

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **STRETFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Stretford, Manchester

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106368

Headteacher: Mr F Fitz-Gibbon

Reporting inspector: Mr F Myers  
1208

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

Inspection number: 184902

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Selective (grammar)

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Granby Road  
off Edge Lane  
Stretford  
Manchester

Postcode: M32 8JB

Telephone number: 0161 865 2293

Fax number: 0161 866 9938

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Blaydes

Date of previous inspection: March 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr F Myers	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?  School's results and achievement  How well is the school led and managed.  What should the school do to improve further?
Mrs S Drake	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.
Mr G Leech	Team inspector	English	
		English as an additional language	
Mr R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mr N Pinkney	Team inspector	Science	How well are pupils taught?
Mrs S Innes	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
		Design and technology (DT)	
Mr J Connor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Mrs H Boyle	Team inspector	History	
		Politics	
		Sociology	

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs P Rourke	Team inspector	Geography	
		Religious education (RE)	
Mr M Flatman	Team inspector	Music	
		Business studies	
Mr J Pickering	Team inspector	Art	
Mrs S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education (PE)	
Mr P Stevens	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	
		Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services  
 Strathblane House  
 Ashfield Road  
 Cheadle  
 Stockport SK8 1BB

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 33 Kingsway  
 London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is one of seven grammar schools in Trafford LEA admitting pupils in the 11-18 age range. The school has been under-subscribed for some years but in 1999 it was oversubscribed. With 825 pupils, including 150 in the sixth form, it is now about the same size as other grammar schools. Fifty three per cent are boys but the balance between boys and girls varies considerably between year groups. The school population is generally stable. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (16.5 per cent) is around the national average but that is very high for a grammar school. This and other evidence on where pupils live supports the school's view that it has 'a broader social mix than other grammar schools'. Situated on the north side of the borough, it recruits heavily from the Manchester area. About one third of the pupils are from ethnic minorities, of whom the largest grouping is Asian. One hundred and seventy six pupils come from homes where English is an additional language, but very few have deficiencies in English. Under five per cent of pupils have special educational needs and one has a statement. This is well below average. Since the school is selective, pupils' attainment on entry is at least above average and for many it is well above average.

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

This is an improving school whose standards have been rising, although they are still below those of other grammar schools. The headteacher has been in post for eighteen months. His drive to improve results by increasing the challenge in pupils' work and making the best use of teaching time is having a beneficial impact. Teaching is at least satisfactory in nine lessons out of ten. There is still room for improvement in standards and teaching, especially in a few subjects. Good use is made of the current accommodation, despite the many accommodation deficiencies. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Attainment is high in business studies, art and design and English literature at Key Stage 4, and in modern languages at both key stages.
- Teaching standards are especially good in art, business studies, modern languages and music.
- More pupils are achieving top grades in their examinations than in previous years.
- The headteacher gives clear direction, with the result that the school is improving its capacity to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and take action.
- The great majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards their work, behave well and relate well to their teachers and to each other.
- There are good links with industry, particularly in the sixth form.
- Extra-curricular provision in music and information and communication technology is good.

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

- Results are not as high as they could be because some teaching lacks sufficient challenge.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in religious education at both key stages, and in physical education for pupils not taking the GCSE course at Key Stage 4.
- Attainment is below what could be expected in religious education at both key stages and in information and communication technology and physical education for pupils not taking these subjects as GCSE courses.
- Pupils' progress is not monitored on a sufficiently regular basis, using all the available data about pupils' performance.
- There is insufficient provision at Key Stage 4 to meet the statutory requirements for information and communication technology.
- There is insufficient provision for personal, health and social education at Key Stage 4.
- Too many pupils come late to school.
- The quality of information which parents receive about their children's progress is unsatisfactory.
- There is no religious education in the sixth form, which is a statutory requirement.
- There is not a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, which is a statutory requirement.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made a reasonable level of improvement since the last inspection in March 1995. Teaching is now at least satisfactory in a greater number of lessons; the overall proportion is now 90 per cent. This has had an impact on standards of attainment, including those in the core subjects. Standards have risen at the national rate or higher, and more top grades are being achieved. However, the rate of improvement has not yet allowed the school to match the attainment levels of other grammar schools. The school has increased in popularity and this has improved its financial viability. The school has responded well to the majority of issues in the last report, including development planning, teaching in French and geography, the structure of the school day, special educational needs and providing religious education in Key Stage 4. It still does not fulfil the statutory requirements for collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form. Current initiatives demonstrate the school's commitment to improving standards further.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	E
A-levels/AS-levels	B	A	A	n/a

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

Standards are well above national averages in Key Stage 3 National Curriculum assessments in English, mathematics and science, and in GCSE and A level examinations. Key Stage 3 results have been very high for some years and rising at the national rate, although they were lower in English and science in 1999. GCSE results have also been well above average for some years and have been rising faster than the national rate, especially over the past two years. The number of top grades increased in 1999. A level results have also been well above average and rising faster than the national rate. The inspection evidence has borne out these high overall standards.

The school's results are much less impressive when compared with those of 'similar schools', which in this case are other grammar schools. The Key Stage 3 and GCSE results in 1999 were well below those of other grammar schools. However, the pupils in this school may not be entirely similar to those in other grammar schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is around the national average, whereas it is well below average in most other grammar schools. Free school meal entitlement is commonly taken as an indicator of poorer social and economic circumstances. Also, many pupils have lower entry test scores than those of pupils going to other local grammar schools.

Results vary considerably among subjects. Compared with the subject results of other selective schools, the percentage of pupils achieving top grades at GCSE in 1999 was above average in art, biology, business studies, chemistry, English literature and history. The percentage was below average in combined science, design and technology, English, French, information and communication technology, mathematics and physics. Recently, pupils have tended to do better in business studies, chemistry, English literature and French than in their other subjects. They have tended to do less well in biology and English language than in their other subjects. In 1999, the A level subjects with above average results were business studies, English, French, geography, Spanish and computing. Those with below average results were English literature, art, biology and chemistry. The inspection evidence has borne out these differences among subjects. Standards of literacy and numeracy are well above average. Attainment is lower than it should be in religious education, and in physical education and information and communication technology where pupils are not taking the GCSE course in those subjects.



The school's experience is that more boys under-perform than girls. However, boys' GCSE results have been higher above boys' national averages than girls have been above theirs. There was only a little evidence during the inspection that boys were under-performing as a whole. Nor is there evidence that any ethnic groups achieve better or worse than they should. The school's examination targets are demanding and would bring results in line with those of other grammar schools.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes to the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour, both in and out of classrooms, is good. Occasionally, pupils show a relaxed attitude when teaching is undemanding, but they are rarely disrespectful.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good and relationships are very good. This is a strength of the school.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average and close to the average for grammar schools. Too many pupils come late to school.

Pupils are keen and courteous contributors to lesson activities. They behave sensibly around the school, although they can be careless in disposing of litter. The rate of exclusions is low. Pupils feel safe in the school and relations are harmonious. They are supportive of each other's needs and appreciate each others' skills. They show increasing initiative in their work. Attendance declines until Year 11, but remains above average. Punctuality is unsatisfactory in the morning and after lunch but pupils go punctually to lessons during the day.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	good	good

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

The quality of teaching is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. In 9 lessons out of ten the teaching is satisfactory or better and in nearly six out of ten it is good or better. Teaching is unsatisfactory in one lesson in ten. Unsatisfactory teaching is not widespread. It is seen mainly in Key Stage 3 and is also linked to non-specialist teaching in geography and religious education. However, there is also good and very good teaching in these subjects. Teaching is good in the core subjects but is particularly strong in art, business studies, modern languages and music. Particular strengths of the best teaching include teachers' secure knowledge, clear aims and appropriate levels of challenge. These features are not applied consistently well. Some aims are imprecise and teachers' delivery lacks urgency. Teachers have had mixed success in adapting their methods to the 50 minute period which was introduced this year. Homework is generally well used and pupils have good opportunities to use their already sound literacy and numeracy skills, although there are no school-wide strategies for developing literacy and numeracy. Pupils are good learners and work independently, especially in the sixth form. Pupils with special educational needs also learn satisfactorily, although not enough is done to plan for their learning across subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	At Key Stage 3 the curriculum is broad and balanced. There are a few deficiencies in the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory but strategies to monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements are not yet securely in place.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Provision for personal development is satisfactory overall. Moral and social development are well promoted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school offers good pastoral care and welfare to its pupils and ensures good attendance. Monitoring of academic and personal progress is not well developed for all pupils.

The curriculum meets all legal requirements in Key Stage 3 but some deficiencies exist in the provision at Key Stage 4 for physical education and information and communication technology. It is also difficult to prepare pupils properly for career choices or to carry out a full personal, health and social education programme because of the 'shared time' arrangements for personal, health and social education and religious education. Contrary to legal requirements, religious education is not taught in the sixth form. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities but the range of clubs operating at lunchtime is restricted by lack of time due to long lunch queues. Good arrangements operate for work experience and for links with industry, especially in the sixth form. There are some productive curriculum links with primary schools.

Religious education lessons and assemblies make a good contribution to spiritual development but, there is only one weekly assembly for each year group, which does not meet the legal requirement for pupils to have a daily act of collective worship. Many subjects promote moral education well, as does the school system of rewards and sanctions. Subjects and extra-curricular activities are used well to help pupils to develop socially. Subjects also contribute to cultural awareness and pupils' cultural backgrounds are brought into subjects and school life, but there is scope for more of this to happen.

Staff give effective care to individual pupils and ensure their welfare. Registration is satisfactory except in the sixth form. The school effectively promotes good behaviour, for example by the 'remove' system. Assessment is generally good in departments but practice is not consistent across the school and there are weaknesses in some areas. A school system of monitoring all pupils' academic and personal progress regularly is not yet in place.

Parents lack sufficient regular information with which to tell how their children are getting on. They do not receive regular enough information, for example, through a newsletter. Comments to parents in their children's reports are too bland and unspecific about what the children are learning. There is scope for parents to play a more active role in the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong leadership. Key strategies are in place to improve results and they have begun to be successful, but teaching quality is not yet being monitored properly.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors understand their role and help to shape the development plan. They need better information for evaluating school performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has accurately identified its development needs and sets appropriate targets but it does not yet rigorously evaluate its own performance.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used effectively despite major deficiencies in the school accommodation.

Staffing and learning resources are adequate but major deficiencies in school accommodation and facilities have a detrimental impact on learning.

Department development plans and reviews are well tied into school plans. Improvements have been made to the shape of the school day so that time is better used. Work has begun on improving the prediction and monitoring of pupils' performance. There are agreed plans to improve teaching, by increasing the challenge to pupils, but heads of subjects do not yet routinely check on classroom delivery. Day to day financial administration is good but not enough information is gathered about costs. The school currently seeks best value for money in a limited number of areas. The value for money achieved overall is satisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards are high and children make good progress.</li> <li>Behaviour and teaching is mostly good.</li> <li>The school has high expectations about work.</li> <li>The school is well led and it has improved.</li> <li>Relationships are good and children like the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children do not get the right amount of work.</li> <li>Parents are not well enough informed about their children's progress.</li> <li>There is not a wide enough range of school activities.</li> <li>The school does not work closely enough with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of parents, although there is room for improvement in standards, the quality of some teaching and levels of expectation. The team agrees with the view of parents that not enough information is provided about children's progress. The range of lunchtime activities is somewhat restricted by the limited time available and long queues for lunch. The work that is set is generally appropriate and the school follows up non-completion of work.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- 1 Pupils generally achieve standards that are well above national averages. This is the case in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, and in the GCSE and A level examinations.
- 2 Over the four years to 1999, the school's Key Stage 3 test results in English mathematics and science have been very high. These results also rose overall in line with the national rising trend, although both English and science results declined in 1999.
- 3 GCSE results have been well above average for the last three years. Over the six years to 1999, the school's GCSE results, as measured by pupils' average points scores, rose at a faster rate than the national rising trend. The highest increases were recorded in 1998 and 1999. There was also a big improvement in 1999 in the proportion of top grades achieved.
- 4 A level results have been well above average in the last two years. Over the three years to 1999, the results, as measured by pupils' average points scores, rose each year at a faster rate than the national rising trend, although some of the rise is the result of entering all pupils for general studies.
- 5 Because the school selects its intake by performance in an 11+ test, national averages provide a poor guide as to whether the school's standards are high enough. A fairer test is to compare the school's results with those of other selective schools, using the percentage of pupils achieving at the higher grades. By this standard, the school's results would appear to be lower than they should be. (Comparison data is available for Key Stage 3 and GCSE but not for A level).
- 6 In the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests in English, the percentages achieving at the higher levels were well below the average for selective schools. In 1998 they had been on or below average. In mathematics, results have been below average in both years. In science, results have been below or well below average in both years.
- 7 The school's 1999 GCSE results also compared unfavourably with those of other selective schools, except that an average percentage achieved one or more GCSE grade. The rates for five or more grades obtained at A\*-C and for the 'average total points score' were both well below average and the rate for five or more grades obtained at A\*-G was below average. The percentage of A\*-A grades achieved and the 'average points score' were also below average. Nevertheless, the school should be credited with having doubled the 1998 percentage of grades at A\*-A (38 per cent).
- 8 Although the school's GCSE results are rated as much lower than those of most other selective schools, some important factors need to be taken into account in deciding whether the school itself is underachieving. The small numbers involved mean that if four pupils who got four GCSE grades at C or above obtained another grade at C or above, the school's rate for five or more grades obtained at A\*-C would be around average for selective schools.

