

INSPECTION REPORT

LITTLE LEVER SCHOOL SPECIALIST LANGUAGE COLLEGE

Bolton

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105256

Headteacher: Mrs Ann Behan

Reporting inspector: Mr David Page
1028

Dates of inspection: 12th - 16th March 2001

Inspection number: 184899

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Church Street
Little Lever
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Roger Heywood

Date of previous inspection: March 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31718	Denise Shields	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
6642	Peter Hill	Team inspector	Information Technology Design & Technology Special education needs	
1272	Ian Hocking	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well are pupils taught?
8411	Colin DuQueno	Team inspector	Science	
17378	Margaret Miles	Team inspector	English	
11292	Nye Goodwin	Team inspector	History Geography Equal Opportunities English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20192	Terry McDermott	Team inspector	Physical Education	
31838	Martyn Williams	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
21770	John Alder	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
4392	Jacqueline Emery	Team inspector	Music	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Little Lever School is an 11-16 specialist Language College. It is about the same size as other secondary schools with 1075 pupils currently on role. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. At 7.4%, the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, including statements, is above the national average, while the number of pupils with statements is broadly in line with the national average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is currently in line with that of similar schools. Attainment on entry has been rising steadily for the last 3 years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Little Lever is a good school with many strengths and few significant weaknesses. Its pupils generally achieve standards that are at least in line with attainment on entry, and often above this. Teaching is good overall with significant amounts of teaching very good or excellent. Leadership by the head is very good and her clear vision for the school's future contributes significantly to its improvement. Governors show remarkable commitment and pride in the school and their contribution to its strategic management is good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching at the school is good overall, with a significant amount of teaching very good or excellent, enabling pupils to achieve well.
- Staff commitment to pupils' social and academic development is very high, as shown in the extensive extra curricular programme and support for pupils' work outside lesson time.
- Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are very good. Pupils behave very well and display a very good attitude to school. The opportunities for social development are very good.
- Very good, and energetic leadership is given by the head. Her vision for the future ensures a clear direction for the work of the school.
- Modern Foreign Languages; ICT across the curriculum, and PE are strengths of the school.
- Links with primary schools are a strength of the school.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs is very good, and very well managed.

What could be improved

- The quality of management in science needs to be improved in order to ensure strong leadership raises the quality of teaching and learning.
- Planned opportunities need to be created to enable pupils' spiritual development.
- RE needs to be given sufficient time to be able to address the agreed syllabus.
- A daily act of collective worship needs to be provided for all pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1995. Since then it has made good progress - all of the key issues for action identified in that report have been successfully addressed. In particular the school's curriculum has been reviewed and now provides a broad and balanced experience for pupils. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been highly developed and has made a significant impact on teaching and the management of subjects. With the exception of last year's results at GCSE, the improvements have led to a fairly steady improvement in pupils' standards of attainment.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	B	B	D	C	

During the inspection, the work seen at both Key Stages for all pupils was good overall. When compared with all schools nationally, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in English was above the national average, and broadly in line with national averages in both mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools, pupils' attainment in English was well above the average, above the average in mathematics, and in line with the average in science.

Over the last 5 years there has been a slight upward trend in pupils' attainment in both English and mathematics. In science the results have fluctuated over time, but have shown some improvement over the last 3 years. The school's targets for 2000, for 5 or more grades A*-C in GCSE/GNVQ were 53%, and at 5 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ were 93%. The school did not achieve these targets, at least in part, due to this cohort of pupils being the last when the school was under-subscribed. This led to it accepting a significant number of pupils with poor attendance records from other schools.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupil's attitudes to work, their behaviour, relationships between pupils, and between adults and pupils, are all very good. These strengths make a significant contribution to the good progress made by most pupils.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well both in the classroom and around the school. They are courteous and welcoming to visitors and take a keen interest in what they have to say. They know right from wrong.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils have very good relationships with their peers and with adults; these are based on mutual trust and respect. They collaborate well but are not yet given sufficient responsibility for their own learning.
Attendance	Very good. Opportunities are taken to remind parents of the need for their children to attend school regularly and on time. More could be done to tackle pupils arriving late at the start of the school day.

Pupils' attitudes to work, their behaviour, relationships between pupils, and between adults and pupils, are all very good. These strengths make a significant contribution to the good progress made by most pupils. These findings show a significant improvement on that of the previous inspection. Pupils behave very well both in the classroom and around the school. They are courteous and welcoming to visitors and take a keen interest in what they have to say, they understand right from wrong. The very good behaviour is underpinned by a clear code of conduct, which pupils understand and say is fair.

Where they are offered, pupils respond well to opportunities to reflect on what they do and its impact on others. They do this particularly well in personal and social education lessons, where their own and others' feelings are concerned.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Not applicable

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

The quality of teaching and learning is generally good and has improved since the previous inspection. The five excellent lessons seen were in mathematics; physical education; technology, and art. Out of the four unsatisfactory lessons, three occurred in science and one in drama. In the vast majority of lessons, the quality of teaching and learning is generally good and has improved since the previous inspection. The five excellent lessons seen were in: mathematics; physical education, and technology. In the majority of lessons, pupils' learning is good and reflects the quality of teaching experienced by pupils of all abilities. This includes those for whom English is an additional language and those who have special educational needs. 98% of the 164 lessons inspected were satisfactory or better, 66% very good or better, and 2% were unsatisfactory.

In English, at both Key Stages, teaching is often good. It is never less than satisfactory and is sometimes very good. In mathematics, the standard of teaching and learning is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Overall in science teaching and learning are satisfactory in both Key Stages. Promotion of literacy is successful across the curriculum. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is at an early stage of development.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school has a clear rationale for the curriculum and has made a positive choice to place an emphasis on the development of modern foreign languages. Nonetheless the curriculum is broad and balanced.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for. Systems are very good and very well managed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The few pupils who are in an early stage of learning English as an additional language are well provided for.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for pupils' personal, moral, and cultural development is good, and for social development is very good. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is a very caring community where the good pastoral system supports pupils effectively.

The school has made very good progress in addressing the issues related to the curriculum identified in the last inspection. The provision for modern foreign languages is excellent. ICT across the curriculum, and PE are strengths of the school. Extra curricular provision is extensive and varied, effectively supporting pupils' academic and social development. The time allocated to RE is insufficient to address the locally agreed syllabus and therefore does not meet statutory requirements. The school fails to meet its statutory requirement to provide all pupils with a daily act of collective worship.

Form tutors and heads of year know the pupils well and, in the main, provide a high level of support and guidance through the form tutor period. Despite some good examples of pupils being given the opportunity to take on responsibility, there are a number of missed opportunities. Parents express a positive and very supportive view of the school. There are good relationships between the school and its parent community.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Very good, and energetic leadership is given by the head. Her vision for the future ensures a clear direction for the work of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and demonstrate remarkable levels of commitment and pride in their school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The monitoring of teaching and learning is well developed and very effective.
The strategic use of resources	Very good.

The school is very well managed. The senior management team have clear roles and work hard to discharge these effectively. Some departments evaluate their performance with considerable detail and accuracy. Evaluation leads to appropriate and costed action plans. Generally, staff qualifications, and their number, match the needs of the curriculum. During the last year, staff illness and turnover have contributed to some difficulties in English, art and RE. The senior management team has worked hard to ensure that pupils receive the best teaching possible. The accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively except in science where there are insufficient laboratories. Learning resources are adequate for the curriculum and are very good in supporting ICT across the curriculum. The school is extremely active in pursuing the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectations of children working hard and achieving their best. Children making good progress in school. The teaching is good. Feeling comfortable about approaching the 	<p>The responses to the parents' questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. However, around 13% of respondents felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> they could be kept better informed about how their children were getting on.

<p>school with questions or a problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is helping children become mature and responsible. 	
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The inspection team agreed with all the aspects which parents like about the school. The inspection found an impressive range of activities outside lessons, and that while the current format of the annual reports to parents is satisfactory, it is in the process of being reviewed.

At the meeting for parents before the inspection, parents were concerned regarding the degree of staff turnover in English. The inspection team found that the senior managers of the school had done everything reasonably possible to ensure that pupils received the best teaching.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Standards on entry to the school in 2000, as shown by national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, were in line with those of similar schools in English but below the averages for similar schools in mathematics and science. The academic standards of the intake have risen steadily over the last 4 years, as measured by the school using standard tests.

2 Since the last inspection the number of pupils making the school their first choice has changed from 100 first preferences to 335. This increase in popularity had not taken sufficient effect to prevent the Year 11 taking exams in 2000 from being below capacity, leading to the admission of pupils with poor attendance records from other schools.

3 At the end of Key Stage 3, when compared with all schools nationally, pupils' attainment in English was above the national average, and broadly in line with national averages in both mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools on the basis of the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' attainment in English was well above the average, above the average in mathematics, and in line with the average in science.

4 Over the last 5 years there has been a slight upward trend in pupils' attainment in both English and mathematics. In English, the performance has overtaken that of the national average over the same period of time. In mathematics, results have generally kept pace with the national results. In science the results have fluctuated over time, but have shown some improvement over the last 3 years.

When compared with similar schools on the basis of free school meals, the % of pupils reaching level 5 and above in English and mathematics was well above the average, and was in line with the average in science. The % of pupils reaching level 6 and above in English was well above the average. In mathematics and science the % of pupils reaching level 6 and above was above the average.

5 At the end of Key Stage 4, when compared with all schools nationally, pupils' attainment at 5 or more grades A*-C in GCSE/GNVQ was below the national average. At 5 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ was below the national average, as were the results in 1 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ. When compared with similar schools on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, the performance at 5 or more grades A*-C in GCSE/GNVQ was broadly in line with the average. At 5 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ, and 1 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ, the results were below the average. When compared with similar schools on the basis of the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' attainment at 5 or more grades A*-C in GCSE/GNVQ was broadly in line with the average. At 5 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ, and 1 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ, the results were below the average.

6 Using the average total GCSE points score per pupil, performance compared with all schools nationally was below the national average and had been above the average for the previous 2 years. When compared with similar schools on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, and on the basis of free school meals, the average points score was broadly in line with the average.

7 The school's targets for 2000, for 5 or more grades A*-C in GCSE/GNVQ was 53%, and at 5 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ was 93%. The school has analysed the results in detail and from observations during the inspection, is on track to improve the results in the present year.

8 Promotion of literacy is successful across the curriculum. Standards of speaking and listening and presentation of work are good. Research skills are demonstrated in art; note-taking in mathematics; reading in history and presenting a summary in modern foreign languages. There is a successful effort on the part of subject teachers to teach subject-specific terminology. All classrooms display key words on the wall. Literacy is now embedded in all schemes of work.

9 Overall, pupils throughout the school have average levels of skills in numeracy. Written computational skills are more highly developed than are mental skills. The impact of the recent introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is already evident in the mental skills demonstrated by Year 7 pupils, for example, they can rapidly halve and double two digit numbers.

10 Pupils show competence in applying numeracy skills in other subjects, for example: when plotting and interpreting graphs in science; using industry standard spreadsheets in business studies; applying knowledge of shape within graphic design aspects of art, and costing and scheduling travel in modern foreign language lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11 Pupils' attitudes to work; their behaviour; relationships between pupils, and between adults and pupils, are all very good. These strengths make a significant contribution to the good progress made by most pupils. They also help to create an effective learning environment where the vast majority of pupils want to learn. These findings show a significant improvement on that of the previous inspection. It also confirms the views of parents, who consider that behaviour is good and that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.

