

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **GREAT BARR SCHOOL**

Great Barr

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103550

Headteacher: Mr. B. Sherratt

Reporting inspector: Mr. D. Driscoll  
11933

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> March 2000

Inspection number: 184893

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Aldridge Road  
Great Barr  
Birmingham

Postcode: B44 8NU

Telephone number: 0121 366 6611

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs. J. Watts-James

Date of previous inspection: 27th February 1995

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			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Key issues for action
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			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Anne Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Bob Castle	Team inspector	Geography	
John Vanstone	Team inspector	History	
Christine Harrison	Team inspector	Science	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Shirley Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
Brian Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
		English as an additional language	
Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English	
Ged Gast	Team inspector	Art	
John Ayerst	Team inspector	Music	
Alan Skelton	Team inspector	Religious education	
Trevor Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Information technology	
Bernard Treacy	Team inspector	English	
Bernard Abrams	Team inspector	6 <sup>th</sup> form science	
Cheryl Jackson	Team inspector	Equality of opportunity	
		Special educational needs	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Great Barr school is the largest school in England. It is a mixed comprehensive school educating pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. There are 2377 pupils on roll, representing a rich mix of ethnic backgrounds. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is now broadly average, but has been steadily improving over the past three years. However, lower than average attainment, on entry, in reading persists. There are 319 pupils on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs, including 18 with statements, which is below average for a school of this size. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The school has 135 pupils for whom English is an additional language, but none of these are at an early stage of language acquisition and almost all have no difficulty with the English language. The school is extremely popular and has more than two applicants for every place available. Overall, the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are broadly average.

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

This is a good school where the quality of teaching ensures that pupils make good progress. Standards have been rising for many years, and continue to do so, as a result of the very good leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff. Parents are very pleased with the quality of the education that their children receive and, in particular, with the high standards of behaviour. Such standards are a result of the very good provision that the school makes for pupils' personal development and the consistently good quality of teaching. The school provides satisfactory value for money with the above average funding that it receives.

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

- The shared commitment to raising standards in the school leads to rapidly rising GCSE results and improvements in most other performance indicators.
- Pupils achieve well at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Lower attaining pupils gain examination results at GCSE grades A\* to G that are above the national average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The quality of pastoral care ensures that all pupils are known well as individuals.
- Standards of behaviour are very good as a result of the outstanding provision for pupils' moral development.
- Many aspects of pupils' personal development are very good as a result of the school's very good provision.
- The school is very well led and managed.

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

- Pupils are underachieving in mathematics and French because the teaching is unsatisfactory in these subjects.
- Attendance in the sixth form is poor and leads to lower than expected standards given the good quality of teaching.
- The poor accommodation for music means that the National Curriculum cannot be taught in full.
- The library is too small.
- The short length of the school week limits the possible achievements of pupils.
- Some statutory requirements are not met, particularly for the appraisal of teachers.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in 1995. There have been great improvements in all measures of performance at GCSE level. Results at A level had been rising steadily, but fell back in 1999 to the level of the 1996 results. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and the high standards of behaviour have been maintained. The number of pupils at the school has risen and attendance has improved. Weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection have mostly been rigorously pursued and many, such as assessment and the provision for cultural development, have been converted into strengths. However, weaknesses persist in the appraisal of teachers. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. These improvements reflect well on the leadership of the school and shared determination of the staff to improve the quality of the education that the school is providing.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	D	D	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	D	E	

<b>Key</b>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils' performances in the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were below the national averages in English and mathematics and average in science. When compared with similar schools, their performance was well below average in English and mathematics and above average in science. However, the results of the tests in English appear to be an anomaly. The school asked for the papers to be remarked as they were so far below the teacher assessments, but this was refused on a technicality. The results in English had been improving rapidly and in 1998 were well above average. The standard of work seen during the inspection was of a better standard than that suggested by the test results and matched the teachers' assessments.

The proportions of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C and A\* to G was average in comparison with both the national figures and the figure for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining one or more GCSEs at grades A\* to G was above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The best results were in drama and German; the worst were in art. Results at A level were well below average and at GNVQ Advanced level were above average. The best results were in physical education at A level and leisure and tourism at GNVQ Advanced level. The worst results were in A level mathematics. The school's targets for examination success are appropriately high and are met or exceeded each year.

In the work seen during the inspection, pupils are achieving well in most subjects, although there is underachievement in French, mathematics and music. Pupils in the sixth form generally achieve appropriate standards given their attainment on entry to the sixth form, but their progress is not at the good level seen in the rest of the school because their attendance is poor.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	Very good in the main school but some pupils in the sixth form do not place enough importance upon regular attendance.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good and often exemplary. The rate of permanent exclusions is low and the rate of fixed term exclusions is average or below and falling.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils demonstrate a genuine respect for the feelings of others and are very mindful of the impact that their actions have on others. Relationships are very good throughout the school and result in a most harmonious community.
Attendance	Satisfactory in the main school but poor in the sixth form.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11 - 14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 17 per cent. Teaching is less than satisfactory in 4 per cent of lessons.

At Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is good in all subjects except art, where it is satisfactory, French and mathematics, where it is unsatisfactory, and drama where teaching is excellent. Teaching in the sixth form is good in design and technology, English, geography, history, physical education and science. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects.

The strengths of teaching in all years are the teachers' knowledge of their subjects, the expectations that they have of their pupils, the way that they manage their classes, the use that is made of homework and the quality of assessment. Good teaching methods are also employed at Key Stages 3 and 4. The unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics is because teachers do not expect their pupils to achieve high enough standards. Much of the teaching in French is of a good standard, but this is not enough to make up for the relatively high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in the department. The unsatisfactory teaching occurs in French when teachers do not expect enough of their pupils or spend too long speaking English rather than French. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in all subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Generally satisfactory. The curriculum has good breadth and balance at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, but statutory requirements are not met for religious education in the sixth form or for music in the main school. The short length of the school week limits the number of subjects studied at Key Stage 4. There is very good provision for extra curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, with very good arrangements for support through withdrawal from lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Not applicable at this school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: the school makes excellent provision for moral development and very good provision for social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: the school has very good procedures for promoting good behaviour and the personal development of its pupils. However, the successful procedures in place to improve attendance in the main school are not being used in the sixth form.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: there is a shared commitment to improving the education for all pupils that is bringing about a sustained rise in standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: the governors are very effective as critical friends to the school although some statutory requirements are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: data is used well to measure the school's improvement and to inform planning. The appraisal of teachers is poor.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: the school targets its spending very well at key areas for improvement.

## 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>Parents are very pleased with all aspects of the school's work. In the response to the parents' questionnaire over 90 per cent of parents responded positively to 10 of the 12 questions, with 89 and 87 per cent responding positively to the other two.</li> </ul>	

The inspection team agrees with parents' views.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Attainment in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 1999 was below the national average. The proportions of pupils reaching level five or above and level six and above were below the national averages in English and mathematics and close to the national averages in science. There does appear, however, to have been errors in the marking of the test papers in English. The school requested that the papers should be remarked as the results were much lower than the Teacher Assessments, but this was refused on a technicality. Results in English had never been below average before 1999 and were well above average in 1998. Results in mathematics have been consistently below average and those in science have been consistently close to the national average. There has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in the last three years.
2. Overall, results are below the average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds, although there are differences between the core subjects. The results are well below average in English and mathematics, but above average in science.
3. Overall, the standards of work seen at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with the levels expected nationally. This represents good progress from the pupils' below average attainment when they joined the school and they are achieving well.
4. The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the results of the national tests in mathematics and science. Pupils are attaining well in science and making better than expected progress, whilst in mathematics the pupils are underachieving as too little is demanded of them. The work seen in English is of a better standard than that suggested by the test results last year and pupils are achieving well in the subject. This would suggest that the teacher assessments were a more accurate reflection of the pupils' attainment last year. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average overall, but there are differences between the individual subjects. Pupils also achieve well, compared to their attainment on entry to the school, in design and technology, geography, German, history and religious education. Pupils achieve very well indeed in drama. However, there is underachievement in French, on account of a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, and music where the accommodation is not suitable for teaching part of the National Curriculum.
5. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 have improved since the last inspection in design and technology, geography, information technology, German, religious education and science. In no subject have standards fallen.
6. In the GCSE examinations in 1999, the proportions of pupils gaining five or more passes at grades A\* to C and A\* to G were in line with the national averages. The proportion gaining one or more passes at grades A\* to G was above the national average. Results against all three of these measures have shown significant improvement since 1997, when all were either below or well below the national averages. The average points score per pupil in 1999 was close to the national average, despite pupils only being able to study a maximum of nine subjects rather than the more usual ten. Results, using the average GCSE points score per pupil, have risen at a rate that is faster than the national average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
7. Results in the 1999 GCSE examinations compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds were average for the proportions gaining five or more passes at grades A\* to C and A\* to G and well above average for the proportion achieving one or more passes at grades A\* to G. The average points score per pupil was close to the average for similar schools. The best results were in drama and German. The worst results were in art.
8. Overall, the standards of work seen at the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly average and confirm the standards suggested by the examination results. This represents good progress for these pupils who were achieving standards that were below average at the end of Key Stage 3. Overall then, pupils are achieving well at Key Stage 4. The standards of work seen during the inspection generally agree with the standards suggested by the examination results, although there are differences in art and religious education, where the standards of

work this year are much better than last year and in information technology where the school enters all pupils for the examination, which is a much higher proportion than is normally seen. Attainment on the non-examined religious education course is below the level expected by the agreed syllabus, mainly because too little time is devoted to the course. Attainment on vocational courses is above the level expected nationally.

9. The good progress made by pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 is confirmed by the views of parents.
10. GCSE results, where it is possible to compare with the previous report, have either been maintained or have improved in almost all subjects except art and music where they have fallen. In music, the results vary from year to year according to the prior attainment of the relatively small numbers taking the course. The results in art have shown significant decline but standards are now rising again as the initiatives put into place by the new head of department are making an impact.
11. The above average proportion of pupils who gain one or more passes at grades A\* to G is a result of the good provision that is made for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs throughout the school. The accurate placing of pupils into groups according to their levels of prior attainment and the very good arrangements for withdrawing pupils for specific support means that lower attainers make good progress in most of their subjects. The highest attainers, including the gifted and very able, make satisfactory progress at present. However, the school is already putting initiatives in place to extend such pupils. The project with an artist in residence, observed during the week of the inspection, is already having a positive impact on these pupils.
12. Throughout the school, pupils attain above average standards in information technology. This, however, represents only satisfactory progress for the pupils as they enter the school with better than expected levels of attainment in the subject. The good teaching that they receive brings about good learning in individual lessons but this is not supported by sufficient use of computers in other areas of the school, so pupils are not consolidating their learning in other subjects.
13. The average A level points score per candidate was well below the national average in 1999. Results had been rising since 1996, but declined sharply last year. Results do tend to vary, however, according to the attainment of the pupils entering the sixth form and, overall, pupils achieved results that were in line with that which would be expected by their GCSE performance. Results on the GNVQ courses were above average last year. The best results at A level were in physical education and the worst were in mathematics. The work seen during the inspection confirms that pupils are generally achieving standards that are appropriate for their attainment on entry to the sixth form. However, achievement is not as good as it should be given the good standard of teaching those pupils in the sixth form receive. The main reason for this discrepancy is the poor attendance of some pupils in the sixth form. There is underachievement in history, mathematics and music. Whilst much of this underachievement is attributed to poor attendance, there are other important factors. In history, the arrangements for sharing classes between teachers are not working and in music the accommodation and larger than average group sizes prevents pupils from reaching their potential.
14. Whilst the proportion of pupils in the school who speak English as an additional is higher than in most schools, none are at an early stage of language acquisition and all are relatively fluent in English.
15. Pupils' standards of literacy match the level expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 3. This represents a significant improvement on their standards on entry to the school, in terms of their reading. However, most of this improvement is attributable to the work of the English and special educational needs departments, with little reinforcement from other subjects. The school is already addressing the issue through a whole school approach to literacy skills. One area of particular strength, however, is the way that all subjects are insisting on the correct vocabulary being used within their subject and this is having a clear impact on the development of pupils' vocabulary across the curriculum. The size of the library, on the other hand, is an impediment to the improvement of pupils' reading skills. The number of pupils using the library at any one time has to be limited and pupils at Key Stage 3 may only borrow one book at a time.
16. Levels of numeracy are in line with the standard expected nationally, however, there are no strategies in place for improving standards of numeracy across the whole school and little evidence that numeracy is taught or developed in subjects other than mathematics. In science, pupils draw very good graphs, but need guidance on calculating percentages. In design and technology, pupils demonstrate basic skills in

measurements of length and weight when designing and making in a range of materials. In geography, the teacher uses questioning effectively to develop pupils' analysis of data on the population of Sierra Leone. There is little understanding of the numeracy needs of pupils on the vocational courses in the sixth form.

17. Each year the school sets challenging targets for its performance which reflect its constant drive for improvement. These targets have been met or exceeded year on year.