- 9 More significantly, the unfavourable comparison is being made without reference to the social background of the pupils when they come to the school. In fact, a much higher proportion of pupils in this school is entitled to free school meals than is the case with grammar schools nationally. These levels of entitlement are taken as an indicator of relative social deprivation. The unfavourable comparison is also being made without reference to the relative attainment of the pupils when they come to the school. Although pupils' attainments on entry are above or well above average, many have lower attainment than do those entering other grammar schools in the area.
- 10 Since, as could be expected, the school's subject by subject results are above national subject averages, more demanding comparisons are appropriate, namely, with the national percentages for top grades and levels, using the results of other selective school results where available. The outcomes of such a comparison are given above for English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3. In GCSE, a comparison of the school's 1999 top grade results (A\*-A) with those of selective schools nationally reveals much variation in performance among subjects, although part of this variation may be due to differences in the prior attainment of the pupils taking each subject. In some cases, numbers are too small for a comparison to be made.
- 11 The school's top grade GCSE results in 1999 were above the national subject averages in art, biology, business studies, chemistry, English literature and history. The highest achievement was in art and English literature. Results were below average in combined science, DT, English, French, ICT, mathematics and physics. The lowest achievement was in combined science, ICT and English. The overall percentage of top grades doubled from 1998 to 1999. The subjects showing the greatest increases in top grades were biology, DT, English literature and History. Further analysis of results has highlighted the positive contribution made to pupils' results in two of the last three years by business studies, chemistry, English literature and French. Pupils who took these subjects tended to do better in them than in their other subjects. They tended to do less well in biology and English language.
- 12 Since A levels are generally taken by higher achieving pupils, the school's A level results can be compared directly with national averages where pupil numbers justify their use. In 1999, the subjects with above average results were business studies, English, French, Geography, Spanish and computing. Those with below average results were English literature, art, biology and chemistry.
- 13 The inspection evidence broadly confirms the standards of attainment recorded in public examinations. Attainment is above or well above national expectations in most subjects at both key stages. Attainment is high in business studies, art and design and English literature at Key Stage 4, and in modern languages at both key stages. However, it is lower than what could be expected, given the selective nature of the pupil intake and performance in other subjects, in RE at both key stages and in both ICT and PE for pupils not taking the GCSE courses in those subjects.
- 14 The school has evidence from individual pupils' work that boys have been more prone to underachievement than girls. The problem is seen as particularly affecting boys with the potential to gain the highest results, who are likely to 'coast' through their work. The evidence relates to specific cases and is not completely reflected in the overall performance of boys and girls.

- 15 There is little long term evidence about whether boys and girls have differed in their attainment on entry to the school. The results of the 11+ tests for the last two years, and of the newly introduced Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT), show no clear pattern of difference between boys and girls. National Curriculum assessments in English mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 show that, on average for the last four years, boys have been slightly higher above the national boys' averages than girls have been above theirs, but the pattern has varied from year to year. Much more clearly, in four of the last five years, boys' GCSE results have been higher above the national boys' average than the girls have been above theirs. The position is quite different for A level. In 1999, boys' results were well below those of girls. However, it is not clear to what extent this reflects a difference on entry to the sixth form.
- 16 The school's target for five or more GCSE A\*-C grades in 2000 would, if met, bring results into the average range for grammar schools. This would be five points above the 1999 results and four points above 1998, which was the best recent result. Since the average scores of pupils at 11+ have not been increasing, improvements will depend on better performance by these pupils while in the school. Indications that the targets are realistic and can be met include the successful effort last year to improve the number of higher grades, and the systematic following up of coursework which is being undertaken this year.
- 17 The school has begun to track the 'value added' for each pupil at the end of each key stage. The analysis of individual pupils' performance reveals numerous cases where their results are below what could be expected. This provides good evidence of individual under-performance and of the room that exists for improvement in school results. Sustaining higher results will depend on the success of the measures to increase the element of challenge in teaching for all pupils and on the swift introduction of accurate and regular monitoring of each pupil's progress.
- 18 The relatively small number of pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress throughout the school, although their needs are not consistently met by subject teachers as not enough reference is made to the individual educational plans. Progress is good where pupils receive extra support, such as that provided by the Support Service for the Sensory Impaired, and where teaching, as in music, takes account of individual needs in planning, content and methods. Records for pupils at Stages 1 to 3 of the school's register do not provide a sufficiently accurate profile of individual needs to enable progress to be monitored effectively.
- 19 A small number of those pupils from homes where English is an additional language have lower language proficiency than other pupils. Occasionally, and particularly at Key Stage 3, they show evidence of problems of comprehension and communication in oral work. They make good progress at both key stages and in the sixth form.

- 20 Standards of literacy are well above average across the school. These standards provide a firm base for pupils' progress. Only very occasionally do pupils show that they have difficulty with the demands of language in their work. Pupils are very articulate, as they show in teacher-led question and answer sessions. They also use dialogue effectively, as in English, business studies and music. They work well in paired discussions in geography, foreign languages, IT, DT and PE. Reading in lessons is frequently too limited to textbooks and worksheets, but in business studies they use newspapers and journals. Writing is often formal and factual, as required by many subjects, but in science pupils give imaginative accounts of the workings of the body and write descriptive letters to friends, and in business studies pupils write company reports. In art, pupils write an historical study and there are opportunities for imaginative and personal responses in geography, foreign languages and RE. Pupils make limited use of drafting and revising to improve the quality of writing in ICT, geography, RE and business studies. Pupils' work is, however, carefully expressed with accurate spelling and punctuation. Standards of handwriting and presentation vary but are generally good.
- 21 Numerical proficiency across the curriculum is good throughout the key stages. Pupils apply their numeracy skills in a variety of contexts and their experience in a range of subjects is often enhanced because of the levels of numerical competence. No instances were observed of a lack of numerical skills having an adverse affect on attainment and progress, although departments do not have a specific policy for teaching and delivering the aspects of numeracy. In science, pupils accurately use a variety of measurement and graphical techniques and the quality of their graphs is of a high order. In geography, pupils' data handling skills are also very good and they accurately represent data in various graphical forms, showing good levels of interpretation and understanding. In modern languages, pupils confidently construct bar graphs to express the results of various surveys conducted in the target language and work accurately on the appropriate currencies, weights and measures.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 22 Pupils' behaviour and attendance have improved since the time of the previous inspection. Pupils have positive attitudes to the school, behave well and build very good relationships with each other and staff, which help them to make good progress in the classroom. They benefit from being part of a harmonious community. Pupils are supportive of the school and say that they like attending it. The majority of those who decide to study for A levels choose to continue their education at the school rather than moving elsewhere. Good numbers of pupils take part in extra-curricular activities, particularly those relating to music, ICT and PE.
- 23 In most lessons, most pupils are attentive and keen contributors to discussion and other activities. However, in the occasional lesson, usually where teaching is not sufficiently engaging, challenging and well paced, some pupils show a casual, relaxed attitude to their tasks. This can lead to disrespect for teachers and it has a negative impact on pupils' learning. However, even where teaching is weaker, there is very little misbehaviour, with pupils generally acting in a courteous and trustworthy manner.

- 24 The great majority of pupils behave consistently well around the school. They are remarkably patient while waiting in the long queues which form at lunch times and can be trusted to behave sensibly, inside and out, while not actively supervised during break times. However, too many pupils drop litter carelessly, around the bins provided and elsewhere, and leave stools, desks and chairs for others to put straight. The number of permanent and fixed period exclusions is low compared with schools nationally, and similar to those of other grammar schools. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they are not aware of any significant amount of bullying or other harassment.
- 25 The quality of relationships in the school is one of its strengths. Pupils of different gender, ethnic background and ability work and play together very well, and also relate well with teachers and other adults. They are supportive of each other's needs and appreciate each others' skills. For example, in Year 9, pupils quickly explained an activity to another whose disability had led to a misinterpretation of information. In Year 7, pupils engaged in a demanding and highly successful dance lesson spontaneously applauded each others' contributions and in Year 11, pupils were equally admiring of each others' efforts in a drama lesson. Pupils respect others' views when discussing and debating issues, generally listening to what others have to say and then building on it, although, particularly lower down the school, they are not so good at listening to others' presentations to the whole class.
- 26 Pupils show increasing initiative and responsibility, for example through their contributions to the School Council. Pupils automatically help teachers to hand out equipment so that lessons can continue smoothly. They research information during free time and conduct themselves very well on work experience and other activities outside the normal school curriculum, such as the recent technology project undertaken by pupils in Year 10. Sixth form pupils successfully organise charitable fund-raising activities. During their involvement in Young Enterprise, they show much persistence and the ability to work successfully as a team.
- 27 Levels of attendance are well above the national average, and are now close to average for grammar schools. Attendance levels decrease as pupils progress through the school but those in Year 11 are still considerably above the overall national average for all year groups. So far this year, eighty-four per cent of pupils have attended for more than ninety per cent of the time, while less than five per cent have attended for less than eighty per cent of the time. Most absence is attributable to illness. Attendance in the sixth form is similar to that of the pupils of statutory school age. In contrast to their good attendance, large numbers arrive late to school, both in the morning and the afternoon, a feature of the school's life which has not improved since the previous inspection. Most pupils, however, arrive for lessons on time during the school day.



## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 28 The quality of teaching is good overall and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. It has improved significantly since the last inspection when more than two lessons in ten were unsatisfactory. In nine lessons out of ten teaching is now satisfactory or better and in nearly six out of ten it is good or better. Teaching is good overall in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and is satisfactory in Key Stage 3. Teaching is unsatisfactory in one lesson in ten. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching is seen in Key Stage 3 and mainly centres on RE. Little unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Key Stage 4 lessons and none was seen in the sixth form. Teaching is particularly strong in art, business studies, modern languages and music. Teaching is unsatisfactory in RE at both key stages and in PE for those pupils not taking the GCSE course.
- 29 Pupils with special educational needs learn successfully, and especially so when, as in music, their individual needs are known and understood, are clearly identified in planning and are met in lessons through a variety of activities and teaching strategies. Such careful attention in planning, however, is not widespread. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, little consideration if any is given to the identified needs of these pupils and how they might be met. Most of the pupils who are from homes where English is an additional language do not have language deficiencies and they learn as well as other pupils. The few pupils with lower levels of proficiency in English learn well with the help of specialist tuition.
- 30 The practice of setting pupils by prior attainment in their subjects allows teaching to be successfully adapted to the broad needs of pupils. More able and gifted pupils are put in accelerated groups where they benefit from an increased level of challenge in the work they are set. However, there is no school policy as such to guide staff on teaching methods to suit gifted and talented pupils.
- 31 Teaching is at least satisfactory and is often better in most subject areas, as a results of good expertise in the subject and good knowledge of the pupils. Homework is generally well used and pupils have good opportunities to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills. In most subjects, the school's intention to sharpen the focus of lessons by stating precise objectives is being at least partly implemented. Most of the lessons have aims or objectives which are shared with the pupils by being written on the board. However, these objectives are often imprecisely defined. Occasionally they are simply statements of long term aims, not of what is achievable within the lesson.

- 32 The school's intention to improve the level of challenge in lesson activities is having a noticeable effect in the majority of lessons. In modern languages, maximum use is made of the target language and activities are organised to engage and stimulate pupils. For example, pupils in Year 11 acted out role-play in a street market scene as shoppers or shopkeepers. They engaged in discussing prices and quality and they negotiated over faulty goods. Pupils in a Year 10 English class were challenged with a variety of contentious propositions about language and were required to form their ideas on the significance of dialect and accent in society. In Year 8, pupils were introduced to abstract art and, in DT, they were intellectually challenged by the concept of latching circuits when designing an electronic game. In Year 9, pupils were challenged to relate Brazilian music to the cultural background of the country and the custom of carnival. Occasionally, however, lessons lacked adequate challenge for pupils. For example, some mathematics lessons showed over-reliance on the textbook or on teacher-directed activities, and in a Year 9 PHSE classes not enough use was made of pupils' willingness and ability to bring in their own experiences, so that discussion of the concept of choice remained at a superficial level. The level of challenge in RE is uneven. In some years it is not well planned so that topics overlap and management and discipline of pupils becomes unsatisfactory. In other years, RE lessons are well planned, proceed at a good pace and engage pupils well. Some geography lessons are too dependent on worksheets to provide challenge and stimulation.
- 33 The recent introduction of 50 minute periods has required teachers to alter their teaching methods and activities, which were geared to combinations of 35 minutes. There has been mixed success. In many subjects where single periods are normally used, the additional time is used to good effect, as in the more effective RE lessons, allowing for the development of a variety of activities. In modern languages, pupils are more effectively able to develop their linguistic skills through extended exposure to the target language. In mathematics, teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and activities to ensure maximum use of time. In art and design, and occasionally in science, completion of the set practical exercises and assessment of the work done is not being completed within the allocated time. In some PHSE and RE lessons, activities are not planned well enough. There is a lack of urgency in delivery, resulting in the lesson not being satisfactorily completed, or the teacher reverts to lecturing to fill out the last part of the lesson. Technology benefits from the extra time given by double periods, which enable the planning and execution of practical tasks, as in food technology. In PE much time is wasted in routines at the start and end of double period sessions, and there is inadequate planning of purposeful activities to occupy pupils fully.
- 34 There are some good examples of helping pupils to relate their learning to the world of work. In business studies a teacher has made use of a placement and partnership with Manchester United. Pupils studying technology courses have worked on some stimulating 'real life' design briefs. One involved a local construction firm and was concerned with designing a bar and restaurant. Another link with a bakery involved simulating the whole design process relating to a new pie product.