12 Pupils are enthusiastic, well motivated learners and are usually keen to participate in all the activities offered. They listen attentively, follow instructions well and usually settle quickly to the task given. Pupils concentrate well during class work. For example during a Year 10 art lesson their concentration and interest produced high quality work reflecting a critical study of the artist of their choice. They answer questions, discuss their work and share the outcomes of their research, for example, during a Year 8 history lesson where pupils shared information about the Battle of Edgehill, and made notes in preparation for further work. Pupils are interested in the life of the school and enjoy the extra-curricular activities. They readily take part in fund raising and other activities, such as reading and study clubs organised by the school. Very occasionally, however, lessons and activities do not gain the full interest of some pupils. Consequently they are unable to sustain concentration and are unwilling to join in whole class discussions. Overall, pupils' attitudes generate a good working atmosphere throughout the school.

13 Pupils behave very well both in the classroom and around the school. They are courteous and welcoming to visitors and take a keen interest in what they have to say. They know right from wrong and are, in the vast majority of instances, polite and courteous to teachers and their peers. The very good behaviour is underpinned by a clear code of conduct, which pupils understand and say is fair. They move sensibly about the school, showing particular care when many people are using narrow corridors. At lunchtime pupils' behaviour is also very good. The canteen and patio area is usually full, but rarely are there instances of pupils pushing in the queues. Their respect for the school premises is highlighted by the absence of litter and graffiti. There are few instances of bullying and pupils are aware that the school has appropriate procedures to deal effectively with any incidents that may take place. There were 38 exclusions in the year prior to the inspection. Exclusions have increased since

the last inspection. The school is well aware of this; the rise in the figures can be attributed to a particular group of boys who have now left the school. The school has set realistic targets to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions, which it hopes to achieve. It is, however, reluctant to exclude and only does so after all other avenues of support for both pupil and family have been explored.

14 Pupils have constructive relationships with their peers and with adults; these are based on mutual trust and respect. They collaborate well, for example, during a drama lesson, groups of pupils shared information and opinions when discussing the “the mantle of the expert”. They work well in groups and pairs. This is particularly notable during PE lessons, where they are fully engaged in activities, offer opinions and listen to one another's advice on how to improve their skills. Pupils handle resources skilfully and with care, for instance, during a design and technology lesson making bread, when they handled equipment sensibly when mixing the dough. Pupils respond well to opportunities to reflect on what they do and its impact on others. They do this particularly well in personal and social education lessons, where their own and others' feelings are concerned. Opportunities, however, are not consistently provided in all subjects.

15 Where they are offered, pupils take on responsibilities well. For example, Year 9 pupils have a duty rota for the reception desk; they enjoy this opportunity and are mature in their approach to the visitors they meet. The oldest pupils have some responsibilities such as involvement in the lunchtime reading club and library monitors. However, there are a number of missed opportunities and in addition there are instances where opportunities are set up but not followed through, for example arrangements to help the lunch time supervisors. Compared with the last inspection, pupils still do not have sufficient opportunities to show initiative and to take responsibility for their own learning. Many of the pupils are too dependent on guidance from their teachers.

16 Unauthorised absence is in line with the national average. However, whilst the national average for attendance has risen over the past three years, school rates have remained static. Absences are usually due to medical reasons, though a number of parents take their children on holiday in term time. Punctuality is generally not a problem, with the great majority of pupils arriving on time. Nevertheless, there are still a number of pupils, across all year groups, who are late arriving each morning. Registers are closed later than the DfEE recommended 30 minutes from the start of the school day. Pupils who arrive after this time are not recorded as unauthorised. This means that pupils can arrive just before lunch but still be recorded as present. The school is, however, following the LEA guidance concerning the recording of late pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17 The quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved since the previous inspection. 98% of the 164 lessons inspected were judged to be at least satisfactory, with just 2% found to be unsatisfactory. 39% of lessons were good, a further 24% were very good and 3% were excellent. The five excellent lessons occurred in mathematics (in Years 10 and 11) physical education (in Year 7), technology (in Year 11) and art (in Year 11). Out of the four unsatisfactory lessons, three occurred in science in Years 8, 10 and 11, and one in drama in Year 8. When taking into account all the lessons seen within a subject department, teaching was judged to be very good overall in physical education in both Key Stages and in mathematics in Key Stage 4. Teaching was judged to be good overall, in both Key Stages, in information technology (ICT), art, music and modern foreign languages. Teaching is also good in mathematics in Key Stage 3, and in English and design and technology in Key Stage 4. In other subjects, teaching across the department was judged to be predominantly satisfactory.

18 The better teaching promotes better learning. It is characterised by teachers' good command of their subjects, particularly so in modern foreign languages, and in ICT lessons. In all subjects, and in

almost all lessons, teachers manage pupils very well and expect high standards of behaviour. The vast majority of pupils respond very well to their teacher, to a large extent because of the good or often very good relationships that exist. This is a key factor that contributes positively to pupils' learning. Teachers maximise the use of resources in all subjects and make particularly effective use of the very good ICT provision to boost learning within English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, design technology, history and geography. In general, with the exception of science, teachers make appropriate assessments of pupils' learning so that they can help them to overcome any problems such as misunderstandings. This feature of teaching is notable in English, mathematics, physical education, modern foreign languages and music.

19 Teachers regularly and appropriately set homework and rigorously check its satisfactory completion. This practice is especially good in English and good in other subjects, including: mathematics; modern foreign languages; ICT, and design and technology, and thus contributes well to pupils' learning.

20 Excellent teaching in two mathematics lessons in Year 10 and 11, was notable for the outstanding quality of relationships between the teacher and pupils and the obvious joy and love of mathematics conveyed by the teacher. The combination of these features resulted in exemplary behaviour from pupils and very good gains in their learning.

21 In an excellent Physical Education lesson, for a class of Year 7 boys, teaching was enhanced by the outstanding quality of questioning by the teacher and his very high expectations of what pupils could achieve. This resulted in excellent learning with all boys, regardless of ability, making very good gains in the development of a gymnastic sequence.

22 The excellent subject knowledge of the teachers, and excellent rapport with pupils contributed substantially to two outstanding technology and art lessons in Year 11. The work presented to pupils was challenging but sufficiently flexible to cater fully for the differing needs of all pupils. The successful application of ICT skills was a notable component of this highly effective lesson. Pupils' response to both these lessons was also excellent, their very high levels of concentration and motivation enabled them to produce very high quality work within their GCSE project work.

23 The unsatisfactory lessons in science are characterised by: inappropriate challenge; slow pace, and too much teacher direction. These features lead to: insufficient gains in pupils' learning; a loss of motivation, and boredom. The development of the understanding of scientific concepts and skills is a particular casualty in such lessons. An unsuccessful drama lesson in Year 8 resulted from ineffective class management and insecure relationships between pupils and the teacher. Pupils' response was unsatisfactory in terms of behaviour and co-operation with the teacher.

24 Weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory lessons in religious education sometimes result in insufficient challenge for pupils. In other lessons where teaching is otherwise satisfactory, for example in history, geography, religious education and science, the intended learning outcomes are not always made sufficiently clear to pupils, and they consequently make less progress.

25 Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are well taught in all areas of the school. In Key Stage 3 they are taught in smaller sets, ensuring that teachers are able to meet the pupils' needs as identified in their individual education plans (IEPs). This also ensures that there is complete equality of access to all subjects and areas that the school has to offer. All teachers have had training in identifying needs and writing targets for IEPs. The school has developed a very successful system which ensures that there are 'department' IEPs, with targets appropriate to pupils' individual needs within that subject.

26 The very good co-ordination of special educational needs across the school ensures that all teachers have good quality information. This allows them to take into account pupils' specific learning difficulties. Pupils with more complex learning difficulties, and those with statements of special educational need, receive good, appropriate, additional support for the Local Authority Mainstream Teaching Support Service. Pupils who have reading difficulties have additional support through the reading club which runs outside lesson time. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored. The school's analysis of reading age information shows that pupils make good progress and clear improvement in their reading.

27 The teaching of the basic skills of literacy is a particular focus of the English curriculum. The rules of spelling and punctuation are routinely taught and assessed to good effect. Grammatical features and conventions are explained and their application leads to clarity in the pupils' work. There is an emphasis on good presentation. These skills are further developed in writing at length and for different audiences. All these skills are evident in other subjects, for example in personal studies for art, and mathematics.

28 The skills developed in reading are promoted in history, where teachers require pupils to read aloud. A high standard of speaking and listening skills is to be found across the curriculum. In modern foreign languages, pupils demonstrate not only confident well-delivered oral explanations, but the ability to summarise what has gone before. However, too few planned opportunities are presented in most subjects for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through collaborative working.

29 Numeracy is developed within mathematics and within many other subjects, including business studies, modern foreign languages, science, art and geography. A uniform approach to the teaching of numeracy has been promoted through the school's good quality policy document. The recent introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) is beginning to influence the style of teaching being adopted in mathematics lessons. The structure of most mathematics lessons involves a brief introductory activity followed by a main activity. In a few cases, these features are followed by an effective plenary. However, if the NNS is to be fully implemented and instrumental in raising standards, some improvements are required in key principles, such as the mental starter, mathematical vocabulary and in ensuring that sufficient time is allowed for an effective plenary.

30 In the vast majority of lessons, pupils' learning is good and reflects the quality of teaching experienced by pupils of all abilities. This includes those for whom English is an additional language and those who have special educational needs. Apart from in science, pupils readily acquire new skills and increase their understanding of concepts, this is especially the case in ICT and in other subjects such as, mathematics, physical education, modern foreign languages, art and music. Physical education and drama are notable as subjects in which pupils apply high degrees of physical and creative effort. Pupils are well motivated, showing interest and a high work rate, in most lessons, but these features are especially evident in mathematics, English, music, ICT and physical education. When opportunities are presented, for example in ICT, physical education, modern foreign languages and music, pupils demonstrate a good capacity to think for themselves. Teachers mark work conscientiously and often give praise in recognition of good quality effort. In the best practice they provide clear guidance as to how pupils can improve their work.

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

31 The school, with the effective support of its governors, has a clear rationale for the curriculum. It has made a positive choice to place an emphasis on the development of modern foreign languages. It has made very good progress in implementing its action plan to remedy the issues related to the

curriculum identified in the last inspection. The school teaching time has been extended and the time allocated to music has been increased. The history curriculum now meets statutory requirements.

32 Overall the curriculum provides a wide range of learning opportunities which are generally of good quality. The time allocated to religious education across the Key Stages is insufficient for the agreed syllabus to be taught. It therefore fails to meet statutory requirements. The school needs to ensure that religious education has sufficient time to teach the agreed syllabus.

33 The rationale for the curriculum includes a positive commitment to keep it broad, balanced and relevant despite the clear shift to an emphasis on languages. The school has achieved this. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is good overall, offering breadth, balance and relevance to all pupils. It provides a good balance between meeting the academic needs of the pupils and their social development. In Key Stage 4 pupils are required to follow a programme defined by the school, including all the statutory subjects. This effectively gives pupils the chance to choose from two option blocks. The school offers business studies, media studies and statistics, which alongside measures such as the diversification of modern foreign language provision keep the curriculum broad. The school has firm plans to extend its provision into vocational courses.

34 The provision for modern foreign languages is excellent. French, German and Spanish are taught in the school. Community languages are taught in addition and pupils are also able to study Japanese in Year 7. The school enables pupils to take GCSE examinations early in a range of subjects, which increases the number of GCSEs they are able to achieve. The use of this 'fast track' option also maximises the choice of modern foreign languages for higher attaining pupils.

35 The school's teaching week, at 25 hours, meets the minimum recommended level. The time allocated to tutor groups is used to register pupils, monitor pupils' welfare and progress. This time is generally used effectively for its intended purpose. The school does not comply with its statutory obligation to hold a daily act of collective worship.

