average, but the school will be nearer to national figures when the recent investment is added to existing stock.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. The school's governors and staff are in a strong position to remedy the weaknesses identified during the inspection. They should maintain the focus on raising attainment and now:

- identify the most able pupils in all subjects, giving particular attention to mathematics and science, so that teachers are able to plan and deliver lessons that present these pupils with demanding work, and devise other strategies to ensure that such pupils achieve the high levels of which they are capable;  
*(Paragraphs: 20, 82, 83, 86, 90, 92, 94)*
- tackle the weaknesses in pupils' numeracy skills, directly in mathematics lessons and by establishing a school policy that requires teachers of other subjects to promote the use of number in their lessons and gives them guidance on how to do it;  
*(Paragraphs: 10, 86)*
- ensure that the improvements that have occurred in design and technology are maintained, and eradicate the persistent weaknesses by providing support and supervision to those teachers who cannot enable their pupils to achieve higher standards;  
*(Paragraphs: 4, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112)*
- apply the existing procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school consistently and with rigour, and ensure that strategies for improvement are precise and included in the planned developments of departments and other sections of the school;  
*(Paragraphs: 56, 58, 59)*
- ensure that the range of data, currently used well to set targets for pupils and to monitor their progress, is linked to other assessment information and used by teachers to modify schemes of work and plan lessons;  
*(Paragraphs: 48, 57)*
- enhance pupils' skills in the use of information technology, and fulfil National Curriculum requirements by ensuring that there are planned opportunities to use those skills in all subjects.  
*(Paragraph: 10)*

67. In addition to the above key issues, the governors may wish to consider these other matters when drawing up the action plan:

- \* In otherwise very good provision for pupils with special educational needs, the individual education plans do not have subject specific targets;  
*(Paragraph: 22)*
- \* The personal, social and health education programme is not well co-ordinated;  
*(Paragraph: 32)*
- \* Training for teachers is not linked clearly to the school's developments and is not evaluated to measure its impact on teaching and learning;  
*(Paragraph: 62)*
- \* Pupils' homework diaries are not used effectively as a means of communication between school and home.  
*(Paragraph: 54)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	178
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>
1	16	44	33	5	1	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	<b>Y7- Y11</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1162	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	125	N/A

<b>Special educational needs</b>	<b>Y7- Y11</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	170	N/A



<b>English as an additional language</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	68

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	37

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	<b>%</b>
School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.9

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	<b>%</b>
School data	1.2
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***

	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	130	108	238

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	85	79	56
	Girls	93	67	56
	Total	178	146	112
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	75 (85)	61 (59)	47 (50)
	National	63 (64)	62 (58)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	40 (47)	31 (31)	14 (14)
	National	28 (34)	38 (34)	23 (27)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	88	74	54
	Girls	91	65	64
	Total	179	139	118
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	75 (69)	58 (79)	50 (77)
	National	64 (60)	64 (62)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	38 (33)	28 (57)	20 (28)
	National	31 (29)	37 (35)	28 (30)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4**

	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	117	112	229

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>5 or more grades A* to C</b>	<b>5 or more grades A*-G</b>	<b>1 or more grades A*-G</b>
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	41	107	115
	Girls	56	109	111
	Total	97	216	226
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	42.4 (40.2)	94.3 (91.5)	98.7 (96.3)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.9 (95.2)

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

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>GCSE point score</b>
Average point score per pupil	School	36.3 (34.2)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

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

*Ethnic background of pupils*

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	12
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	43
Pakistani	17
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	1
White	939
Any other minority ethnic group	8

*Exclusions in the last school year*

	<b>Fixed period</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	6	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	76	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### *Teachers and classes*

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	66.44
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.61

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	385.5

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.8
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.77
Key Stage 4	22.31

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2587340.00
Total expenditure	2547392.00
Expenditure per pupil	2192.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	106699.00
Balance carried forward to next year	146647.00

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1162
Number of questionnaires returned	276

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	27	56	13	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	36	55	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	55	8	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	56	17	6	1
The teaching is good.	21	68	4	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	45	27	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	51	7	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	47	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	20	48	22	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	25	55	8	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	60	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	51	11	2	9

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

### **ENGLISH**

68. Standards in English are high at both key stages and have been so for several years. Examination results consistently exceed national averages.

69. The 1999 Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results were high, with 75 per cent of pupils achieving Level 5 or above and 40 per cent achieving Level 6 or above. An even higher standard was achieved in the 1998. Girls achieve slightly better results than boys, as is the case nationally, though both boys and girls have been above the national average for their gender for several years. The results are very high when compared with those of similar schools. Pupils' performance in English is much better than in the other two core subjects, mathematics and science. Pupils are seen to have made very good progress when their 1999 Key Stage 3 average points score is compared with their score three years earlier at the end of Key Stage 2.

70. The 1999 GCSE results were above the national averages in the proportion of pupils achieving A\*-C in both English and English literature. Twenty two per cent achieved one of the top two grades in English, which is much higher than the national figure. The average points score shows that pupils made good progress from the end of Key Stage 3 to GCSE. Girls outperform boys in both subjects although boys' results are also above the national average for their gender; the department is developing strategies to tackle the differential. Pupils' performance in both subjects is usually significantly better than the average of their other subjects. In the last two years, a small number of lower-attaining pupils were entered for an alternative examination but all pupils are now entered for both subjects.

71. Pupils are articulate and have very good oral skills. They use talk effectively, and from the start of Key Stage 3 they are adept at evaluating their work and using a range of presentational skills. For example, two Year 7 classes took full responsibility for creating highly imaginative and well planned presentations using choral speaking, role-play, music and audio visual aids. Pupils speak confidently at length when explaining their views, and they have good debating skills. They readily engage in role-play, as seen in a Year 8 lesson where they questioned each other to establish the moral responsibility of characters in *Goodnight, Mr Tom*. At both key stages, pupils understand the use of ground rules and persuasive techniques when debating and discussing issues. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils engaged in a high powered debate on the role of women in the *Taming of the Shrew* by skilfully defending, deflecting and extending view points in a dynamic way. Similarly, Year 10 pupils used a formal forum to passionately debate single sex education. Pupils with special needs take an active part in oral work, though those receiving direct support in the classroom have less well developed oral skills.

72. An increasingly high proportion of pupils enter the school with reading scores two or more years behind their chronological age, but all make very good progress. There are competent readers at both key stages who have a good grasp of textual appreciation and analysis. They are confident when exploring themes, characters, plot, imagery and language, as seen in Year 9 classes where pupils confidently discussed both *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*. From Year 7, pupils acquire a thorough understanding of poetic terms, and they can select appropriate points and quotations to support their interpretations. At Key Stage 4, pupils have a secure understanding of the literary texts they are studying and can comment on the use of dramatic devices and language when analysing characters. This was well illustrated in a Year 11 lesson where pupils explored the level of manipulation in *The Merchant of Venice*. In this lesson, pupils drew on the historical setting of the play to discuss the issues of racism and anti-semitism.

73. Pupils with special educational needs read well below the standard expected nationally, but they make good gains in lessons when vocabulary is reinforced and decoding strategies are used to help them. Many of the weaker readers do not always read with expression and clear pronunciation of words to establish meaning.