- 35 The English department very effectively undertakes the promotion of reading and the use of spoken and written English but there is no whole-school policy for the development of literacy across the curriculum. There are individual examples of good practice. In music and business studies there is a policy on language use and development. Teachers are painstaking in the introduction and use of subject-specific vocabulary but lists of key words were only seen displayed in music, foreign languages, science and mathematics. In the marking of mathematics, geography, RE and foreign languages, pupils' attention is drawn to weaknesses in presentation.
- 36 At present, there is no whole school approach to developing numeracy skills across the curriculum and most departments do not have a strategy for providing the opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills. The development of a whole school approach is already included in the school and mathematics departmental development plans.
- 37 Overall the rate of learning is good. It is better in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form than in Key Stage 3, where it is only satisfactory, because groups are generally smaller and many teachers have extensive experience of teaching GCSE and A level. They show a high level of commitment to that work. Target setting for pupils is better developed in Key Stage 4 and this also has a positive impact on learning.
- 38 Pupils generally show interest, concentration and independence in their work. For example, they show high levels of engagement in modern languages and music, enjoying the opportunities to develop and practice their skills. They are co-operative, exercise self-discipline and respect the needs of others. They learn effectively, often in spite of the inadequacy of the accommodation. For example, pupils in Year 10 spontaneously assisted with the arrangement of a classroom to make it suitable for drama activities. Pupils in a Year 8 science lesson carried out detailed practical work in testing for sugars in a most orderly and controlled manner despite the cramped conditions. Pupils in the sixth form make good use of the guidance they are given on how to work independently and become effective users of literature and the internet to search for additional material for their studies. For example, biology pupils selectively researched material of how plants produce chemicals for self-defence as a background to their coursework investigation.
- 39 Not enough consideration has been given to the effects of how pupils are grouped by gender or ethnicity, either within lessons or as a result of setting in subjects. In a number of classes, there is a considerable imbalance between girls and boys. In one lesson, a close knit group of girls dominated the attention of the teacher so that other pupils got little attention. The school's perception that many boys tend to coast through their work was confirmed in some lessons, where groups of boys sitting together had little exposure to the sounder working habits of girls. In a Year 9 lesson, ethnic minority pupils grouped themselves separately and made fewer oral contributions than white pupils. Since systematic evaluation of teaching has not been established, the school has not yet properly identified and taken action on these features.

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

- 40 Reasonable improvement has been made in response to issues raised in the last inspection. The school day has been revised and recently a new timetable structure was adopted. For all years there are now six 50 minute lessons per day and a 30 period week. This has facilitated the introduction of an improved curriculum model that has enabled the school to deal satisfactorily with some of the issues raised in the last report.
- 41 At Key Stage 3, the school offers a good quality, broad and balanced curriculum which satisfies all statutory requirements. Provision for RE and ICT has been improved. All pupils have weekly lessons in ICT. Most aspects of personal, health and social education (PHSE) are now delivered in a programme that includes the inculcating of study skills. RE now has its own time allocation. In Years 8 and 9 the structure allows for accelerated sets in English, mathematics, science, modern languages, geography, history (Year 9 only) and PE. Pupils who have shown appropriate linguistic ability are selected to study an additional modern language in Years 8 and 9.
- 42 A new curriculum model for Key Stage 4 has been introduced this year into Year 10. Minor adjustments will be introduced in the light of the first year's experience. All pupils study English, mathematics, science, French, PE, RE and DT. A choice of three further subjects is possible, including three separate sciences, and two modern languages may be chosen. Although the model does provide a broad and balanced curriculum, it relies upon the joint delivery of RE and PHSE, including careers and vocational education and guidance. This is unsatisfactory because all of the time is needed for the short GCSE course in RE. The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum in ICT are not being met through the current arrangements. The National Curriculum requirements in PE are not being delivered by the current scheme of work.
- 43 The sixth form curriculum provides an appropriate range of A-level subjects, arranged in four groups, and its structure is capable of accommodating the forthcoming 'curriculum 2000' requirements. Provision includes the study of key skills, general studies and an enrichment programme of industry links. There is no provision for PE and, as at the time of the last inspection, the statutory requirement for the provision of RE is not being met.
- 44 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and reflects a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Pupils receive their curriculum entitlement and are fully integrated into all aspects of school life. Teachers understand the school's staged approach to special educational needs. However, this is not always reflected in the content of lessons or in the resources used. Strategies to monitor the effectiveness of arrangements are not yet securely in place.
- 45 The inspection has not highlighted a lack of proficiency in either literacy or numeracy as impeding the acquisition of knowledge and skills in any area of the curriculum. The school has plans to introduce strategies for raising the profile of the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

- 46 The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and reflects the interests of both pupils and staff, although lack of time limits the range of activities at lunchtime. There is good provision for extra-curricular sport and nearly three hundred pupils are actively involved in activities including football, basketball, cricket, athletics, netball, rounders, tennis, cross-country and wind surfing. The opportunity for pupils to take part in clubs ranges from general knowledge quizzes to using the ICT clubs to sharpen their ICT skills. Many pupils are involved in musical and dramatic activities and there is a drama production every two years. The school takes part in an exchange programme with the Lycee Bichat in Luneville, France. Large numbers go skiing abroad with the school.
- 47 In general, pupils have equal access to the curriculum, except that in Key Stage 3 the shortage of specialist PE teachers is being addressed by the employment of visiting coaches. In dance and lacrosse, the selection procedures do not provide equality of access for all pupils.
- 48 Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is currently evolving and is incomplete. The Key Stage 3 programme is based on the development of study skills. An example of how this can work well was where, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils were encouraged to improve their group-working and communication skills while discussing how they would react in different uncomfortable situations. However, the programme needs to be refined in order to ensure that pupils are provided with sufficient opportunities to think and learn about issues related to their personal development as well as the development of important study skills. In Key Stage 4, no separate time is allocated to PSHE except within RE, nor is there a scheme of work. Delivery is through specific days allocated to sex, drug and health education within the RE programme. The content of lessons is very dependent on individual teachers and the overall provision is not satisfactory.
- 49 The school has adopted a new scheme of work for careers education, drawn up by Careers Partnership, which includes all the required elements for teaching pupils from Year 9 upwards. Training has enabled teachers to deliver it successfully at Key Stage 3. However, in Key Stage 4, the delivery observed within RE is ineffective, so that pupils are not well prepared for careers interviews. Careers education for sixth form pupils is provided through the extension studies programme and offers pupils appropriate information to help guide their life choices after leaving school.
- 50 This year, pupils will undertake two-week work experience placements in Year 10. Preparation and debriefing takes place during short course technology lessons, since the experience relates to the industrial aspect of the course. The scheme is well organised, with help from the local Business Education Partnership. The school has also developed some very useful links with industry, which have a particularly strong impact on older pupils. The Understanding Industry Conference held during the inspection provided Year 12 pupils with good opportunities to increase their knowledge of the career possibilities and the demands of industry. The school has a highly successful record of participation in the Young Enterprise scheme.
- 51 The school has developed constructive relationships with local primary schools, but with such a wide catchment area, it is difficult for teachers to have a close relationship with them all. Teachers have observed English lessons in primary schools. Last year the technology department organised a bridge building activity, involving pupils in primary Year 6 and Year 10, and modern language teachers have also worked with primary pupils. There are satisfactory links with colleges and universities for the purposes of careers guidance.

- 52 Since the last inspection, the school has made some progress in implementing more fully its aims for pupils' personal development. There is increased time for RE at Key Stage 4, although this is shared with PHSE. Assemblies have an element of spiritual development and worship. However, pupils do not actively participate in assemblies, which they attend only once a week, and there is no RE programme in the sixth form. Since assemblies and programmes of RE are major contributors to school programmes for spiritual development, provision for this aspect is barely satisfactory.
- 53 The headteacher leads weekly assemblies for each year group. These occasions are purposeful and always provide pupils with good opportunities to consider matters of spiritual importance. Although individual assemblies conform to statutory requirements, the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and is in breach of statutory requirements. Assembly themes prompt pupils to value the ideas of courtesy and respect for all people who attend and work in the school. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate cultural diversity and to protect and respect each other's beliefs, traditions and cultural backgrounds. For example, pupils were given a good introduction to the teaching of Martin Luther King and exhorted to share in the leader's great dream of the universal brotherhood of mankind. Pupils are regularly given time to reflect on the theme of assemblies and to pray in their own way.
- 54 In form periods, time for spiritual contemplation is not commonly provided. In some RE lessons pupils are given opportunities to be still and to consider issues of great importance. In English pupils consider spiritual issues in their coverage of literature such as Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Animal Farm and Of Mice and Men. In music and art lessons pupils are given opportunities to evaluate great musical and artistic masterpieces and to reflect on the wonders of creativity and design. In geography and science pupils reflect on the wonders of creation and they consider the solar system, the various theories of creation and life forms.
- 55 The school promotes pupils' moral education well. The staff have created a positive and affirming culture based on consistently applied school policies. The code of conduct is displayed in most classrooms so that rewards and sanctions are generally well understood and applied. The school provides a variety of rewards for pupils who work hard and for those who make good progress, although some pupils feel that consistent performance needs more recognition. Some opportunities are missed to celebrate and affirm good behaviour, for example in assemblies. However, regular presentation evenings offer recognition for effort and success. Pupils support fund raising activities ranging from pop concerts to projects with Dr Barnardo's.
- 56 Moral issues are well presented in lessons. In geography, pupils are urged to consider the moral questions relating to the preservation of endangered species, population development and rainforests. The GCSE Short Course in RE ensures that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 consider moral issues related to contemporary living. In the sixth form art lessons, pupils are confronted with moral issues in work where they explore their reaction to prisoners of conscience and the horrors of war. They consider the concept of evil as depicted in the works of Salvador Dali. In business studies, pupils consider thoroughly questions of ethics and the importance of honest business practices.

- 57 The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop socially, to relate to each other and to take responsibility. Pupils volunteer to escort visitors around the school on the open days for new entrants. The School Councils meet regularly with the headteacher to discuss a variety of matters in an open and positive manner, so that pupils learn how to have a voice in the running of the school. Most English lessons contain purposeful group work. In Key Stage 4, drama, pupils explore the theme of racial prejudice through improvisations. Many participate in school productions such as 'The Wizard of Oz'. In modern languages, pupils develop their social skills through visits abroad. In PE pupils learn to exercise team and leadership roles. Numerous visits to the theatre, the cinema, musicals and concerts give pupils a multitude of opportunities to work, relax and relate together informally outside of school with fellow pupils.
- 58 Provision for pupils' cultural development is sound. The school is itself a harmonious multi-cultural and multi-racial community and opportunities are taken to bring pupils' cultural diversity and their religious, secular and cultural traditions, festivals and customs into the life of the school. Subjects including English, art, dance, modern foreign languages and music, promote greater understanding of cultural diversity. In music lessons pupils study the music of a host of countries, ranging from a study of Brazilian folk music to Italian, Indian and Chinese music. Pupils have opportunities in extra curricular music activities to perform music from a variety of internationally known composers. Pupils enjoy working with local artists, visit local and London art galleries and stage their own summer exhibitions which are open to the public. The history department enriches pupils' cultural development by taking pupils to Chester, where pupils learn much about the Roman and medieval heritage of Britain, and to London where they visit the Imperial War Museum. In geography and biology, sixth form pupils go on an annual field trip to the Lochanra Centre on the Isles of Arran. In politics, pupils visit the Palace of Westminster. All pupils benefit from a good variety of work placements which enable pupils to gain first hand experience of the business community. All sixth form pupils have very good opportunities to work alongside industrialists during industry week. The number of orchestral and choral concerts has grown over this academic year and this has encouraged both pupils and their audiences to enjoy music from around the world.

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

- 59 The school cares well for its pupils and ensures their welfare and safety. Parents and pupils are both positive about the way that teachers will make great efforts on behalf of individuals, spending time with them, providing a listening ear and furnishing them with helpful advice. The pastoral staff, in particular, have good knowledge of pupils' family circumstances, and the presence of a trained counsellor on the staff means that pupils always have someone to go to if they need help.
- 60 Suitable procedures are in place to ensure child protection. Staff know what to do if they have concerns. There is good liaison with outside agencies and any information is kept in a confidential manner. First aid provision is adequate. The school nurse visits on a weekly basis and those staff who need to know are informed about pupils' individual medical needs. The school has a good policy relating to health and safety, and a good awareness of what needs to be done in order to improve its practice. Subject departments carry out effective risk assessments, fire and electrical equipment is regularly checked and, on a day to day basis, staff act with due regard to safety. However, there is not yet a formal whole school risk assessment. Some specific aspects of health and safety have been brought to the attention of the headteacher.