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

18. The great majority of pupils demonstrate very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development and these are very evident throughout the life and activities of this very large community. Their good willingness to learn and their extremely orderly conduct make a considerable contribution to their progress in lessons and to their success in the longer term. Pupils, who come from a wide range of racial backgrounds, are friendly and work harmoniously together. The views of parents confirm that a very high proportion of pupils enjoy school.
19. In four out of five lessons, pupils of all ages demonstrate at least good levels of interest and behaviour, working hard and staying on task with few reminders. They often enjoy their work, as they do when they are motivated by an opportunity to use computers. They work well together when this is required and respond well to their teacher by following instructions and trying to answer questions. When attitudes are at their best, standards of co-operation with the teacher are outstanding. For instance, with excellent teaching in a Year 11 drama lesson, pupils were really enthusiastic and confidently welcomed the teacher's constructive criticism of their efforts. Sixth form pupils often show a particularly mature and responsible attitude to learning. Even where teaching is comparatively mundane, pupils of all age groups and abilities are usually willing to learn. Their attention may wander, for instance if the teacher's input becomes too prolonged, or if they do not understand the work, but their behaviour remains at least satisfactory. When, rarely, they become really restless, this relates to limitations in the skills and strategies employed by the teacher. Overall, however, this is a school where the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils allow teachers to concentrate on teaching rather than controlling behaviour.
20. A large number of pupils come regularly to the extra-curricular opportunities arranged and demonstrate a great interest in the activities. In music, for instance, they work hard, with great enjoyment and enthusiasm, making best use of the limited time-slots available for band and orchestral rehearsals.
21. Behaviour around the buildings and site reflects that seen during organised activities, which is frequently exemplary. Pupils are polite and helpful. They move purposefully to their classrooms, so that despite the distances involved, lateness is only infrequently a problem. Groups moving around narrow corridors and stairs are orderly, even when teachers are not present. On one occasion a pupil tripped on the staircase and every other pupil present waited quietly and patiently whilst the situation was dealt with. They show a great deal of respect for others' feelings and realise that poor relationships with others, such as bullying, are not acceptable. This leads to an almost complete lack of any form of anti social behaviour. However, pupils know that when such problems do at times arise, they can turn to teachers for effective help. Pupils appreciate the awards they obtain for good work and good attitudes. There is also a considerable pride in the achievements of others, such as the spontaneous applause for the choir in assemblies. These occasions were also notable for the way in which members of the audience felt free to stand up and join in, with no encouragement from staff, to express their sheer enjoyment of the event with a total lack of embarrassment.
22. Occasionally, poor behaviour does arise and, in previous years, this has resulted in the frequent use of short-term exclusion, although the incidence of permanent exclusion is low. The school has responded very well to this and, in the present year, short term exclusions have fallen dramatically to a level that is average or below. The sheer size of the school makes accurate judgements difficult, because tables for national comparisons stop at 1500+ pupils on roll. Exclusion is now reserved for the most grave incidents of poor behaviour, while other offenders work in school under close supervision, away from their usual classes. A notably hard-working atmosphere, with good concentration from all, is engendered in this group of 'internally excluded' pupils. Overall, the high standards of behaviour are one of the most important reasons for parents sending their children to the school.
23. Pupils respond well when they are given responsibility, for instance simply being in the right place at the right time on the extensive site is a challenge that even younger ones rise to successfully. Their participation

in the school's successful involvement with the Eco Schools initiative has led to the school achieving this prestigious award. They show initiative, for instance, when given challenging written tasks in Key Stage 3 religious education they seek out their own information without being told to do so. On occasion, very high self motivation is evident, for instance in music where pupils work hard to perfect pieces in their own time. Pupils on the reception rota carry out their duties efficiently. Pupils contribute to new initiatives, such as the buddy scheme recently introduced to support Year 7 pupils. Overall, however, the most impressive aspect of the pupils' response is the way in which they observe the high expectations that the school has of its pupils' standards of behaviour.

24. Pupils' very good attitudes at Key Stages 3 and 4 are confirmed by the way most attend school willingly and regularly, seldom staying away without good reason. Only a very small minority are less enthusiastic. In response to the school's efforts, an upward trend in attendance has been established in the main school. It has risen from unsatisfactory levels, below 89 per cent, three years ago, to approaching 92 per cent, around the average for secondary schools, in the most recent reporting year. The rate of unauthorised absence was below average last year. In the current year, this trend of improvement is continuing. For instance, Year 11 attendance during the present year is satisfactory, while absence rates of the previous year group were a cause of concern. The positive way in which a group of Year 11 pupils is responding to an appropriate alternative curriculum, including ongoing work experience, is contributing to the current improvement.
25. Pupils in the sixth form are, in one respect, less keen and responsive. They miss lessons more often than those in the main school. There is some thoughtlessness in these pupils' use of the greater freedom they have for organising themselves. Sixth form attendance is recorded by the school as low, at around 84 per cent, in the current academic year up to the time of the inspection. During the inspection, actual attendance in sixth form lessons was lower than this, with one in every five pupils missing on average from every lesson. This is restricting pupils' progress and reducing their success in examinations. The main reason for such a poor level of attendance stems from the number of pupils in the sixth form who have jobs in the evenings and consequently arrive late the following morning.
26. Overall, the school has made good progress since the previous inspection. The high standards of behaviour have been maintained whilst the rate of exclusions has fallen in the current year. Attendance has improved at a good rate.

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

27. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. The quality of the learning that such teaching promotes is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. This finding agrees with the views of parents.
28. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons; good or better in 64 per cent and very good or excellent in 17 per cent of lessons. The proportions of lessons taught to these standards are similar at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, although there is a larger proportion taught to a very good or excellent standard at Key Stage 4. At Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is good in all subjects except art, where it is satisfactory, French and mathematics, where it is unsatisfactory, and drama where teaching is excellent. Teaching in the sixth form is good in design and technology, English, geography, history, physical education and science. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects.
29. The strengths of teaching in all years are the teachers' knowledge of their subjects, the expectations that they have of their pupils, the way that they manage their classes, the use that is made of homework and the quality of assessment. Good teaching methods are also employed at Key Stages 3 and 4. The unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics is because teachers do not expect their pupils to achieve high enough standards. Much of the teaching in French is of a good standard, but this is not enough to make up for the relatively high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in the department. The unsatisfactory teaching occurs in French when teachers do not expect enough of their pupils or spend too long speaking English rather than French. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in all subjects.
30. The good systems for assessing work on a regular basis lead to teachers being well aware of their pupils' levels of attainment. This means that they are able to build upon the pupils' prior knowledge and understanding most effectively so that pupils are acquiring new knowledge at a good pace. The marking of

books and of the regular tests that occur in many subjects also ensure that pupils have a good understanding of their levels of attainment and what they need to do to improve further.

31. Most teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve and encourage them to apply good levels of intellectual and physical effort. However, there is a considerable weakness in mathematics. In mathematics, teachers do not expect their pupils to do well in examinations and some teachers have the attitude that a particular grade at GCSE should be good enough for the individual. The opposite view is taken in science, where teachers tell even the highest attainers that they can do better still and push them hard to achieve the highest possible grades. The difference is clear in the examination results at GCSE, where science achieve some of the best results, especially at grades A\* and A, whilst the results in mathematics are much lower. Overall, parents feel that the school expects the pupils to work hard and achieve well.
32. The arrangements for placing pupils in groups, according to their levels of prior attainment is particularly accurate, and the spread of attainment within these groups is relatively small. This makes it much easier for teachers to plan lessons that are at an appropriate level of difficulty for all pupils within a class. The methods that teachers use are particularly effective with pupils with special educational needs at Key Stages 3 and 4. Here, teachers are able to use similar methods for all pupils in the class because they are all working at a similar level. This, together with the very good teaching that such pupils receive when withdrawn for specific support, ensures that pupils with special educational needs are making good progress.
33. The only weaknesses of any note in the planning of lessons relate to the teaching of basic skills and, in some cases, lessons that tend to promote an over dependence on the teacher. Even these features are not unsatisfactory, but they do not reach the good standard of the other features mentioned. In terms of basic skills, much of the literacy work is promoted through English, as would be expected. However, this is not supported in many subjects through an emphasis on, for example, extended pieces of written work though the writing frames in history make a good contribution. The insistence upon the use of the correct terminology, on the other hand, is a strong feature in many subjects and helps to develop pupils' vocabulary.
34. Teachers are able to use their good subject knowledge well to maintain the interest of their pupils. So that in geography, for example, the teacher was able to broaden pupils horizons by talking knowledgeably about wider factors that have an impact upon rural and urban life in Brazil. In the sixth form, however, this can go a little too far and teachers can sometimes dominate the lesson rather than making pupils think for themselves. Some teachers in French, do not expect their pupils to play a great enough part in lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4.
35. The greatest strength in the teaching lies in the very good way that teachers control their classes. Whilst standards of behaviour are undoubtedly high, this is only brought about by a consistent approach to implementing the school's values on the part of all teachers. Pupils are made very aware of the standards that are expected of them from the time that they join the school and teachers ensure that these standards are not allowed to slip. On many occasions, if the noise level starts to rise in a lesson or if pupils stray off task, the teacher only needs to give a quick glance in the direction of the pupils concerned to return the situation to normal. This ensures that the pace of learning in lessons is not allowed to fall below its usual good level.
36. The use of homework is generally good, and this is confirmed by parents. Homework is usually set regularly and is used effectively to extend the lesson. Tasks are relevant and play an important part in increasing pupils' productivity. Parents agree that their children get the right amount of work to do at home.
37. There have been great improvements in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. In particular, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen from 20 per cent to 4 per cent and the proportion of lessons that were taught to a good or better standards has risen from 50 per cent to 64 per cent.

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

38. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory curriculum, although the failure to meet statutory requirements in music at Key Stage 3 and religious education in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

39. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 has good breadth and balance and satisfies almost all the requirements for the National Curriculum and religious education. In addition to the basic National Curriculum subjects, pupils also have lessons in drama and personal and social education. However, pupils do not receive their full entitlement to the programmes of study for music because the size of the music rooms limits the use of the required range of instruments.
40. In Key Stage 4, the curriculum has satisfactory breadth and balance and satisfies all statutory requirements. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects and religious education, pupils also study personal and social education and choose additional subjects from a satisfactory range of options. There are very good opportunities for pupils to choose vocational subjects, including an intermediate GNVQ course in health and social care and a City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education course which is particularly appropriate for pupils who need to develop personal, social and basic skills within a broad vocational context. However, there is a weakness in the options for higher attaining pupils because there is no opportunity for pupils to study a second modern foreign language.
41. The curriculum in the sixth form offers a good range of A level and GNVQ courses. Pupils also follow a programme of supplementary studies, including physical education and health education and have opportunities to take part in Young Enterprise projects. Hence each pupil is provided with a curriculum which meets their needs and has good breadth and balance. However, there is no religious education component in the sixth form curriculum so it does not fully satisfy statutory requirements.
42. The teaching time in Key Stages 3 and 4 is 23 hours 45 minutes each week. This is slightly below the recommended minimum teaching time of 24 hours, but is significantly below the 25 hours which the Department for Education and Employment suggest schools might consider offering in Key Stage 4 and which is offered by almost two thirds of schools nationally. One result of this shortage of teaching time is that higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 can only study a maximum of nine GCSE subjects, compared with the ten subjects frequently offered in similar schools. This restricts their learning opportunities, compared with pupils in other schools, and limits their overall attainment in GCSE examinations. Further consequences of a shortage of time are found in religious education at Key Stage 4, where the depth and detail of pupils' learning are significantly restricted.
43. Pupils have lessons in information technology in both key stages and make good progress in these lessons. However, the overall development of pupils' skills in information and communications technology is limited to a satisfactory level, because they do not have enough opportunities to apply and develop their skills in other subjects across the curriculum. Some subjects, notably mathematics and music, provide good opportunities to use computer equipment as part of learning within the subjects. However, in other subjects, particularly design and technology, history and modern foreign languages, the application of information and communications technology is inconsistent across the teaching groups and some pupils use information and communications technology only very occasionally in these subjects.
44. Pupils in all year groups have lessons in personal and social education, which include all the required components of health education, sex education and drugs awareness. The planning for these lessons is satisfactory overall, though better in Key Stage 3, where the lessons are well regarded by pupils, than Key Stage 4. The school has conducted a survey into pupils' views in Key Stage 4, noted the weaknesses identified and is planning appropriate modifications to the course. There is a short, but satisfactory, programme of careers education as part of the personal and social education course. The course is supplemented by good contributions from other subjects including the use of appropriate careers education software in information and communications technology.
45. The school is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and is constantly seeking to improve the opportunities available to pupils. For example, there are several new initiatives designed to accelerate pupils' learning. The increased emphasis on study skills is one initiative that has become well established across the various subjects. Within the strategies for improving study skills are several techniques, including the emphasis on key words, which contribute to developing pupils' literacy skills. The arrangements for developing literacy are therefore satisfactory, even though the school's literacy policy is only in draft form at present.
46. The school is aware of the unsatisfactory arrangements for developing pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum. The school has already set up a working party to address this issue and there is a draft policy, to



be finalised and introduced shortly, which aims to overcome this weakness. There are good arrangements for encouraging pupils' use of number in design and technology but few other subjects have policies and strategies for developing numeracy. In science, for example, pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory but not as good as their attainment in other aspects of science and pupils do not always get enough practice in handling calculations. There is also a lack of organisation in the teaching of the numeracy aspects of the GNVQ key skills programme in the sixth form.