74. The high and many average attaining pupils are assured writers who write fluently and correctly. At the start of Key Stage 3, these pupils produce extended writing that is well planned and structured, and these skills are maintained through to Year 9 and into Key Stage 4. High-attaining Year 8 pupils write superb narrative that is well above the standard expected for this age group. Overall, essays are coherent, and pupils have a good command of grammatical skills and use them well. They make good progress in developing their writing skills by the end of Key Stage 4. The lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in producing extended writing, sequencing their work and in completing comprehension exercises. All pupils, and in particular, those with special educational needs make good use of writing frames to structure their work, and respond positively to the advice given for re-drafting. Pupils receiving support have positive attitudes to their written work, and many produce essays that are just in line with the standard expected nationally. Draft books are used extensively to plan essays, with the high-attaining pupils demonstrating good editing and proof-reading skills. These processes are, however, not used rigorously by many pupils as they rely on their teachers to correct their mistakes.

75. Behaviour is good, with some excellent features in all year groups; it is a contributory factor to pupils' achievements in the subject. Pupils are positive about their work and maintain a high level of engagement and concentration in lessons. They work industriously, accept set challenges and persevere. They behave responsibly, taking charge of planning and developing their work. They take pride in their projects. At Key Stage 4, many buy their own examination texts, which they carefully annotate in preparation for the examinations. Pupils with special educational needs make good gains because they respond to the support provided and co-operate well with the support staff. Pupils respect their teachers and work consistently well in the positive ethos in the department.



76. The quality of teaching is good overall. Lessons are always good or better at Key Stage 4; one excellent Year 11 lesson was seen. Key Stage 3 teaching is never less than satisfactory and is mostly good or very good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and the examination requirements. Lessons are based on very good planning, and learning objectives are shared with pupils. Teaching challenges pupils intellectually, and they respond to the high expectations placed upon them. This was seen in a Year 11 lesson, where pupils were required to critically evaluate the *Taming of the Shrew*, and in a Year 8 class who were given the task of directing a scene from *Macbeth*.

77. The teaching promotes independent learning, as seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were animated about showing off their interpretations of different poems. Pupils are furnished with the basic skills at the start of every lesson, and these are developed through the good progression work and homework which extend their understanding of the subject. Questions are used skilfully to probe their understanding; a wide choice of resources is used; exposition is clear; opportunities are provided for pupils to intervene and take part in group work. Group work is used effectively to allow pupils to collaborate and explore their understanding of literature. Good classroom management and organisation, combined with the good relationships between pupils and their teachers, contribute to effective teaching and learning. Work is constructively marked, and targets for improvement are set. However, sufficient time is not always given to summarising the work.

78. The study of the National Curriculum is comprehensive. The subject makes a valuable contribution to all aspects of pupils' development, although too few books on other literary heritages are reflected in the curriculum. There is a shortage of literature from other cultures as well as dictionaries and thesauruses. There is sufficient curriculum time for the subject. However, the extra time allocated to English in Year 7 is not used for the intended communications skills lesson. Schemes of work are not explicit enough about the use of information technology. The department has very good systems in place for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress and providing extra support after school.

79. An outstandingly good head of department leads the subject with clear vision. Leadership is energetic and proactive, and is supported by a dedicated team of staff working together to improve standards further. Planning is strategic, with short and long term goals. Procedures for monitoring the department's work are in place and effective. However, review procedures are infrequent. The department does not have explicit policies on equal opportunities and gifted pupils. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in developing monitoring tools and a comprehensive marking policy. The subject is a strength of the school.

## MATHEMATICS

80. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests, 61 per cent of pupils reached Level 5 or above, which was close to the national average. The proportion achieving Level 6 or above was also close to national figures. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The average points score of the results in 1999 was lower than that of similar schools. When this is compared with the points score achieved in 1996 by the same pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, they are seen to have made very good progress. Over the past four years, the test results have fluctuated but they have improved overall. Pupils' performance at Key Stage 3 in mathematics has been consistently better than in science, but not as good as in English.

81. The proportion of A\*-C grades achieved by pupils in the 1999 GCSE examination was below the national average. This was also the case in 1998, whereas in 1997 the results were in line with national figures. The average points score in the most recent year puts the school broadly in line with national results but below similar schools; there was no significant difference between the results for boys and girls. The points score has risen since 1997, but other schools nationally show a more consistent degree of improvement. The 1999 cohort made the progress expected of them when their average points score is measured against what they achieved two years earlier in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Since 1997, pupils have done consistently worse in the subject than in the average of all their other subjects. The results are never as good as English and usually worse than science.

82. The attainment of the majority of pupils currently at Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with the levels expected nationally, although in several lessons a significant minority were below the age-related expectations. Pupils in Year 7 reviewed homework that had been given as a mathematical 'crossword', and usefully reinforced concepts as members of the class explained how they had recalled answers in response to clues. Pupils in Year 9 cope well with the concepts of probability. Some are able to employ to good effect known methods in changed circumstances, for instance when they considered a case of 'selection without replacement' and had to suggest how such a problem might be tackled. Throughout the key stage, pupils with special educational needs, including those from the hearing impaired unit, attain appropriately or in line with their capabilities, often with very effective help from the support staff. The ablest pupils, particularly in Years 8 and 9, are less effectively challenged by their classwork and homework, and, as a consequence, they fail to make the progress they should towards the higher levels of the National Curriculum.

83. The attainment of Key Stage 4 pupils is broadly in line with the levels expected nationally. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work rarely revealed pupils who are achieving at a higher level. Whilst beginning work on graphical representations of quadratic functions, pupils are able to investigate the reasons for differences between two graphs. They can correctly interpret the values where these functions intersect the axes. Other pupils, working on the surface area of two-dimensional nets for a range of three-dimensional boxes, were able to apply known facts in a new situation. They could correctly identify the factors that would create the 'best' box and ensure maximum volume for minimum surface area. All pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriately because they receive good support. However, as in Key Stage 3, the ablest pupils do not receive an appropriate level of challenge.

84. Pupils' attitudes to the subject, including their behaviour in lessons, are satisfactory. In most lessons, they are prepared to begin work quickly and they are eager to ask questions. When there is a loss of concentration, it is more likely to occur at Key Stage 4. They respond well to good teaching, and enjoy lessons where the teacher adopts a lively approach and presents them with a variety of activities.

85. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. A substantial minority of Key Stage 3 lessons are good, whereas Key Stage 4 lessons are almost always satisfactory and never below. One Key Stage 3 lesson was unsatisfactory because, when help was given to targeted individuals, the teacher allowed the pace of the lesson to fall dramatically so that, for an extended period, a significant proportion of the class was off task. Teachers maintain very good relationships with pupils throughout the school. Common features of the best lessons include teachers' use of well targeted open questions, which lead pupils to investigate specific features of the work. Other successful lessons have a variety of activities, which ensures that the overall pace of work and level of engagement remain high. For example, one class used a shuffled deck of playing cards in a timed exercise on multiplication. Each card was dealt in turn and its face value multiplied. The time taken to go through the pack was then compared with the time taken to do this in an earlier lesson, and improvements were greeted with obvious pleasure.