- 61 Registration procedures have improved since the previous inspection as part of the reorganisation of the school day, so that it is clear which pupils are present. However, registration of sixth form pupils is less than satisfactory, since their day is more fluid than that of the other pupils. Heads of upper and lower school liaise on a weekly basis with the education welfare officer and much effort is devoted to preventative work with those beginning to show signs of reluctance to attend regularly, and those who persistently arrive late.
- 62 The arrangements to ensure good behaviour and eliminate any signs of harassment are effective, with the result that the school operates as a lively and happy community. The system of removing disruptive pupils from lessons and requiring them to reflect on their behaviour is effective in ensuring that other pupils' education is not interrupted. Most pupils who are isolated in this way are only removed from lessons once.
- 63 On a departmental basis, the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are generally good, although, despite the clear guidance given in the school policy, practice is not consistent across the school. This was an issue in the last inspection. In music there are very thorough procedures through which pupils' attainment in both areas of the subject is meticulously recorded. However, in RE the only formal assessment at any level is of Year 10 pupils' attainment in the short GCSE course. In PE, assessment criteria are not related to National Curriculum requirements. The assessment of pupils' work in ICT across different curriculum areas is also weak. In all other subjects, thorough, relevant procedures are in place. The use that teachers make of assessment in order to inform their curriculum planning is satisfactory. Those departments that have good procedures in place make appropriate use of the information that they gain, when adapting the content of their schemes of work and individual lessons. Departments do not share with pupils and parents their assessment of National Curriculum levels until the end of Year 9. This limits parents' awareness of the rate of progress being made by their children.
- 64 Procedures for monitoring and guiding pupils' academic and personal attainment and progress are unsatisfactory overall. Although the new system of monitoring the completion of work is appreciated by both pupils and parents, procedures are not yet fully in place to make best use of the available information in order to predict progress and to track what actually happens. Overall progress is reviewed only twice a year within departments. Form tutors are only beginning to develop their monitoring role. Much of the time pastoral staff spend on monitoring personal progress is concentrated on those giving cause for concern. The assessment and monitoring of pupils in the sixth form is carried out with consistency and regularity.
- 65 Satisfactory arrangements are in place for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs, but progress monitoring for pupils at stages 1 to 3 of the school's register are not satisfactory. Review arrangements for these pupils are also unsatisfactory and do not provide the appropriate information to guide future planning. The absence of clear and precise targets relating to the particular needs or disabilities of those pupils who are at stage 2 or 3 of the school's register restricts subject teachers' ability to identify appropriate subject specific targets and this, in turn, restricts the progress these pupils make.



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

- 66 Parents' views of the school are largely positive, with particular support expressed for the expectations teachers have of their children, the progress that pupils make, and the standards of work that they achieve. Parents like the way that teachers show respect for pupils and treat them as individuals. The great majority of parents would feel comfortable approaching the school with any concerns, and consider that their wishes and suggestions are responded to in a positive manner. Many offered the opinion that the school has improved in recent years. Although parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, they would like to be better informed about how well their children are getting on. Parents of Year 7 pupils in particular would like an earlier date to discuss their child's progress as well as how well they have settled in. Many parents find the form of parents' evenings unhelpful. They generally feel that the school could work more closely with them.
- 67 Inspection evidence shows that the school is working increasingly hard to strengthen its partnership with parents. It conducts surveys of parental opinion and makes its expectations and values very clear in the written information that is sent home. Pastoral staff work in close liaison with parents over those pupils who are causing concern. However, the school does not yet issue parents with information about what their children will be studying in the coming half term, nor does it have a newsletter to keep parents abreast of school events and successes. 'Output', the annual magazine which is largely edited by sixth form pupils, is an interesting publication which gives a good idea of school life during the past year, but through the rest of the year little information goes home that could keep parents 'in touch' with what is going on. Pupils' progress reports include the statutorily required information but teachers' comments are often bland, giving little hard, subject specific information about how well pupils have progressed, where their strengths and weaknesses lie, and what they need to concentrate on in order to improve. Comments such as 'revise carefully for exams', or 'show more enthusiasm' are not sufficiently focussed. Arrangements to keep parents fully informed of the progress made by pupils with special educational needs are not yet sufficiently developed.
- 68 As at the time of the previous inspection, there is scope for parents to play a greater part in the life of the school. They attend in large numbers meetings to discuss their children's progress and they are also supportive of school productions, but evenings to discuss, for example, how parents can help their children in Year 11 to revise for their GCSE exams, have been poorly attended. Parents have made positive contributions towards the wording of the home-school agreement, and the great majority have signed it and abide by its statements. Parents are not expected to sign pupils' work planners but most are supportive of their children's work at home and many provide the facilities that help them carry out research and study in a quiet place. The Parent Teacher Association has provided some funds to augment the school's resources but is about to undergo a rejuvenation, in the hope that it will become a more dynamic entity, providing a real forum for debate and support for the school.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 69 The headteacher provides strong leadership and clear educational direction for the school. Examples of his work are seen in the current drives to raise the level of challenge to pupils in their work, to make them aware of work deadlines and to increase their sense of being responsible for their own success. The key strategies designed to achieve this do not just appear in the school development plan but are also given first place in the staff handbook. In each subject area, managers have had to review practice and draw up an action plan related to increasing the level of challenge. Accelerated learning sets have been established. Additional computer facilities have been established to give pupils greater opportunities for independent study and research using media based resources and the internet. There are firm plans to improve these facilities.
- 70 The success of these strategies has been seen already in the improvement to the proportion of higher grades being achieved at GCSE. Pupils readily report and confirm the effect which the strategies are having on their school experience. They are under increased pressure to achieve. Their time is better used because the new timetable has cut the number of lesson changeovers. There are clear time allowances for changeover to encourage punctuality. Pupils' work is more focussed because lessons have to start with clear aims which pupils know about.
- 71 A rigorously applied scheme for picking up non-completion of work across subjects ensures that by the end of a given week each instance of non-completion has been identified, the pupil's parents have been notified, and the pupil has been given a chance to catch up. If this does not work, the pupil is given a Friday work detention. Those who have regular problems with handing in work have to use a detailed work report diary which teachers sign as the work is done.
- 72 Other elements of the strategy are not as far advanced as might be expected. Partly through LEA consultancy work, the school has accurately identified the specific improvements which are needed in teaching and learning styles and these are clearly communicated to teachers. However, regular monitoring of teaching quality by subject leaders is not uniformly practised across the school.
- 73 The school has identified the setting of appropriate work targets for pupils and regular monitoring of their progress as two key steps in improving results and in giving pupils responsibility for bringing about their own success. There are already well established arrangements for subject staff to set work targets for pupils twice yearly. A system for picking up cases of underachievement in Year 11 has been extended to Year 10.
- 74 These arrangements do not amount to regular monitoring and target setting for all pupils. In recognition of this, the school plans to give form tutors the role of monitoring pupils' progress and to provide them with better 'baseline' information about pupils' test results in order to set challenging targets. Planning for all this is not sufficiently advanced. Through in-house training, staff have increased their awareness of pupil performance data and what it shows about school and subject results. However, matters still needing closer definition include the frequency of pupil monitoring, the exact role of the form tutors, how they are to be managed in this work and how the school will pool all its information about each pupils' progress and make it available to tutors.

- 75 There are well established arrangements for setting numerical pupil attainment targets for subject areas and for the school's overall results. Useful work has been done in analysing past results and in relating them to data about pupils' prior attainments in order to provide evidence on whether the school is 'adding value' for its pupils. A standardised test was introduced this year to provide baseline assessments for Years 7 and 10, in order to make up for the deficiencies and incompleteness of available data. To date, the targets actually set have not yet been based on rigorously examined evidence. In particular, not enough work has been done to examine the relative performance of girls and boys and of different ethnic groups and to identify and evaluate the success of various teaching strategies.
- 76 Financial considerations are built into the school development plan but the true costs of key developments are not totally transparent. For example, the school has not yet defined the source of the staffing costs which would have to be met by increasing the amount of time for monitoring pupils' progress and teaching quality.
- 77 The governors have a good general understanding of their role and play an active part in the school, for example, through their involvement in shaping the school development plan, which has then played a key part in guiding the work of the school. There is a joint monthly meeting between governors and senior staff. Governors are closely involved in plans for development of the school facilities. They have been consulted appropriately on such developments as the 'remove room', the timing of the school day and curriculum changes.
- 78 The governors' role in monitoring and evaluating school performance is not as well developed as some other roles. They do not visit, or receive presentations and reports from, individual subject departments. The information they receive on pupils' results is not sufficiently analysed and evaluated to allow them to perform their role in monitoring subject and school performance in relation to targets. However, they are notified of the management targets set for senior staff, which is a useful step in the direction of implementing performance management.
- 79 The following statutory requirements are not met. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. RE is not provided for pupils in the sixth form. These were also issues in the last inspection. There is insufficient provision to ensure that the National Curriculum requirements in ICT are met in Key Stage 4. The governors' annual report to parents does not inform parents about the effectiveness of the school policy for special educational needs.
- 80 Significant improvements have been made in planning and monitoring, which were key management issues in the last inspection. Each department produces a development plan which is closely linked to the themes of the school development plan and includes specific pupil performance targets. Annual departmental reviews have the function of evaluating how far policies and priorities have been fulfilled. Senior managers are involved in these progress reviews. A good start has been made to providing managers of subject areas with comparative information so that they can monitor and evaluate the standards being achieved in their subjects. Monitoring of teaching standards is not yet well developed.

- 81 Leadership and management is good in the majority of subject areas, although a general weakness is the formal monitoring of teaching quality. The management of RE and of PE are unsatisfactory overall and there has been insufficient improvement in these subjects since the last inspection. More clarity is needed about the respective roles of the special educational needs co-ordinator, subject leaders and link staff in monitoring the progress of pupils on the special educational needs register.
- 82 The school has a stable, very experienced and well qualified teaching staff. All are effectively deployed except in the case of PE where a shortage is made up by visiting coaches in areas where staff are non-specialists. Standards are affected within geography and RE by the deployment of non-specialist teaching staff in a number of teaching groups. Middle managers continue to carry large teaching loads, which affects the quality of monitoring and support for departmental members. This was an issue in the last inspection.
- 83 The provision of non-teaching support staff is generally adequate but expansion of the role of technical support in DT to cover ICT creates an overall deficiency in support time for these areas. A good induction system is in place for newly appointed and newly qualified staff and this is well managed, tracked and monitored. Good arrangements are in place for continuous professional development and review.
- 84 Improvements have been made in accommodation since the last inspection, in the library and in the facilities for ICT, DT and art. These have had a positive effect on the quality of the curriculum. However, accommodation is now inadequate. Pupil numbers have increased by over one third, and may continue to increase for the immediate future. The school makes maximum use of the accommodation available. However, in spite of its best efforts, there are significant deficiencies, and the unsatisfactory condition and lack of flexibility of some areas are hindering the effective delivery of the curriculum.
- 85 It is not possible to suite rooms in some subjects, with the result that many lessons have to be taught in non specialist areas. This is particularly so in modern languages, where many lessons are taught in craft and art areas, which are totally unsuitable. In science, the accommodation and facilities are inadequate. There is a need for additional science laboratories along with the refurbishment of the existing provision. In other subjects such as music and art, a lack of storage space limits the type of work that can be done by pupils. In PE a number of factors adversely influence the range and quality of the curriculum. There are no facilities for indoor games and the playing fields are prone to flooding, which considerably restricts their use for much of the year.
- 86 Corridors and reception areas are kept as bright and attractive as possible with displays of work and school buildings are well maintained, but some parents find the school dull. Whilst a rolling programme of redecoration and refurbishment is in place, many areas, such as the science laboratories and the PE changing rooms, are drab and in need of redecoration.