47. In most respects, all pupils have equal access to the school's curriculum. However there are some inequalities. For example, only girls have the opportunity to study dance within the physical education curriculum, although both boys and girls take part in dance in the extra-curricular programme. Some pupils in Year 7 miss part of their personal and social education lessons when they take part in activities designed to improve their numeracy and literacy skills. Pupils in Year 7 also miss several assemblies in the half term when they go swimming.
48. The provision that is made for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school's arrangements for placing pupils in teaching groups according to their prior levels of attainment result in the accurate allocation of pupils to such groups. This means that there is a relatively small range of attainment represented in any one class, so that teachers can pitch their work at an appropriate level. In this way, pupils with special educational needs are both supported and extended. Arrangements to support pupils with specific difficulties are very good. Such pupils are withdrawn from lessons and receive very good teaching. They are returned to their usual classes when problems have been overcome and are never withdrawn for any longer than is necessary.
49. The arrangements for ensuring the continuity of pupils' learning when they transfer from the primary schools are satisfactory overall. The English department is forging particularly strong links with partner primary schools, visiting those schools and taking part in the 'Moving on Up' project which provides a valuable bridging activity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. The numeracy summer school fulfils a similar role in the development of pupils' mathematical skills. However the links between other departments and their primary counterparts are generally less well established.
50. The school provides pupils with a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities, which is valued by pupils and by almost all the parents who completed the questionnaire. There is a particularly good variety of sporting activities, which involves 18 members of staff and around 40 per cent of pupils. There are further strengths in drama, music, the opportunities for extra study support and the programme of visits that the school provides. The school makes effective use of its links with the community in this respect.
51. The school has made satisfactory progress in developing its curriculum since the time of the previous inspection. The time allowed for music in Key Stage 3 is now appropriate and the number of pupils involved in extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, has increased. There has been some progress in the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum but it is still not used consistently in all teaching groups in all subjects. The overall teaching time remains low.
52. The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and its success is apparent in the life of the school which provides a safe, civilised and caring environment whose members feel valued. The blue print for this success is a statement which clearly sets out the school's values and articulates how they will be put into practical effect. Perhaps the school's greatest success is the way in which the vast majority of pupils, staff and governors share and demonstrate the values.
53. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Although the school does not comply fully with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, it goes to considerable effort to provide as many assemblies as possible within the space available. Pupils are scheduled to attend four house assemblies each week. Those observed during the inspection were of a high quality. They were acts of worship addressing issues such as sacrifice and sharing and included prayer and time for reflection. Standards of presentation were high and were often enhanced by pupil participation. Memorable were the performances by the school's Gospel choir and a video of a recent "sleep-out" by sixth form pupils in aid of the homeless. A programme of "Thoughts for the Day" is provided for use during form time when pupils do not attend assemblies. Religious education helps pupils understand how beliefs affect actions and assists them in reflecting on themes of forgiveness, community and commitment and what it means to be human. A further significant contribution to the provision is made by art, English, drama and music. The school ethos

means that the uniqueness of the individual is not only talked about, but demonstrated in attitudes. There is a small but enthusiastic Christian Union group, and provision is made during Ramadan for Muslim pupils to observe their required prayer and fasting. Each year there is an arts focused week with a spiritual and artistic basis. This year's festival is planned to demonstrate the centrality of Jesus Christ to the Millennium. The significant weakness in the provision is that no religious education is provided for sixth form pupils.

54. The provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. The school's widely shared values mean that there is a consistent expectation of good behaviour in all aspects of the school life. This is demonstrated by respect for others in classes and consideration whilst moving around the school. The success of the provision is that the vast majority of pupils have internalised these values and respond well to the trust put in them. Were this not so, the school's enormous buildings and narrow staircases would be very difficult to manage. The strong and effective house system sets high standards and emphasises rewards over sanctions. Specific initiatives such as the one entitled "You can do it" build self-esteem. There is a well-planned programme of personal and social education for all pupils including the sixth form. The school's code of conduct is reinforced through a widely supported home/school agreement. The school's "eco-code" draws pupils' attention to matters of right and wrong in a wider context and the work in art, English, geography, history, physical education, religious education and science explores moral issues. There are a number of effective schemes in which the school co-operates with outside agencies to support pupils who are less committed to its values and may find difficulty in differentiating right from wrong.
55. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. Pupils entering the school are set an excellent example by their elders and the whole atmosphere is one in which pupils quickly learn how to get on with each other in a mature manner. The provision is especially successful in building very good relationships between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. Within the house system younger pupils are taught for much of the week in their form groups which aids good relationships and a feeling of being known. Specific topics are dealt with by form teachers in the personal and social education programme. There are opportunities for pupils to collaborate in most subjects and through residential experiences and team activities in dance, drama, music and physical education. There is however no strategy to provide a residential experience for all pupils during their school career. The least well developed area of the school's provision is that for giving opportunities to pupils to show initiative and take responsibility. Independent learning and research is not a strong feature of most subjects and facilities for this in the school libraries are badly restricted by the size of the available accommodation. The school is, however, addressing this issue through a new course on study skills and improving the learning resource centre in the sixth form block. There are however a number of opportunities outside the classroom through the house prefect system, form monitors, librarians, the school shop and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The attention of pupils is drawn to the community and their responsibilities as citizens through an ambitious and widely regarded environmental programme and through links with the commercial and industrial life of the city through work experience and schemes such as the Engineering Education scheme. Pupils and staff raise considerable sums of money for charity.
56. Very good provision is also made for pupils' cultural development. There is a lively arts and music programme including school productions, a whole range of musical activities and dance workshop links with local companies and with Malvern Girls College. Good links have been forged with the cultural life of the city through joint work with the Birmingham Royal Ballet and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. There is an ambitious programme of visits to art galleries, museums and theatres and of residences by artists, poets and dancers. A significant contribution is made by the school's links with Slovakian schools. These programmes demonstrate the contribution of many cultures and the multicultural nature of UK society is explored and celebrated in art, dance, English, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music and religious education. It is demonstrated also by the excellent role models of members of the multiethnic school staff. The membership of the Gospel choir and the appreciation with which its performances are received by pupils and staff, demonstrate the success of this area of provision.
57. Parents are strongly of the view that the school is helping pupils to become mature young adults through its provision for pupils' personal development.

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

58. Pastoral care of pupils and management of their behaviour are strengths of the school. The system of houses and tutor groups provides a very successful framework for the care and personal guidance of pupils, ensuring that each is known well as an individual and has teachers to turn to with any problems or concerns.

As well as good support from staff, younger pupils receive a degree of support from other pupils, for instance from Year 11 prefects. Good links with parents contribute to the care and management of pupils.

59. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. High expectations of behaviour are very firmly upheld, ensuring that this very large school community is orderly yet pleasant and friendly. Systems of awards are used well, so that helpfulness, together with effort and progress with learning, are recognised. Staff deal consistently, fairly and appropriately with unsatisfactory behaviour. There is full investigation of any incident that causes concern. Pupils are helped to take responsibility for their actions, for instance by completing a written account of what has happened. In previous years there has been an over-emphasis on the use of short term exclusion to respond to unacceptable behaviour. A very good system of internal exclusion, whereby some offences lead to the pupil following a timetable of work under strict conditions, has recently been established. Senior staff supervise such pupils in a suitably equipped room, away from their usual class. The use of exclusion from school is now restricted appropriately to the more serious instances of poor behaviour.
60. Most aspects of pupils' personal welfare are very well provided for. A full-time school nurse looks after any who become ill or injured during the course of the school day and other first-aiders are also available in case of need. Management of child protection procedures is very capable and caring. Staff are regularly reminded of the procedures they must follow about any such concern. There is effective liaison with outside agencies, to ensure prompt and appropriate action is taken when such matters arise.
61. Educational guidance is good. Pupils are given appropriate responsibility for their own learning in terms of regularly agreeing targets in the various subject areas and recording these in their planners. They examine their progress both in discussions with their tutor and when they write contributions for their Record of Achievement. Older pupils especially are helped to know what they can do in terms of the National Curriculum levels at which they are operating in the various subjects. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form are told of their projected examination grades, so that they better understand their own capabilities and are encouraged to raise their aspirations.
62. Very good efforts are made to promote and maintain attendance in the main school. The importance of attendance is emphasised to pupils and to parents. Prompt phone calls are made to pupils' homes if they are absent without explanation. New initiatives, such as the successful 'Just One Day' project with Year 9 pupils in danger of falling into habits of poor attendance are explored. An alternative curriculum, including on-going work experience, has been introduced at Key Stage 4 and is already helping to maintain the attendance of a targeted group of Year 11 pupils. Good liaison with the education welfare service helps with these useful initiatives.
63. Monitoring and promotion of sixth form attendance is poor. Registers are kept in lessons, but insufficient efforts are made to identify pupils who frequently miss their lessons and to encourage improved attendance. The sixth form registers completed at the start of the day do not provide a suitable record to allow effective monitoring. It is impossible to distinguish in these registers between times when pupils are out of school, hopefully engaged in private study at home, and times when they are present in school. Pupils often arrive late and go straight to a lesson. In these instances records show them as being on study leave for the whole of the session. Records are confused by the incorrect way that the computerised registration module calculates attendance statistics. The system wrongly counts pupils absent on study leave as being present in school. Latecomers are required to sign a 'signing in' book but at times they forget.
64. Health and safety procedures have improved significantly since the previous inspection but are still not comprehensive enough and remain unsatisfactory. Risk assessment has been successfully put in place in a number of areas. In physical education for instance it is thorough and effective. However it does not extend sufficiently to underpin safety across the complete spectrum of the school's organisation and activities. Issues such as uneven surfaces on paths and other outdoor areas, cause concern.

65. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The school's assessment policy is both detailed and comprehensive and sets out the aims and principles for assessing and recording pupils' attainment. Through the effective use of computer systems, whole school assessment and monitoring procedures are systematically organised and information is made available to subject and pastoral staff. These systems support regular and effective assessment and self-assessment practice in departments and the monitoring and setting of targets for pupils.
66. In the majority of subject areas, teachers relate their assessments to National Curriculum levels and they give a good standard of guidance to pupils on how they may improve their work. The assessment policy clearly determines the requirements for marking and subject leaders put this into practice and monitor it effectively. Time is set aside to compile a very comprehensive Record of Achievement by the end of Year 11.
67. A wide range of assessment information is collated and used well to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, to predict attainment, set targets and raise standards. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is developing well and in science for example, the practice is very good. On entry to the school, pupils are tested using nationally recognised tests and this information is regularly updated as pupils move up through the school. This data is used well to review pupil performance and set targets for examination performance in each subject and for the whole school, particularly at GCSE. Form tutors access this information to inform their reports and set the agenda for their regular progress review meetings with pupils. The introduction of the progress file and pupil mentoring is assisting a number of underachieving pupils in setting their own targets and aiding subject and form tutors in monitoring their progress.
68. The assessment and recording procedures for pupils with special educational needs all meet statutory requirements. The school uses entry assessment data well and procedures to identify and place pupils on the Code of Practice Register are clear and effectively managed. Pupils are regularly assessed to decide if and when further help is needed. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils well through assessment monitoring and subject departments and encourages them to reach their full potential through participation in special projects and through the setting of demanding targets.
69. Procedures for assessment have improved significantly since the previous inspection and the good level of pastoral care has been maintained.

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

70. Parents are very supportive of the school. They feel it is well managed and they appreciate the way their daughters and sons are expected to work hard and to achieve their best. They are pleased with the school's expectations about high standards of behaviour and with the resulting good behaviour.
71. Good efforts are made to inform and involve parents in pupils' learning. Planners are in regular use by pupils so that their parents can see information about homework. Planners are also used for teachers and parents to exchange messages, for instance if homework is not handed in. Parents are contacted about successes and when problems arise. Parents were recently involved successfully in the 'Just One Day' project to promote attendance of a group of Year 9 pupils. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are appropriately involved and informed about their progress.
72. The school makes good efforts to explore ways of increasing parental involvement and responds to issues that they raise. A questionnaire is used to find out about their concerns. Parents are further involved in school activities through well-attended meetings arranged by the Parent Teacher Association, such as 'Examination Preparation'. The expertise of individual parents is welcomed, for instance when they assist with coaching for extra-curricular physical education activities.
73. Parents appreciate the work of the school and feel that they can contact the school if there are any concerns.
74. A good general spread of information is available to parents in the prospectus and in other booklets and communications. The Annual Governors' Report, however, omits important information; it should include about arrangements made for disabled pupils. There is another significant deficiency in the information sent to parents. Reporting to parents about pupils' attainment and progress is, overall, unsatisfactory. Both a full report about each pupil's learning and an informative summary report are sent home during each year. Full

reports are written to a very good format and frequently give detailed, well-presented information. However at Key Stage 4 these reports omit essential information about pupils' progress on the statutory religious education course. In mathematics, information given about pupils' progress is too general, without enough detail of what the individual can and can not do. A minority of parents would like improved arrangements for hearing about their children's progress. The school has recently responded by ensuring parents see their child's annual report in advance of making appointments to talk to teachers about their comments.