86. The work provided at both key stages covers the four statutory attainment targets appropriately. The timetabling arrangements cause some classes to have teaching split between two members of staff, which has a detrimental effect on the quality of the work. Leadership of the department is not sufficiently focused on strategies to bring about improvement. There is also a need for policies in a number of key areas, most notably one that will develop numeracy across the whole curriculum. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is not developed. Staff have taken steps to provide enrichment opportunities for the ablest pupils, for example, by involving them in national mathematical competitions and by running a termly 'maths puzzle'. Nevertheless, opportunities for extension, particularly but not exclusively for these pupils, lacks cohesion and does not form an integral part of their taught lessons or homework.

87. The department is well provided with a suite of rooms at one end of the school, although some rooms are small. Pupils' achievements are celebrated in all rooms with colourful, well considered and informative displays. Weaknesses regarding the department's use of information technology, noted in the last inspection report, have been tackled and largely overcome. The poor performance of boys at GCSE has also been tackled and has improved.

## SCIENCE

88. In the 1999 Key Stage 3 national tests, the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or higher, and Level 6 or higher, was below the national average. The average points score was also below average. Over the past four years the school's results have been consistently below the national average. There has been little difference between the performance of boys and girls. In comparison with similar schools, attainment in 1999 was also below average. However, when the same group of pupils entered the school in 1996, their Key Stage 2 attainment was well below average, and over the key stage they have made good progress. The test results have always been below mathematics and further below English.

89. In the 1999 GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the A\* - C range was below the national average. Girls' performance exceeded that of boys by a margin greater than that found nationally. Results in 1999 were better than in 1998, but not as good as 1997, when they were above the national average. In the last two years, pupils have performed less well in science than in the average of their other subjects. The average points score in 1999 was just below other schools nationally. Pupils' performance at the end of Key Stage 4, compared with Key Stage 3, shows that progress over the key stage has been satisfactory.

90. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work by pupils currently in Year 9 indicate that knowledge of subject detail and depth of understanding are below expectations, mirroring the test results. Investigative skills, especially those of observation and recording, are satisfactory, but evaluative skills are less well developed. The standard of work shown by pupils with special educational needs is often in line with others, because the level of support from specialist teachers is good. The most able pupils are achieving below their capabilities because work is insufficiently challenging. At Key Stage 4, standards are in line with the national average, but again there is an absence of work matched to the capabilities of higher-attaining pupils. Many pupils have good investigative skills. They record observations accurately and analyse data carefully. Nevertheless, the depth of detailed theoretical work required for pupils to achieve the highest grades is not apparent.

91. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory and attitudes to learning good. The majority of pupils in both key stages develop good relationships with staff and with each other. They have regard for safety, and the effect of their actions on others. A small minority behave immaturely. Pupils collaborate well on investigations and work effectively in teams for discussion activities. Pupils are willing to comment on their work, but opportunities for full participation in class are often not sufficiently exploited. They make a good effort to present clear written descriptions of experimental work in their books.

92. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is better at Key Stage 4 where it is never less than satisfactory and most lessons are good. A small proportion of Key Stage 3 lessons are unsatisfactory because the pace is slow and pupils' understanding is not monitored. However, the most successful Key Stage 3 lesson, taught to Year 8 pupils, was conducted at a brisk pace with timed variable activities carefully selected to help pupils understand how to test for starch in food. Staff have a secure knowledge of science. Although there is imbalance in basic qualifications, with staff being graduates in biology and chemistry, there is no evidence of major variation in standards in the three science attainment targets. Planning

is satisfactory, although the extent of challenge for higher-attaining pupils is too low. Provision for lower-attainers is also variable, although the work for those with special educational needs is good, particularly where specialist support is given. A diverse variety of teaching methods is adopted, with a brisk pace and effective emphasis on group discussions. Numerical and quantitative work is less well practised. Questioning technique is used well by some teachers, but overall there is inconsistency in the application of this method in consolidating and reinforcing understanding. Assessment is regular, but marking of work does not sufficiently identify how pupils can raise their level of attainment. Homework is satisfactory, but not structured well enough to extend and support understanding from the lesson.

93. The department has established schemes of work fulfilling the required breadth, balance and relevance of the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. To tackle the below average level of attainment at Key Stage 3, the scheme has been revised to ensure the various components are implemented more effectively, with greater depth through more structured activities. The Year 7 scheme is complete, but only a few selected sections of the Year 8 and Year 9 schemes have been amended. Assessment is undertaken with increasing rigour to help planning and identify some aspects of underachievement. However, monitoring of the quality of teaching has not been sufficiently sharply focused on the evaluation and development of teachers' skills. The accommodation for science has a positive effect, since most laboratories are large and bright, with very good displays. Resources are mainly good, apart from a shortage of text-books for use at home. There are currently few computers in use within the laboratories. The library is well stocked to support science teaching.

94. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in standards but mainly at Key Stage 4. Attitudes to learning, previously satisfactory, are now good. Teaching continues to be satisfactory overall, but there are significant developments taking place in the areas of assessment, planning, and the use of information technology. Weakness still remains in the provision for the highest attainers, especially at Key Stage 3, and in the monitoring of teaching.

## **ART**

95. There has been a downward trend in the GCSE results since 1997, when they were broadly in line with national figures. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade was half the national average. Within these poor overall results, some girls achieved well, with a higher proportion gaining an A\* than did so nationally. Over several years, pupils entered for art have performed less well than in their other subjects. Over the same time span, the performance of girls has been much better than that of the boys. The number of pupils taking art has declined in recent years and the reasons for this need to be investigated. It is reported by the department that several who display a talent for the subject do not opt for it at Key Stage 4 for various reasons, and this is partly why recent examination results have been low. However, this assertion is not supported by firm evidence and the department is not in a position to say whether or not the grades achieved by the pupils in 1998 and 1999 represent progress against their performance at Key Stage 3.

96. From lesson observations and looking at pupils' work, the standards at Key Stage 4 are higher than the past two years' examination results suggest. There are clear indications of how established artists have influenced the pupils' work, particularly in the abstract, surreal and repeat-pattern work currently on exhibition. Pupils presently work in pastel, acrylic, mixed media, papier maché and in three dimensions using clay. Their compositions from observation and based on natural forms are sound. There is, however, a lack of sophistication in the work, and weaknesses in control and in the development of appropriate technical skills. Some of the work they are asked to do is not stimulating, but it matches the ability of a significant minority whose creativity is limited. Nevertheless, this approach restricts the possibility of their developing stronger ideas of their own. At Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils are achieving the national standard and a significant minority are achieving above it. Pupils of all abilities are confident in the application of poster paint, acrylic and mixed media. There is good control of materials, tools and techniques in three-dimensional work. Pupils use shading effectively and display a strong understanding of techniques in their papier maché sculpture.

97. Pupils at both key stages work with enthusiasm and stay on task throughout the lessons. They are happy to discuss their work and they can use appropriate art vocabulary. They are able to explain the techniques being used and are willing to refine their work in the light of teachers' advice. Tasks undertaken in the classroom and for homework are presented with pride and care.

98. The quality of teaching is good and occasionally very good; it is never unsatisfactory. Teachers are successful in encouraging a positive and enthusiastic response from pupils. They strike a good balance between providing input to the whole class and supporting individuals, sometimes with skilful questioning. Teachers are aware of pupils' special educational needs; they set them appropriate challenges, and are encouraging and supportive. Their demonstrations and explanations of tasks to be undertaken are always clear and motivate pupils to do well. For instance, in one class, pupils' three-dimensional creations were beginning to crack and go out of shape. They were reassured by the teacher's skilful demonstration of how to rectify the faults, and they were then able to initiate repairs and regain their confidence. In all lessons, a secure atmosphere is created which increases pupils' confidence and inspires them to work to the best of their abilities.