36 Schemes of work indicate that curriculum planning in most subjects is sufficiently detailed to ensure that coverage of the programmes of study of the National Curriculum result in effective teaching and learning. Schemes of work generally attempt to provide balanced coverage across different aspects of the subject. Schemes of work need to be refined in English and science. Information technology is generally well employed in a range of subjects across the curriculum.

37 The school makes good provision for its pupils with special educational needs having developed an inclusive ethos. They are well supported by access to an appropriate curriculum and resources. The few pupils with English as an additional language are also well provided for. In general grouping arrangements do not inhibit equality of opportunity. A group of lower attaining pupils are not always presented with a relevant curriculum in science at Key Stage 4. In most years, group sizes are relatively small for lower attaining pupils and this helps to improve the quality of provision for these pupils.

38 The governing body is increasingly involved in monitoring the curriculum, through its curriculum committee, in close partnership with the headteacher. Governors are involved in the strategic planning of the curriculum taking a keen interest in the development of the school's status as a language college.

39 The school prepares pupils effectively for adult life and the world of work through careers education and work experience. There are good links and liaison with post 16 educational institutions, employers, trainers and the careers service. This provision is well planned and co-ordinated and makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Initiatives such as the young enterprise scheme

for Year 10 pupils enhance this provision. The school places a priority on pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) and is thoughtfully developing an effective programme that fosters basic skills and an increasing awareness of the idea of active citizenship.

40 The provision for sex education, and information on drug misuse is good. Teachers are supported by an effective scheme of work. Links with the partner institutions are excellent, with a wide range of positive and effective relationships. These include arrangements with partner primary schools, which are developing teaching and learning in information and communications technology and modern foreign languages. These links also enable effective transition arrangements. There are also good links with teacher training institutions, which enable the school to help in the training and induction of new entrants to the teaching profession.

41 The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These activities encourage active participation beyond the school day and in the wider community. Staff organise homework clubs, revision sessions and tuition outside the school day. They also help develop social skills. The school's summer university is a good example of its commitment to providing enrichment. The school has an extensive and highly popular programme of extra-curricular sport. There are many visits to places of interest, fieldwork and visits abroad, which enhance the subjects of the curriculum. It uses links with people and institutions abroad to enhance learning. The school invests a significant amount of time and other resources to enhance this aspect of the curriculum. The school works hard to encourage its pupils to participate in these activities. This ensures that it is a strength of the school.

42 The school has a statement of aims for the personal development of pupils which is clear in respect of the desirable attitudes it seeks to inculcate, but less clear in identifying the values to which it is committed. This shortcoming is reflected in the uneven contribution made by the subjects of the curriculum to the promotion of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The suggestion made in the last inspection report, that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development could be improved by the school developing strategies for monitoring and evaluating provision, remains to be taken up.

43 Spiritual development is unsatisfactory, as the school does not plan for this provision systematically. The school provides insufficient opportunity to enable pupils to reflect and consider spiritual issues. There is a lack of planned opportunities within subjects for pupils to reflect on how elements of their studies might apply to their own lives.

44 Moral development is good. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of moral behaviour in their personal relationships. All staff are very good role models. They regularly acknowledge, praise and celebrate pupils' efforts and achievements. A clear code of conduct forms the basis of the school's expectations regarding pupils' behaviour, inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated. The personal, social and health education programme, taught to all pupils through each Key Stage, does make a positive contribution to the moral education of pupils when it challenges them to confront controversial questions of human behaviour and consider their own responses to these. In religious education at Key Stage four teaching focuses on the response of religions to particular ethical dilemmas, for example euthanasia and abortion. In other subject areas the contribution is less explicit and opportunities are lost to strengthen the whole school approach to promoting awareness of, and sensitivity to, such matters.

45 Very good relationships underpin the school's work. The school ensures that pupils' social development is very good. Teachers act as role models in fostering positive relationships that impact positively on learning. They are based on mutual trust and respect between staff and pupil. Pair and group work, notably in PE, help to promote teamwork and good relationships. Pupils develop a sense of social responsibility through their contribution to the community. Involvement in the many extra curricular activities helps to develop self-confidence and esteem. Money is raised for charity, for

example Red Nose Day. The impact of such activities is noticeable in the school community, where pupils are invariably courteous, helpful, friendly, well mannered and exhibit good inter-personal skills in their dealings with each other.

46 The cultural development of pupils is good. The excellent array of extra curricular activities provides access to a wide range of cultural experiences. These visits and the personal social and health education programme help to prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse society, although this aspect of the school's work is not yet fully developed. There are cultural links with schools abroad which are supported by exchange visits to France and Germany. Some Year 10 pupils undertake their work experience placement in France. Cultural development is addressed by the teaching of music, art and drama, the development of music in the school being a positive development since the last inspection. Pupils are encouraged to visit art galleries, the theatre and music events and there are many opportunities for them to participate in drama performances and music making in the school. Pupils studying art also enter local and national art competitions. Pupils perform at the Bolton Music festival.

47 The school is placing an increasing emphasis on developing literacy skills across the curriculum. There is a position statement that informs departments about focusing teaching on raising standards of literacy. At this early stage, its major impact has been on the development of 'key words' and subject specific vocabulary. The school has appropriate plans to develop the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy in Key Stage 3.

48 The school has made a sound start to implementing its Numeracy Strategy. Younger pupils are beginning to benefit from the school's recent introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS); for example, Year 7 pupils follow the prescribed Programmes of Study within the NNS. This is at an early stage and is not yet fully embedded. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop and apply their numeracy skills both within mathematics lessons and in other subjects. Across the school, relevant opportunities are planned for the application of number. For example; plotting and interpreting graphs in science and geography and using industry standard spreadsheets in business studies. Pupils also learn to apply knowledge of shape within graphic design aspects of art and to cost and schedule travel in modern foreign language lessons.

49 A daily act of collective worship is not provided consistently for all pupils. The school does not plan collective worship, no material support is provided for those whose responsibility it is to lead it, and no records are kept. Collective worship, broadly conceived, provides an occasion for focusing all the school intends and represents so far as the promotion of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is concerned. Currently, that opportunity is being missed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50 Overall, this aspect of the school's provision is good, but within this there are very good features. This is in line with the findings of the previous inspection.

51 The school is a very caring community where the good pastoral system supports pupils effectively. The pastoral organisation is ably lead by a deputy head teacher. Regular meetings take place with personnel, at all levels, this ensures that those directly involved in the care of pupils are aware of any concerns. Form tutors and heads of year know the pupils well and, in the main, provide a high level of support and guidance through the form tutor period. In the tutor period time is generally used well. This is not always the case and on occasions pupils sit and chat, or read magazines rather than following the planned work. Although monitoring of the use of form tutor time has taken place, action has not consistently been taken to ensure that good practice is shared and that the time is always used productively.

52 Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good overall. There is very good liaison with the many primary schools whose pupils transfer to the school. A well-organised induction programme ensures they settle quickly into the routine of school life. A number of staff have received first aid training and there are good arrangements to deal with illness or accidents at school. The medical needs of pupils are well catered for. Supervision arrangements at breaks and lunchtimes are effective.

53 The arrangements for child protection are good. There is a new child protection policy, recently adopted by the governing body. The designated member of staff has undergone recent training and has detailed knowledge of local procedures. Teachers are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about pupils in their care. There has been recent child protection training for all staff on the policy, and the school has firm plans to carry out training to ensure staff have knowledge of the possible signs and symptoms of abuse. Fire drills are regularly carried out. The school has adopted the county's health and safety policy, and teachers have a sound awareness of health and safety arrangements, and the need for safe practice in their day to day work. A site manager and supervisor oversee health and safety arrangements; the procedures in place are very good.

54 A very appropriate and clear code of conduct forms the basis of the school's behaviour expectations. It is clearly understood by pupils. Parents are encouraged to sign this document when their children enter the school to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of both expectations and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour; the vast majority do so. In the main, all teachers have a consistent approach to dealing with incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils understand the need for punishment to be used; they feel it is firm but fair. Appropriate behaviour, effort and achievement, in all aspects of school life are regularly rewarded through the merit system and praise cards that are sent to parents. Pupils who sometimes have difficulty controlling their behaviour receive good support via detailed individual behaviour management plans, and from the members of the behaviour support team. There is a detailed anti bullying policy, procedures to tackle bullying and harassment are good. Pupils and parents express confidence that any incidents brought to the school's attention are dealt with promptly and effectively. The programme of work for PHSE, and evidence of drama work, indicates these areas are used well to raise pupils' awareness of bullying issues.

55 Attendance is effectively monitored through the pastoral system. Regular meetings take place between the heads of year and the educational social worker (ESW). The school is very aware of those pupils whose attendance is not regular. Opportunities are taken, through letters and a newsletter, to remind parents of the need for their children to attend school regularly and on time. The school needs to continue to tackle the issue of pupils arriving late at the start of the school day.

56 Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are satisfactory. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, and take part in activities which contribute to their personal development. For example: membership of the school council; involvement in the young enterprise initiative, or through day to day responsibilities such as monitors and the Year 11 buddy system with younger pupils. Despite these good examples, there are a number of missed opportunities. The school council is open to pupils up to the end of Year 9, and there is no effective system to seek the views of older pupils. Some responsibilities have been established, but have fallen by the wayside, there is limited responsibility open to pupils in Year 7.

57 Each year all pupils have an interview with their head of year at which targets for improvement are set; these cover both achievement and personal improvement. Although targets are generally clear, they are not regularly monitored for success. It is usually the case that they are not reviewed until the following year, and sometimes eighteen months will have elapsed. Because of this, targets lose their effectiveness. Currently there is no effective system to track pupils' personal development. Much reliance is placed on informal information, and the knowledge of form tutors and heads of year. The

Tile Project, introduced for Year 7 last year made a promising start, but is not presently being used. It has many elements which could be used effectively to both track and promote pupils' self confidence and esteem.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

58 Parents express a positive and very supportive view of the school. Many say that staff are approachable and that suggestions and concerns are dealt with quickly and to parents' satisfaction. The school has sought the views of parents and as a result of suggestions made has altered its practice. For example there is now an additional parents' evening in Year 7. There is a very appropriate home school agreement, reflecting the schools aims, which parents are asked to sign along with the school's code of conduct. Signed returns are monitored and are virtually 100%.

59 Parents of pupils in Years 7 and 8 are invited to meetings at which their children's targets are set; this ensures they are aware of what their children must do to improve. A large number of parents use the school's facilities and attend language or ICT courses. These often give them an insight into what their children are learning. When homework is set, and where they are able, parents support the work their children do at home. Where their children are directly involved, for example Christmas concerts or productions, attendance by parents is very good. Although the parents staff association (PSA) has dwindled in numbers, it still raises money which benefits the school, for example in buying additional learning resources. Overall the school has effective links with parents and they make a good contribution to children's learning.

60 Overall, the quality and range of information provided for parents is good. Newsletters, day to day information and information booklets keep parents well-informed about school life and what their children are learning. Parents are invited to information evenings covering such topics as drug awareness or option choice information for pupils entering Year 10. Parents of Year 10 pupils also receive useful information about key course deadline dates. The style of the annual reports to parents about their children's progress is in the process of being reviewed. The current format is satisfactory. In the best examples, they clearly state what pupils know, understand and can do, however, sometimes detail is focused on course content. Some information, for example, about test and examination results is not always easy to understand. Parents have the opportunity to discuss these reports at regular parent's evenings. Brief, interim reports are also sent which keep parents informed of the progress their children are making. The school brochure is extremely well presented and provides prospective parents with a clear overview of the school. The governors' annual report to parents is concise and effective.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61 The head provides very good and energetic leadership. Her vision provides clear direction for the work of the school, which works hard to promote high standards for all. The senior management team has clear roles and works hard and successfully to discharge these.