- 87 Learning resources are only just adequate for the curriculum and the number of pupils. Expenditure on resources has not kept pace with curriculum demands. A recent injection of additional funding has allowed the English and geography departments to begin to re-stock with new text books. Mathematics is well provided for with books, as is history in Key Stage 4. In other departments such as DT, although there are good up to date books, there are not in sufficient quantity to allow pupils to take them home. In history in Key Stage 3 the books are out of date. The drama department does not have sufficient play texts for its examination pupils. The library stock is inadequate as the book stock is about half that which is expected in a school of this size. In the music department there are insufficient musical instruments and there are no multi-cultural percussion instruments.
- 88 Departments generally have sufficient equipment and materials to teach the National Curriculum but there are shortcomings in their quality. In the science department much equipment is old and needs replacing with modern items, as does the language laboratory in the languages department. There is generally good equipment in DT but there are no computer-controlled machines. Good quality audio-visual aids are not widely available. Most departments do not have their own television and video recorders. Each language classroom has an overhead projector but geography, history and RE do not.
- 89 ICT resources are barely satisfactory as the ratio of pupils to computers is high for a selective school. There are three networked suites in the school, one of which is in the library. There is internet access and computers are reasonably up-to-date but some do not have the latest operating systems. Although the school has recently invested in the third computer suite it is not widely available for cross-curricular use as it is used to teach ICT. There is virtually no provision of ICT within departments and little subject related software is available in general. Pupils' learning is not therefore as enhanced by the use of ICT as it should be.
- 90 Day-to-day financial management is unobtrusive and responsive to need. The most recent audit found financial management to be of a high standard. All recommendations have been acted upon. Effective use is made of new technology for school administration and finance. The headteacher and governors have ready access to information to ensure that finances are kept in good order.
- 91 The principles of best value are applied to school initiatives to improve facilities, such as the refurbishment of the library. There is, as yet limited application of the principle in other areas.
- 92 The school is striving to achieve greater transparency in its accounting by identifying costs in relation to plans, pupils and general provision. Currently there is insufficient information for the purposes of planning and for the evaluation of cost effectiveness. The costing of teaching time is not fully developed. This makes it difficult to show the cost of alternative approaches to a given school strategy. It is difficult to establish precisely the cost-effectiveness of post-16 provision. A rough calculation of available teaching periods against income suggests that both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are subsidising post-16 provision.
- 93 Taking into account the level of income, the use made of school resources and facilities, the quality of education provided and the results gained, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 1 Improve attainment by:
  - a) remedying the deficiencies in the teaching of RE, and of PE for those not taking the subject at GCSE; (245-246; 230-232)
  - b) ensuring that the stated aims or objectives of lessons are specific to each lesson and matched to specific aims in schemes of work; (31)
  - c) ensuring that the level of challenge in the tasks set for pupils reflects appropriately high expectations for each pupil, based on precise knowledge about what they already know and can do; (32)
  - d) fully establishing the role of subject leaders in regularly monitoring the quality of teaching in their subject area; (72, 74)
  - e) Using available data on the relative performance of boys and girls to identify issues and evaluate teaching strategies.(39, 75)
- 2 Improve the management of RE and PE, so that attainment is at least at a comparable level to other subjects, in RE at both key stages and in ICT and PE for pupils not taking the GCSE courses at Key Stage 4. (202, 234, 248)
- 3 Improve the quality of monitoring of pupils' progress by:
  - a) fully establishing the role of form tutors in the monitoring process; (64)
  - b) fully developing the systems for analysing and recording pupils' attainment on entry to the school and subsequently; (75)
  - c) fully analysing and recording attainment by gender and ethnicity. (64, 75)
- 4 Ensure that the National Curriculum in ICT is delivered at Key Stage 4 and pupils' attainment is improved by:
  - a) building appropriate elements into subject schemes of work so that the necessary skills and competencies may be systematically acquired; (196)
  - b) setting up assessment of ICT so that the ICT skills and competencies of each pupil can be monitored and demonstrated; (201)
  - c) improving facilities for the control element of the programme of study. (194)
- 5 Provide a full programme of PHSE by:
  - a) establishing it as a separate curriculum element from RE or by structuring it carefully within a range of appropriate subjects; (48)
  - b) improving, in particular, the provision for careers education at Key Stage 4 so that pupils are well prepared for their careers guidance interviews. (49)
- 6 Improve levels of punctuality by:
  - a) encouraging all pupils to come earlier to school; (27)
  - b) enlisting the support of parents in putting over the message about good timekeeping; (27)
  - c) applying firm sanctions against persistent latecomers. (27)

7 Improve the quality of information for parents by:

- a) increasing in formal reports to parents the amount of information which is specifically about children's progress in their subjects; (66-67)
- b) improving the timing and quality of parents' meetings about children's progress; (66)
- c) providing a more regular flow of news to parents about school life. (67)

8 Meet statutory requirements by:

- a) introducing RE into the sixth form curriculum; (79)
- b) providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. (79)

*Improving attainment, pupil monitoring and partnership with parents have been identified as priorities in the school development plan.*

### **Other areas for improvement**

- a) Improve learning resources and equipment, especially in art, science and ICT (control). (87)
- b) Improve the stock of the library. (87)
- c) Improve the level of technical support for ICT. (83)
- d) Improve the match between staffing and the needs of the curriculum in RE and PE. (82)
- e) Improve the quality of targets on pupils' individual education programmes and ensure that all teachers use them in their planning. (65)
- f) Establish formal arrangements for governors to review the progress of pupils with special educational needs and to keep parents informed. (81)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	175
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	66

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	16	38	33	9	1	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	675	150
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	136	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	35	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	176

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	39
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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



### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	49	62	111

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46	49	49
	Girls	60	60	59
	Total	106	109	108
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	95	98	97
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	65	96	69
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	49	49
	Girls	61	62	60
	Total	108	111	109
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97	100	99
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	79	95	83
	National	31	37	28

### ***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	1999	53	52	105

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	48	52	52
	Girls	46	51	52
	Total	94	103	104
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	90	98	99
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	54
	National	37.8

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	n/a	n/a
	National	n/a	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	1999	29	30	59

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	16.5	23.2	20.4	3.2	3	3.1
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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	n/a	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	n/a	n/a
	National	n/a	82.5

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	25
Black – African heritage	18
Black – other	11
Indian	41
Pakistani	97
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	33
White	455
Any other minority ethnic group	26

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	1
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 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	825
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	165.25

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.4
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	29.2
Key Stage 4	22.8

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	1539713
Total expenditure	1553566
Expenditure per pupil	2281
Balance brought forward from previous year	80230
Balance carried forward to next year	66377

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	825
Number of questionnaires returned	261

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	42	4	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	48	45	3	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	49	4	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	53	12	2	1
The teaching is good.	41	48	5	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	39	18	6	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	35	4	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	25	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	34	43	12	4	7
The school is well led and managed.	47	37	2	2	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	42	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	38	11	5	13

### **Other issues raised by parents**

The concern raised most clearly at the parents' meeting and in the questionnaire responses was the amount of information provided about children's progress. In particular, many who attended the parents' meeting were dissatisfied with the organisation of parents' evenings. They did not feel that the arrangements for booking time with teachers worked in practice or that enough time was available for each discussion.

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

### **ENGLISH**

- 94 At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 and for the previous two years, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above and level 6 and above in the National Curriculum tests was well above the national average, though well below the average for similar schools. As nationally, girls did better than boys but there is no clear pattern to show that they are usually higher above the girls' national average than boys are above theirs. Results for all pupils in English are similar to those in science but lower than those in mathematics. Nationally, English results are highest. The overall trend in results has followed the national upward trend, although they declined in 1999.
- 95 In the 1999 GCSE examinations and for the previous two years, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-A and A\*-C in GCSE Language and Literature was very high compared to the national average. It was below the average for similar schools in Language but close to it in Literature. The attainment of girls is generally higher than that of boys, as it is nationally but there has been a marked improvement in the attainment of boys. Over the last three years, the upward trend of results at grades A\*-C has been greater than the national trend and the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades A\*-A has increased since 1997 to more than four times the national proportion. Generally, pupils do better in Literature than in Language.
- 96 In the 1999 A level examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A-B and A-E in A level Language and Literature was above the national average and, in Language at the highest grades A-B, well above. The proportion achieving grades A-B, and A-E, was in line with the average for similar schools in Language but below in Literature. Over the last three years results have fluctuated a little but have improved since 1997.
- 97 Scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observations confirm the standards indicated by the Key Stage 3 tests and the GCSE and A level examinations. At the end of all key stages pupils' speaking and listening skills are well above average, though pupils for whom English is an additional language are not generally able to demonstrate speaking skills comparable to those of their peers until Key Stage 4. Pupils listen attentively and speak very articulately, with a good command of vocabulary. They respond well to questions, giving considered and detailed answers, and are happy to ask questions themselves in order to clarify points. They prepare and confidently execute formal and extended talks and improvise dialogue for role-playing in drama. Pupils at all stages sustain discussions with groups of their peers, present conclusions to the class and justify points of view. Pupils in Year 9 capably represent the views of interested parties in formal group debate about violence on television. Pupils are comfortable in engaging in dialogue with teachers – Year 13 pupils, for example, are able to explain, maturely and in detail, their methods in preparing coursework investigations of the implications of the use of language.

- 98 At the end of all key stages attainment in reading is well above average. In Key Stage 3 reading is well promoted by the identification of periods for silent reading when pupils are given the opportunity and responsibility to extend their reading experience and develop their skills. They are encouraged to choose from a wide range of books provided by the school or, after consultation with the teacher, which they bring to school. Pupils' progress in personal reading is carefully monitored; they keep a record of their reading and complete review question sheets or write reviews when they complete books. Pupils show good reading skills in the classroom and are able to read aloud without hesitation, though pupils for whom English is an additional language are limited by the later development of their skills in the language. The study of a passage by Year 9 pupils in preparation for the national tests, shows good skills in identifying and responding to emotive vocabulary. Pupils have a wide range of reading experience to extend them: drama and poetry texts and both fiction and non-fiction prose. Written work shows good understanding of and the capacity to respond to fairly demanding texts such as "Lord of the Flies" in Year 9. In Key Stages 4 and the sixth form, pupils' reading skills are developed to a high level enabling them to make perceptive and sophisticated responses to a good variety of modern and pre-twentieth century set texts and factual material. In Year 11 pupils analysed a variety of broadsheet and tabloid newspaper treatments of the Bramley kidnapping/adoption story and drew perceptive conclusions about the significance of differences in presentation. Year 13 pupils responded sensitively to a poem by RS Thomas, perceiving the relationship between form and content. In essay answers good reading skills are demonstrated in the use of background material and critical studies from class and school libraries, CD-ROM and the Internet.
- 99 Pupils' writing skills are well above average at the end of all key stages. They learn to write for a range of purposes, and learn to recognise and understand different techniques by studying a good variety of texts. In Year 9 pupils show good skills in scanning an examination text to extract information used in well-structured comprehension answers. Pupils execute extended pieces of imaginative and discursive writing as well as poetry. They write formal and informal letters and in Year 9 write quite mature literature essays about plotting and characterisation in, for example, "Animal Farm" and "Macbeth". In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form pupils write well constructed responses to questions. Literature answers for GCSE, and particularly for A level, are mature and, in A level Language, pupils show a good grasp of language theory in their answers. The volume of written work produced is well above average and the quality of writing is of a high standard. Language is correctly used, the standard practice of drafting helping to improve the quality and structuring of written work. There are comparatively few problems with spelling except in some work by pupils for whom English is an additional language and some by pupils with special educational needs.

- 100 Progress is good at all key stages. Pupils of all levels of attainment develop their knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate in all aspects of English. In language, pupils consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the terminology of grammar in Year 7 and develop understanding of how language works through Key Stages 3 and 4. They are introduced to the history of English and its development over time and by Year 9 successfully study the language of Shakespeare. They appreciate the variety of language use in Key Stage 3, including the language of advertising and the mass media, and in Key Stage 4 can complete an extended coursework study of an aspect of media presentation. Pupils make good progress in developing and adapting their writing in different styles for different purposes, from narrative and personal writing in Year 7; through writing to inform and persuade in Year 8; to literature essays in Year 9. These different forms of written expression are extended and further developed through the preparation for, and completion of, the range of coursework tasks in Key Stage 4, and the writing tasks at A level.
- 101 Pupils make good progress in the study of literature. They are introduced to the terminology of literary devices in Year 7 and explore their use and value through Key Stage 3, so that from year 9 onwards they can discuss their use in literature and, in Key Stage 4, write quite scholarly literature essays. The small number of pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with what could be expected. The progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language is inhibited in Key Stage 3 as a consequence of their later acquisition of the language but they make good progress in Key Stage 4 as they gain competence and confidence. Specific provision of extension tasks and differing teaching strategies is made for the most able and talented pupils, to ensure their good progress. In addition, from Year 8 onwards, teaching arrangements allow for the grouping together of these pupils.
- 102 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and, at times, very good. They work co-operatively in pairs and groups and respect and appreciate the contributions of others. They are polite, well-behaved and friendly and have good relationships with teachers. Younger pupils are eager to contribute to lessons. The response of older pupils is more measured but they are willing to participate as required. Pupils work quietly for the most part – even group discussions are carried on relatively quietly - and are engaged by tasks, mostly sustaining their concentration to the end of lessons.
- 103 The quality of teaching and learning is good. All teaching is satisfactory or better and is good or better in three-quarters of lessons. In one fifth of the lessons in Key Stage 4 it is very good. Pupils are well taught by staff who are well qualified and have a good range of experience. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the material and prepare their lessons well, setting clear objectives for pupils. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson, for example, were presented with a variety of challenging propositions about language, such as, "some accents are more attractive than others". They had to discuss this in pairs and present conclusions to the class. This enabled them to develop their views about the value of accent and dialect and their relationship to society. Teachers' expectations, both of quality of work and of pupil behaviour, are high and are rewarded by good responses. Most lessons contain a carefully judged and well-paced combination of reading, writing, listening and speaking activities, which stimulates active response. In a Year 7 class, for example, pupils' understanding of the processes of writing for information was well developed through a variety of individual writing, pair work, teacher exposition and oral class work, which was managed at a good pace throughout to maintain pupils' interest.