99. The curriculum and schemes of work are well planned and designed to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum and meet the demands of the GCSE course. Projects are planned to ensure equality of opportunity and access for pupils of all abilities. At both key stages, assessment is continuous, findings are carefully recorded, and feedback to pupils is sensitive and detailed. Target setting is well used and effective because it is clearly expressed and realistic.

100. Regular meetings of the department are held to revise schemes of work. The department has conscientiously tackled the recommendations of the last inspection report. Teaching at both key stages is more effective and now takes into account the abilities of the pupils. There is less reliance on secondary source material and there has been an improvement in pupils' understanding of the influence and work of established artists and designers. The assessment procedures are communicated clearly to pupils. Accommodation is satisfactory. Money to resource the department is adequate; it covers consumables, but there is little left over to purchase in new equipment. The management of the subject has weaknesses because it is not sharply focused on monitoring and evaluation and action to improve standards.

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION**

101. The GCSE results have been consistently above the national average for several years. In 1998, when the entry was smaller than other years, the proportion achieving an A\*-C grade was more than 40 percentage points higher than the national results. For the last two years, a higher proportion of pupils gained A\* and A grades than did so nationally. Each year, the pupils entered for business studies do better than in the average of all their other subjects. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys, except where there are differences in ability on entry; both girls and boys achieve a great deal during their course, and predicted grades are efficiently monitored. The maintenance of high standards reflects stable and experienced staffing and a modular syllabus, largely practical in nature, which is relevant to pupils' needs and the way they work best

102. The pupils currently at Key Stage 4 also display high standards. In Year 10 lessons, pupils use information technology effectively to produce well-presented reports and graphs of the results of their surveys of how a theatre in the area can increase its popularity and become more viable. Pupils know the contents of an induction programme in a large company, and can effectively analyse the strengths and weaknesses of job applicants shortlisted for interview. Year 11 pupils produce graphs of a survey into a possible new travel agency in the area, and analyse their results to generate constructive business decisions. Pupils' examination coursework assignments are generally well presented, and by the end of the key stage most pupils have produced clear break-even charts from data provided from case studies of local businesses. Although the most able pupils do not draw graphs from spreadsheet tables, pupils are fully aware of the strengths and limitations of their survey data. Evaluations are generally well written and in sufficient depth to demonstrate clear understanding of business concepts; pupils are secure in their ability to apply them in a variety of practical business situations. The majority of pupils can properly analyse the reasons why firms use retained profit to finance further expansion, and how a marketing department uses socio-economic indicators to target possible new customers.

103. Teaching is good in both Years 10 and 11, resulting in pupils learning basic theory very well. They are supported by very clear help sheets and guided to apply concepts to practical case studies. Through these they are taught to research and evaluate findings, and improve the key skills of information technology, number and communications. Pupils make rapid progress because they quickly apply concepts in practical tasks and do not, for example, spend too much time copying from textbooks. Teachers ensure tasks are generally well

matched to the varying abilities of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils learn at a good pace because teachers explain concepts clearly and make sure everyone understands what they are doing. Tasks are relevant and interesting because they are based on real business examples. Pupils learn to think critically through teachers' well-focused questioning which extends basic terms. Pupils develop their literacy skills by reading business articles for understanding, by summarising main points and redrafting their evaluative answers to key topic questions. This process is enhanced by teachers' very good topical subject knowledge. As a result, they plan lessons very well using relevant case studies and material from newspapers and local organisations such as theatres. Pupils' note-taking and bibliographies sometimes lack depth, and the majority of pupils depend on teachers to provide resources such as newspaper articles and books.

104. Homework is set regularly and marked according to school policy and examining board criteria. The process needs strengthening to ensure that all pupils are sure of the exact GCSE grade level at which they are working. Teachers use constructive target sheets effectively to help pupils assess their own progress. Teachers have appropriately high expectations about the examination grades which can be achieved, and they provide action plans to help any pupils who are likely to underachieve.

105. Pupils enjoy their lessons and make good progress in consolidating theoretical knowledge through practical assignments. Surveys out of school help them add depth to their descriptions of businesses. Pupils behave in a mature way in all lessons because they appreciate being treated as adults. They enjoy their work and understand clearly what they have to do. They always keep on task and persevere with their work. Pupils co-operate very well with each other and their teachers. They also work independently on written work and computers to plan and evaluate their coursework assignments.

106. The examination courses are well structured and taught by experienced and skilled teachers. Pupils' information technology capability is improved through regular use of computers in lessons, where they learn to use a variety of packages, such as graphics, to display graphs of their survey results. Success in their coursework research enables pupils to progress easily to the requirements of A Level and GNVQ courses in local further education colleges. The department is ably led and is well focused on maximising pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers monitor courses regularly to improve techniques and results; they use up-to-date textbooks and other materials from industry and the media very effectively. The Internet is used appropriately to obtain the latest financial and marketing data, although few pupils currently have access to on-line data. Links with local business and industry are adequate but require further development.

107. Improving examination results reflect good teaching and increasing progress by pupils as teachers develop new methods and materials. The department has the capacity to keep on improving.



## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

108. The 1999 GCSE results for design and technology were below the national average. This was also the position in the previous year. However, in both years, pupils entered for the subject did better than in the average of all the other subjects. The food technology results are consistently higher than those for resistant materials and graphics. In 1999, the food technology results were 10 percentage points above the national position. Pupils also do better in this subject than they do in their other subjects. The results for resistant materials and graphics are low with little sign of improvement. There have been some improvements in the subject as a whole since the last inspection, due to changes in staffing and a more rigorous approach to the support of pupils' learning, but a considerable amount of work remains to be done in the aspects of the subject where standards remain low.

109. Attainment is in line with national standards by the end of Key Stage 3. Work produced by a significant minority of Year 7 pupils shows low attainment, but in most Year 7 and 8 classes seen during the inspection the majority of pupils were attaining the expected level for their age. A scrutiny of work done by the higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 showed that they have developed good designing skills. For example, they carry out market research well when developing new food products. They have good levels of knowledge of different materials and use fair tests when making investigations. Detailed feedback from teachers helps them to make good progress. Some pupils use their own computers to present their work to a high level. However, all pupils are not able to make use of information technology because of the lack of access in workshops. The older pupils in the key stage are beginning to make step by step plans for their work, and analyse their findings from research. Pupils' good levels of literacy enhance the quality of their work. Lower-attaining pupils produce better work with some teachers than others. For example, the design drawings of some Year 9 pupils in graphics are inaccurate and slapdash because there is insufficient feedback from the teacher.

110. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher-attaining pupils have a good level of understanding of how new food products are developed. They analyse recipes to determine their nutritional value and research issues analytically. Other Year 11 pupils design and make products such as storage units for music centres satisfactorily. A significant number of Year 11 pupils have poor graphical skills and make unsatisfactory progress, whereas Year 10 pupils have good graphical skills because they are well taught.

111. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory overall. In this inspection, half the lessons were good and about 15 per cent were poor. Teaching is usually good in food and textiles technology. In resistant materials and graphics, the teaching varies from good to poor. In good lessons at Key Stage 3, teaching is thorough and knowledge is reinforced well. Planning is detailed and sharply focused on learning outcomes. Purposes of the learning are fully explained to pupils at the beginning of lessons. There is direct teaching of new information, which links well with previous learning, for example when pupils are learning how to develop a design for a cushion cover or how to design a tie. Pupils are given good opportunities to apply the new information to a relevant task, for example using a range of saws when making a moving toy. There is a good review of learning at the end of lessons, and homework is set to extend what has been learned in class. Where learning is less successful, the topic for the lesson is not relevant to the task.

For example, it was difficult for Year 7 pupils to relate what they were taught about hard and soft wood to the task of making a balancing toy. In a poor lesson, tasks were given without any discussion with the pupils about the purpose of the activities or how they might be carried out. At Key Stage 4, good teachers effectively promote pupils' learning. They have a very clear perception of each pupil's needs and a good range of strategies to support them. Where teaching is well focused and effective, the best teachers are skilful in blending challenge with support. Enthusiastic teachers keep pupils on task and give individuals detailed and helpful feedback. Where teaching is poor, the teacher's low expectations result in pupils being off task for considerable lengths of time, and the lack of support strategies results in many pupils becoming disaffected. The quality of marking is variable. All teachers do not correct spellings. Some give well focused help and encouragement to all pupils, but the unsatisfactory progress made by some pupils is due to their receiving little or no written feedback. As a consequence they do not know what they must do or how they might do it. Homework is used effectively.

112. Since the last inspection, good management has resulted in considerable improvement. The department now has a more coherent identity, although there are still clear differences in practice within the areas that deal with resistant materials and graphics. The curriculum has been revised to bring it into line with the National Curriculum. Pupils are given problem-solving activities and take responsibility for developing their own designs. There is still too little emphasis on information technology, including computer aided design and manufacture, and electronics. The rota arrangement whereby pupils experience a sequence of activities has been reviewed. Although pupils are offered a wide range of experiences, the programme has not been audited thoroughly to ensure continuity and progression. The nature of the tasks set and the quality of support provided in most classes ensure that individual needs are now better met. Gender imbalances are still apparent at Key Stage 4, but the position has improved. Health and safety issues have been addressed. However, teaching is not sufficiently well monitored to encourage uniformly good practice, and this limits the progress of some pupils. Resources are satisfactory overall, but there is a lack of artefacts and products to stimulate and extend pupils' imagination when designing. Pupils' progress is monitored, but target setting is not effective for all pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4. Opportunities for applying learning about technology are limited by the lack of links to the community and to industrial practice.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

113. In 1999 and 1998, the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\*-C was below the national average; the 1997 results were marginally above average. The girls' results are getting better each year, and moving further above the national average. In contrast, the boys' results have declined and are now significantly below average. In 1999 and 1997, pupils performed better in geography than in the average of all their other subjects, but the position was reversed in 1998. Lower-attainers perform well at GCSE, but there is some under-achievement, particularly amongst the higher attaining boys. Good management of boys by experienced teachers maintains their interest in class, but there is no departmental strategy to raise the attainment of boys over time.

114. Standards displayed during the inspection by current Key Stage 4 pupils are average. Year 11 pupils' performance in the mock examinations and the standard of their course work indicate that they are achieving a higher level than the previous cohort. Standards of the present Year 10 pupils are better still. The inspection of lessons and the scrutiny of exercise books indicate that most Key Stage 3 pupils are achieving the expected standard for their age. In both key stages, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are overwhelmingly good. In some lessons, they are very good and occasionally excellent. Pupils learn well in most lessons; they come prepared and respond to good teaching. The exception to this is a few boys, mainly in Year 11, who have not developed good learning habits and can be disruptive.

115. Good teaching leads to good learning at both key stages and consequently to good progress in most lessons. Teaching is mostly good at Key Stage 3 and always good at Key Stage 4. A minority of Key Stage 3 lessons are very good. However, one was seen to be unsatisfactory because a group of immature Year 9 boys was not dealt with firmly and was allowed to disrupt teaching and learning. All teachers are enthusiastic geographers, whose confident command of their subject is shown in the quality of their learning objectives and the management of their well-prepared materials. They are skilled at building the confidence of their pupils and in raising their self-esteem. Whilst they praise effort in marking pupils' work, they do not identify clearly the points which pupils can improve; teachers do not yet help pupils set sharply focused targets which they can attain. Extensive information about the attainment of pupils is not yet used effectively to identify those who are doing well over time or to support those who are not achieving well enough. One lesson at Key Stage 4, when pupils were practising a decision-making exercise, was linked at each step to simple criteria for gaining marks in an examination; this was well taught, but lessons at Key Stage 4 do not generally contain enough of this type of guidance.

116. Minimum teacher talk and maximum output from pupils is generally effectively used as a teaching method, as is teachers' ability to change the pace of lessons and vary the tasks. Teachers take appropriate risks to make lessons interesting; for instance, a good demonstration of the percolation of water through dry sand, wet sand and gravel helped a Year 7 class understand the principles of water infiltration. Topical issues are used well. For example, a discussion of the Limpopo flood disaster made the point about the hydrological cycle. Some lessons benefit from teachers' clear expectation that pupils should think and find out for themselves. This method allows pupils to achieve the higher levels of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. An example of this was seen in a Year 9 class, who were given a research task for homework to extend their classwork on exploring the nature of volcanoes. Not all homework extends pupils in this way; some is still limited to description or simply finishing classwork, which does not engage the higher-attainers who mostly finish their work in class. There needs to be better use of the start of some lessons so that pupils focus more quickly on learning.

117. National Curriculum requirements are largely met, although the Key Stage 3 curriculum does not provide a solid enough base for transfer to Key Stage 4. Adjustment should result in better provision for the key skills of literacy, numeracy and communication. There should also be more practical work, including fieldwork and personal investigations, and more use of information technology. Assessment procedures are developing, but

assessment information is not used to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment. Accommodation is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Resources for learning have been increased but remain unsatisfactory because there are not enough books. This is nevertheless an improving department, with a thoughtfully led, innovative team of teachers. There is a group commitment to improvement and a clear view of the direction in which the department is moving.

## **HISTORY**

118. Standards in history are very high and have been maintained over several years. GCSE examination results in the A\*-C range are well above the national average, and the proportion of pupils achieving these grades in the last two years has been more than 20 percentage points above the national position. Pupils entered for history do better than in the average of all their other subjects. Girls usually gain higher grades than boys. High standards are found throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in lessons and work seen in exercise books is also well above national norms. From the start of Year 7, pupils are encouraged to develop their understanding of the subject and they do so readily, often from a low knowledge base. They develop historical skills rapidly and are soon able to extract information from a variety of sources and resources. This was shown to very good effect in a Year 7 lesson during which pupils discussed how to organise individual projects on the Crusades, with skilled prompting from the teacher. Pupils can also write for a variety of purposes and in a variety of styles. They have a secure sense of chronology and are encouraged to use historical terminology from the outset, which they do well. These standards are maintained and built on at Key Stage 4, where pupils develop a wider knowledge and understanding of the subject; this enables them to analyse source material in depth. This was demonstrated in an effective Year 11 lesson, during which pupils interrogated sources on the USA after World War I in order to improve their potential GCSE grades.

119. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very positive at all times. They enjoy history and show a keen interest in it. They exhibit high levels of commitment and respond well to challenges; for example, during a Year 10 lesson in which pupils worked with a commendable sense of purpose to understand how differing ideologies in the 20th century affected the Cold War. Nevertheless, in order to build on this positive picture, pupils would benefit from more opportunity to reflect on the progress they make during lessons at the end of each session.

120. The quality of teaching in the subject is never less than satisfactory. It is always good or very good at Key Stage 3 and almost always good or very good at Key Stage 4. Lessons are planned carefully, and aims and objectives are stated clearly at the beginning of each lesson. Teachers' very secure grasp of subject knowledge enhances the learning process and gives pupils the confidence to develop their historical skills to the full. Classroom management is very strong, and there is an air of purpose and enjoyment in the lessons. Pupils are given ample opportunities to develop independent learning skills through an emphasis on individual project work at Key Stage 3. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 8 lesson, during which pupils were encouraged to use different writing skills to produce some very impressive research projects on the English Civil War. Good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress at both key stages. The emphasis on independent learning and

research has addressed in full a concern in the previous report. Higher-attaining pupils are given ample scope to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject through extension and project work. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are supported well by class teachers and by the use of different materials to suit their needs.

121. The department is managed well, and the monitoring of pupils' performance is very thorough. A variety of techniques is used to keep pupils informed of their progress, including self-assessment. The previous report noted a lack of opportunities for pupils to engage in fieldwork, but this has now been rectified. As is common across the school, there are insufficient opportunities to use information technology. Most of the current stock is of limited use, although there are plans to develop this area. Display is used to very good effect in the main school building. There is some poor accommodation. One of the two demountable classrooms scheduled for replacement is of poor quality. The pupils who are taught there do not enjoy the benefits of a good visual environment.

122. The department has maintained the high standards noted in the previous report and attainment in examinations has continued to rise. A key challenge now is to increase the numbers taking the subject at Key Stage 4 and to build further on the obvious success of a very able and committed teaching team, who are a considerable strength in the school.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

123. Pupils' performance in the 1999 GCSE examination was adversely affected by long term staffing difficulties. The proportion of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade was well below the national average; this was also the case in 1997, whereas it was close to average in 1998. In both 1999 and 1997 pupils entered for the subject did significantly worse in information technology than in the average of all their other subjects. The majority of the Year 11 pupils currently involved in the course are also below the expected level. They were affected by the staffing difficulties when they were in Year 10 and they have a lot of ground to cover, although they are now making good progress. Several are unaware of their own knowledge limitations and the standard required to achieve a C grade or above. Nevertheless, some of the higher-attaining pupils have rapidly reached an appropriate standard. Attainment of the current Year 10 pupils is noticeably better; they are motivated and hardworking, and, if present performance is maintained, the results should improve dramatically in 2001. One group, for example, shows sound understanding of network systems and these pupils are beginning to consider systems analysis as a way of solving problems. Higher-attaining pupils are starting to apply their knowledge in group presentations. The other Year 10 GCSE group is also working with confidence and a degree of independence. Pupils involved in an alternative accredited course, which is skill based and designed particularly for lower-attainers, reach the levels required for the qualification, but the work limits the few who are capable of achieving higher levels.

124. Attainment at Key Stage 3, evidenced by current Year 9 work, is generally at the expected level. However, as the work of these pupils has not been kept from the two previous years, their depth of knowledge or progress cannot be judged. Pupils are being presented with work that is commonly given to GCSE candidates, and the higher-attainers are doing well enough to reach National Curriculum Level 7 or higher. Even some of the lower-

attainers are reaching Level 5, the expected National Curriculum level. Desktop publishing work done by other Year 9 pupils is in line with national expectations. No Year 8 group was seen, but Year 7 pupils, many starting from a low base, are mostly in line with age-related expectations. They can use formulae to calculate line and column totals. The lower-attainers are reasonably competent at word processing and the higher-attainers can combine text and graphics. Many pupils are making good progress, although some are restricted because they have had to adjust to the school's computers, which are different from those commonly used at home.

125. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to the subject are good overall. This reflects the intrinsic interest most pupils have for the subject and the way they respond to the teaching. Most work enthusiastically, showing enjoyment and increasing confidence. Their interest is also reflected in the good attendance at lunchtime computer clubs and the positive comments made by pupils, despite having to use older equipment in lessons.

126. Teaching is mainly good or very good, and it is never less than satisfactory; it is stronger at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. The new co-ordinator, who is also one of the assistant headteachers, has brought strong subject knowledge to the department. Most lessons benefit from good planning, well chosen activities and carefully selected resources. Some lessons go particularly well because of highly effective class management, and a brisk pace, which ensures good learning through active involvement of the pupils. This was the case in a Year 10 GCSE lesson where timed targets were given for different activities. In another examination class, the teacher gave informed guidance and also used questions particularly well to confirm pupils' understanding. The less effective lessons, although satisfactory overall, tended to be where the teacher took too long to establish the group task and there was less monitoring of pupils' progress. An important feature of the recent work is the attempt to devise Key Stage 3 learning activities that address three National Curriculum levels, so as to enable the ablest pupils to reach the higher levels. The need for coherent schemes of work at Key Stage 3 was a requirement of the last inspection and this has been met. Pupils with special educational needs are mostly given sufficient attention. Those who are withdrawn from lessons have access to new facilities, and, in one lesson observed, they were clearly gaining literacy skills from the well selected specialist software. Homework is often used effectively for pupils to prepare information for the next practical lesson.

127. There is a very firm commitment from senior managers and governors to promote the use of information technology. A large amount of money has been spent on building work and resources. Current resources are dated and too few computers are available for pupils to use in subjects other than information technology. Leadership of the subject is very good, and much has been done in a very short time to rectify the obvious weaknesses and put in place a plan for short-term and long-term developments. In response to the last inspection, assessment has been strengthened; it is developing well but needs further refinement. Current timetabling arrangements mean that the subject is not taught continuously through Key Stage 3, and this affects progression. The non-specialist staff who teach the subject are well supported by specialist teachers and the technicians, who also make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Two major challenges remain: to develop the subject across the curriculum, and to establish a system for monitoring the work of the department and evaluating its impact on pupils' learning.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

128. The 1999 GCSE results in both French and Spanish were much improved on those achieved in 1997 and 1998. This was most marked in Spanish, where the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was nearly double the national figure, while in French the proportion rose close to that figure. In both languages, a higher proportion of pupils achieved A grades than did so nationally. In Spanish, girls' overall performance was very high compared with the national average for their gender. In the two previous years, the French results were below average, but the Spanish results were above average in 1997 and broadly average in 1998. A much higher number of pupils are entered for French than for Spanish. In 1998 and 1999 those taking Spanish did better than the average of all their other subjects whereas in French they did worse; in 1997 the position was reversed.