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

75. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. The development of a set of shared values among all staff has been outstanding and is fundamental to the way that the school ensures that it fully meets its aims. There is a very good level of commitment on the part of all staff to continued improvement. Parents recognise the very good leadership provided by the headteacher in the way that he makes it clear to all pupils and parents that actions that do not conform to the school's own high standards will not be tolerated. These standards of behaviour underpin the life of the school to the extent that teachers are allowed to teach and pupils are allowed to learn. The results are clear in the results at GCSE level which have gone from well below average to average since the appointment of the headteacher and are continuing to rise.
76. The high quality of the senior staff in the school has led to very effective delegation at this level. One member of the senior management team, for example, has the responsibility for developing new initiatives within the school and this has led to a real focus on how children learn and how their pace of learning can be improved. There is, however, a lack of consistency in the support provided for middle managers in carrying out their roles. For instance, the monitoring and support of weak teaching is carried out by members of the senior management team and this is effective in reducing the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Other, day to day, monitoring of teaching is the responsibility of heads of department and there is great variation in the effectiveness of their approaches. In English, for example, the monitoring and support of teaching is most effective and is at the core of the improvement in the department. In other subjects, such as art, the head of department requires greater support from senior management in order to develop this aspect of his role. A further weakness is the poor arrangements that the school has for the appraisal of teachers. Only the headteacher has been appraised; this has proved to be very thorough and also of great benefit. Every other teacher, however, is not receiving these benefits. The school has plans to introduce performance management systems but, nevertheless, this is a weakness that was pointed out in the previous inspection and it has not been addressed
77. The governors play a good role in the leadership of the school and shaping its future. They are well aware of its strengths and weaknesses and also of the challenges that the future holds, particularly in terms of financial management. They monitor the work of the school well through visits, performance analyses and by regularly asking members of the school staff to explain aspects of their work to the governing body. There are, however, several areas where statutory requirements are not met and this aspect is unsatisfactory. There is no provision of statutory religious education in the sixth form; no system of appraisal for all teachers; the frequency of acts of worship do not meet statutory requirements; the full National Curriculum is not taught in music and there is some information missing from the governors' annual report to parents.
78. The school's awareness of its strengths and weaknesses allow the senior staff to set most appropriate priorities for improvement. Full recognition is given to issues of national concern, such as reducing exclusions, and to issues that are raised through the regular whole school reviews of its own performance. These reviews concentrate on the perceptions of the staff and play a significant part in both developing a whole school ethos and also in measuring the school's improvement and establishing priorities. The actions taken to address the priorities are well thought out and effective, with clear guidance on how success is to be measured and how the impact of initiatives is to be evaluated. The development of the school has been supported by financial planning of the highest order. For example, the school has already drawn up plans to address the large fall in funding anticipated over the next few years. There are alternative budgets that clearly identify what the impacts will be on the work of the school. This places the school in a very good position to meet such challenges.
79. The quality of financial planning has been demonstrated in the past through the way, for example, that specific grants have been perfectly targeted at improving efficiency. The cladding of the main buildings not only improved their safety and appearance but also the levels of insulation. Finance recently made available

for very able pupils was targeted exceptionally well in art, for example, where a relatively low cost approach using an artist in residence had a great impact during the week of inspection. In all of its financial transactions there is a very good adherence to the principles that ensure best value is obtained and that the school makes very good use of its available resources.

80. The quality of financial planning, however, has been unable to make up for long term neglect of the structure of the buildings. Two rooms were wisely closed by the headteacher, during the inspection, on receiving a report from a health and safety consultant. This leaves the school with poor accommodation. There are not enough rooms for all of the classes and the inadequacies of the music rooms mean that the school is unable to teach the full National Curriculum. Furthermore, the library is too small and accommodates insufficient books. This leads to the school having to limit access to the library and the number of books that can be borrowed. The school is unable to meet the demand for reading that their work in developing such skills demands.
81. The number, qualifications and experience of teaching and support staff match the demands of the curriculum in most subjects. Despite the small number of classroom support staff, they are well deployed for those pupils with special educational needs. Technical and administrative staff ensure the school functions effectively. Amongst the staff there is a good mixture of new and experienced staff. The new, young staff are having a significant impact on raising standards. However, the situation has recently become unsatisfactory. The timetable has been changed to allow some teachers to staff the exclusion room. This has led to several classes being taught by temporary staff who are not specialists, and this is now starting to have an impact on standards, particularly in mathematics and religious education. The school has recognised this weakness and is drawing up strategies to address it.
82. There is a comprehensive induction programme for new staff and newly qualified teachers. They feel well supported and appreciate the support and guidance that they receive. There is a centralised system of in service school based training, which takes place on a weekly basis with topics led by both staff and outside tutors. This enhances staff development, for example, information technology to improve staff competence. New technology is used well to manage the administration of staffing issues and is used particularly well in the management of assessment.
83. The high standards of management and leadership, evident at the time of the previous inspection, have been maintained.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

In order to improve the standards reached by pupils and the quality of education that the school provides, the school should:

- (1) Improve the standards achieved by pupils in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that teachers have appropriately high expectations of their pupils at the start of the year and that lessons are planned to reinforce such expectations; (paragraph 31)
  - implementing a whole school approach to numeracy. (paragraph 46)
- (2) Improve the quality of teaching in French by ensuring that all teachers of the subject share the same high expectations and good practices of the other members of the department. (paragraph 34)
- (3) As finance allows, improve the quality of the accommodation in music to allow the full delivery of the National Curriculum. (paragraph 80)
- (4) Make use of the successful initiatives in the main school to improve attendance in the sixth form. (paragraph 63)

In addition to these main areas for improvement, the following, less important, weaknesses need to be considered:

Meeting all statutory requirements, particularly those for the appraisal of teachers; (paragraph 77)

Paying greater attention to health and safety matters; (paragraph 64)

Increasing the length of the school week to allow better coverage of religious education and more GCSEs to be studied; (paragraph 42)

Improving, as finance allows, the size of the library and the number of books available. (paragraph 80)

**PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

*Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	234
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	64

*Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	14	47	32	4	0	0

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

*Information about the school's pupils*

**Pupils on the school's roll**

	Y7 – Y13
Number of pupils on the school's roll	2377
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	432

**Special educational needs**

	Y7 – Y13
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	319

**English as an additional language**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	135

**Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	59
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	99

*Attendance*

**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	7.9

**Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.4
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*

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	233	192	425

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	114	124
	Girls	126	122	119
	Total	214	236	243
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	50 (75)	56 (59)	57 (58)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (48)	27 (30)	19 (26)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	129	107	155
	Girls	149	116	126
	Total	278	223	281
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (56)	53 (57)	66 (74)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (21)	25 (11)	35 (34)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

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

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	187	201	388

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	65	168	182
	Girls	98	192	201
	Total	163	360	383
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	42 (36)	93 (86)	99 (92)
	National	46.3 (43.3)	90.7 (88.5)	95.7 (94.0)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	School	35 (32)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

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

Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	54	90	144

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	8.6	12.4	10.9 (13.3)	0.9	1.5	1.3 (1.6)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	85.7
	National	72.9

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	194
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	6
Indian	132
Pakistani	16
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	4
White	1967
Any other minority ethnic group	34

***Teachers and classes*****Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	143
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.***Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	463

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	21

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	22	
Black – African heritage	1	
Black – other	0	
Indian	5	
Pakistani	1	
Bangladeshi	0	
Chinese	0	
White	116	3
Other minority ethnic groups	2	2

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

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	6627210
Total expenditure	6748134
Expenditure per pupil	2859
Balance brought forward from previous year	405352
Balance carried forward to next year	284428

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	2377
Number of questionnaires returned	665

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	50	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	52	46	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	42	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	59	6	2	1
The teaching is good.	43	52	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	52	8	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	47	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	30	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	56	9	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	52	44	1	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	48	3	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	41	3	0	5

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

**ENGLISH**

84. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 national tests the attainment of the pupils was below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. The proportion reaching the expected level 5 was below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. The proportion reaching level 6 was below both the national and similar schools' averages. However, the teachers' assessments for this year group judged their attainments to be close to the national average and the school asked for the scripts to be remarked. The re-marking was refused on technical grounds. The standards of accuracy of these pupils' work, as seen during the inspection suggest the teachers' assessments are a more accurate judgement of the pupils' attainments. Results improved from 1996 to 1998 and fell in 1999. Pupils' test results in 1999 were similar to those in mathematics and below those in science. There were no significant differences between the performances of boys and girls.
85. At Key Stage 4, the proportion passing GCSE English in 1999 at grades A\* to C was below the national average. This figure was in line with the average for similar schools and in line with standards anticipated by pupils' previous attainments. Overall, results have improved since the last inspection. Girls' results improved considerably in 1998 and this improvement was maintained in 1999. Boys' results improved significantly in 1999. In the 1999 GCSE literature examination the proportion passing at grades A\* to C was below the national average, although the school consistently enters a larger proportion of its pupils than is the case nationally. The results in 1999 fell from results that were in line with the national averages in 1997 and 1998. Pupils obtained results in both examinations that were below their results in the other subjects that they studied.
86. Results at A level were below average in 1999, but showed significant improvement on the previous year.
87. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 match the level expected nationally for 14 year olds. This represents good achievement given the pupils' below average reading scores when they entered the school. Speaking and listening skills are good. The pupils' attentive listening to the teacher and each other was a common feature in many lessons. Pupils express their opinions confidently and clearly. There are some very articulate pupils with a good range of vocabulary such as the girl who asked: 'Can we use archaic language, Miss?' in a letter writing assignment based on a Shakespearean sonnet. Reading skills are average. Many pupils can write successful analytical assignments on the issues in 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and on the political dimensions in a text such as 'Talking in Whispers'. Higher attainers make good use of quotations to illustrate their judgements. Writing skills are also average. Only a minority of pupils fail to show consistently the required levels of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar. The work of pupils with special educational needs provides clear evidence of good progress in letter formation, spelling and use of punctuation in simple sentences. They have a clear understanding of the main events and issues in 'Romeo and Juliet'.
88. In work seen during the inspection, at the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above the level expected nationally for 16 year olds. This improvement in comparison with the previous Year 11 is due to better standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar and reflects the continual rise in attainment over the past few years. The pupils are also more effective readers. They are making good progress. A middle attaining set showed good standards of analysis and understanding when discussing the different structural layers in Penelope Lively's 'The Darkness Out There'. Higher attainers achieve the highest standards expected. They discussed Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' with enthusiasm showing a keen understanding of its irony. Some pieces of course work comparing 'Gulliver's Travel' with 'Animal Farm' showed the highest standards of fluency, vocabulary and insight. Some middle attainers rely too much on retelling the story of a text but nevertheless include sufficient analysis to reach the level expected nationally. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, are mainly performing at a below average level, rather than well below. In a lesson on poetic techniques these pupils showed a good recall of simile, metaphor and imagery. Although their work includes inaccuracies their writing reveals a good ear for mature phrasing in their expression.
89. In work seen during the inspection, by the end of the sixth form, standards are in line with those expected nationally and better than those suggested by last year's A level results. Given the pupils'

relatively low attainments in English for those starting an A level course this represents good achievement. The best pupils are very perceptive and write and discuss the themes of 'King Lear' with insight, awareness of ambiguity and of the effect of Shakespeare's language. Middle attainers tend to require prompting to recognise more obscure meaning. Lower attainers tend to be more literal in their understanding. In the combined English language and literature course there is evidence of some very perceptive responses in course work to the writing of Sylvia Plath and D H Lawrence. When preparing for their 'Writing to Entertain' task pupils showed a good awareness of factors that influence this genre. In oral work pupils are articulate, making and justifying judgements effectively.

90. Apart from English lessons, pupils do not have enough opportunities for sustained and extended reading throughout the curriculum. Opportunities to read in the target foreign language increase in modern foreign languages as the pupils move up the school. There are some opportunities for short periods of reading aloud in science, religious education, history and geography and some good use of CD ROMs in information technology at Key Stage 4, but overall there is not enough planned provision. The current library stock is insufficient to meet the demands of the pupils.
91. There is a broader range of opportunities to develop writing competencies but unevenness persists. The consistent stress on the need to use subject specific vocabulary is a strength across most subjects. Some departments, such as science and history, give good support for writing with the use of writing frames such as a frame for a Year 10 history assignment on the role of women in Nazi Germany. Overall, the pupils' most substantial assignments tend to be done in English and they do not have enough chances for writing extended pieces in subjects other than religious education and history.
92. Standards of teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The specialist knowledge of the teachers contributes significantly to the pupils' acquisition of skills knowledge and understanding. So, in a Year 10 lesson, the skilled questioning of the teacher triggered and expanded the pupils' understanding of different aspects of Shylock's character, and raised their awareness of its inherent complexity. Thorough planning of activities and objectives promotes good learning and keeps pupils busy and concentrating. Texts and tasks are well matched to different levels of attainment, but at the same time ensure good coverage of National Curriculum requirements. The pupils' good attitudes to the subject and their very good behaviour also effectively contribute to a positive classroom atmosphere in which learning can take place effectively. Teachers have generally high expectations regarding the quantity and quality of work that the pupils should achieve. A Year 11 middle attaining group significantly increased their understanding of the role and effect of the character of Jud in 'A Kestrel for a Knave' through their own independent study and through a brisk whole class teaching session. Marking is mainly good, recognising strengths but indicating targets for improvement. In the small number of lessons that were satisfactory as distinct from good, there were shortcomings in the amount and quality of work required from all pupils in the lesson, often resulting from too much time allocated to some tasks, especially group work. Occasionally, the objectives of the lesson were not clear and although activities were appropriate their full value was undermined through pupils lacking clarity about where the activities were taking them. At Key Stage 4 most pupils have a clear understanding of their levels of achievement and of how they can improve, but this clarity of understanding about their own learning was less evident at Key Stage 3, despite some sensible self-assessment tasks that the department has devised.
93. The large department is well led and managed by an experienced head of department who receives good support from colleagues with responsibility. Good leadership has led to good curriculum and assessment provision. It is evident in the systematic and rigorous monitoring of teaching. One member of the department has been involved in the local authority's literacy developments, but as yet too few members have had the opportunity to increase their awareness of the National Literacy Strategy and to use some of its methods in their teaching. The department makes a most effective contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
94. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. Examination results at GCSE are higher, pupils at Key Stage 3 write for a wider range of audiences, and the quality of challenging literature that the pupils study has increased. In most lessons observed there was a good range of teaching and learning activities that engaged the interest of the pupils and encouraged their learning.

## DRAMA

95. Teaching and learning in drama are strengths of the school. In the 1999 GCSE examination the proportion passing at grades A\* to C was well above average as it has been for the last three years. Work seen during the inspection in both Years 10 and 11 shows that these standards are maintained. A level results were broadly average last year. The quality of teaching and learning in drama is excellent. The teachers' knowledge is used to develop a wide range of performance skills. Their enthusiasm inspires the pupils, whose motivation, determination to succeed through honest self-criticism and team work are of the highest order. The subject contributes immensely to pupils' personal development. Delicate issues, such as bereavement, are addressed sensitively and respectfully and the pupils respond with a maturity beyond their years. The drama department and other staff also make a very good contribution to the school's extra curricular programme with frequent productions and cultural visits.