62 The school has a comprehensive set of aims which stress the achievement of pupils' potential. Equality of opportunity is well addressed within the school although is not explicitly mentioned within the aims.

63 A very good system for monitoring of teaching and learning is in place and is an effective response to an issue in the last inspection report. The system is rigorous and thorough, and has been evaluated and improvements have been made as a consequence. Although in practice it has not made the impact in science which it should, even here it is used to identify strengths and weaknesses, and drives departmental development plans across the school. The monitoring system is effectively linked

to the school's systems for performance management. This strategy for reviewing performance is well established, and developed readily from systems already in place. The quality of the school's response was praised during a recent visit by the threshold assessor.

64 The school development plan is an extensive, though well-structured document. It commendably extends beyond the current financial year, running from 2000 to 2003, and is currently being revised. A clear synopsis of whole school issues is included early in the document. A review of the last Post-Ofsted Action Plan is effectively detailed. There is a clear, shared commitment amongst both staff and governors for the school to succeed and there is the clear capacity to do so.

65 Governors fulfill their statutory duties with considerable, indeed remarkable, levels of commitment. They exhibit much pride in their school. They are appropriately involved in the strategic management of the school. Widespread staff attendance at committee meetings helps to raise the level of understanding of the governors of the issues pertinent to the school. Governors are clear on the development priorities which the school faces. The head and chair of governors have an effective, trusting relationship, and the chair is well informed and highly motivated to support and challenge the school.

66 The school finances are carefully and effectively monitored with the use of appropriate ICT, and spending is effectively reconciled with the information from the LEA. This monitoring ensures that specific grants, such as those for the development of the language college, are spent appropriately.

67 Generally, staff qualifications and their number match the needs of the curriculum. During the last year, staff illness and turnover have contributed to some difficulties in English, art and RE. The senior management team has worked hard to ensure that pupils receive the best teaching possible. Targeted groups receive support in the classroom from a senior manager and systems are in place to induct and support temporary staff. Support from heads of department for supply staff is generally good. In English, the scheme of work is not a sufficiently accessible document to provide effective guidance for supply staff. There is a thorough programme of induction for all staff joining the school.

68 The co-ordination of special educational needs is very good. The co-ordinator is a member of the senior management team and is very well supported by an assistant special needs co-ordinator. The school places a high priority on meeting pupils' special and individual needs and the overall provision is very good. The systems and organisation are very good and all the requirements of the Code of Practice are met. The SEN managers are also responsible for the systems for behaviour support. These systems are similarly very well structured, with detailed records and analysis, and very good behavioural support plans. Pupils' progress is carefully measured against the targets of their plans and appropriate action efficiently taken.

69 The accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively except in science. In science there are insufficient laboratories to support the curriculum being taught, and the quality of learning when science is taught in ordinary rooms suffers as a consequence. Learning resources are adequate for the curriculum and are very good in supporting ICT across the curriculum.

70 The school is extremely active in pursuing the principles of best value. For example the provision of school meals has been recently reviewed and the provider changed as a consequence.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to bring about further improvement the headteacher and governors should:

1. improve the quality of management in science in order to ensure strong leadership raises the quality of teaching and learning, through effective monitoring and support, and that schemes of work are reviewed in order to ensure that learning objectives drive lessons and that scientific enquiry is more effectively taught; (paragraphs 23, 63, 107, 111, 114)
2. create planned opportunities to enable pupils' spiritual development; (paragraph 43)
3. ensure that RE is given sufficient time to be able to address the locally agreed syllabus, and; (paragraphs 32, 201 202)
4. ensure that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all pupils. (paragraph 49)

NB: The school is already taking steps to address item 1 effectively.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

164

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

47

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	24	39	32	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1075	n/a
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	147	n/a

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	280	n/a

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	82

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	36

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.4

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	2000	135	103	238

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	89	94	82
	Girls	79	73	55
	Total	168	167	137
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (63)	70 (65)	58 (56)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (20)	38 (35)	29 (20)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	82	86	83
	Girls	81	68	70
	Total	163	154	153
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (76)	65 (80)	65 (69)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (40)	34 (34)	27 (31)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	95	83	178

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	31	82	87
	Girls	38	74	81
	Total	69	156	168
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	39 (51)	88 (93)	94 (93)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	34 ([***)
	National	38.4 ([***)]

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2000	0	0	0

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	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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	0	n/a
	National		76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	18
Pakistani	66
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	5
White	979
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	6	1
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	31	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	62.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	12.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	342

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.2
Key Stage 4	18.9

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	2570928
Total expenditure	2516
Expenditure per pupil	2429
Balance brought forward from previous year	-104005
Balance carried forward to next year	-15286

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1075
Number of questionnaires returned	256

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	48	7	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	46	49	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	49	7	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	57	9	3	2
The teaching is good.	38	54	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	49	11	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	41	5	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	33	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	55	11	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	39	50	3	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	53	5	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	45	7	1	13

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

ENGLISH

71 At the end of Key Stage 3, results in national tests for English were above the national average, and well above the average for similar schools. Pupils are developing proficiency in their approach to the examination paper and have a good understanding of its demands.

72 At the end of Key Stage 4, the number of pupils gaining A*-C grades was below the national average for English Language at GCSE, and well below the national average for English Literature. However, observations of lessons indicate that the current Year 11 pupils are well on track to achieve results at least in line with, and many above, national expectation. Pupils are well-prepared for examination entry and less able pupils are sufficiently challenged to make good progress. Pupils demonstrate high levels of speaking and listening skills in question and answer sessions with their teachers.

73 The study and writing of poetry, which is a strength of the department, allows pupils to tackle that section of the examination paper with confidence. Standards of presentation are high and the range of writing is very good. There is a need to develop the reading of a wide range of texts as a voluntary activity outside the classroom. A greater emphasis on developing an enthusiasm for reading early in Key Stage 3 would lead to greater discrimination and response at Key Stage 4. The school library is well-managed and would make a very good resource to support this. The school has recognised this and there are plans to promote pleasure in reading in the coming year.

74 There have been strenuous efforts to successfully address the issues from the previous inspection, and monitoring and reviewing of teaching is well-established. This has led to the identification of training needs for teachers and the effective setting of targets in departmental developmental planning. The identification of the need for greater accuracy in spelling and punctuation has led to closer attention to these skills. In both Key Stages the rigorous attention to spelling, punctuation and presentation has raised the levels of attainment in writing.

75 At both Key Stages, teaching is often good. It is never less than satisfactory and is sometimes very good. Teaching is marked by well-founded subject knowledge throughout the Key Stages. Classes are managed effectively with some teachers using seating on the basis of gender to good effect. Teachers insist upon high standards, and relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.

76 The pace of lessons is generally very good. There is sufficient challenge for all pupils especially less able pupils. However, in lessons where there is a complete change of focus within the 50 minute period, this sometimes leads to a superficial treatment of content, for example in one lesson where both homonyms and a focus on Shakespeare were attempted. In such lessons, pupils are sometimes required to abandon work in which they are deeply immersed, and there is no time for reflection. Where the change of activity is subtle, learning is good. For example in one lesson where a low ability group listened to a radio tape; discussed the worksheet; worked in pairs, and then made up their own story.

77 Assessment, through testing, self-evaluation sheets and careful, constructive marking is used effectively to monitor progress and plan for the future. By giving good quality feedback, the teachers make sure that the pupils know how well they are doing, and they know what they need to do to improve. Homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend learning. Opportunities for spiritual

and cultural development are sometimes missed, such as when studying a text such as *Romeo and Juliet*, or *Lord of the Flies*.

78 The department is well led by an effective head of department. The strongly positive ethos within the department can be attributed to his strong leadership. The department is also fortunate in the strong core of dedicated and hard-working teachers, some of whom are also very experienced. They have clearly defined roles. There is much evidence of teamwork and mutual support.

79 Additional in-class support for less able pupils is now evident and is being used to very good effect. The special needs assistant ensures that best use is made of his/her time in the classroom. Where support is not available, teachers work hard, and successfully to address the needs of all.

80 Pupils are usually attentive and respectful and sustain their concentration even when question and answer sessions are prolonged. Pupils follow instructions promptly and where opportunities are given, collaboration is good. They often demonstrate high levels of interest in their work and relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. The quality of these relationships often contribute to learning.

81 National Curriculum requirements are fully addressed, including the use of information and communication technology and provision of effective learning opportunities for all pupils. Strategies to close the gap between girls' and boys' performance, such as shorter texts and a boy-sensitive teaching style, are in place. 'Fast-tracking' to allow early GCSE entry, meets the needs of the most able pupils in Key Stage 4.

82 The scheme of work for English tackles current initiatives well, for example the National Literacy Strategy. However, the document as a whole needs streamlining to make it readily accessible to staff new to the English department such as newly-qualified and supply teachers. This is particularly important given parent's concerns regarding the recent rate of staff turnover in the department.

83 Media Studies is well covered with a significant proportion of pupils going on to specialise in the subject in Key Stage 4. Drama is taught as a discrete subject, and has a high profile in Key Stage 3. It contributes significantly to moral and social development and underpins the drama element of the National Curriculum for English. Pupils choosing to specialise at Key Stage 4 do so successfully gaining 64% A*-C grades at GCSE. last year. The subject is led by an enthusiastic and capable specialist who ensures that the pupils give of their best.

84 Promotion of literacy is successful across the curriculum. Standards of speaking and listening and presentation of work are good. Research skills are demonstrated in art; note-taking in mathematics; reading in history and presenting a summary in modern foreign languages. There is a successful effort on the part of subject teachers to teach subject-specific terminology. All classrooms display key words on the wall. Literacy is now embedded in all schemes of work.

MATHEMATICS

85 At the end of Key Stage 3, the results of the National Curriculum tests taken in 2000 by pupils are in line with the national average, and above those of pupils in similar schools. 70% of pupils gained level 5 or above (against a national average of 65%), this represents a significant improvement over the past two years. 38% gained level 6 or above (against a national average of 42%). There is no difference in the results of boys and girls at this Key Stage.

86 Evidence from lessons observed, and from a scrutiny of pupils' work, matches the standards indicated by national tests and examination results. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils have

acquired at least the expected level of knowledge, skills and understanding across all aspects of mathematics and especially in written computation, including manipulation of fractions and decimals. Lower attaining pupils are understandably less secure in these areas. The impact of the recent introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is already evident in the mental skills demonstrated by Year 7 pupils, for example, they can rapidly halve and double two digit numbers.

87 At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results for 2000 are in line with the national average compared with all schools, and above the average when compared with similar schools. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. GCSE results in statistics are below the national average but show an improvement over the results of the previous year.

88 Year 11 pupils are able to make effective use of calculators, for example when performing trigonometric functions. They can apply their knowledge and understanding of algebra when changing the subject of a formula and when evaluating algebraic expressions. The vast majority of pupils in Year 11 understand the concept of correlation. High attainers can plot a line of best fit on a scattergram and apply the appropriate skills to estimate areas under a curve.

89 There has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection, especially in the quality of teaching and in strategic aspects of management.

90 The standard of teaching and learning is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In Key Stage 3, teaching is very good in approximately one third of lessons, good in a further third and satisfactory in the remaining third of lessons. In Key Stage 4, teaching is very good or excellent in two thirds of all lessons and good in the remainder.