- 104 Classrooms are too small for much movement. Inventive combinations of whole-class lessons, group work, role-playing and drama are all able to be undertaken as a consequence of good class management and pupils' willingness to move furniture and cheerfully accept the cramped conditions. The very good quality of written work is maintained by very conscientious marking and an extensive body of work is required of pupils. Assessment is thorough and constructive, enabling pupils to improve the quality of their responses. Teachers undertake the process of monitoring and target setting, measuring pupil outcomes in public examinations against previous targets, but it is recognised that more can be done to monitor individual pupil progress. Teaching is generally characterised by an interest in and an enthusiasm for the subject, which are communicated to pupils and encourage them to respond. For example, pupils in a Year 11 class were able to share their teacher's enjoyment in the humour of Bill Bryson.
- 105 In a few lessons, the pace and challenge is not maintained until the end and more consistency is required, to ensure that pupils maintain their concentration. Teachers make some provision for differences in pupils' levels of attainment in tasks set and responses required, but mostly this is for the highest-attaining and gifted pupils. While teachers are aware of the difficulties of pupils for whom English is an additional language, there is no evidence of the formal provision of support material in lessons to help them share in the work of the class. Many pupils make use of ICT and produce well-crafted word-processed homeworks but teachers do not formally incorporate its use into their lesson programmes. Teachers make relatively little use of the library as a learning resource, except for some introductory lessons on library skills in Year 7 and for research in Years 12 and 13. Some lessons which are a continuation of previous activities do not recap previous learning and complex tasks are not sufficiently processed in plenary sessions as a form of ongoing assessment.
- 106 The department is well managed and works well together as a team, contributing to regular minuted meetings, sharing good practice, reviewing progress annually and preparing a carefully costed development plan which takes into account the priorities of the school. The scheme of work is clear, detailed and prescriptive. Expenditure is prudently managed – the current allocation of funds is satisfactory, but not to replenish resources which are run down. Teachers make good use of wall displays, which are predominantly of pupils' work, to stimulate interest.
- 107 There have been improvements on the few specific issues in last inspection report. Drama has developed and is now more emphasised in the curriculum, with a specific drama component in the scheme of work for each year group in Key Stage 3 and the establishment of a GCSE drama option in Key Stage 4, with the first entry for examination this year. Teaching now employs more adventurous strategies though they are still limited by the inadequacy of the accommodation. Areas for improvement remain. Standards of attainment have risen but there is still some way to go in raising the attainment of some boys, and in bringing the level of attainment in GCSE Language up to that in Literature. Some special provision of tasks and materials is made for the highest-attaining and gifted but pupils for whom English is an additional language require some support material to cater for their needs. The scheme of work should include the use of ICT.



## *Drama in English*

- 108 Drama is incorporated in the English curriculum in Key Stage 3, but has been developed as a discrete subject as a GCSE option in Key Stage 4, with the first entry of pupils for the examination this year. Since it is part of English in Key Stage 3 there is no separate assessment of pupils' levels of attainment by the end of the key stage, nor has there yet been any entry for GCSE to establish national comparisons of standards.
- 109 Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work show that at Key Stage 3 pupils are achieving above national expectations. Drama is formally represented in the English curriculum by a unit of work in each year of Key Stage 3. In Year 7 pupils work together co-operatively in groups to create an improvisation based on their reading of a story, which they present with enthusiasm and energy to the class. They perform un-selfconsciously and project clearly, with good use of dialogue. In Year 8 they study the history of drama and move on to more demanding playtexts. In Year 9 they investigate the presentation of drama in different media and explore the set Shakespeare text for the national test for English.
- 110 In Key Stage 4 pupils are achieving in line with national expectations. In Year 10 pupils show good skills in costuming, staging and lighting their improvisations. They are able to learn their scripts and move and speak comfortably and without inhibition, with some sense of character. They work co-operatively in groups and have sensible mature relationships with each other and their teacher. In Year 11 pupils are able to recognise successful and unsuccessful features of previous performances recorded on video and adapt their current practice accordingly. They devise their own capable performances of playlets illustrating the themes of pride, teenage problems and prejudice. They perform seriously, maintaining the integrity of the characters and the storyline. An ethnically mixed group performing a response to prejudice was able to make a very perceptive and honest presentation, which was received very maturely and sympathetically by the class.
- 111 Teaching is good. Proper attention is paid to the establishment of an appropriate atmosphere in which pupils can perform without inhibition and achievement is celebrated. There is good academic content in the scheme of work, which is well-structured and pays careful attention to the systematic development of drama skills to meet the requirements of the curriculum.
- 112 Since the last inspection drama has become established as a separate activity as suggested. It makes a good contribution to the development of pupils and to the life of the school through the biennial major school productions and the presentations by GCSE pupils. It is a successful subject despite the disadvantages of accommodation and resources. The room used for drama doubles as a classroom and although the space is adequate it is uncarpeted and furniture has to be moved for each drama lesson. It cannot be used properly as a drama space either for the GCSE pupils or for drama lessons in Key Stage 3. The funding for resources is inadequate, with the result that pupils in Year 10 cannot be provided with drama texts and are forced to work only on improvisations.

### *English as an additional language (EAL)*

- 113 The proportion of pupils in the school for whom English is not the first home language is high compared to national averages. In the past the school has not perceived that the presence of such pupils in school imposed any particular teaching requirements, as 'ethnic minority pupils' were well represented among the high achievers. The school's approach, and until recently its attainment data, did not differentiate clearly between pupils from ethnic minorities and EAL pupils. The individual progress and attainment of EAL pupils has not been specifically monitored.
- 114 The school's perception and practice is changing. For the first time Cognitive Ability Tests have been used to establish a baseline of data on levels of attainment of the intake. The group of pupils in Year 7 scoring lowest in verbal reasoning, with a score of less than the national mean of 100, includes twelve EAL pupils. This is recognised as presenting a challenge to teaching strategies if the needs of these pupils are to be met.
- 115 No specific provision to support the learning of EAL pupils is made by subject departments. At present the only specific support offered to such pupils in the school is the support for four pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10 for 2 periods per week each, for which they are withdrawn from lessons for language development by visiting specialists. The local EAL service funds this support. The pupils involved are of Asian heritage. The support offered is of good quality and interviews with the pupils and informal observation of a support session indicate that the support teachers have good knowledge of the pupils and their capabilities. Termly progress reports are written about each pupil, stating levels achieved in each English attainment target and setting future targets.
- 116 Examination of the data the school has provided suggests that there may be a long standing situation of EAL pupils not achieving their full potential in Key Stage 3, but that they generally achieve their potential by the end of Key Stage 4. The school's assessment data as yet presents only a vague picture. Analysis of the 1999 National Curriculum assessment results shows that the average results for pupils from ethnic minorities were a little lower than those for pupils of white heritage. Within the minorities group, pupils of Asian heritage scored lowest on average. The 1999 GCSE results, however, show the ethnic minority pupils almost without exception achieving higher points averages than the white heritage pupils, with the pupils of Asian heritage scoring highest. The place of EAL pupils within this pattern is unclear.
- 117 Staff have been made aware of the CAT results and the special needs co-ordinator is liaising with departmental special needs representatives to target and monitor the identified pupils within subjects. The representatives are also to initiate the provision of tasks and materials for those pupils to accommodate their language needs. The English department does not yet have a role in these developments. Although improvements are in progress, the school's arrangements for monitoring the progress of EAL pupils are currently unsatisfactory.

## MATHEMATICS

- 118 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national average. Test results at the end of the key stage in 1999 were very high compared with national averages but were below the average for similar schools. Test results indicate an improving trend that is in line with the national trend, and pupils consistently perform better in national tests in mathematics than they do in English and science. Nationally, English results are highest. Boys' results are slightly higher than girls' results by a similar margin to that seen nationally. Teacher assessments of pupil attainment are very close to those obtained in national tests and the attainment of pupils in lessons matches test results. By the end of the key stage, pupils show that they have a good level of understanding of the various aspects of their work in mathematics. They are competent in the manipulation of algebraic symbols, show that they can interpret and illustrate statistical data and are fully conversant with the names and properties of the commoner geometrical shapes. Pupils carry out calculations with confidence and are able to clearly explain their work using appropriate mathematical vocabulary.
- 119 The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national average. In 1999 there was an improvement in GCSE results with nine out of ten pupils gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations, compared with eight out of ten in the previous year. This is double the proportion seen nationally and close to that achieved in all selective schools. The number of pupils achieving the higher grades (A\*-A) has steadily increased over the last three years and in 1999 almost seven out of ten pupils achieved these grades compared with eight out of ten in all selective schools. Except for isolated instances, all pupils obtain GCSE certification within the A\*-G grade range, and in the last two years the boys' results have been higher than the girls. Most boys and girls perform at least as well in their GCSE mathematics examinations as they do in their other subjects and the 1999 pass rates were higher than at the time of the last inspection. Attainment in lessons matches GCSE results.
- 120 By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have an extensive repertoire of mathematical vocabulary, solve equations of increasing complexity, construct algebraic and statistical graphs, carry out investigation work and confidently use trigonometry to find angles and sides in two and three dimensional examples. The standard attained by most pupils is an adequate preparation for those wishing to study mathematics at A level.
- 121 In 1999, eight sixth form pupils took A level mathematics and seven took A level statistics. In general, higher attaining mathematics pupils opt to take the mathematics course and this is reflected in the results. In 1999 three pupils achieved a grade A in mathematics, two achieved a grade C, one a grade D and one a grade E, and the average points score achieved was above the national average but slightly below all selective schools. All candidates in statistics achieved pass grades, with five obtaining a grade D, one a grade C and one a grade E and the average grade achieved was almost one less than the national average. Overall, the results are higher than at the time of the last inspection. There has been a marked increase in the number of pupils currently studying A-level mathematics, both in the upper and lower sixth. Eighteen pupils will complete the course in this school year and scrutiny of their work, observations in lessons and modular examination results already at hand, indicate that over half of them should obtain a grade A on completion of the course.

- 122 The overall strength and quality of teaching in mathematics is good. It is slightly better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 and is best in the sixth form. It is rarely unsatisfactory and in half of lessons it is good or very good. All teachers have a good command of the subject and share a commitment to improving the achievements of the pupils. The content of lessons invariably has a structure that builds on previous learning, and consolidation and practice are usually accompanied by the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. In general, planning of lessons takes full account of the prior learning of pupils and their potential.
- 123 The causes of pupil underachievement in a small number of lessons, as indicated in the previous report, have been satisfactorily addressed, and any current underachievement relates mainly to inadequate planning of the use of time in the new, longer, lessons and the use of a limited range of teaching strategies. In the best lessons the teacher radiates an enthusiasm for the subject, fully involves the pupils during exposition, engenders a brisk pace and sets realistic, timed tasks that are well matched to individual pupil needs. In such lessons the pupils respond with interest and produce a good rate of work that shows they are making good progress and learning new material. For example, a group of Key Stage 3 pupils was enthusiastically involved with the teacher in reviewing the range of ways of illustrating statistical data and then making the most effective selection in relation to a given set of data. The teacher's skilful formulation of questions, and involvement of a wide range of pupils, was effective in ensuring that they were able to make informed choices that ranged from pie charts to scatter diagrams. The teacher punctuated the lesson with appropriately imposed time limits that ensured that all pupils addressed increasingly searching questions. Similarly, a group of sixth form pupils were fully engaged in discussing high-level vector questions in preparation for their impending module examination. The teacher's subject competence and obvious love of the subject was reflected in the enthusiasm demonstrated by the pupils and their resulting levels of understanding and progress. In both examples the pupils related to the teacher in a mature and studious way and the teacher's ability to understand any difficulties experienced by the pupils ensured that progress and learning were promoted.
- 124 In less successful lessons the teacher's impact on pupils' learning is diminished because of inadequate dialogue between teacher and learners during explanations to the whole class. In such lessons the textbook is sometimes used as a tool for instruction and the pupils' focus is divided between textbook and teacher, thus increasing the scope for pupils to be distracted from their work. A lack of pace and challenge sometimes ensues because the teacher is then employed in replicating explanations on an individual basis and consequently misses opportunities to develop and share ideas and extend the levels of knowledge and understanding. For example, a group of Key Stage 3 pupils, investigating the angle sum properties of polygons, quickly and successfully produced a suitable quantity of illustrative examples in order to derive a formula. The bulk of the teacher's time was devoted to helping pupils on an individual basis but, because ideas were not shared and appropriate time limits were not imposed, a brisk pace was not achieved. Consequently, the potential for extending knowledge and skills to include questions of greater depth and difficulty were missed and higher attaining pupils were not given the opportunity to examine a different aspect of the topic.

- 125 In all age groups, the overwhelming majority of pupils display good levels of sustained concentration and they adopt a positive attitude to study. The majority of lessons are teacher directed and, even in the minority of lessons in which the limited teaching strategies do not inspire pupil involvement, the pupils show that they are well motivated and receptive. Although there are many examples of very good quality written work, the presentation of solutions varies from class to class. Learning is sometimes impeded by untidy written work and, because it lacks structure, it does not foster understanding and retention. In addition, particularly in algebra, a lack of systematic, rigorous presentation sometimes inhibits progress.
- 126 A promising start has been made by the department in assembling and using a database of pupil performance for use in conjunction with the day-to-day assessment of pupils' work. The development of subject-specific individual pupil targets has begun and the need for further advance in this area is recognised. The use of information and communications technology to enrich and support learning in mathematics is also a priority in the department's development plan. At present, provision is not integrated into the schemes of work and has yet to be structured to ensure uniformity of experience for all pupils. There is inadequate accommodation for delivering the mathematics curriculum. There are insufficient rooms and the relative siting of existing rooms, mentioned as a matter of concern in the last report, does not encourage the creation of a mathematical ethos. The requirement of a full time mathematics teacher to be peripatetic is inefficient because it imposes limits on the use of a variety of teaching strategies and because the necessary movements are a misuse of the teacher's time and energy.
- 127 The head of department provides clear educational direction for the subject and the department is effectively and efficiently organised. Schemes of work fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and departmental documentation is of good quality. The monitoring role of the head of department is not yet of a sufficiently high profile to ensure that good practice is shared amongst teachers and that they all consistently apply departmental procedures.