129. The current attainment of pupils in modern languages is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3, inspection evidence indicates that most Year 9 pupils' attainment is in line with the national expectation, and in Spanish a significant number are above it. In Spanish, for example, pupils who have learnt the language for one and a half years can express how they feel and describe different ailments with confident pronunciation and good accents. They progress to writing accurately four or five lines about their leisure interests with different adjectives and prepositions, as a result of good visual support and regulation from the teacher. Pupils' highest attainment is shown in their acquisition of new vocabulary and in their listening skills. Pupils in the early years of learning French recognise and can say the names of up to 12 birthday presents. They can pick out, and recognise with good accuracy, key words from a cassette recording. Good progress is seen when, by the end of a lesson in Year 8, nearly all pupils, including lower-attainers, can say and write up to ten sentences about what leisure activities are available in their home town. In French, there is some under-achievement. For instance, where teachers do not insist on correct pronunciation or guide activities sufficiently, pupils are hesitant in role-play and fall back into speaking English. In oral work, some pupils of average attainment do not make sufficient progress in extending their answers beyond a few words or short phrases repeated mechanically.

130. Attainment and progress at Key Stage 4 are satisfactory for most pupils, although some of average ability do not achieve as they should in French. High attainment and good progress are seen in Spanish. Pupils in a Year 11 class understand their teacher's fluent Spanish. They watch a video with a commentary spoken at native speed and understand most of it. They make good progress in developing confident descriptions of different places around the world inhabited by Spanish speakers. In French, on the topic of lost property, most pupils can accurately describe several items they have lost, using the past tense and several adjectives accurately. By the end of a lesson, most pupils have progressed to speaking short dialogues with confidence, and to listening to recorded material and accurately classifying up to five details. In classes where attainment is lower, pupils' responses to prepared GCSE questions are hesitant, relying on written support from their textbooks. They do not understand significant amounts of a text when comparing English and French schools, and they and their teacher have to use English to aid comprehension. For many lower-attaining pupils, their achievement is only in the recognition of vocabulary and phrases, and matching words to pictures with increasing accuracy. This, however, represents satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment in both French and Spanish.

131. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are usually satisfactory. Pupils work co-operatively with each other and their teachers. Lower-attainers work well in groups on language learning games. Many pupils volunteer answers and seek to complete tasks to the best of their ability. In some lessons, however, where teaching focuses on questions and answers to individuals, the rest of the class remain passive and uninvolved. In a minority of lessons at Key Stage 4, there is some poor behaviour from average and lower-attaining pupils, both boys and girls, who have a short attention span and are unable to concentrate.

132. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. In about a third of lessons teaching is good, including some very good Spanish lessons; no lesson was taught unsatisfactorily. Usually teachers are confident in using French or Spanish for most of the lesson. Resources are ready prepared to ensure maximum use of learning time and good pace throughout the lesson. Pupils' learning, and the work of low attainers in particular, is carefully guided by activities such as grids, games, classifying tasks and a range of other tasks that enable the teacher to interact well with pupils and give them opportunities to succeed. A particular strength of teaching is the use of equipment such as the overhead projector, to give pupils visual support and focus their attention on the presentation of new language. Relationships are usually positive, and pupils are given support and encouragement. Their progress is regularly monitored. Homework reinforces the content of lessons and is regularly and helpfully marked.

133. In a few lessons, there are some weaknesses alongside the strengths. These relate to excessive use of English to help comprehension, and limited expectations of what pupils can do. On these occasions there are insufficient opportunities given to extend pupils' oral responses from their use of single words to short statements. There is some tolerance of poor pronunciation. Very occasionally significant amounts of a lesson only concern individual pupils, which leads to others losing interest.

134. Leadership and management of the department are good. Clear and detailed guidance is given on most aspects of teaching and day-to-day routines. A consistency of approach has been established in relation to marking, the use of equipment and some aspects of the use of French and Spanish in lessons. Staffing, accommodation and resources are good. Progress has been made in relation to a number of areas since the last report, particularly in respect of resources at Key Stage 4, but the issue of underachievement of some groups in French at Key Stage 4 remains.

## **MUSIC**

135. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining an A\*-C grade in the GCSE examination was below the national average. There were no entries in the previous year, but results in 1997 were above average. The relatively small number of pupils taking the examination each year makes it difficult to gain a true comparison with the national picture. No information is available to report how pupils' performance compares with their performance in their other subjects.



136. Standards at Key Stage 4 are currently below average. Since the last inspection, there have been several staffing disruptions and these have adversely affected delivery of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Consequently much time is spent teaching Key Stage 3 material alongside that of Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 10 have learnt about the renaissance and baroque periods of music, how chords are constructed and how they relate to melodies. However, they require frequent revision of basic knowledge, for example the names of notes in the bass clef. Nevertheless, many pupils in Year 11 have made up the work necessary to tackle the GCSE examination. They have already completed one of their two compositions and are preparing their solo performances.

137. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 7 are able to define the elements of music and can recognise them in listening to excerpts. They know the names of the notes in the treble clef and the rhythmic values, and they have composed a piece in groups on the subject of witches. Pupils in Year 8 can define "pentatonic" and compose melodies using five note scales. They have also composed pieces in three parts, with the outer sections being provided by the teacher and the inner contrasting section by the pupils. Pupils in Year 9 are able to write melodies and harmonise using appropriate chords; they are also able to identify the time signatures of pieces of music while listening to them, including that of 'Take Five' by Dave Brubeck.

138. Learning is good overall, with evidence of pupils learning well and making very good progress, particularly at Key Stage 4. Year 9 pupils are able to write down simple rhythms and melodies from dictation, access musical software, record channels, and change the instruments playing those channels. Year 11 pupils react positively to the need to complete their compositions and preparations for impending solo work.

139. Pupils at both key stages have positive attitudes to learning music and, except for a small amount of misbehaviour in Year 9, their behaviour is always good. They settle down to tasks quickly, complete them in a short space of time and present their work well. They pay attention and work independently when required to do so. Pupils with special educational needs integrate and achieve well. Key Stage 4 pupils approaching deadlines for course work are generally responding well. They discuss their work with the teachers in a mature manner, using musical terminology confidently. Overall, they respond better to the practical aspects of the course than the theoretical. However, some pupils arrive at lessons without the correct materials, and homework is not always completed. Relations with the teachers are generally good, but they are not always good between the pupils themselves.

140. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good at Key Stage 4; no lesson was taught unsatisfactorily. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good. This contributes towards clarity of task explanations, effective use of time, well planned lessons, good preparation and choice of resources. Their use of questioning is effective, either to assist recall or to aid the discovery of new knowledge. While most tasks set by teachers are achievable by all pupils, the preparation of extension activities requires more thought. Little use is made of musical terminology. The special needs support assistants make an invaluable contribution to the progress made by the hearing impaired pupils; their contribution is well

141. prepared, and evaluated after the lesson. In the theoretical lessons at Key Stage 4, the pupils' poor recall and lack of basic background knowledge slow the pace and reduce the lessons to revision sessions. Although there is effective provision for the more musically able, who are given extension tasks, this only serves to divide the class further in a situation where relations are not developing positively. Homework is set on a regular basis, in line with school policy, and is always related to work covered in class or other course work.