91 In both Key Stages, teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. They plan and prepare lessons carefully and have clear intentions as to what pupils will learn. Lessons begin promptly and proceed at a brisk pace that keeps all pupils engaged in their learning. Classes are managed very effectively in the vast majority of lessons. The use of computers makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning both in mathematics and in ICT, but some practical difficulties exist when teachers require pupils' attention within the ICT suite. This is exacerbated by the lack of carpeting in the room which causes distracting background noise.

92 Teachers' exposition and questioning is logically structured to promote good learning. Teachers make very effective use of good quality textbooks and worksheets. A positive ethos exists in lessons. Teachers deal sensitively with pupils' misconceptions and have at least good, and often very good, relationships with pupils. The high expectations teachers have of their pupils is rewarded by the good standards of presentation in pupils' written work.

93 Pupils clearly enjoy mathematics as evidenced by their very good behaviour and diligent work rate. Pupils co-operate fully with teachers and, when required to do so, with each other, for example when sharing texts or using a computer. Teachers give appropriate attention to developing pupils' literacy skills, for example by emphasising spellings of key vocabulary.

94 Excellent teaching was observed on two occasions in lessons involving pupils in Year 10 and 11. This high quality of teaching is characterised by excellent relationships, manifested by high levels of mutual respect between the teachers and pupils, and by the teachers' outstanding enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject, which impact significantly upon pupils' attitudes and learning.

95 Pupils with special educational needs are invariably taught within small groups which allows them to have additional opportunity for teacher support. This ensures that they make appropriate gains in their learning. Those few pupils for whom English is an additional language participate fully in class

discussions and achieve similarly to their peers. Homework is set as established practice, it is checked rigorously and contributes well to learning.

96 The department is very well led and managed. This contributes significantly to the good sense of team spirit amongst the staff and to pupils' achievements. The head of department is an excellent role model for his team, especially through his obvious enjoyment of teaching and his outstanding relationships. Teachers' high commitment to pupils' pastoral and academic development is demonstrated by the extra provision made for pupils to learn mathematics outside of lesson time.

97 Departmental documentation is of a very good standard and provides a clear basis for cohesive working. Strategic planning is good, resulting in an action plan that identifies appropriate areas for development and the requisite resources. Good systems are in place for checking the work of the department and its outcomes, including analysis of test results. Grouping of pupils into ability sets provides good opportunities for the learning for all pupils. Accommodation is at least satisfactory and is enhanced by good quality classroom displays.

98 The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is at an early stage of development. It is beginning to influence the nature of teaching and learning, but greater emphasis needs to be given to some key principles of the strategy. Across the school, many opportunities are planned for pupils to use and apply numeracy within other subjects, for example when plotting and interpreting graphs in science, using industry standard spreadsheets in business studies, applying knowledge of shape within graphic design aspects of art and costing and scheduling travel in modern foreign language lessons. Such opportunities enhance and bring relevance to pupils' learning.

SCIENCE

99 At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in national tests in 2000 was in line with the national average and the average in similar schools. The levels of attainment are rising after a dip in 1998. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that pupils are on track to attain standards in line with the national average.

100 The achievement of pupils in both Key Stages in most classes is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. For groups of more able pupils, Year 7 pupils could describe the energy changes in a sequence of operations and understood the relationship between energy and work. Year 8 pupils understood the relationship between pitch and frequency and loudness and amplitude. In lower ability groups in Year 9, pupils could recall the differences between inhaled and exhaled air.

101 At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in 2000 at GCSE was below average for the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C and average for those gaining A*-G. Attainment in science in 2000 was lower than in previous years. Attainment seen in lessons, and the scrutiny pupils' work in Key Stage 4, indicate that these pupils are making progress to achieve higher standards at the end of Key Stage 4 than last year.

102 In Key Stage 4 upper sets, Year 11 pupils had a good understanding of the patterns in properties of elements seen in the periodic table and could describe the differences in processes of fermentation with yeast and culturing yoghurt with bacteria. In lower sets in Year 10, pupils could draw distance-time graphs and interpret given graphs with the support of appropriate prompts. In a substantial minority of lessons pupils make insufficient progress.

103 There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls in either Key Stage. In the majority of lessons pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. In one lesson progress was unsatisfactory due to work being set at an inappropriate level for the pupils.

104 Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory in both Key Stages. In half the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory, in one third it was good or very good, and in the remainder teaching was unsatisfactory.

105 In the majority of lessons there are clear objectives made explicit to pupils. There is an appropriate emphasis on learning technical terms and their spelling. In these lessons, effective questioning develops pupils' understanding, and good relationships with pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good.

106 When teaching is good the challenge for pupils is well matched to pupils' needs. There is clear explanation, good management of the class and practical work, the topic is made relevant to the pupils and work proceeds with a good pace. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is progressively extended; they are able to contribute their own ideas and make links to other work.

107 Where lessons are unsatisfactory, there is insufficient challenge for pupils, and insufficient consideration of previous work. In these lessons, more guidance is needed for pupils to develop their understanding. Too often in such lessons, the pace is slow and too much time is spent by pupils in unproductive copying. The development of pupils' knowledge, understanding or skills is unsatisfactory in such lessons. In a lower set Year 8 class, pupils were not required to develop their understanding of healthy and non-healthy foods beyond work they had done in Key Stage 2 and top set Year 10 pupils were only required to identify superficial adaptations of polar bears to their environment.

108 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory with effective use of additional support. In one unsatisfactory lesson with a lower set containing a number of pupils with statements of special educational need, work set was inappropriate. It required mathematical understanding of the proportions of elements in chemical formulae that was beyond the pupils' understanding.

109 Pupils' attitudes to science are good. Pupils work co-operatively in groups. They are attentive and remain engaged with the lesson. Teachers promote good relationships and respect between pupils and with staff. Equipment is used responsibly. In most lessons, pupils are willing to answer and ask questions. In a substantial minority of lessons pupils are passive and not required to take responsibility for organising their own work. Pupils are well behaved even when teaching is unsatisfactory.

110 The science curriculum meets statutory requirements. All pupils in Key Stage 4 follow the course leading to a double award at GCSE. Pupils are grouped into ability sets in all years on the basis of the previous year's end of year assessment.

111 Insufficient emphasis is placed on the development of scientific enquiry. The balance of the other three aspects of the subject is appropriate. The use of ICT to enhance the teaching of science is developing. Contributions were seen to the development of literacy through the understanding and spelling of technical terms. Fewer contributions were seen to the development of numeracy, and these were confined to work with graphs.

112 The science curriculum is insufficiently adapted to the needs of pupils of different prior attainment. This causes reduced progress of lower attaining pupils through inappropriate work for their levels of understanding, and too often, insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. Sex education in science is not co-ordinated with PSHE lessons. Opportunities to contribute to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are missed. Health and safety procedures in the department are satisfactory.

113 Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress in both Key Stages are thorough, but of a limited range. The formal assessment of scientific investigation in Key Stage 3 is underdeveloped. Teachers are aware of the attainment of pupils in their classes but make insufficient use of this in their planning.

114 While there are strengths as well as weaknesses in the management and leadership of the department, overall, management is unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory teaching within science has not been effectively tackled by the head of department. The roles of others in the department with management responsibilities need reviewing in order to ensure they play their full part in the improvements in science.

115 Departmental routines are thoroughly and efficiently managed. There is an effective department handbook and a full range of departmental policies in place. The monitoring of teaching and learning has commenced and an action plan been drawn up as a consequence of this. Improvements have been made in the use of objectives; the management of behaviour, and the support for pupils in revision. The schemes of work for both Key Stages adequately cover content, knowledge and understanding, but do not indicate different approaches for different ability sets. Learning objectives are not included and guidance on the teaching of scientific enquiry is insufficient. The schemes of work need to be revised. This is recognised and plans are in hand for improvements.

116 Laboratory accommodation is suitable but not sufficient. Nearly a quarter of science lessons take place outside of laboratories. Science lessons observed in classrooms were limited due to the accommodation. Proposals are being made for the conversion to an additional laboratory. Resources for learning are sufficient but much equipment is old and near the end of its life. A phased programme of replacement is necessary.

117 Improvement since the last inspection has taken place in the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department, contribution to the development of literacy, the provision and use of ICT, support for special educational needs and health and safety procedures. Insufficient progress has been made in eliminating unchallenging work and the number of laboratories remains the same.

ART AND DESIGN

118 At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment for the majority of pupils is in line with national expectations. Where attainment is below national expectations it is usually found in Year 8 and 9 classes with the less well-motivated pupils, for whom the subject has little attraction. Pupils are given the opportunity to experience a variety of creative experiences involving: drawing and painting; some ceramics; collage; printing, and computer generated art applications. The majority of pupils show an interest in their work. The majority of pupils are capable of using drawing and painting materials and have an appreciation for the use of colour, line and tone. In addition some pupils demonstrate good research skills in planning their work, and when completing homework assignments. Pupils are more than willing to discuss their work and a significant proportion show pride in their achievements

119 At the end of Key Stage 4 the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with or above the national average. In 1998 and 1999 the average points score was above the national average. In the year 2000 the average points score was below the national average but above the average points score for the school. In the year 2000 the subject performance was significantly above the average for almost all other subjects. In the three years from 1998 the attainment of girls has been better than that of the boys. The reason for this imbalance could be related to the structure of the course which involves a significant amount of course work completed over the two years of Key Stage 4. The style and demands of the course, together with a requirement for research skills and sustained effort over a long period of time, could prove unattractive to some pupils.

120 The previous report drew attention to the lack of continuity in the subject caused by the rotation scheme within the timetable. This has been effectively addressed. Art is now taught as a discrete subject on a weekly basis. Homework was found to be non-compulsory and infrequently set in Key Stage 3. There is now a homework timetable in place. Mention was made of the lack of provision for computer applications, ceramics and screen printing. All these areas have been addressed and improvements made. The health and safety recommendations relating to ceramics have been fully implemented.

121 The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory, and sometimes good in Key Stage 3, and very good in Key Stage 4. The best lessons are challenging and well planned in order to provide all pupils with opportunities to progress and to gain levels of achievement commensurate with their abilities and aspirations. Pupils with special educational needs are well served through sensitive teaching. Classroom management is usually effective. The relationships between the teachers and the pupils are good, providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and civilisations in order to raise creative and visual appreciation and awareness. However, some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, fail to challenge the pupils sufficiently. As a consequence, some pupils can become bored and therefore lose interest in producing good quality results.

122 Assessment is effective: pupils are given constructive advice on the quality of their work and the effort they put into their work. Assessment includes a certain amount of pupil self-assessment and therefore, when questioned, the pupils were well aware of teacher expectations, and of their own strengths and weaknesses. Work is appropriately marked at periodic intervals usually linked to the completion of a project

123 A significant number of pupils in both Key Stages are articulate and can use technical language when discussing their work. Teaching is at its best in Key Stage 4 and this is where the highest level of progress is seen. In Key Stage 4 some very impressive personal studies have been created using ICT systems. Drawing skills are reasonably well developed as is colour appreciation. Some pupils show initiative and understanding and therefore produce work that contains elements of originality. There is evidence that in all year groups across both Key Stages there exists a number of pupils who have the potential and the ability to make significant progress. These pupils would benefit from being introduced to greater challenges in order to demonstrate their true potential. The majority of the pupils react well to the subject. A small number of pupils in Year 9 and 10 have been given the opportunity to take GCSE Art examinations early therefore allowing them to study an additional GCSE Art subject in Key Stage 4. The scheme of work affords pupils of all abilities the opportunity to succeed. The attitude of the pupils is varied but for the majority it is never less than satisfactory and more often good. A minority find sustained concentration, problem solving, extrapolation and an understanding of aesthetics difficult. These problems are more common with low achieving boys in Key stage 3. Relationships between pupils and towards the teachers are good. Pupils are more than willing to share materials and ideas and are willing to assist in the distribution and collection of equipment in lessons..