## SCIENCE

- 128 In the national tests in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 the percentages of pupils reaching the expected level and higher levels were very high in comparison with national percentages. The results were better than those in English. Nationally, science results are lowest. Girls did better than boys for the first time, but the difference was not significant. The results were not as high as in 1998, especially at higher levels. In comparison with similar schools, the results were well below average. Since the last inspection the results had steadily improved until the slight reduction in 1999.
- 129 In the GCSE examinations in 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C grades in double award science was very high in comparison with the national average. Boys performed slightly better than girls, which is against the national trend, but the difference was not significant. Since the last inspection the results have steadily improved although the 1999 results were slightly lower than those for 1998. Forty per cent of the cohort opted to study the separate sciences and results in all three subjects were above the national averages, with all chemistry entrants achieving A\*-C grades. In recent years chemistry has consistently achieved these rates. Results in biology have increased steadily but those in physics were slightly lower in 1999 than in 1998, having shown a previous rise. The results in both double and triple award science are still short of the targets set in the school development plan.

- 130 In the A level examinations in 1999 all entrants gained A-E grades, compared with 80 per cent success in chemistry but only 42 per cent in physics. Comparisons with national average figures are not reliable due to the relatively small numbers of candidates in each subject. The poor results for physics were due in large part of the sustained absence of a number of pupils during the critical period prior to the examinations. The department decided to change to a new syllabus for physics and to move to modular assessment in the light of these results. All nine candidates in Year 12 obtained the AS Level qualification in physics after their first year on the new course, and they are continuing with the A level course this year. Pupil numbers on all three A level courses have risen steadily over recent years and are currently buoyant.
- 131 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 3 in the lessons observed is above expected standards, but was not quite as high as indicated by the test results. This was due to the fact that in most Year 9 lessons the emphasis was on revision to prepare for the imminent national tests. Pupils have very good laboratory skills and work in an ordered manner respecting the needs of others and safety procedures. They routinely make accurate measurements of length, volume, mass, temperature and time and record their results in neat tables. Representation of the results in various graphical forms is particularly well developed, and pupils interpret graphs accurately. They aim for high standards in written work and respond well to challenge. For example, pupils in Year 8 produced high quality work and displayed sound mathematical skills in work on the energy content of foods. They measured the amount of heat produced by burning various food samples and then converted the results to obtain energy values per one hundred grams to make direct comparisons with values on commercial packaging.
- 132 Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. In lessons observed it was not quite as high in double award science as indicated by GCSE results, but it was not possible to view the pupils' substantial coursework which had been sent off for moderation by the examining board. Pupils have good all-round knowledge of subject matter, which they can discuss with clarity and using appropriate scientific language. They can apply knowledge to new situations. For example, pupils in a Year 11 double award group drew on their knowledge of genetics to develop understanding of how cystic fibrosis and sickle cell anaemia are transmitted. In a Year 10 chemistry class, pupils displayed good understanding of exothermic and endothermic reactions, acids and bases and chemical formulae during practical work on the reactions of limestone.
- 133 Attainment by pupils near the end of A level courses is above average. They have a very mature attitude to their studies are able to discuss their work with knowledge, clarity and understanding. They have good skills in independent learning, and regularly use a variety of references to gather information. Coursework investigations for the assessment in biology are of a high standard. For example, a high standard of research was evident in investigations into enzyme action in breaking down hydrogen peroxide and the production by plants of chemical defence agents. Pupils used CD ROMs and internet sources well.

- 134 Pupils learn and progress well in Key Stage 3. They take a pride in their work and have high standards. For example, pupils in Year 7 worked very carefully to produce very good magnetic field patterns around bar magnets using iron filings and then fixed the patterns to produce an impressive display of their work. They demonstrate imagination in responding to a challenge. For example, Year 8 pupils researched information on Archimedes using CD ROMs, and constructed very good diaries or newspaper interviews on his discoveries. They develop good knowledge of the basic structures of plants and animals, and construct detailed food webs. They measure forces and understand about balanced and unbalanced forces, speed and acceleration.
- 135 Pupils learn and progress well in Key Stage 4. They become more mature and self-critical in their approach to their studies. This is particularly seen in their work on scientific investigations. Planning is thorough and closely linked to theory. Practical work is accurate and results are well recorded and presented in appropriate forms. Results are carefully analysed and evaluated. Investigations into the effect of concentration on the rate of reaction between magnesium and acid, the size of craters formed by dropping ball-bearings into sand, and recovery rates after different types of physical exercise, were of high quality.
- 136 Pupils in the sixth form are good learners and make good progress in their studies. They rise to the challenge of high level work. They respond well to the modular pattern of assessment in chemistry and physics and work at a sustained pace to meet deadlines. They rapidly pick up new ideas and become secure in applying them. Mathematical skills are well used in both chemistry and physics. For example, calculations on drift velocity and resistivity in physics and on thermodynamics and reacting quantities in chemistry are performed accurately and confidently. Pupils in biology also demonstrate good mathematical skills in the statistical treatment and graphical presentation of their results.
- 137 Pupils' respond well in science lessons. They arrive at lessons prepared to work and respond well to the challenges set. They listen attentively and participate fully in question sessions and discussions when they freely express their own views, for example when working on genetically inherited diseases. They settle quickly to the set tasks and generally maintain good concentration. They work very well together in groups when doing practical work which they undertake carefully respecting good safety routines. Relationships with teachers are very good.
- 138 The quality of teaching is good in both key stages and in the sixth form. In two-thirds of the lessons observed it was good or very good. A very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen which resulted from lesson objectives not being clearly enough identified or achieved. Teaching is equally good in all key stages. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to good effect in their confident delivery of subject matter and in the posing of clear questions designed to probe pupils' knowledge and extend their understanding. Learning objectives for each lesson are set and shared with pupils, but on occasion these are not precisely enough defined to be readily assessed at the end of the lesson.

- 139 Teachers prepare lessons well and generally challenge pupils. For example, pupils in a Year 11 physics class had to draw ray diagrams to illustrate total internal reflection, and then set up prisms in positions to demonstrate the effect. Finally they were given an internet address to search for further examples of the use of the effect. Discussions are well led with high pupil involvement. For example, pupils in a Year 11 biology class discussed fully the results of their experiments on testing the effectiveness of a range of antibiotics. They expressed their views well and clearly understood how bacteria had developed resistance to the earlier forms of antibiotics used in their tests. Practical work is well organised and managed. For example, pupils in Year 8 carried out a series of tests on sugars in rather cramped conditions with great care and success. Quality worksheets are used when appropriate.
- 140 Extension work is often available but high attaining pupils are rarely stretched to use them. Homework exercises are well planned to reinforce or extend work done in lessons. Lessons usually proceed at good pace and time is well used. For example, in a Year 9 lessons revising physics topics, the pupils were set tight time limits to complete a set number of questions. The answers were marked and the mark scheme fully explained before further questions were tackled. Some teachers are still adjusting to the new fifty-minute periods and some lessons do not have a satisfactory summative session when pupils and teacher assess the success of the lesson.
- 141 Curriculum planning is good in both key stages. In Key Stage 3 it is well balanced and has sufficient depth to stimulate and challenge the pupils. Literacy skills are developed through careful introduction of scientific terminology which is then regularly checked for correct usage. Opportunities for creative writing are provided and exercises in searching for information using library texts and CD ROMs are regular. Numeracy skills are used regularly in the handling of experimental data and in performing calculations. Pupils carry out computations accurately and efficiently both mentally and by using calculators.
- 142 The A level courses in chemistry and physics are based on modular lines with the coursework component built-in, and the biology course is planned towards end of course assessment. All the schemes of work in science are currently being revised. The scheme for Key Stage 3 is complete and is fully integrated with learning objectives, assessment and ICT skills included. The Key Stage 4 courses are currently being constructed to meet the demands of the new Curriculum 2000 course proposals. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work are satisfactory, but the systematic setting of targets and reviewing progress is undeveloped in Key Stage 3.
- 143 The department is well led. There is a strong team spirit and a clear commitment to the further raising of standards. Since the last inspection standards have generally risen but the improvement has not always been regular. The quality of teaching remains good and there has been a substantial shift away from teacher-led lessons to more pupil involvement in learning and greater opportunities for them to show what they can do. The use of ICT remains undeveloped due primarily to the lack of dedicated computers in the science area. Resources are adequate although many items such as balances and water baths are ageing and in need of replacement. The accommodation is in urgent need of considerable renovation. Services in several laboratories are unreliable and potentially dangerous, for example the overhead supply of gas in the first floor laboratories. Technical staff maintain equipment well and are efficient in supplying the teaching needs of all subject areas, although the high occupancy level of the accommodation at times hinders their duties.



## ART

- 144 Teacher assessments indicate that almost all of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 either meet, or exceed national expectations. Considering the pupils' varying prior experiences of art, this indicates good progress. Girls' attainment exceeds that of boys. Since the last inspection the department's results at Key Stage 4 have improved significantly. GCSE results for 1998 and 1999 were remarkable in that every pupil gained a grade at A\*-C, continuing the trend set in recent years. Results at A level are less good than at GCSE. The number of candidates is small, and whilst every pupil gained a pass grade, the average points score is below the average for all schools and for similar schools. In recent years few of the candidates have gained the top grade at A level.
- 145 The inspection evidence is in line with the evidence from examinations. Standards of attainment are above average overall, with the best work being produced at Key Stage 4 where it is very good. In Key Stage 3, pupils' work reflects the department's strong emphasis on graphic processes. Some good work in portraiture benefited in content and style from the pupils having looked at the work of Millet and Munch. Other pupils, designing covers for compact disk cases owe much to commercially produced material. Year 11 pupils demonstrate good skills when linking their work to that of famous artists such as Picasso, O'Keefe and surrealist artists including Dali and Magritte.
- 146 A Year 8 class showed keen insight and interpreted visual images to great effect on being introduced to the difficult concept of abstract art, confidently using their drawing skills to create bold, imaginative compositions. Similarly, a Year 10 class selected shapes and forms from works by the great masters, in order to adapt and modify them to create ceramic pots. Pupils have a clear understanding of how they want their work to develop. Sixth form pupils are confident and articulate when discussing and explaining their work. They have a clear view of the steps they have taken, the influences on them and their future development. The department builds confidence in its pupils.
- 147 There is evidence of the pupils' over reliance on images found in magazines or photographs, and under-developed drawing skills prevent many of them completing their designs to the expected standard. At the same time, sketchbooks are little used for thorough personal research or for the development of ideas. Some pupils are unsure of just how good their work is and better annotated marking would help them improve it further. The boys' work is bold and direct, whereas the girls' work reflects a more considered approach and extra time spent on preparation and presentation.
- 148 Attainment in the sixth form is average. The pupils' grasp of the subject and their knowledge of critical studies is varied. One pupil demonstrated the value of thorough research when comparing the illustrations of Beatrix Potter with those of Aubrey Beardsley but not all have the keen personal view of the subject, so necessary at this level. As they mature, pupils develop and refine their practical skills. The limited range of materials and storage space, and heavy emphasis on painting and drawing, reduces the possibilities of working on a larger scale.

- 149 The attitudes of the pupils are good, except in the case of small numbers of younger boys who at times interrupt lessons. The great majority are sensible and courteous to each other and their teachers. Indeed, a strength of the department is the way pupils form positive relations with each other and their teachers. The pupils recognise their teachers' enjoyment of their subject and respond accordingly. The atmosphere in the classrooms allows pupils to reflect on and appreciate their own work and that of their classmates. Boys and girls alike make sensible, informed contributions to discussions at the beginnings of lessons.
- 150 The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good. Very occasionally the aims of the lesson are too ambitious or activities fail to engage the full range of pupils and the pace slows, thus allowing the initiative to slip from the teacher to the pupils. On the other hand, the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is never less than very good. A teacher used great skill when explaining the basic elements of package design, the importance of layout and appropriate lettering, while encouraging pupils to constructively criticise each others' work.
- 151 Teaching at Key Stage 4 is very good. Teachers clearly communicate their high expectations during lesson introductions which are concise and to the point. Pupils have every chance to do well as their teachers circulate, assessing, prompting and suggesting ways forward. A very good lesson led to the challenging activity of making a coil pot from an original design, a process allowing pupils access to much new learning. Another teacher presented the class with a checklist of assessment objectives relating to the rapidly approaching GCSE examination, a strategy which generated concentrated activity. These pupils were working on a very diverse range of subjects. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and the maturity of the small numbers of pupils allows a much more personal style.
- 152 While the curriculum is broad, a greater range of activities and processes would allow more pupils to do well. As in the previous inspection, the profile of ceramics and sculpture should be raised, and there is still a lack of work with textiles. The use of copying and second-hand imagery continues to slow pupils' learning. Pupils lack sufficient opportunities for printmaking and the use of computers, scanners and video. Visits to London, to Granada Studios, and the exhibitions of pupils' work in school and in the local art gallery all enrich the pupils' cultural development. There is scope to increase the amount of non-European art in the department's work. The methods employed by teachers to assess the ongoing work of the pupils are good and the information gathered is used to modify the curriculum.
- 153 There is clear direction in the department, although more of its activities should be formalised. Teaching is not monitored so that good practice is shared. Development planning is sketchy and imprecise and fails to consider the implications for time, costs, resources and appropriate training. Rooms are small and inappropriate for any large scale work. The options system now allows more pupils to follow the subject to GCSE but problems of storage, already acute, will increase as the department's success attracts more pupils. Learning resources are at best adequate and fail to allow the pupils to experience many methods and processes which are now commonplace in art education.