## MATHEMATICS

96. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests the proportions of pupils attaining level 5 and above and level 6 and above were below the national averages. The overall performance was also below the national average. The average National Curriculum points score attained by pupils in 1999 was well below the average in comparison with similar schools. There was little significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls and results in mathematics were in line with those in English but below those in science.
97. The proportions of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 were well below the national average. There has been an improvement in results over the past three years in line with the national trend. Pupils gained results that were significantly lower than those in their other subjects. Results attained in mathematics at A level in 1999 were far below the national average.
98. Overall, pupils make unsatisfactory progress, given their prior attainment, at all key stages.
99. On entering the school, pupils' levels of attainment in mathematics are broadly average, but are rising. In work seen during the inspection, pupils are achieving standards broadly in line with the standards expected of 14 year olds nationally. This differs from the National Curriculum results for 1999. It is a different cohort of pupils, attainment on entry is steadily improving, and there has been a change of teaching staff. Higher attaining pupils acquire good techniques in algebra. For example, they formulate and solve linear equations from problems and competently multiply out brackets in order to solve equations. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty in identifying fractions. The majority of pupils acquire good techniques in data handling and the high attainers have a good understanding of scatter diagrams. By the time pupils are 16, standards of attainment in work seen during the inspection are below the level expected for that age group and pupils do not make the progress that is expected of them. Although pupils work well during the lessons, the expectations of what they can achieve are low. Good work is seen where pupils use the sine and cosine rule to solve simple problems in two dimensions. Although middle-attaining pupils plot cumulative frequency graphs, they do not interpret them. The overall progress of pupils with special educational needs is in line with the rest of the pupils in the school. Standards of attainment in the small group of pupils at the age of 19 are in line with course expectations. Attainment at A level in previous years has varied considerably, in line with changes in the pupils' attainment on entry to the sixth form. In 1999 the A level results were adversely affected by the absentee rate. In the current year, pupils confidently identify and calculate the  $n$ th term of arithmetic sequences and progress to calculating the  $n$ th term of a geometric sequence. In a statistics module, pupils understand when they need to use the binomial distribution and identify and use the mean, variance and standard deviation in calculations.
100. Levels of numeracy are in line with the standard expected nationally, however, there are no strategies in place for improving standards of numeracy across the whole school and little evidence that numeracy is taught or developed in other subjects than mathematics. In science, pupils draw very good graphs, but need guidance on calculating percentages. In design and technology, they demonstrate basic skills in measurements of length and weight when designing and making in a range of materials. In geography, the teacher uses questioning effectively to develop pupils' analysis of data on the population of Sierra Leone. There is little understanding of the needs of pupils on the vocational courses in the sixth form.

101. The overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, resulting in unsatisfactory learning. In individual lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was satisfactory and there were examples of good teaching. The unsatisfactory teaching and progress are the result of low expectations of the level that pupils are likely to achieve at the beginning of the course and leads to unsatisfactory progress overall. For example, pupils who are identified as capable of achieving a grade B at GCSE are entered for the intermediate rather than the higher paper, and teachers plan their lessons to address these lower expectations. By the time of the inspection, pupils were already underachieving. There are, however, good features of the teaching and teachers generally demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics in all three key stages. This is illustrated by the clear explanation of tasks and the confident and appropriate use of mathematical terms. Teachers manage pupils well and pupils generally concentrate on their work and behave well. They listen attentively to their teachers and are courteous. In these lessons they make good progress in consolidating new and previous work. Although pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form have a sound understanding of their levels of attainment, this is less evident at Key Stage 3 and has an impact on their expectations and progress. In the most effective lessons, teachers set clear objectives and there is a good balance between explanation, demonstration and individual work. Where teaching is less effective, the pace of the lesson is slow and teachers do not give pupils the opportunities to explain techniques.
102. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The school uses the information to identify weaknesses at Key Stage 4 and is beginning to track their progress through the key stage. There has not been sufficient time for this to have an impact on overall attainment. Although the procedures for monitoring learning are appropriate, there is insufficient rigor in the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress. There are too few specialist teachers to enable mathematics to be taught effectively in some classes at Key Stage 3. This has an impact on the level of work achieved and the overall attainment and enthusiasm that pupils have for the subject.
103. Since the last inspection, progress has been unsatisfactory. Standards of attainment have declined at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, as has the quality of teaching.

## SCIENCE

104. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportions of pupils at the age of 14 achieving level 5 and above and level 6 and above matched the national averages. The average points score which pupils achieved was above average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys and girls achieve broadly similar results at this stage. Results in science in 1999 were better than those in mathematics and English. Test results in science have been consistently in line with the national average for the last three years. In the 1999 GCSE double award science examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was above the national average and well above average for similar schools. Both boys and girls achieved better results in science than they did, on average, in their other subjects. Pupils have gained consistently good GCSE results in science in recent years. Results at A level in 1999 were well below average in biology and physics and below average in chemistry.
105. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 and 16 are better than expected for pupils of the same age nationally. These standards reflect the attainment indicated by GCSE examination results but the attainment seen in Key Stage 3 is better than that demonstrated in recent tests. This is because the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is rising and the department now has a well established scheme of work for Key Stage 3 which is constantly being modified and improved. Many pupils in both key stages have knowledge and understanding of topics they are studying which are better than expected for their age. In lower attaining groups, pupils' basic understanding is usually secure, though they sometimes find it difficult to recall details and to give precise descriptions and explanations. Pupils' practical and investigative skills are generally good and this represents an improvement since the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory but pupils in middle and lower attaining groups are not as successful in calculations associated with the 'physical processes' topics as they are in other aspects of the science course. They do not always have as many opportunities to practise these calculations as they should.



106. Pupils now enter the school with levels of attainment which are broadly average, they make good progress through both key stages and their achievements by the end of Key Stage 4 are better than might be expected in relation to their earlier attainment.
107. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment are above average on the A level courses. This is a significant improvement upon the standards indicated by examination results in 1999. One of the main reasons for this is the change to modular courses. Results of the modules examined to date show above average performance in all subjects and this represents good progress, given students' levels of attainment at GCSE. Pupils are good at using knowledge and understanding to solve problems, and are skilful in performing tasks that require care and an eye for detail.
108. The quality of teaching and learning in science is good in all years. The high proportion of teaching that is either good or very good, is the major strength of this department. In response to this good teaching, pupils take an active part in lessons and often pose questions of their own to confirm and extend their understanding. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan their lessons carefully to attract pupils' interest and hold their concentration. In the very good lessons there is a constant change of activity, together with skilful use of resources. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, the teacher used a very long piece of string, sets of cards involving key words and their definitions, examination questions and a video recording. This group did not arrive at the lesson showing particular enthusiasm for learning, but they enjoyed the activities and were constantly consolidating and extending their understanding of food webs and chains. In some lessons, which are otherwise satisfactory, there are occasional weaknesses. For example, a question-and-answer session can become too prolonged or pupils spend too much time on written exercises. In these circumstances, pupils' attention wanders and, although they remain quiet and well behaved, the pace of learning slows. Teachers set interesting and useful homework tasks. They mark pupils' work carefully and provide good indications of how standards can be improved. In one biology lesson in the sixth form on the heart, excellent teaching used exemplar work from the teacher's own student days and that from a published anatomical artist to set high standards for students to aim for, supported by a highly knowledgeable commentary and skilful demonstration from the teacher that both informed and enthused the pupils.
109. One of the features of this department is the way in which pupils of all levels of attainment are enabled to make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups where expectations of both behaviour and attainment are high and learning activities are well matched to their needs. Gifted and talented pupils are provided with demanding and challenging work. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 11 used an examination question from a separate science examination to find out, in their homework, about the electrical characteristics of an unfamiliar component. The good achievement of the highest attaining pupils is indicated by the proportion of A and A\* grades gained in the 1999 GCSE science examinations. This proportion is above the national average and significantly higher than in other subjects in the school.
110. The head of department provides very good leadership for this large department. Teachers, technicians and learning support assistants work most effectively together as a team. There is a shared determination to move the department forward and raise pupils' attainment. The department is well managed, runs smoothly and there are good strategies in place to produce improvement. The department monitors teaching and learning by detailed analysis of examination and test results and by the scrutiny of exercise books. However there is not yet a programme of observing lessons to identify strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers, apart from newly qualified teachers. Hence the department is not yet making as much use as it could do of the various skills and techniques of teachers to improve the practice of others in the department.
111. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment in Key Stages 3 and 4 has improved, Key Stage 3 results are better than they were and the weaknesses identified in teaching at that time have been overcome. The department has increased its use of information technology to support pupils' learning and is now using some innovative and valuable school-produced software. However, the planned uses of information technology are not yet being experienced consistently by all pupils across the various teaching groups and this remains an aspect of the department's work which requires further improvement.

## ART

112. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 were well below the national average and results show a falling trend from 1997, when they were broadly average. The attainment of girls has improved over this period, but is still below the national averages for girls, and the attainment of boys has fallen to well below the national averages for boys. Based on 1999 data, pupils' results in art were below those they obtained in other subjects that they studied. The results at A level in 1999 were well below average.
113. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment are in line with the level expected nationally at the age of 14. Pupils have satisfactory drawing and painting skills, they use line, tone, texture and colour imaginatively and expressively. Standards of modelling and construction skills are below average, but all have a sound understanding of pattern. All pupils have a good standard of knowledge of the work of artists and other cultures gained through their studies using the Internet, CD ROMs, books and first hand experience of the work of artists. In work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by pupils at the age of 16 are in line with the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. The improvements brought about by the new head of department are now clearly paying dividends at Key Stage 4 and standards are consequently better than those indicated by last year's GCSE results. The majority of pupils have an average standard of drawing skills and use fine and broad media expressively. Many make good use of the artists they study as a stimulus to their ideas, although their investigative skills are under developed. At Key Stage 3 there is a weakness in three-dimensional work caused by insufficient resources and inappropriate accommodation. At Key Stage 4, three-dimensional and relief constructions are often very imaginative and well modelled with a strong use of colour. Pupils in both Key Stages with special educational needs are achieving standards in line with their peers. The highest attaining pupils demonstrate good painting, research and presentation skills. In the sixth form, standards achieved are average across the full range of media and techniques, although attainment is below average in terms of investigative and observational drawing skills. Overall, pupils are now making satisfactory progress throughout the school.
114. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is satisfactory. Where learning objectives are clearly identified and a taught input particularly addresses the development of skills and understanding, then there is a positive impact on learning. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on Picasso, pupils worked effectively in groups to research the artist's work, using the Internet, and they produced collage and sketchbook studies before beginning large scale group paintings from this work. These lessons were well structured and effectively managed and made good use of the study of the work of artists and other cultures as a context for practical work. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are consistently good and are reinforced by the teachers' rigorous application of the school's expectations of behaviour. In the best lessons, teachers focus on developing pupils' understanding of artistic concepts, using sketchbooks well in class and for homework, to record ideas and designs. However, at both Key Stages 3 and 4, there is a minority of unsatisfactory teaching, especially where a limited range of strategies is used to promote investigative skills or the study of artists' work is not used to produce a personal response. In the A Level lessons seen, pupils were working with the artist in residence and made very good progress as a result of this experience.
115. During the inspection, many classes and a large group of 'all age' gifted and talented pupils had the opportunity to work with an artist in residence. Teachers made good use of this experience to develop pupils' painting skills and spiritual understanding of the creative processes.
116. Aspects of the subject are well managed and many of the procedures are well considered and effective, for example, the arrangements for health and safety and for assessment are thorough and well maintained. The recent developments in the use of sketchbooks and the study of the work of artists as a basis of all pupils' study is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. However, aspects of leadership, particularly concerning the monitoring of teaching and the setting of shared standards of practice are weak. The spiritual and cultural dimensions of learning in art are well considered and, with the strong programme of visits to museums and galleries, enrich the learning experience. The display of art and design work in the school and in many of the art rooms is of a high standard and effectively celebrates achievement.