124 The management of the department is good. The teachers work as an effective team. The quality of pupils' work on display in the Art Department, and around the school, is good. This promotes high standards, interest in the subject, and celebrates achievement. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

125 At the end of Key Stage 3, the standard of pupils' work is at least in line with expectation and, for a significant number of pupils, it is above. For example, in a graphics lesson, pupils who had only

recently been introduced to a new computer graphics programme, worked with a very high level of concentration. Pupils were very quick and accurate in learning how to use the new package. They all produced especially high quality graphics for a mobile telephone. In Year 8 modular technology lessons, most pupils clearly demonstrate not only their competence with ICT systems, but also an above average understanding of the module content, for example, in hydraulics and control technology.

126 At the end of Key Stage 4, standards in the 2000 GCSE examinations throughout the faculty were above the national average. In GCSE textiles standards were well above average and, in resistant materials, were above average. In graphic communication standards were in line with the national average, and in food technology just below average. Evidence from pupils' work and lesson observations during the inspection, indicates that Year 11 pupils are on track to improve on the results obtained in 2000. In at least two of the areas, graphic design, now a very popular option for pupils, and fabrics, pupils are currently working at levels which are well above national average.

127 Until last year the school provided half courses in technology. However these were not popular with pupils or staff, and the school has now reverted to full GCSE courses in this area. Standards in these short courses were generally below average.

128 Teaching in Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory with a significant amount of good and some very good teaching. This is especially the case in the new technology rooms where pupils are engaged in modular technology. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the modules and of the underlying scientific and technological concepts. For example, in a very well taught Year 8 lesson the teacher made very good teaching points to individuals and pairs of pupils. This was demonstrably based on her considerable scientific knowledge and her expertise in ICT. Lessons are well prepared and organised in all areas of the faculty. Teachers have good relationships with classes. This, linked with good, and often very good, classroom management, ensures that the lessons are well paced and productive, with pupils enjoying their work.

129 Teaching is good overall in Key Stage 4 with some very good and excellent teaching. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. A very notable feature of teaching of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is the very high expectations that teachers have of what pupils can achieve. In all lessons this has a clear effect on pupils who are determined to do their best in future examinations. An excellent example of this was seen in a Year 11 GCSE graphic design lesson. The teacher set the standard from the start of the lesson, clearly motivating the pupils, recognising that they have high levels of skill and knowledge and understanding. Pupils respond to this approach by producing very high quality design work. During the period of the inspection the school experienced some staffing difficulties. However, these have been well managed by the senior management team, and pupils in the faculty have continued to make good progress.

130 The use of ICT is well integrated into the work of the faculty. This is especially true of graphic design, modular technology and control, and some areas of design and realisation where CAD/CAM applications are used. Teachers plan very well for the use of ICT with a significant number of teachers in the faculty having high levels of skill. This clearly inspires pupils' confidence, as well as ensuring that the quality of learning in this area is always at least good.

131 Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for. The school's approach to supporting pupils' individual needs is very well organised. The faculty fully meets the school's requirements in this aspect and all teachers are aware of pupils' individual needs and plan for them. The Individual Education Plans, for individual pupils identified as having special needs, not only meet their general learning needs, but also needs specific to their technology lessons.

132 Within all areas of the faculty pupils are highly motivated and work very well and with enjoyment. They recognise the expertise of their teachers and are very confident in asking questions, putting forward opinions and in asking for advice. They talk readily and with confidence about the work they are doing. Key Stage 4 pupils engaged in GCSE coursework, for example in textiles and in graphics, exhibit well above average knowledge which is very clearly supported by the work in their folders. With high quality work such as this and with good teaching, learning is good. Pupils in all areas are well behaved and self-motivated, many clearly taking responsibility for their own learning and actions.

133 The very good management of the faculty contributes significantly to the high level of teamwork amongst the staff leading to high expectations. Department planning and documentation is very good and provides a clear basis for the work of all areas. Strategic planning is very good. For example in the department emphasis on the use of ICT and the provision of new facilities. Overall the faculty is well equipped with excellent resources, both in quality and quantity, for modular technology and ICT. The new provision in the modular technology rooms is excellent and a testimony to the school's vision and determination to provide very high quality and relevant courses for all pupils in the school.

GEOGRAPHY

134 At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is generally in line with national expectations. The responses of pupils in class and the work in a sample of books indicate a range of attainment with the substantial majority matching the required level for their year groups. A significant minority achieve above the expected levels. Evidence from lessons observed indicates that the substantial majority of pupils are on track to achieve the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 3.

135 At the end of Key Stage 4, in 2000 34% of pupils achieved grades A*-C at GCSE which is well below the national average. Results at the end of Key stage 4 have declined over recent years. The department is taking the measures necessary to remedy this. Evidence from lessons observed indicates that attainment at Key Stage 4 is generally in line with national expectations. Where pupils are grouped by prior attainment their current attainment reflects this, with lower ability groups achieving below the national expectation.

136 The department has made good progress in some areas since the last inspection. It has developed effective systems for self-review and clear strategies for improvement.

137 The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory, and some lessons are very good. Lessons are marked by clear exposition, supported by direct questioning and are conducted at an appropriate pace. Pupils make good progress when teachers include frequent opportunities to recap and explain key ideas as in a Year 10 lesson on land-use and settlement. Teaching ensures good progress when it builds on what pupils already know. In these cases pupils were given the chance to brainstorm ideas and organise them, working with groups of their peers.

138 Where teachers are clear about their objectives, and when these are shared with pupils, progress is particularly marked, as in a Year 8 lesson on the hazards of flooding. While teachers always have a focus for lessons, they do not always make it sufficiently clear which skill or concept is to be learned. Learning objectives are not always shared systematically and explicitly with pupils.

139 Direct questioning is generally effective in establishing what pupils know, but more use needs to be made of open questions to reveal pupils' understanding of key ideas. Where pupils are encouraged to talk about what they have learned before recording their work, progress is particularly good.

140 The level of challenge posed by the work is not always appropriate. For example when pupils are required to record information into their exercise books or folders without having the opportunity to process or transform it.

141 Literacy is supported when emphasis is given to the language of the subject, with key terms and phrases explained. Resources are generally used appropriately. The understanding of the enquiry process is developed effectively in fieldwork exercises. This approach should be extended into the usual lesson structure so that the title for each lesson could be posed as a key question and the lesson activities the route to providing an answer. The plenary aspects of lessons, at the beginning and end of sessions, when new ideas are introduced, tasks are set and when progress is checked, are generally under emphasised. This key feature of lessons could be developed further in order to reinforce what has been learned and to clarify misconceptions by asking pupils to report on what they have achieved.

142 Classes are well ordered and well managed. Teaching is marked by positive and secure relationships. The challenge for the department is to ensure a consistent approach to teaching and learning by disseminating existing good practice effectively.

143 The acquisition of geographical knowledge is good. Progress is less marked in developing understanding and in the application of knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts. Progress is greatest where teachers involve students in analysing ideas, through careful questioning and in discussion. Pupils demonstrate very good listening skills.

144 Pupils generally keep on task and sustain concentration well. The vast majority were interested in their work and meet the expectations of their teachers. They listen carefully and respond very well to the tasks that they are set. In those lessons where pupils have an opportunity to participate and explore ideas they respond particularly well and this is reflected in the progress they make in understanding new ideas. Pupils respond well when given the chance to contribute to structured discussion

145 The department provides a curriculum, which meets statutory requirements. There is a clear emphasis on developing geographical knowledge and skills. Schemes of work have been developed and updated in the light of the National Curriculum 2000. Work is marked regularly and pupils receive clear guidance on their presentational skills. The feedback on subject specific knowledge, skills and ideas is not always sufficiently developed. Too often comments are not precise enough for pupils to get appropriate feedback in order to know what they have understood and what they need to improve. Progress in this aspect of assessment could assist in setting precise targets for individual pupils.

146 The subject is well led with clear strategies for improvement. The examination specification has been changed at Key Stage 4, after careful evaluation, in response to the recent decline in results. The documents developed by staff are clear, effective and reviewed regularly. The effectiveness of the department is monitored through the analysis of pupils' work, test results and through classroom observation. The department benefits from this systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation. The quality of the learning environment is good and wall displays are used to support teaching and learning. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support teaching and learning, for example in a Year 9 lesson pupils learned to construct and interpret graphs with the help of an interactive whiteboard.

HISTORY

147 Attainment in the lessons observed in Key Stage 3 was generally in line with the national expectation. The department has made steady progress since the last inspection. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements. It has clear and relevant plans for further improvement.

148 At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment was well below the national average in 2000, when 32% achieved grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations. In the lessons observed, and work scrutinised, pupils are well on track to reach the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 4.

149 The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and sometimes good. Teaching is characterised by an appropriate pace in well-structured lessons. Lessons are marked by clear exposition supported by direct questioning and teachers generally build effectively on prior knowledge. Teaching is marked by warm, positive and secure relationships. There is a clear focus on developing historical knowledge.

150 Where teaching is good pupils are increasingly taught how to extend their writing skills and develop key concepts through discussion. In these well-planned group activities pupils are encouraged to co-operate so that speaking and listening skills are developed effectively. This approach works particularly well when pupils are able to discuss and share their ideas through working in pairs and in larger groups. The challenge for the department is to ensure a consistent approach to teaching and learning by disseminating existing good practice effectively. The level of challenge posed by the work is generally appropriate. Teachers generally have clear aims, however, these are not always shared with the pupils. While teachers make the focus of activity in lessons clear to pupils, they do not always make it sufficiently clear which skill or concept is to be learned. The development of key skills is particularly effective when pupils process information and analyse ideas. Pupils make good progress when teachers include frequent opportunities to recap and explain key ideas.

151 Questioning is generally effective but more use needs to be made of open questions to reveal pupils' understanding of key ideas. There are times when tasks are not sufficiently challenging, for example, the simple transfer of information from a source into books. Pupils need to be taught the skills of note-making in order to reduce their dependence on transferring information uncritically from texts. The plenary aspects of lessons, when tasks are set and when progress is checked, are underdeveloped. This key feature of lessons needs to be employed with greater consistency. Teaching is most effective where a range of strategies are employed to develop knowledge, understanding and key skills.

152 Pupils make steady progress in lessons. They acquire knowledge well and gain a reasonable understanding of key events, particularly when they are given the opportunity to process new information through tasks that involve discussion and problem solving. Pupils are generally focused on their tasks and well motivated. The majority are interested in their work, and behave very well, meeting the expectations of their teachers. They are generally keen to answer direct questions. They demonstrate high levels of interest in the historical ideas and knowledge they encounter. In some key areas of their learning pupils are over-dependent on their teachers. This is particularly evident when recording written work.

153 The department provides a broad curriculum with a clear emphasis on developing historical knowledge and understanding. Schemes of work are being developed and updated in the light of the National Curriculum 2000. A key area for development should focus on building the scheme of work around key questions, so that lessons become the process for answering those key questions. This should help the process already underway to shift teaching from transmission of knowledge into the transaction of ideas. Pupils have their work marked regularly and are awarded grades with some supportive comments. Too often comments are not sufficiently precise for pupils to get appropriate subject feedback in order to know what they have understood and what they need to improve.

154 The department is well led. There is clear focus on raising standards. The effectiveness of the faculty is monitored through classroom observation, the analysis of pupils' work and test results. This is

helping staff to be reflective, which in turn has supported the process of self-review. There are examples of display being used to support teaching and to encourage the development of literacy, through using key words. The use of information technology is developing. An effective team of specialist teachers supports history teaching. The department is well resourced and these resources are deployed effectively.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

155 The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is a strength of the school. In many departments the comprehensive, and high quality, use is a model of good practice and, as a result, standards are very high at the end of both Key Stages.