142. Since the last inspection, the inconsistency in teaching, caused by the staffing difficulties, has had an adverse affect on standards in classrooms and in extra-curricular activities. The department is rectifying the situation. There are shortcomings in the accommodation. One of the two classrooms is inadequate for the kind of activities needed to teach music. The practice rooms have been improved considerably since the last inspection. The shortage of percussion instruments and full-sized keyboards hinders the delivery of the National Curriculum, as does the absence of information technology resources. In other respects the curriculum is appropriate, although a previous timetable arrangement causing the GCSE course to be taught outside the school day was inappropriate and an obstacle to higher standards.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

143. The GCSE examination results have been rising for several years and the most recent results were well above the national average. 80 per cent of pupils achieved a grade in the A\*-C range, and they did better in physical education than in the average of their other subjects. There are no pupils in the current Year 11 taking the course, but those in Year 10 are attaining a good standard in both the practical and theoretical aspects. Pupils respond well when they experience very good teaching, showing good practical skills and secure understanding of how to analyse technique. In a theory lesson, pupils demonstrated sound understanding of the causes of sports' injuries, although their knowledge could only be described as superficial in a similar lesson taught earlier in the inspection week. Their written work, covering several topics, confirms that standards are appropriate for pupils who are less than two terms into the course. A group of pupils showed sound practical skills in non-examination work as part of the National Curriculum core programme. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 could not be judged, as it was not possible to observe Year 11 pupils during the inspection.

144. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations, although given the performance of Year 7 pupils, the higher order skills are not as well developed by the end of the Year 9 as they should be. Pupils have a secure grasp of basic skills across a range of gymnastic and games activities, enabling them to play football, netball, basketball and hockey successfully; however, they lack sufficient tactical awareness. Their movement ideas and range of skills are sufficient to compose simple gymnastic sequences; however, although their movements are controlled, they are unable to work at different speeds and levels and show a dynamic approach to the activity.

145. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are mostly satisfactory, and their behaviour in lessons is almost always good. In some lessons, pupils display obvious enthusiasm, particularly when playing competitively. They work hard in practice situations and try to implement the advice given by teachers. Pupils have the ability to work in pairs and small groups, sometimes doing this effectively without direct supervision. Year 7 pupils demonstrated good learning and very good attitudes in a gymnastic lesson; they were concerned about the quality of their movements and appreciative of the performance of others. Many of these attributes enable pupils to make satisfactory progress in most lessons, and good progress when they experience challenging teaching. Positive attitudes are demonstrated by the way pupils come prepared for lessons and by the number who are eager to be involved in the range of club activities provided by the department. Good standards are achieved by some pupils, who gain representative honours at a high level, either individually or as a member of a team.

146. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. It varies greatly but now it is mainly good or very good. A member of the department was on long term absence at the time of this inspection. One of two unsatisfactory lessons occurred because a temporary teacher was unfamiliar with a Year 8 group and maintained activities when it was clear that the pupils did not have sufficient skill to carry out the tasks successfully. The other lesson taught to Year 9 pupils had no clear learning objectives, leaving the pupils no wiser about the principles and practices of fitness. The best lessons were successful because of a lively approach, a brisk pace and clear expectations about the standard of work. In a GCSE theory lesson, Year 10 pupils benefited from these features as well as the teacher's good use of questioning. There has been an attempt to tackle a criticism in the last report about teaching styles, and the range has been widened through observation of other staff. However, not all teachers are successful at using different strategies within one lesson. The requirement for pupils to plan and evaluate their work is applied in some but not all lessons.

147. The number and nature of the planned activities meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. There are opportunities for Key Stage 4 pupils to develop the activities they have learned at Key Stage 3 and to select new ones. Assessment procedures have been refined, but still need strengthening so that pupils' progress is judged explicitly against the criteria set out in the end of key stage descriptions. The department is soundly led. The quality of teaching is monitored through regular observation of lessons. Review procedures have been instrumental in identifying strategies that have steadily improved examination performance.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

148. At Key Stage 4, pupils are entered for the GCSE short course. Results in the last two years have been below the national average for the proportion of A\*-C grades gained. Girls achieve better than boys. Attainment for the current Key Stage 4 pupils is also below average. Many have good knowledge and understanding of Christian and Hindu beliefs. They can consider questions to do with euthanasia and explain different viewpoints to some extent. Some higher-attaining pupils can produce a balanced, reasoned argument, but many of average or lower attainment state views briefly and with less clear understanding. Acquisition of these skills is best for pupils of all abilities where the teaching clearly aims to develop pupils' thinking, stimulates their interest and provides intellectually demanding work.

149. Pupils reach levels expected by the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Key Stage 3. Many have good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world faiths. They recognise special beliefs, for example, about God as creator. Pupils appreciate some of the rich ways in which different believers express their faith; through prayer, worship and festival. Some higher-attaining pupils can interpret the meaning behind religious questions but, generally, higher critical skills are not well developed for most pupils as there is less planning for this.

150. Pupils' achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall although several pupils, particularly in Year 10, do not achieve as well as they should. Progress was seen to be good for high and average attaining pupils in Year 7, who, for example, gained good knowledge of different places of worship through an interesting, extended research project. Year 10 pupils thoroughly enjoyed a lesson exploring different beliefs in the after-life, and they discovered some common values shared by Christians and Hindus. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, especially at Key Stage 3 where their needs are supported in smaller groups, as in Year 7. Here, pupils' learning about the Muslim holy book was very well promoted by the use of visual resources. Pupils with special educational needs also make sound progress where teachers are sensitive to their needs and give them effective individual help. However, there is some underachievement at both key stages for pupils across the range of ability where their varying needs are not met. This is particularly true in some Year 10 lessons where activities are undemanding and the pace is slow. This was the case in a lesson where pupils only considered some basic facts about war that they already knew. In this class, both boys and girls were de-motivated and dismissive of the value of religious belief.

151. Many pupils reach good standards of personal development. Where the teaching is interesting, they concentrate, offer suggestions and behave very well. In the best cases, they take the initiative. For example, a pupil with special educational needs raised perceptive questions showing insight into issues of human existence; these sparked others' curiosity to ask, "why?" However, at times where pupils are bored by the tasks and where the ensuing social chat goes unchecked, pupils learn little and do not develop positive attitudes towards others' beliefs. At times, some pupils, particularly but not solely boys, are reluctant to start writing.

152. Overall, the teaching is satisfactory. Slightly more than half the lessons seen were good, but a minority, at Key Stage 4, were judged to be unsatisfactory. The best teaching is well planned. It challenges all abilities to think and is based on good subject knowledge, used to ensure that all pupils understand. High attaining pupils in Year 9 matched aspects of different religious beliefs to various funeral rites and learned more about underlying meaning. Good teaching uses varied, stimulating methods and sets a purposeful pace so that pupils remain focused on the work. This was seen in an effective lesson, which included a lively exchange on complex causes of modern warfare. Relationships are mostly very good. Teachers encourage all pupils to join in class discussion, and chivvy anyone who is slow to tackle written work. The marking of pupils' work is done regularly, and much of it is rigorous, enabling pupils to see how well they have done and exactly how they can improve. Homework is often used effectively to extend learning. In the unsatisfactory lessons, pupils are not given enough opportunity to contribute their own ideas or draw on their own experiences. Furthermore, expectations of pupils to think are too low; there is not enough planning of work matched to the wide range of ability, and pupils' behaviour is not successfully managed.

153. Since the last inspection, provision for the subject has improved with the introduction of the GCSE short course, and, in this respect, the school now meets statutory requirements. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Departmental management is sound. There is clear educational direction, focused on raising attainment. Systems to assess pupils' progress are sound, but the results are not used well enough to guide planning of future work, matched to different needs. This, and planning for pupils' progression to higher critical skills, are key areas for improvement to raise attainment. Support for teaching is good but systems of formal monitoring of the work of the department are not fully in place.