117. The subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection and GCSE results have fallen significantly. However, the school is addressing most of the issues and clear progress is now being made, although greater monitoring of teaching is required to bring the quality of teaching up to the good standard evident in most other subjects.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

118. In 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE grades A\* to C grades were in line with the national average. Results in the food, graphical products and resistant materials courses all showed significant improvement in 1999, but the textiles and systems and control course results were lower than in 1998. In comparison with the national averages, textiles remains well above the average; the food and graphics courses are above; the systems and control course is below and resistant materials well below. The proportion of girls achieving grades A\* to C is significantly higher than the boys. Results overall are much higher than in 1998 and pupils gained better results than in most other subjects that they studied, regardless of the material area in which they specialised. Results at A level were below the national average.
119. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is in line with standards expected nationally. This represents good achievement as pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are below average in design and technology. Middle and higher attaining pupils have satisfactory making skills in a range of materials and their graphical skills are equally well developed and at nationally expected levels. For example in a Year 9 graphics lesson the pupils were exploring how colour, texture and the proportions of simple shapes can be changed and affect the mood and impact of images making them bold, happy or lonely. Subject knowledge, and the technical vocabulary which underpins it are at satisfactory levels for these pupils. The girls' design skills are generally at a higher level than those of the boys. For lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, practical making skills are better developed than other aspects of the subject.
120. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are generally in line with the level expected nationally and this represents good progress for these pupils. However, in the work seen during the inspection in the textiles, food and graphic products courses, attainment is above or well above the national average. Girls continue to have higher levels of attainment than the boys particularly in designing. Making skills are at least satisfactory on all the courses offered in the subject. Design skills are particularly good in the textiles and graphic product courses where the pupils had analysed their research very effectively to refine and develop their design ideas. Middle and higher attaining pupils have a good subject knowledge and understanding. For example in a Year 11 food lesson, pupils analysed and evaluated a food product and its packaging, and were able to compare their own practical making with commercial and industrial practices of food production. For lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, practical making skills continue to be better developed than other aspects of the subject. Attainment in the two GCE A level courses, textiles and graphics introduced in September 1999, is in line with national expectations as pupils have at least satisfactory skills, knowledge and understanding in all areas of the course. These pupils are making good progress given their levels of attainment on entry to the course.
121. Throughout the school, pupils handle materials, tools, equipment and machines with accuracy and skill, and work with due regard for safety and hygiene. Graphical communication skills progress well over time and pupils use an increasing range of drawing and projection methods to model, record and develop their design ideas. Middle and higher attaining girls make particularly good progress with their design skills undertaking research, analysing, drawing up specifications, and evaluating with increasing depth and rigour. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress, in relation to their prior attainment, especially in making.
122. The quality of teaching and learning in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form is good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons carefully. In all the lessons observed teachers used effective teaching strategies and learning activities, which were appropriate for pupils of all levels of attainment. For example in a textiles lesson, the teacher used a range of strategies including explanation, questioning, practical activity and recording graphically with drawings and flowcharts, as pupils carefully took apart garments to investigate how they were made. Such approaches ensure that pupils work hard and show high levels of interest in the tasks presented to them, leading to a high pace of learning with a good level of productivity in lessons. Teachers give good individual support to the

pupils, often including accurate and informed feedback which makes an impression on the pupils, encourages them to value their efforts, and raises their level of motivation. In some lessons the teachers shared the aims of the lesson with the pupils so that they were aware of what they should achieve by the end, but this was not a consistent practice. Rarely did the teachers review the progress made at the end of the lesson with the pupils, or set time targets for the completion of intermediate tasks, and this contributed to a loss of pace in the learning in some lessons. Routines are well-established and classroom organisation and management are good. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Many higher attaining pupils can work without close teacher supervision. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. Behaviour and relationships with their teachers and each other are always at least good and often very good, and they collaborate effectively in group work. This leads to teachers being able to spend their time teaching, rather than having to control behaviour. Good work is carried out in improving pupils' vocabulary, raising standards from below average to a satisfactory level by the end of Key Stage 3.

123. The department is well led and managed. Teachers and technicians are working well together as a team to raise further the attainment of the pupils. There is effective and on-going review of the curriculum. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum but more integration of information technology is needed in schemes of work to ensure that all pupils benefit from its use. The assessment system is effective and manageable and well understood by the pupils and includes targets for improvement that considerably enhance learning. The present system of allocating financial resources to various courses is not efficient. This is leading to some loss of quality in the materials provided to the pupils and is having an impact on the standards of work produced in the use of resistant materials.
124. Since the last inspection the department has made good progress. Pupils' attainments have been significantly improved at GCSE and the quality of teaching is consistently good. The last inspection report made some minor criticisms related to curriculum planning, teacher expectations and health and safety practices, all of which have been addressed.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

125. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A\* to C was in line with the national average. Pupils entered for GCSE geography did not do quite as well in this subject as they did in most other subjects that they studied. Results at A level were broadly average. Over the last three years there has been a steady improvement in attainment and examination results at both GCSE and A level.
126. In work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved at the age of 14 are at the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. By the age of 14, pupils understand the factors associated with rural push and urban pull in Brazil around Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo. Higher attaining pupils realise that poor living conditions lead to disease, low mortality rates and crime. Lower attaining pupils begin to understand some of these consequences; however, they have difficulty in both articulating and writing these ideas. All pupils show a good understanding about the differences between voluntary and forced migration. Pupils learn to make choices as though they were refugees being forced to flee their country. From a below average attainment in terms of geographical skills on entry all pupils make good progress through the key stage. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have made significant improvements in the skills of presentation, accurate note taking, cartography and interpretation of maps.
127. In work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved at the age of 16 are broadly in line with the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. By the age of 16, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, show a basic understanding of tourism. Pupils make successful comparisons of the frequency of their holidays taken in the UK with those taken abroad. They know that relief and climate combine to influence the type of farming, for example, in East Anglia where the land is relatively flat and the climate is dry, farming is predominantly arable. Higher attaining pupils explain subsistence farming and link this with crofters in the Scottish Highlands. Pupils have some basic knowledge of the European Union's common agricultural policy and many understand the problems associated with the storage of crops. Higher attaining pupils understand the problems associated with giving away crops to third world countries. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress as they move through the key stage. They build successfully on their skills and knowledge. Pupils combine their skills and knowledge in order to consider geographical issues and concepts, for

example, the effect of climate, relief and soil upon farming. Throughout both key stages pupils are successfully encouraged to develop investigative and analytical skills.

128. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved in the sixth form are below the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. They use the criteria of climate, soil and vegetation in order to classify natural regions. Pupils show they understand the reasons for the growth of a seaside resort over the last century and especially the very recent influences, for example, life style or speed of travel, that have caused such changes. Pupils successfully link their knowledge, understanding and concepts in order to understand the development of a resort. However, investigative and analytical skills are a weakness as pupils rely too heavily on their teachers for learning.

129. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of their subject and this is a strength of the department. This in-depth knowledge enables teachers to challenge and extend pupils knowledge, understanding and consequently extends pupils horizons. Staff make good demands of their pupils as demonstrated through their probing and challenging questions. For instance, Year 8 pupils made very good gains in learning in knowledge and issues when considering voluntary and forced migration of people. Teaching methods are generally satisfactory, although, at times, they are inappropriate, as pupils are not fully involved in their learning and become too reliant upon their teachers. This constrains their understanding, particularly in the sixth form. However, pupils are encouraged to ask and answer geographical questions in some detail, which enhances their understanding. The skills of higher attaining pupils, including the very able, are challenged well through observation and inquiry as they apply their knowledge in analysing photographs of shanty towns. Geography makes a sound contribution to literacy in the use of geographical words. Teachers make good use of their pupils' speaking skills. For example, in Year 9, pupils demonstrated gains in their learning as they make good oral presentations to the class about the problems over the establishment of shanty settlements in Rio de Janeiro. Pupils listen and contribute well to question and answer sessions. The majority of pupils show mature attitudes and enjoy geography. However, for some low attaining sets, lessons are long and pupils' concentration deteriorates. As a consequence of good teaching, good behaviour and positive attitudes, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in their learning in both key stages and in the sixth form.

130. The department has good leadership and is well managed. The head of department shows a very clear educational direction for the development of the subject. The department has created a very positive ethos for learning. Policy documents are clear; the departmental action plan is realistic and consistent with the school's aims; curriculum and assessment are both good; the latter informs both short and long term planning. This documentation ensures progression and development for learning. At present, the use of information technology is under developed and this constrains the development of geographical skills.

131. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. New young staff have had a significant impact on learning, attainment and improvement in examination results. Corporate planning has ensured reviewing and development of the curriculum, schemes of work, assessment procedures, reporting and recording. Improvements have been made in the standards of teaching and learning. Staff now make greater demands of their pupils. The consequence of these improvements is that standards of attainment have risen. The department is well motivated and committed to the raising of pupils' attainment.

## **HISTORY**

132. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in 1999 was in line with the national average. Results have tended to fluctuate in recent years but the overall trend is upward. Pupils gained results which were similar to their results in the other subjects that they studied. Results at A level were in line with the national average last year.

133. The standards of work of pupils at age 14 is in line with the level expected nationally. This represents good progress, given the pupils' previously below average attainment in history attainment on entry to the school. The written work confirms that pupils have a good grasp of chronology. A good range of techniques are employed in the organisation and presentation of information. For example, a higher attaining class correctly located text information relating to a set of pictorial sources that illustrated

differences between the parliamentarians and loyalists, and used it to add brief, informative notes for each illustration. Pupils possess a detailed knowledge of specific events in the periods studied. This was demonstrated by pupils in a middle attaining class whose responses to question demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of how the government used propaganda to influence and control mass opinion.

134. At the age of 16, pupils' standards of attainment are in line with those expected nationally. This represents good progress, given that the pupils currently in Year 11 were achieving below the level expected nationally when they were 14. Pupils display a good grasp of cause and effect, as illustrated in a middle attaining class, studying the period of boom and bust in the American economy between World Wars. In this lesson, pupils identified how key political decisions had different short and long term consequences for the economy. Writing frames make a useful contribution to the quality of written work. Skills in the use of sources to build knowledge and understanding are relatively less well developed than their other skills.

135. Standards at A level are below average. Many pupils have well-developed study skills, but lack depth in their knowledge and understanding of significant events in the periods studied. This was illustrated in a Year 13 class where a significant amount of background information and skilful prompting was needed to enable the pupils to form a view on the relative contributions of Cavour and Garibaldi to the unification of Italy.

136. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. This brings about good learning and good progress over time, except in the sixth form where pupils are not achieving at an appropriate level, owing to some discontinuity in teaching and a relatively high absence rate. Planning is a strength and all lessons observed were well-structured. Many lessons start with an activity that quickly captures the pupils' interest and attention. For example, a Year 9 lesson on the role of women was introduced with a quick quiz that deliberately caricatured traditional stereo types and provoked just the reaction sought. All teaching reflects secure subject knowledge and understanding. This ensures that key concepts of increasing sophistication are understood and pupils' historical vocabularies broaden and become more secure. For example, a higher attaining Year 7 class made good progress in their understanding of the hierarchies within the church and the state in medieval England through their answers to the teacher's questions. Positive relationships and a good range of teaching and learning styles secure very good application and concentration in the majority of lessons. Though pair and group work are widely employed, the interactions between pupils are often rather passive. Group work was employed very effectively in a Year 12 A level revision lesson to clarify for the pupils the strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding of British foreign policy between 1815 and 1871.

137. The curriculum is broad and balanced, though there are only limited field study opportunities and there is no structured use of information technology to support learning. There are classes at A level that are shared between teachers, and this is having a detrimental effect on the progress because planning is insufficient to ensure continuity of learning. Management is good overall and administrative procedures are very good. A remarkable amount has been achieved in the few weeks since the appointment of the new head of department.

138. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. There has been improvement in the key areas of teaching and learning. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations has risen, as has the attainment of pupils of average ability in Key Stage 3. The attitude and effort of pupils which was good is now very good in the majority of lessons.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

139. The results for the GCSE short course taken by all pupils in 1999 show that the proportion of pupils attaining grades A\* to C was below the national average. There has been a fall in the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C since 1997 although results have remained at the same level over the last two years. However, the school enters many more pupils than is normally seen.

140. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils at the age of 14 achieve above the levels expected nationally and this represents satisfactory progress given their levels of attainment on joining the school. They

cover a range of skills and use a variety of software packages in their lessons. They are able to use desktop publishing software, spreadsheets, databases and cover aspects of control technology within their design and technology lessons. They search for information using both CD ROM as well as the Internet. Pupils at all levels of attainment achieve basic competence in the skills covered in specific information technology lessons, with higher attaining pupils being able to show greater depth in their understanding. An example of this is in the use of spreadsheets, where all pupils are able to set up a spreadsheet, enter data and use formula to calculate results, with higher attaining pupils being able to explore the results of their calculations further by varying the data they are using. Pupils are able to explain how the variables they use in their data affect the end result of their calculations. Good application of a database program was seen in a project involving pupils in setting up a database identifying the relevant information needed by an estate agent. Pupils entered the details and were able to demonstrate how this information can be retrieved. Higher attaining pupils were able to view and present the information in different formats. As part of their information technology lessons, pupils used databases to search information on a variety of career choices. These lessons were supportive to pupils, increasing their knowledge about a range of careers and enabling them to make realistic considerations about their own future opportunities. Pupils at all levels of attainment benefited from this investigation work and were able to talk confidently about their findings.

141. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils at the age of 16 achieve above the levels expected nationally and this represents satisfactory achievement. In the work seen, pupils applied a range of skills and demonstrated greater depth in their understanding. They are able to evaluate and comment on their progress and the overall success of their own achievement as well as identify ways of improving further.

142. In the sixth form A level course, attainment is well below the level expected of A level candidates nationally. This is mainly due to the level of study required for GCSE short course at Key Stage 4, which does not prepare pupils with sufficient knowledge to cope with the level of work expected at A Level. In the first year of the A level course, pupils enter the AS level examination but the results are poor. In lessons seen, pupils found difficulty in understanding some of the information to the depth required for the course. Attendance at lessons is poor and this has also affected levels of attainment.

143. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. This brings about good learning in lessons but pupils only make satisfactory progress over time because there is insufficient use of information technology in other subjects to ensure that pupils can consolidate their skills through regular practice. Teachers show a high level of planning and preparation and are well-organised for their lessons. In most lessons there are clear objectives that support the pupils in their learning. Teachers explain the technical language of the subject and encourage students to use it correctly. This is particularly important where there are pupils with lower than average reading skills who benefit from this opportunity to extend their vocabulary in the subject. Worksheets are produced which are helpful in moving the pupils learning forward when they undertake projects. Teachers use a good range of learning resources. For example, during revision lessons, pupils were using an interactive CD Rom prepared by the teachers in the school to help them revise the information in a more interesting way. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge of their subject and in the main use questions and answers effectively to assess how much the pupils learn and understand and also to ensure they are actively challenged in their thinking and to engage them fully in the lessons. Revision lessons were well structured for Year 11 pupils with a good variety of activities to sustain the interest of the pupils. In lessons, pupils responded well to this and it very effectively identified some of the gaps that pupils had in their learning. With the support of the teachers, they were able to look up the information missed and complete a short task to reinforce the knowledge. However, the pace of learning is often slowed down by too many pupils sharing computers.