156 At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are attaining levels which are above the national average and, for a considerable number of pupils, well above. A significant number of pupils are extremely competent and attain very highly in their use of ICT. For example, pupils as early as Year 7, are able to assemble very good quality PowerPoint presentations which include video clips and sound as well as text and animation. Pupils in Year 9, working in the technology area, use interactive packages very well. They are very confident when using the software and are completely at home with all aspects of the computer interface and software.

157 At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils clearly show the benefits of the knowledge and skills they gained in Key Stage 3. This has resulted in the majority of pupils having very good levels of transferable ICT skills which they confidently use in many subjects. The school's aim to establish ICT as an intrinsic tool for teaching and learning is fully met, with this being especially evident in the work done by pupils in Key Stage 4. Very good examples of this were seen in a number of subjects. In technology, pupils learning a new software application were clearly able to apply their considerable skills to use the new software effectively and well.

158 The GCSE information technology examination results for 2000 are in line with the national average compared with all schools, and above the average when compared with similar schools. This is a lower level of attainment than in previous years. The evidence obtained during the inspection indicates that Year 11 pupils are on track to reach levels of attainment above the national average by the end of Key Stage 4. This will be an improvement over the 2000 results.

159 Teaching is good overall in both Key Stages and in many lessons is very good with some excellent teaching. School and department policies are very clear about the way in which ICT is to be addressed within the context of the subject. As a result teachers plan very well for the strands and aspects of ICT. For example, in modern foreign languages, (MFL), where the use and teaching of ICT is an example to all, ICT is an integral part of much of the pupils' work. In this example, teachers use it very well, and extremely effectively, in their teaching. As a result, pupils use ICT very well in many aspects of their learning.

160 Teachers' own knowledge and understanding of ICT is above average across the school. Many teachers have high levels of skill in using the wide variety of software packages. Some of the very good examples of this are to be found in: modern foreign languages; humanities; technology, and mathematics. In modern foreign languages interactive whiteboards are used extremely well, alongside an impressive range of interactive software, including use of the internet and video in presentations. In humanities interactive whiteboards are used to illustrate and display teaching points. In technology it is an integral tool for both teaching and learning. In mathematics it is used very successfully to teach both mathematical concepts and skills as well as ICT skills, especially data handling and communication.

161 Pupils at all levels of attainment make good progress in their use of ICT. Pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) are well catered for. The school's strategy for ensuring that all departments meet the needs of pupils with SEN is very effective. Individual Education Plans are specific to the pupils' needs within a particular subject area and monitoring ensures that targets are met.

162 Pupils in both Key Stages are generally so enthusiastic about their work, and involved in what they are doing, that concentration levels are very high and behaviour is very good. Pupils share information and readily help each other. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, are very good, and considerably enhance the quality of learning.

163 The co-ordination of the cross-curricular use of ICT is very good. The ICT development plan is excellent. It is clearly based on a very thorough review of the current provision, and gives detail as to how the plan is prioritised and how it is to be implemented. There are a clear set of objectives which include the links with the community, both local and international, as well as developments within the school.

164 The management structure is clear and very effective. The senior management team are well involved in an area which is identified by the school as a very high priority. The day-to-day organisation, running and support for ICT is shared between a number of people. It is very well co-ordinated by the ICT manager and assistant ICT manager. The planning of ICT across the curriculum is very good. What each department is expected to contribute to pupils' overall ICT competence is clearly identified and is carefully monitored, both by departments, and by the ICT managers. Technical support is very good, well organised, and contributes significantly to the success of ICT across all areas.

165 The level of resources in all areas of the school is excellent and is a reflection of the school's determination to make this a centre of excellence. There is a very comprehensive and high-level infrastructure with network systems linking computer clusters in all areas of the school. Laptop computers are linked to the network via wireless links. There are bookable, open access, computer suites as well as a very high level of provision in some areas of the school, for example modern foreign languages. The school is increasing the use of interactive whiteboards and projectors for both teaching and learning. There is a considerable amount of additional ICT equipment, for example, scanners, data-logging equipment, CAD/CAM equipment and digital cameras.

166 The extensive extra-curricular provision of the school makes full use of the ICT facilities. The rooms equipped with computers are full of pupils at lunchtimes and after school. Pupils have access to the library and modern foreign languages rooms, where staff give freely of their time to allow pupils to use the computers. The school has excellent links with the community, providing adult classes in the evenings, and with the local primary schools, who bring their pupils into the school to learn to use ICT.

167 This is a very dynamic and forward looking aspect of the work of the school. It continually strives to improve an already excellent provision. The contribution to pupils' learning is very significant and gives them a high level of confidence in this area.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

168 At the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments for 2000 indicated that standards in modern languages were above average. The success of the five pupils who obtained grade C at GCSE in French in Year 9 amply supports those judgements.

169 All pupils study French from Year 7. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards in work seen are above average. From Year 8 pupils also study either German or Spanish. By Year 9 standards are above average in German, already equalling those in French. They are below average in Spanish. This reflects the former policy of offering this language to lower attaining pupils only. In Year 8, where German and Spanish are now taken equally by pupils of all abilities, standards in both languages are above expectations. Additionally, this year all pupils in Year 7 follow an introductory course in Japanese.

170 In all lessons, pupils' listening skills are good, because teachers use the foreign languages extensively for all purposes and make good use of authentic recordings. This gives pupils confidence in using the languages themselves. In a group of lower ability Year 9 pupils studying French, the pupils had no problem following instructions, explanations and conversations set in a market. They later re-used some of the language to create and perform their own dialogues, dealing well with weights and measures, prices and giving change. A lower ability Spanish class needed the teacher to provide more repetition, but they coped satisfactorily with recordings about rail travel, and then went on to ask correctly for a variety of tickets. A set one German class grasped all relevant details of a song involving food and drink very well, and then composed their own.

171 Most pupils are unself-conscious in speaking the foreign languages. Accents and intonation are usually good. Pupils read printed, word-processed or hand-written language readily. Their skills are supported by schemes of reading for pleasure. Their writing is clear, showing careful attention paid to spelling, punctuation and grammar. The writing of higher attainers in French and German shows very good vocabulary and use of tenses. They have a good idea of the difference between the formal language needed to book a holiday and the more colloquial expressions used in letters to pen pals. They word-process effectively, using correct foreign characters. The lowest attainers write in coherent sentences. No pupils reach levels below those expected for their age.

172 At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results at A*-C, in both French and German, were above average in 2000. Pupils did far better in languages than in any other subjects they studied. Such success has been usual for several years. Girls did better than boys, but the difference was less marked than is the case in England as a whole. Spanish will be examined for the first time in 2001. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards in work seen are above average in French and German. They are below average in Spanish, reflecting the former selection policy.

173 Listening skills are so good that English is barely heard in class. Conversation ranges from the lowest attainers' simple Spanish exchanges at Foundation level, reserving a campsite, to Higher level German discussions about holidays, where several tenses are used at once. Average attainers demonstrate good accents for example as they prepare oral presentations about their area. These are later word-processed and sent to their partner school in France. Reading skills are good, this is particularly evident in the way all pupils use ICT resources, as they did for example in a German lesson using material from the Internet. Dictionaries and reference materials are used appropriately and effectively. Writing is regularly good and well presented. Pupils with statements of special educational needs write in unambiguous sentences, demonstrating standards at least in line with expectation and often above it. The highest attainers write or word-process equally well, demonstrating growing fluency.

174 Since the last inspection, the school has maintained above average GCSE results in both French and German. The take up of German has increased. The range and use of audio-visual, ICT, and multi-media resources has increased significantly. Teachers now rarely miss any opportunity for pupils to use their initiative. Moreover, the school has been successful in achieving the status of Specialist Language College.

175 Teaching is generally good, in approximately one third of lessons, it is very good. Several teachers are native speakers; all are very competent linguists. Pupils have very good examples to follow so both their confidence and accuracy in all skills develop uniformly well. Teachers are well aware of curriculum and examination requirements, so pupils learn the right things and in realistic contexts. The simple, but profound expectation that the foreign languages be the major means of communication means that pupils gain the self-discipline to refrain from using English until their foreign language resources are exhausted. Teachers are careful to tailor their demands, especially their style of questioning, to pupils' needs. Help and support are sensitively given on the one hand, plenty of probing and stretching on the other. Pupils are regularly made to think for themselves. Only rarely is a lesson structured a little too closely to let pupils give fullest rein to their initiative. More often, the frequent paired or independent work produces the spontaneity of Year 7 who confidently and most politely questioned classmates and adults in French, conducting a survey of favourite patterns and colours of clothing. The pace of work is usually brisk, enabling pupils to make rapid progress.

176 The regular, well-structured assessment system plots pupils' development in all skills. Classroom displays include descriptions of national curriculum levels. In day-to-day marking, however, pupils receive little idea of their progress against national expectations, and focused targets for improvement are uncommon. Teachers and pupils relate well to each other, so discipline problems are unusual. The enthusiasm and commitment of the staff communicates itself well to their classes, whose eager participation testifies to their frequent enjoyment.

177 Pupils' standards on entry to the school have risen over recent years. Whilst the present Year 7 are broadly in line with the national average, this was not the case for older pupils. Their above average attainment at the end of both Key Stages represents, therefore, very good achievement. Pupils with special needs work very well in small sets towards appropriately challenging targets. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are at no disadvantage because English is so rarely used in class.

178 Thanks to a broad curriculum, more pupils than average take GCSE in two languages. In Key Stage 3, schemes of work are organised so that pupils may gain certificates in graded objectives schemes. Extra-curricular clubs, plus exchanges and visits abroad, not only support the timetabled languages but add others such as Russian, which may be taken to GCSE. Last year, several pupils from ethnic minorities successfully took exams in their native languages. "Fast track" classes allow the most able pupils to take GCSE early in one of their languages. They appropriately use the time then made available in Year 11 to begin a bridging course towards advanced studies.

179 The clear vision of the head teacher, followed through in departmental management and organisation of very high quality, promotes an excellent ethos for learning. This is shown by high standards of achievement. The school's aim to be an international focus for the people of Bolton is one of substance.

MUSIC

180 Standards in music at the end of both Key Stages are in line with national expectations and pupils in the current Year 10 are on track to exceed national expectations at GCSE.

181 In both Key Stages standards in listening are good. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are beginning to analyse mood in music effectively and are able to see how the use of music can change atmosphere in a film. The majority of pupils can compose simple tunes, develop them with sequences or chordal accompaniments and find appropriate 'voices' on a keyboard. They are able to evaluate their own work and that of others. There were some examples of good ensemble playing from pupils in

Years 7 and 8 , using tuned percussion or keyboards in class and a variety of instruments in the 'Scratch Orchestra'.

182 Standards of singing with some classes are generally less secure in vocal projection, confidence and intonation. They were much better when appropriate 'warm ups' were used. One Year 8 class sang 'The Galway Piper' and 'The Drunken Sailor' well, with good diction, energy and accurate pitch. They also accompanied themselves with tuned percussion and were able to evaluate their own performances.

183 At the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils can identify technical phrases and musical periods correctly, for example being able to recognise the use of glissando in Blues. Some particularly good examples of composition were seen in Year 10. While there was some evidence of the use of ICT to aid composition , this is an area which needs greater development. Time constraints in lunch time lessons for the current Year 11 have restricted opportunities for them to refine their compositions. There were not many opportunities to hear performances from pupils in Key Stage 4 during the period of the inspection. Taped solo performances and live and taped examples of ensemble work were of a good standard. Good levels of performance were achieved in all instrumental lessons and ensembles observed. A particularly good level of playing was reached by the brass ensemble.