144. The use of computers in other subjects to support the delivery of the National Curriculum and to raise standards of GCSE work is inconsistent across the curriculum. Good use was seen in mathematics, where teachers have embedded the use of information technology in their schemes of work. Further good examples were observed in science, where pupils use temperature sensors, log data, use word processing and the digital camera. Science groups in the sixth form use the digital camera for reproducing images and 3 dimensional modelling of molecules, using specialist software produced by the staff. In some subjects, the use of information technology is developing. For example, in art, pupils use the CD Rom and the Internet to research information on artists. They design layouts, draw and extend their graphic skills using the computer. In design and technology pupils cover aspects of

computer control and also use the computer to design and test electronic circuits. However, some of the modules are taught only to some groups in Year 9 who choose to do the course in preparation for GCSE courses. This means that some pupils cover the work more extensively and in greater depth. In religious education, pupils research information using the internet and CD Rom to prepare information sheets on the topics they research on different religions. In other subjects, such as history, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education, there is insufficient use of information technology.

145. The school has addressed a number of issues since the last inspection and has made satisfactory progress. The subject now meets statutory requirements in terms of both the National Curriculum and reporting to parents. There is now a systematic assessment scheme in place. The role of the co-ordinator still needs to be clarified and there is still a need to increase the numbers of computers in the rooms where information technology is taught as a discrete subject in order to meet the demands of larger groups.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

146. Pupils study either French or German from Year 7, depending on the house they are allocated to when they enter the school.

147. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the level of A\* to C passes in German was well above the national average, and the level of A\* to C passes in French was broadly in line with the national average. Pupils studying German gained results that were better than the other subjects that they studied, whilst those studying French obtained results that were similar to their other subjects. There have been significant improvements in the results in both languages since the time of the previous inspection. There was a small entry for A level GCE in both French and German. Two candidates were entered in French and both passed at grade D. There were two entries for German and both of these candidates passed also: one at grade C and one at grade D.

148. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards at age 14 are in line with that expected nationally in German, but below that expected in French. Attainment at age of 16 is above that expected for pupils of the same age in German, but below that expected for pupils of the same age in French. There is a significant level of unsatisfactory teaching in French, particularly at Key Stage 3, that lowers standards, despite the efforts of good practitioners in the subject to maintain them. Attainment at the end of the sixth form is in line with the course expectations. Attainment is improving over time in both languages and across both key stages. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls or across the four aspects of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as their peers. When pupils receive good teaching they achieve good standards, but when the teaching is unsatisfactory, they do not achieve appropriate levels.

149. By age 14, pupils can answer questions, in a basic way, about such topics as the local area and the houses in which they live, sport and leisure activities, holidays, finding directions in town and shopping. The majority of pupils listen carefully to the teacher, to audio tapes and to other pupils when they are speaking and can respond appropriately. In some of those lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, pupils tend to sit chatting when the teacher and other pupils are speaking. This is not only ill-mannered, but lowers the quality of learning for all pupils. Most pupils are confident when speaking and try hard with pronunciation. Their spoken responses progress from single words and short phrases in Year 7 to longer conversations in Year 9. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9, for example, can carry out quite sophisticated conversations about their leisure interests, pastimes and pocket money, which involve a number of exchanges, a variety of tenses and correct agreement of adjectives. Pupils develop their reading skills mainly by reading text books to find the answers to questions and they occasionally read aloud in class. Pupils are introduced to authentic texts at quite an early age, and Year 7 pupils are able to read, and write to, articles in teenage magazines. Overall, pupils' reading skills are satisfactory. In their written work, most pupils are able to write a number of sentences or short paragraphs with reasonable accuracy by age 14. In their German lessons, in particular, higher attaining pupils produce very good pieces of extended writing describing their family, their houses and the area where they live.

150. By age 16, pupils return to these topics as preparation for examinations and add others. Pupils' coursework, for instance, often contains good quality work on such topics as the dangers of smoking and their



relationships with their families. The examination requirements allow a good deal of flexibility in speaking and writing, and pupils broaden their range of spoken responses as well as writing accounts, letters and descriptions of people. There is unsatisfactory teaching at this key stage also, and this restricts attainment and progress for a number of pupils in French.

151. There is a small number of pupils in the sixth form, whose attainment is generally in line with that expected of pupils taking A level courses. The extra attention they receive and the satisfactory teaching means that they are making good progress. However, this is offset, to some extent, by the fact that pupils do not have a larger number of their peers with whom to share work and practise their language skills.

152. Teaching is good in German and unsatisfactory in French. This is a major contributory factor in standards in French being lower than those in German. However, standards are also lower because the highest attaining pupils do not study French in Years 9, 10 and 11. There is good teaching also in French but this does not compensate for the poor learning in the unsatisfactory lessons, especially in Key Stage 3. In the vast majority of lessons, the teachers have good class control and there are very good relationships between pupils and with their teachers. In general, pupils have good attitudes to work and behave well, even when the teaching is boring and lacks challenge. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, some or all of these features are present. In some lessons, the teacher has unsatisfactory control and pupils tend to sit chatting rather than paying attention. This clearly detracts from the quality of their learning. In others, the lessons are conducted mainly in English, and the pupils have few opportunities to actually practise and use the language being taught. It is also a feature of these lessons that pupils do not have to try to remember the language, because they know that the teacher will tell them the English anyway. A common feature of unsatisfactory teaching is a lack of challenge at an appropriate level for the pupils. This was evident, for example, in a Year 10 French lesson, where pupils' spoken responses were mainly single words in response to short questions from the teacher. There was also little attempt, on the teacher's part, to encourage pupils to improve their pronunciation or to extend their use of language. In all of the unsatisfactory teaching and in some lessons where teaching is otherwise satisfactory, teachers do not provide work that is tailored to the needs of the range of attainment found in classes. The use of information technology to enrich and enhance the curriculum is inconsistent. Where teaching is good and very good there is a high level of teacher and pupil cooperation that improves the quality of learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge that is used to provide a variety of challenging activities that move at brisk pace and this keeps pupils both interested and occupied. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to encourage pupils to use, practise and vary their language to fit different situations. These include skilled use of question and answer, good use of the overhead projector, role-plays, and pair and group work as well as listening and writing tasks.

153. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. There is a strong moral dimension in most lessons and pupils are taught right from wrong. In most lessons there is good provision for social development through sharing, taking turns and working together in groups. There are school trips to Germany and France and these make a good contribution to both pupils' social and cultural development. There is also a cultural element in many lessons. There are good procedures in place for assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. The data provided is used to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses and to set targets for improvement. Good use is made of assessment results to plan the curriculum. Most of the teachers provide good support and advice for the pupils. Compared to most other schools, pupils have restricted access to a broad and balanced curriculum because there are no opportunities for them to study two languages. This was raised in the previous report and has not yet been successfully addressed. The management of the subject is satisfactory, however, urgent actions are required to reduce the high level of unsatisfactory teaching in French.

154. There have been significant improvements in attainment since the time of the previous inspection and the department has made satisfactory progress since that time. The previous report drew attention to deficiencies in the schemes of work for the subject. This has been done and there are now good schemes of work in place. Pupils generally have good attitudes to work and behave well. However, much of this very good level of improvement is now being offset by the unsatisfactory teaching in French.

## MUSIC

155. In 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving A\* to C grades in music at GCSE was broadly in line with the national average. Pupils gained results that were generally better than those in the other subjects that they studied. Results at A level were below the national average. Results have been similar over the past three years, but numbers opting to take examination courses in music have increased, particularly at A level.
156. Accommodation for music is unsuitable and, as a result, not all of the requirements of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 3, are covered. Pupils make insufficient progress in those elements of the programmes of study that are concerned with acoustic, as against electronic, sounds. Consequently, pupils' attainments, at the end of Year 9, are below national expectations overall and they are underachieving in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to work with a variety of tuned and untuned instruments, to develop sensitive control of subtle changes within musical elements, and to investigate a diversity of sound sources.
157. In those parts of the curriculum that are covered, however, progress is satisfactory and standards are in line with those expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils work mostly on electronic keyboards and they develop satisfactory keyboard skills for workshop use. Skills of pitch, rhythm, pulse and meter are generally in line with expectations. Pupils listen carefully to music and use an appropriate vocabulary when they discuss what they have heard. For much of the time during Key Stage 3, pupils work in groups or pairs, arranging and composing music. They develop good compositional skills, and have a good knowledge of musical form and constructional device, often using the work of composers to illustrate points of style and form. During the inspection a number of classes, for example, were using the Promenade from Mussorgsky's 'Pictures from an Exhibition' as a starting point for their own 'Walking Music'. They understood well the structural and illustrative elements of the Mussorgsky and incorporated them effectively into their own work. No class singing was seen during the inspection, but singing is included in the scheme of work.
158. From work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment is in line with the standards expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils compose, perform and listen to an appropriate standard. Much of the composition is based effectively on pupils' good aural skills and is supported well by technology. The groups are very large at this stage and, while the preparation for GCSE is appropriate and most pupils achieve well, the preparation for those going on to A level is less secure. Pupils' aural skills in composition are not sufficiently underpinned with a theoretical knowledge and expertise for further study. The sixth form groups are also well above average in size and this again constrains opportunities for teachers to develop sufficient academic depth in the study of harmony and composition. Standards at A level are below the level expected nationally and pupils are underachieving. Higher attainers in particular are not achieving their potential in these groups that are too large.
159. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. All teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, which enables them to provide good and effective technical support. In good and very good lessons, teachers clearly identify the learning aims for different levels of attainment in the class in their planning, as well as the content and strategies for the lesson. In these good lessons, expectations are high and the pace of the lessons is well controlled. Overall, these lessons are rigorous and demanding of pupils, who enjoy the intellectual stimulation and react with obvious interest and excitement. Pupils, of all levels of attainment, work hard and gain satisfaction from their achievements as they develop skills and understanding in music. The less successful lessons are not so well planned and information from assessments are not used consistently well to inform the planning of lessons. The content and strategies for the lesson are clear, but aims are not well identified from assessments in previous work and there are no different aims for the groups in the class. Pupils are less clear about how to improve. In all lessons, relationships and control are good. Pupils are well behaved and always ready to learn. They apply themselves well to practical tasks and sustain their concentration for extended periods. Pupils support each other very well in music lessons and co-operation in group work is good. In most lessons, at all key stages pupils make their own musical decisions and take responsibility for their work. Homework is generally used well to support learning. The tasks given for homework are appropriate and marking is positive.
160. Accommodation for music is poor. The subject is taught in general purpose classrooms that have insufficient space for group work and the use of acoustic instruments. In addition, the rooms are in very poor condition; two of the four needed to be closed for safety reasons during the inspection. Storage facilities

are inadequate. The constraints imposed by the accommodation result in the school failing to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum's programmes of study for music at Key Stage 3. In other respects musical activity in the school is flourishing. Teachers in the department work very hard and give willingly of their time and energy. Extra-curricular activity is strong; there is a good variety and number of activities that are well supported, and some of them are of good quality. There are fourteen different ensembles that meet each week. Good opportunities exist for instrumental lessons, but the numbers taking up the opportunities is below average. Overall, the department is well led and has a clear direction and vision. The policies and scheme of work are of good quality, but further development is needed on the detail of progress in the subject to support teachers' planning and formative assessments. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development through its activities in school assemblies and through its energy and enthusiasm for pupils' own diverse and other cultures.

161. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching has improved. Standards of attainment have remained broadly similar, but the numbers of pupils involved in musical activities, and in examination groups, has increased considerably at all levels and direct comparisons of examination results are not valid. The accommodation was unsatisfactory at the last inspection and has not improved since. The level of musical activity across the school has increased considerably, however. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

162. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was in line with the national average. There has been an improving trend in the GCSE results. Pupils gained results which were similar to the other subjects that they studied. In the 1999 A level examinations, the results in physical education were above the national average and were the best results in the school.

163. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment in physical activities at all levels in the school is in line with the levels expected nationally. This represents a good level of achievement, given pupils' prior attainment. A significant minority attains above average standards in games and athletics. Pupils in the sixth form achieve well.

164. By the time they have reached the age of 14, the majority of pupils achieve at least average standards in games. Pupils demonstrate competence in a range of skills, which they develop alongside strategic play in small-sided games. This was well illustrated in rugby, where pupils successfully learned the art of timing a pass to avoid contact, and how to tackle safely; and in netball, where pupils used their skills effectively, to initiate attacking play from an interception. However, standards in hockey are below the level expected, because many pupils have yet to master some of the basic skills, such as the drive, and to play effectively on grass. Standards in swimming are satisfactory. Most pupils can swim at least 25 metres and they have a sound understanding of safety skills. Sound standards are seen in gymnastics, where many pupils, of all levels of attainment, demonstrated effective control and body tension in vaulting. Planning and evaluating skills develop well in most lessons, but pupils rarely observe, analyse and comment on performance against specific criteria. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy skills in many lessons. They use the technical language of the subject well, and make good use of written resource cards in practical activities. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, and of the need to warm up before strenuous exercise.

165. By the age of 16, improvement in games continues, as seen in netball, where pupils apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics, effectively; team talks are an important feature of the game, as pupils plan tactics and evaluate the success of their team's strategic play. Pupils make good progress in badminton, as they refine their skills and develop increasing tactical awareness. High standards are attained in basketball, reflected in the outstanding achievements of the highest attainers at national level. Very good progress is evident in dance; pupils develop precision of movement and good control as they learn a set dance motif, with higher attainers using dynamics well. Standards of attainment in GCSE coursework are in line with the levels expected nationally, and pupils show a sound understanding of the theoretical aspects, which they can apply to practical activities.