184 The music department has made very good progress since the last inspection and has successfully addressed all areas of concern. Effective new schemes of work have been introduced which combine all musical elements of listening, composing and performing and National Curriculum requirements are now met. Much more time is given to composition and effective structures for its development are built into each unit of work. There is now adequate time allocation at Key Stage 3, although one GCSE examination class is still taught during the lunch time.

185 The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good at both Key Stages. Clear musical objectives are set, lesson content is sufficiently challenging and high quality training has had an impact on lesson content and standards achieved, for example, in the outcome of work on Gamelan in Year 7 and film music in Year 9. The development of pupils' listening skills is a strength of the department, with examples of appropriate reinforcement of technical terms, good interrogation of extracts played and skilful questioning.

186 Lessons are generally well paced with a lively stimulus, such as the use of a piano accordion to enhance work on a sea shanty. Word banks are used effectively to promote musical literacy and the selection of music for performance or analysis is generally appropriate and suitably challenging. For example, the music played by the 'Scratch Orchestra' and effective use of past pupils' compositions. Marking is positive and supportive but could do more to identify ways pupils could improve.

187 The school now needs to address the use of levels for assessment and reporting, once the appropriate area standardisation training has taken place.

There is quality teaching in a variety of instruments including upper and lower strings, brass and woodwind, providing appropriate challenges with clear instructions and constructive attention to detail. There is a strong interest from pupils to learn guitar and percussion however, and the school might consider expansion in these areas.

188 The quality of learning is good in the majority of lessons observed. In Key Stage 3, most pupils are able to sustain concentration and work independently. A few are able to tune their own instruments. In Key Stage 4 all pupils work with sustained interest and commitment, for example, with the formation of a pop group which regularly rehearses at school without supervision. In both Key Stages pupils generally make good progress in the development of listening and composition skills and satisfactory progress in performance. Good progress is made by the majority of pupils in acquiring

knowledge about musical language and technical terms. Whilst all pupils make good progress using keyboards, the use of computer software to aid composition is very limited. This area needs more development within the department.

189 Pupils with Special Educational Needs are particularly well supported with appropriately modified materials, and they make good progress within lessons. Able pupils are provided with a variety of extension activities to challenge their ensemble and solo playing both in school and in ensembles organised by Bolton Music Service. Particularly good progress was noted in attention to dynamics within the brass ensemble and with three Year 7 pupils beginning to play the violin.

190 The music department is energetic and hard working. It is well led and managed. Appropriate and well-balanced schemes of work have been introduced in order to meet National Curriculum requirements. Good monitoring procedures are in place which have effectively informed training requirements and have had a clear impact on teaching. There is a breadth of provision for extra-curricular musical activities which take place every lunch time and most evenings. There is a choir, orchestra, scratch orchestra, brass band, samba band, keyboard club and brass, string, wind and percussion ensembles. Some pupils are highly committed but numbers are limited especially in the choir. Shorter lunch times have had an adverse effect on membership. The school recognises this and is developing some positive strategies to address this problem.

191 There are also a number of additional performance opportunities for pupils in external events such as the Bolton Music Festival. There is very good liaison with peripatetic staff, who also assist with GCSE practical lessons and run ensembles such as the brass group. Excellent development opportunities have been identified with the planned establishment of the new satellite Music Centre for Little Lever, to be based at the school in conjunction with Bolton Music Service.

192 Music is taught in a bright and welcoming learning environment. Photographs of music-making in school, and word banks, are clearly displayed. The suited rooms are generally well used but the smaller teaching room is not always fully utilised for practical activities, restricting the development and opportunity for performances in some classes. Resources are adequate, of good quality and are appropriately stored. There is currently under usage of some guitars and the newly acquired computer software.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

193 Physical Education at Little Lever School is a strength of the school. At both Key Stages, students of all abilities, both boys and girls, are encouraged, through high quality teaching, to develop their skills to the highest possible level. Many pupils compete successfully at district and regional level, with some achieving significant success. Standards overall have been steadily improving. This is apparent, both in the comprehensive records of end of module assessments, and at GCSE, where standards have risen to 53% achieving A*-C in 2000. There is good evidence in the work observed, to suggest that this trend will continue.

194 At the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of most pupils exceeds national expectation in all areas of the physical education curriculum. Pupils perform skilfully in a range of games, and show good understanding of the principles of play and tactics. Good standards are achieved in gymnastics in Year 7 by both boys and girls, where pupils of all levels of attainment show good control and body tension, as they successfully perform their own sequences based on balance and linking. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to participate successfully in outdoor and adventure activities. Planning and performing skills are developed well in all lessons. Pupils' skills in evaluating their own and others' work are enhanced by the ample opportunities provided for observing, analysing and commenting on performance against specific criteria. Most pupils have a good understanding of health

related fitness and the effects of exercise on the body. They know how to warm up before strenuous activity, and can name the muscles they are stretching. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in an unobtrusive manner, and are able to make good progress. There are no observable differences in terms of ethnicity or gender.

195 At the end of Key Stage 4, the level of attainment in physical activities by girls and particularly boys, is above national expectation. Pupils build on the strong foundations of the previous Key Stage. Progress and learning is always at least good, and pupils routinely evaluate individual performance to improve standards. The very large majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, effectively apply their activity-specific knowledge, their performance skills and their understanding of rules and tactics, in full games. As tactical awareness develops alongside technical skills, pupils are able to make effective decisions in offensive and defensive situations, and can accurately officiate the activity. The wide range of pupils who attend extra-curricular clubs and groups make very good progress in their chosen activity. This is reflected in both the success of representative teams, and the general level of attainment in lessons.

196 The quality of teaching in the department is very good. All teachers have secure knowledge and are enthusiastic in their delivery. They have high expectations of pupils and maintain a brisk pace throughout lessons. Detailed schemes of work are in place for all activities. Planning is based on accurate evaluations, and organisation is clear. This gives structure and ensures progression in learning for all pupils. Class management is never less than good, and usually very good. The use of shared learning objectives, allied with clear explanations and good quality demonstrations, together with fully integrated opportunities for observation, analysis and discussion, ensures consistency and progression. The staff have successfully generated a tangible ethos of success based on challenge, support, and trust.

197 Pupils respond well to the exciting and stimulating environment created by the obviously purposeful, yet sympathetic approach used within the department. They are well turned out, are positive about the subject, pay close attention to teacher guidance, and work with energy and enthusiasm in lessons. In consequence, relationships and behaviour are very good. These aspects clearly contribute to pupils' overall progress in lessons, which is good, and to their personal and social development. This is exemplified by series of lessons, in which the teaching was very good or excellent. A quite stunning Key Stage 3 gymnastics lesson was delivered in a low-key manner to a large mixed ability group of boys, which generated individual and group excitement, a wonderful atmosphere and outstanding progress for all participants. There was a further Key Stage 3 lesson in trampolining, where another large group of boys were all actively involved in a safe and disciplined manner performing, coaching, spotting, filming and evaluating a creative and challenging extension to previous work. Whilst in Key Stage 4, a double set of very able boys were subtly led to make extremely rapid progress in developing technical skills in their first hockey lesson.

198 The department have responded positively and effectively to the last inspection report. Strong aspects have been maintained or further extended, and areas noted for improvement have been successfully addressed. Staff have worked hard to raise levels of pupil self-confidence, and this is demonstrated by high rates of involvement and good attitudes to work. National Curriculum requirements are met at both Key Stages and staff are deployed effectively to ensure that all pupils' needs are addressed. There is a comprehensive system for assessing recording and reporting achievement which demands full involvement of all pupils, and there is an objective and consistent programme for monitoring teaching.

199 The department is very effectively led and managed. The extensive end of module assessment arrangements successfully provide accurate information to pupils about their performances, and give staff objective data for measuring learning outcomes. This links closely with the ongoing programmes

of monitoring teaching, and of staff and curriculum development, in helping to secure high standards of work. Careful staff deployment ensures even coverage across all groups. There are extensive and well-looked-after facilities, the department is generously equipped and there is a clear imperative to improve on previous best in all respects. Relationships within the department are excellent, and the experienced and knowledgeable all-specialist staff make a very well balanced team. They support each other well, work with commitment, both to the pupils and to the subject, are consistent in their challenge and support, and contribute significantly to the ethos, work and life of the school. This subject is unequivocally a strength of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

200 At the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, most pupils achieve satisfactory standards when related to the locally agreed syllabus, (LAS). Some examples of poor achievement were observed. A GCSE course in Religious Studies is offered and the unsatisfactory time allocation mentioned in the previous inspection report has been addressed.

201 At the end of Key Stage 4, in the year 2000, 27.9% of pupils achieved grades in the range A*-C, this is significantly below the national average of 54.1%. This is a concern for the school, and indicates that those matters of teaching and learning mentioned in the last report remain to be addressed. The department has attempted unsuccessfully to introduce the half GCSE qualification, developed nationally, as a certification of the LAS course at Key Stage 4. This syllabus requires a time allocation for teaching, which is currently not provided. It is unsatisfactory that all pupils follow such a course throughout the Key Stages but receive no certification for doing so.

202 Religious Education is provided for all pupils at the school in accordance with the requirements of the Bolton Agreed Syllabus. There are no requests from parents for the withdrawal of pupils from the taught programme. The curriculum time allocated for the teaching of the subject at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is insufficient to ensure that the statutory requirement to deliver the LAS is met. Sufficient time needs to be made available, and the requirements of the LAS need to be met.

203 Teaching was satisfactory in a majority of lessons at both Key Stages and sometimes good at Key Stage 3. At the time of the inspection, a majority of lessons were taught by supply teachers and by humanities staff. The contribution made by these teachers in the circumstances is admirable. The department has reviewed approaches to teaching following comments made at the last inspection and has noted the LAS suggestion that pupils 'learn about' and 'learn from' religion. The translation of this description of the process of religious education into a clear methodology for planning the taught programmes is crucial to the raising of standards. It has yet to be achieved. Teaching observed is heavily weighted toward 'learning about' religion, thus discouraging the development in pupils of the skills of thinking, enquiry and reflection. If these were to be encouraged they would have a positive impact on standards of achievement. Teaching does not currently provide for the progressive study of religions through the Key Stages. The failure to progress study results in pupils having a limited opportunity to learn about and from a particular religion. This places them at a disadvantage when external assessments are made.

204 Together with other departments in the humanities faculty, the department has taken the opportunity to group pupils according to ability. Information regarding pupils with identified special educational need is made available, but could be better used in determining approaches to teaching and learning. A learning support teacher was observed making a good contribution to the support of pupils' learning.

205 Pupil attitudes and responses to the subject at both Key Stages are always at least satisfactory and sometimes good. At Key Stage 3, a commitment to enquiry and a fascination with the subject

matter, for instance Judaism and the concept of Kosher, was noticeable in many lessons. Such attitudes to learning could be further supported and enriched by the use of a broad range of resources, including artefacts, drawn from religious communities. The key resource remains the book and the worksheet, a situation remarked on at the previous inspection, when the setting of appropriate work was said to be underdeveloped. On all occasions where pupils were observed dealing with belief systems which were not their own, they exhibited a proper sensitivity.

206 Staffing instability has had an adverse effect on the progress since the last inspection. With the staffing situation stabilised, the head of department should ensure that the field of enquiry of the subject is secure in taught courses and that pupils are able to progress their learning. Certification should be offered to all at the completion of Key Stage 4 and the subject's resources for learning, currently limited in extent, should be significantly enhanced.