166. By the age of 19, pupils' levels of attainment are average. Good work was seen in badminton and hockey coursework, with individual pupils demonstrating good standards of observation and critical analysis of each other's performance. Written work indicates an at least satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects of the A level course, with an exceptional knowledge of physiology..
167. Very high standards are achieved in extra curricular sport, and over a third of the school population participates regularly through an extensive programme of clubs and inter-school competitions. School teams and many individual pupils gain representative honours at county, regional and national level. The under 16 boys' basketball team won the 1999 West Midlands Championship Cup and was runner-up in the English Schools' Basketball Association Championships. Members of the team also won the National 3 on 3 Basketball Championships. The under 14 girls' badminton team won the Birmingham Schools' League, and the senior girls' trampolining team was third in the Midlands Schools' Championships. Individual successes include three pupils who have represented England in athletics and a member of the under 16 English Schools' Basketball Squad. The school is particularly proud of the high level of success that pupils have achieved in recent athletics competitions.
168. The quality of teaching is good, resulting in good learning throughout the school and there are examples of very good teaching and learning in all Key Stages. The very good relationships between staff and pupils are at the heart of the supportive learning environment, which prevails in the department. Teachers know their pupils well and this contributes significantly to the very good standards of behaviour and high levels of participation observed during the inspection. Almost all the pupils are well motivated, and have very good attitudes to learning, as reflected in the high level of support for extra-curricular activities. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lesson planning is good. There are clear objectives, which are shared with the pupils, so that they know what they are required to learn. Well-designed tasks enable pupils to build on previous learning, consolidate new skills through practice and make gains in knowledge and understanding to increase their breadth of learning. High standards are expected and attained in nearly all respects, and most pupils take their work seriously, showing pride in good performance. This was evident in many lessons, and well-illustrated in dance by senior girls, and in rugby by junior boys, including several with special educational needs, who were eager to demonstrate what they had achieved. When teaching is good, the pupils share the teacher's enthusiasm, are fully engaged in all the activities, and learn quickly and efficiently. Consistently strong features of teaching are skilful use of questioning and effective use of resources to support learning; particularly those that offer opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The strongest teaching challenges pupils both physically and intellectually with a demanding pace of learning, as seen in a rugby lesson, where a high level of physical activity was well balanced by pupils being made to think hard about the purpose of the game and their tactical play. The most effective teaching also gives pupils some responsibility for their own learning, for example, in a badminton lesson, where pupils developed their tactical awareness of the use of the serve through challenging problem solving tasks. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme, and progress at the same rate as their peers. Although marking is regular and encouraging, pupils are not always given advice on how to improve their work and spelling errors are often not corrected. Requests for pupils to complete unfinished work are not followed up with sufficient rigour.
169. Since the previous inspection the subject has been successfully reorganised into one large, and effective, department. The speed with which the new organisation has developed into such a strong, supportive and cohesive unit says much for the leadership of the new head of department and the quality of the staff. The department's strong community links with sporting organisations and local clubs offer excellent opportunities for higher attainers to make further progress in their chosen sports. The development of dance within the school, through links with the Royal Ballet, is a strength, but boys do not have equal access to dance in the curriculum. Positive steps to redress this inequality of opportunity have been taken this year by running a pilot course for a group of Year 7 boys.
170. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards of attainment have been maintained at Key Stage 3 and have improved at Key Stage 4. GCSE and A level results have also improved. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.

## **Religious Education**

171. The 1999 GCSE examination results were significantly below the national average for the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C. Pupils gained results that were generally lower than those in their other subjects. Girls performed better than boys. However, pupils achieved results in line with their potential as measured at the start of Year 10. Results at GCSE level have shown a fall over recent years in line with a falling number of candidates. A realistic target has been set for GCSE attainment this year. Results for a small number of candidates at A level were below the national average. There is no observable trend in A level results, due to small and variable numbers of candidates from year to year.

172. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standard of attainment at the age of 14 was good, being above that expected for pupils of their age in the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus. They understand the reasons for studying religion and know what the main world faiths are. They recognise that religious faith affects the way people live their lives, how they demonstrate their faith and how they approach moral decisions. They can identify correctly the founders, sacred books and main festivals of the different faiths and recognise the central place of Christianity in UK tradition. They have a good technical vocabulary and understand the significance of symbolism in both a visual form and also in the practices and rituals of religion; for example, the symbolism of Holy Communion. In addition to a good factual knowledge many can identify key ideas of faiths, such as forgiveness and sacrifice in Christianity, unity in Islam, and renunciation and community in Buddhism. Some respond to stimuli with awe and wonder and many can express their thoughts and feelings with sensitivity and feeling. An example seen was the work of one lower attaining pupil who wrote at length on the topic of "What it feels like to be loved". Most pupils can consider beliefs, such as the religious view of creation, and relate it to their own experience through their involvement in caring for the environment. Their achievement over time is good because they consolidate the knowledge they acquire and learn to use it when considering matters of belief and behaviour. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good because of the school's setting arrangements and work and teaching methods well matched to their ability. Progress made by gifted and talented pupils is good.

173. At the age of 16 the attainment of pupils following the GCSE course is satisfactory and in line with their potential. They have deepened their knowledge of Christianity, Judaism and Sikhism especially their appreciation of the cultural aspects of these faiths and can relate their beliefs to ethical questions and the manner in which believers live. For example, they understand how beliefs in equality and community lead to the hospitality in a Sikh Gurdwara. They make good progress over time due to informed teaching and a well organised course which includes first hand experience of religious communities and worship centres. The standard of attainment of the majority of pupils who follow a core course of religious education is below that expected in the Agreed Syllabus. They have considered a number of moral issues but their attitude to these is insufficiently informed by religious values and beliefs. They make insufficient progress because there is not enough time devoted to the subject at Key Stage 4.

174. At the age of 19 the attainment of the small number of pupils following an A level course is satisfactory. They have an in-depth knowledge of Islam and modern Judaism but lack a well informed overview of the development of these religions. They lack confidence in expressing what they know. The majority of pupils in the sixth form do not have any provision for religious education and therefore fail to make progress from the standards achieved earlier in their school career.

175. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good. Most teachers have a very good subject knowledge which enables them to provide accurate information backed up by an understanding of the beliefs which underlie religious practice. Class management is very good and all lessons are ordered and businesslike. Each has clear learning objectives which are known and understood by pupils. Planning is good so that all materials are available and suitable learning experiences well prepared for work in both class and at home. Each lesson has a variety of activities using oral teaching, reference to text books, viewing of video material and religious artefacts. Emphasis is placed on the provision of key words and a high standard of literacy. Teachers have high expectations of pupil response, behaviour and the quality of written work. There is some use of information and communication technology planned for specific sections of the syllabus. Many lessons involve pupils in reflection and evaluation such as the consideration of questions like "Is it better to care for the dying than to provide for a merciful end to life?" The pace of most lessons is good but there are occasions when demand made on some pupils, the time given for an activity and better planned questioning could better maintain the impetus of learning. In general teaching methods are well matched to the needs of pupils especially those with special

educational needs. Because of these features pupils make good progress in each lesson and exhibit a positive approach to the subject. They show pride in their written work, listen well to teachers and to each other, settle quickly to tasks and remain focused. Their behaviour is very good. When required to do so they collaborate well. Some use a variety of resources including the Internet to research the subject for homework. The low take-up of the subject at GCSE level does not reflect the interest shown in this key stage.

176. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is good. Teaching in the GCSE course is well informed and uses a wide variety of approaches. The course is well covered and pupils given guidance and support in how to approach examination tasks. The completion of course work is well organised. It was possible to observe only a small sample of lessons in the statutory non-examination course but the teaching in the lessons observed is good. Specialist teachers exhibit the same qualities as in the previous key stage and non-specialists use their subject knowledge and experience to plan and deliver good quality lessons. The achievements of the pupils on this course however is unsatisfactory due to a number of factors:-

- Insufficient time for the course. Approximately half that recommended.
- The deployment of temporary supply staff to teach several classes.
- The lack of an examination goal for this course and its timetable organisation.
- Insufficient emphasis on religious values and beliefs when considering moral issues.

Due to these factors pupils show less commitment to the subject and whilst they are well behaved and co-operative their level of involvement is less than satisfactory and progress is below that seen in Key Stage 3.

177. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is satisfactory with well informed teaching, good coverage of the course and conscientious work by pupils. The small number of candidates makes it difficult for lessons to be lively and stimulating and there is little interaction or debate.

178. The leadership and management of the subject is good. There is an ethos of high standards. Teachers are enthusiastic and hard working and they provide a stimulating environment for learning in the classrooms through the imaginative use of displays. All lessons are well resourced with guidance and materials. Overall planning is good and the subject makes a very good contribution to the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Standards of pupils' work is monitored and the results of marking and assessment used to improve further planning and provision. Although teachers meet regularly there are no arrangements for them to systematically observe each other's work and therefore the best practice is not sufficiently disseminated. A lack of communication is leading to insufficient support being given to temporary staff teaching some classes in Key Stage 4.

179. Since the last report there has been an improvement in the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3. Although GCSE results have shown a fall, those pupils choosing to follow the course are achieving their potential. The department recognises the fall in up-take in Key Stage 4 and is currently introducing the GCSE short course for higher attaining pupils in Year 9. Standards in Key Stage 4 are still variable, due to the inadequacy of the provision and the school fails to meet statutory requirements to provide religious education for all sixth form pupils.

### **Vocational courses**

180. In the results of the 1999 City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education (DVE), there were good standards of attainment for the pupils at the age of 16 who achieved the diploma at foundation level. Of the cohort of 45 pupils, 96% of pupils entered achieved the full award and over half of these pupils achieved at the higher levels of credit and distinction.

181. In the results of pupils following General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses, pupils at the age of 18 achieved standards of attainment above national averages at the advanced level and in line with national averages at Intermediate level. Over two thirds of the candidates who began the advanced course achieved the higher levels of merit and distinction. The leisure and tourism course lost only one of its 11 candidates and almost half the candidates achieved at distinction level. Retention of pupils on intermediate GNVQ programmes of study affects results when compared to national standards as one

third of all the candidates did not complete this one year course. In leisure and tourism over half the pupils did not complete, but all who did gained merit accreditation. No art and design pupils achieved at pass level. Over two thirds of pupils completed the Health and Social Care course and one pupil gained a merit. Of the 8 pupils who began the business studies course only 5 completed. Of these 4 gained a merit.

182. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 16 are better than those expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils following the vocational course enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average and their achievements by the end of Key Stage 4 are better than might be expected in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils have a good knowledge of the topics they are studying and many have better understanding than expected for their age. For example, pupils of all levels of attainment displayed a thorough knowledge and understanding of production techniques and responsibilities on the film studies course, could draft and re-draft an appropriate letter for a magazine on the health and social care course, and as part of the health and fitness course demonstrated a thorough understanding of how to use a gymnasium to exercise in a safe and sensible manner.

183. In the work seen in the sixth form, standards are broadly average across the courses. Pupils demonstrate good interaction skills and give constructive feedback on the health and social care course. They display an appropriate understanding of opening and closing stock and could cross reference this to a balance sheet in business. They demonstrated a sound understanding of primary and secondary methods of marketing in leisure and tourism. There is work of some flair and imagination in art and design but sketchbook designs and modelling/construction skills are below average for this course.

184. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 4 is good and it is satisfactory in the sixth form. Key Stage 4 teachers and those involved with advanced GNVQ have good knowledge of both their subject and their pupils. They plan lessons carefully, making not only the aim of the lesson clear but also relating it to the performance criteria. This ensures that all pupils are aware of what they are meant to be doing and the standard they have to be working towards. It is this approach that has resulted in considerable higher level achievement. Teachers at Key Stage 4 provide stimulating learning activities for pupils of all levels of attainment ensuring that pupils with special educational needs are able to make progress which matches that of other pupils in the group. When support assistants are present, the teacher skilfully liaises with them so that they work as a team providing the right blend of help and challenge so that pupils do not become too dependent. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and effort and pupils are challenged appropriately. For example, whilst some pupils were still grouping pre-production, production and post-production workers in film studies, the more able were extended with an task which involved editing, entering text and using clip art on the computer. However, the quality of teaching varies significantly in the sixth form. It is the difference in the quality of teaching between lessons, key stages, and the advanced/intermediate GNVQ that produces marked differences in pupils' response. When teaching is good, pupils share the teacher's enthusiasm, become fully involved in all the activities provided, enjoy the lesson and learn quickly and efficiently. For example, in a health and social care advanced GNVQ lesson the pupils were able to undertake very sensitive role-plays and provide constructive feedback for each other. They were not embarrassed, supported each other well and demonstrated excellent interaction skills. The pupils had been taught to take control of their own learning and were able to relate the role-play exercise not only to the vocational unit they were studying but also to the key skills communications unit. Key skills work observed for the application of number at intermediate level was less effective because teaching was not related to the demands of the syllabus and the pace of the lesson was too slow for pupils to gain new knowledge or understanding. The most successful DVE and GNVQ lessons had a high vocational context and benefited from being assessed mainly through practical projects.

185. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Speaking skills that were previously judged to be unsatisfactory have improved as a result of the curriculum manager working alongside the GNVQ co-ordinator to raise the profile of oracy skills in the sixth form. This has also resulted in improved questioning skills, information-seeking and independent learning. Provision at Key Stage 4 has been developed with the introduction of part 1 intermediate GNVQ in Year 10 alongside the Diploma of Vocational Education and the GNVQ team does now meet on a regular basis. However, there is still a need to share good practice across all the teachers of vocational education. Whilst English, mathematics and information technology specialists are now represented on the GNVQ team

they do not all have a thorough understanding of GNVQ procedures and processes. Key skills still present problems as they are still not well covered and the recording system needs to address the evidence indicators and be based on the key skills logbooks to ensure full coverage.