## BUSINESS STUDIES

- 154 Standards of attainment in business studies are very high. The attainment of pupils' that take GCSE is well above average. In 1999, nearly all pupils gained A\*-C grades. Results have been consistently high since 1997. Inspection evidence shows that pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of business objectives and how businesses are organised, financed and operated. Most pupils are able to apply their knowledge and understanding in a wide range of contexts and can distinguish economic facts from opinions. The pupils' interpretation of financial data is equally secure. The most significant strength of attainment lies in pupils' ability to evaluate evidence, make reasoned judgements and present their conclusions in accurate and appropriate ways. The few pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 4 make satisfactory progress.
- 155 Since the introduction of the subject at A level in 1998, results have been very good. In 1999, all nine entrants gained A to E grades and most gained A to C grades. In 1998, all nine pupils gained an A or B grade. Inspection evidence shows that currently pupils have above average understanding of key aspects of the syllabus such as marketing, operations management and people in business. Pupils think through the issues very carefully and are able to express their ideas cogently and with clarity.
- 156 Teaching is good at Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. Teachers are competent and knowledgeable and they know thoroughly the requirements of the examination syllabuses. A wide variety of engaging teaching strategies is used to good effect. In sixth form lessons, when speaking about economic growth, teachers and use pertinent local examples such as the Trafford Centre, The Arndale Centre and the building of the second runway at Manchester Airport. These examples interest and motivate the pupils and give the lessons a special relevance. Teachers give good examples when describing economic trends, expectations and government legislation. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and in return make lessons interesting by engaging pupils in rigorous question and answer sessions about topical business news, such as mergers, marketing strategies and European matters.
- 157 The teaching of the GCSE classes in Year 10 included an effective lesson about recruitment and selection processes involving all pupils in a role-play exercise. The teacher acted as a facilitator and prompted pupils to analyse the various tactics and responses of the players in order to bring out key points in an effective and influential manner. In a Year 10 lesson the teacher successfully extended pupils' understanding of car production by setting up a simulation exercise in which pupils had to adopt various business roles from managing director through to finance and personnel directors. In all the lessons, teachers rigorously extend pupils' knowledge by prompting questions which probe pupils' knowledge, extend their business vocabulary and deepen their understanding.
- 158 Teachers establish very good working relationships with pupils. Marking is of a high quality and pupils respond well to the comments made on their submissions. Homework is regularly set and pupils are being taught how to evaluate their own answers and how to be more precise in their written and spoken presentations. Teachers promote consideration of the spiritual and moral aspects of running businesses by including modules of work on business ethics so that pupils understand something about the moral issues faced by companies working on a global scale across cultural divides. However, pupils in both key stages do not currently benefit from the regular use of ICT partly, because resources are limited.

- 159 Since the previous inspection, business studies has replaced economics. Since then the popularity of the subject at GCSE and A level has risen significantly. There are currently two groups of pupils in Years 10 and 11 and large groups following the A level course. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of the courses and currently benefit from the departmental links with Barnardo's Business Incentive Scheme (BIS), Granada Studios, Cadburys, Salford University and companies such as Kellogg's and Laing Construction PLC.
- 160 The department is very well led and managed and has established itself as a popular and successful unit. The department undertakes a review each year in which it reflects on previous work and devises and revises plans for the future. The consideration of new syllabuses and schemes of work for the sixth form has been undertaken thoroughly. Although the department works well with work placement companies and enterprise organisations, numerous further opportunities exist locally through which outside organisations and speakers could enhance and enrich the already positive and successful aspect of the department's work.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY (DT)**

- 161 The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was well above the national average. This has been so over the last three years but there is a rising trend in pupils gaining the higher grades. Girls out-perform boys by margins similar to those which apply nationally.
- 162 At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are above average in all aspects. Pupils arrive with variable experience of the subject and few have above average skills. Because of the good teaching and challenging activities they have in Year 7, pupils quickly acquire the confidence and skills to use a wide range of hand and machine tools in the workshops and appropriate equipment in the food technology area. By the end of the key stage, they follow the design process to make well- finished products, such as wheeled toys from wood, and pasta dishes using skilful methods to make a range of sauces. They have a good understanding of the materials and processes they use because these are taught in depth by teachers with very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject. For example, they recognise and use electronic components to design systems for electronic games. They have a good knowledge of nutrition and what constitutes a healthy and balanced diet, of the materials they use, such as wood, metal and acrylic, and of how materials are treated. In graphics lessons, they develop good formal drawing and sketching skills which they use effectively to communicate ideas in all aspects of the subject. At the end of each project, pupils analyse their work and make suggestions to modify and improve it so that further progress is encouraged.

- 163 At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is well above average in all aspects. Pupils communicate their ideas to a very good standard in graphic products, through formal drawings, sketching and the design and construction of three- dimensional models such as café facades. In food technology, they develop products such as sweet and savoury dishes which can be batch-produced, using the good experience they have acquired in investigating ingredients and experimenting with recipes. They use a wide range of resistant materials to design and make products which are well finished. They use advanced skills for cutting, shaping and constructing their work. They have a very good knowledge of electronic components and systems which they incorporate into projects, such as sensing systems to detect 'no jumps' for long jump events and scoring systems for tennis. Their knowledge of tools and materials is well above average and they use it to make decisions about the products they design, for example when it might be more suitable to use soft or hard wood or the proportions and nature of ingredients for pastry.
- 164 In Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress over time to build the skills and knowledge needed to design and make products which are unique to them and demonstrate creativity and practicality. They learn to recognise customer needs and wants and how to evaluate both their own work and commercial products. This begins in Year 7 when pupils begin to learn how to evaluate commercially produced scones so that they can make their own to the recipe and standard they want. The skills and knowledge they acquire in Key Stage 3 effectively prepare pupils to undertake examination courses in Key Stage 4. This is particularly evident in their use of the design process and graphics skills that are common and necessary to good standards of work in all aspects of the subject.
- 165 Pupils continue to progress well in Key Stage 4 where they build on skills and knowledge to reach standards that are well above average. They make particularly good progress with learning about the processes they use for working with different materials and with nutrition in food technology which they use to plan healthy meals for different groups of people such as vegetarians. Pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to others because their needs are well understood and provided for. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress because they are well motivated and provided with appropriately challenging activities.
- 166 Pupils have good and often very good attitudes to learning. Very good behaviour enables them to experience a wide range of activities, such as working with wood and heating and shaping metal in the same lesson in Year 7, because they are trust worthy and sensible. They know that these standards are expected of them by teachers and they respond very well because there are good relationships and mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Pupils work together co-operatively in lessons and talk about their work with each other with pride and interest. Because they are keen and interested, they work at a good pace safely and concentrate well.

- 167 The quality of teaching is good. In more than half the lessons seen teaching was very good. In just over one third it was good and it was never less than satisfactory. Well structured lessons with clear objectives help pupils to develop skills and knowledge systematically over time. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is effectively communicated to pupils, who are encouraged to be creative and to work independently. They plan interesting and motivating activities which pupils enjoy and at which they work hard to achieve good standards. Lessons are conducted at a good pace to maintain interest and to enable pupils to achieve well. Clear learning objectives are set. In practical lessons, for example in food technology, pupils' work is evaluated, involving them effectively so that they understand the levels of attainment they have reached. The basic skills of numeracy and literacy are effectively taught. Teachers insist on high standards of accuracy when weighing and measuring ingredients and materials and when they evaluate work, appropriate subject related vocabulary and clear communication skills are encouraged.
- 168 The curriculum is well planned and provides pupils with a broad and balanced experience in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, pupils choose from graphics, electronics, food and resistant materials but pupils taking the short course have insufficient time in Year 11 to meet course requirements within school hours. There are well qualified and experienced teachers for each aspect of the subject curriculum. The lack of technician support is inefficient of teacher's time with teachers spending too much time on preparation of materials and clearing up after classes.
- 169 Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The storage space available for pupils' work is inadequate and does not match the care and pride pupils take with their practical work. The two resistant materials workshops are also used for electronics and graphics, which are incompatible with the rooms' main purpose. This produces an unsatisfactory learning environment for both electronics and graphics. The high standards of work currently achieved in these areas result from the positive attitudes of teachers and pupils. Systems for assessing pupils' work are good and the department has just developed an electronic system for recording and monitoring the experience, attainment and progress of pupils against set targets and baseline assessments on entry to the school. The current system for recording experience and attainment is adequate but barely sufficient to monitor progress.
- 170 The quality of leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides clear direction in an efficient and sensitive manner. There is a shared commitment to continue to raise standards and to improve the range and quality of experience for pupils. The need to improve the quality of coursework for pupils has been addressed and there are clear improvements in the quality and presentation of coursework folders since the time of the previous inspection. There has also been good improvement in teaching, the quality of learning, standards of attainment and leadership.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

- 171 In the last three years the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\*-C has been well above the national average for all schools. In 1997 and 1998 this proportion was in line with the national average for selective schools but was well below it in 1999. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades in all three years is in line with the national average for selective schools. There are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls.

- 172 The proportion of pupils gaining A level grades A or B in the last three years was well above the national average for pupils in selective schools in 1997 and 1998 but at the national average for selective schools in 1999. The proportion of pupils gaining A level grades A to E was below the national average for all schools in 1997 and 1998 and well below that for selective schools but was above the national average for all schools and for selective schools in 1999. In these three years girls have performed much better than boys although the numbers of pupils entered for the examinations are too small to draw firm conclusions about gender differences in performance.
- 173 Attainment by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above national expectations and in line with expectations for pupils in selective schools. In the teacher-assessed tests in 1999 one quarter of the pupils were at level 8, the highest level. In lessons observed and in pupils' work seen, all pupils have a good technical vocabulary that they use to good effect in writing clear, accurate and coherent accounts of geographical patterns and processes. In their work on the Amazon rainforest, the highest attaining pupils in Year 9 show an excellent understanding of the complexity of environmental issues that impact upon economic development and the conflicts that ensue. Pupils' knowledge is up to date and politically informed, as illustrated in Year 9 pupils writing a letter from the position of an Italian diplomat to a counterpart in Turkey explaining how Turkey could become a member of the European Union.
- 174 Attainment in lessons at the end of Key Stage 4 for pupils who are following the full GCSE course is very high in relation to national expectations and in line with that of pupils in selective schools. Their geographical vocabulary is excellent and their written work shows a thorough understanding of the inter-relationship of both physical and human processes in shaping the differences and the similarities between places. Year 11 pupils make effective use of a wide range of geographical skills and techniques in their investigation into shopping provision in the nearby shopping centre. Many make particularly good use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to present the results of their data analysis in a variety of formats. The attainment of pupils who are following the short GCSE course is good in relation to the attainment of pupils in all schools, but the quality of work is below that expected in selective schools as the time allocation is only one third that of the full course.
- 175 In Year 13 attainment in lessons is in line with that of pupils in selective schools and very good in relation to the national average. Pupils make an effective analysis of complex data in the form of graphs, maps, statistics and text, to draw reasoned conclusions, for instance about which environmental changes would best reduce surface run-off of water in the Forest of Bowland. They make effective linkages between their first hand experience of the landscape which they studied on Arran and post glacial landscapes in general.
- 176 Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well above the national average. Their progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 is always satisfactory and often good. Pupils quickly acquire a good geographical vocabulary and skills in using and producing maps and graphs. Their visit to Manchester Airport in Year 7 helps them learn to integrate theory and first hand investigation. They gain an awareness of different points of view about competing pressures on the environment, so that in Year 9 they can write a series of letters, from six different points of view, about environmental issues concerning Lake Baikal. Some work in Key Stage 3, however, fails to challenge pupils sufficiently, particularly when undemanding and unstimulating work sheets are over-used, so that their progress is slowed.

- 177 In Key Stage 4 pupils learn to make good use of a range of geographical skills to obtain information from a variety of sources then synthesise it to draw appropriate conclusions. A variety of resources is used by pupils but many worksheets that are used do not encourage pupils to lay out their work well or to think and write as extensively as they could. Pupils following the short course in Year 11 rely particularly on duplicated notes and worksheets. Pupils make good progress in the sixth form and they learn to identify and analyse problems at a variety of scales from local to global. Nearing the end of Year 13 they have a comprehensive understanding of world geography. In all key stages, pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with other pupils as do the pupils for whom English is an additional language. These pupils participate fully in all the lessons but their written work shows some weaknesses in spelling and grammar. The higher attaining pupils do not make as much progress as they could. If they work hard in class they have less homework to do and additional extension tasks are not always provided for them.
- 178 Most pupils are highly self-motivated, are keen to succeed and work hard. They are interested in their lessons and most take pride in completing written work carefully but many are rather passive learners. Pupils' behaviour is generally good though in some classes they waste time a little in chatting. Most work well together in pairs or groups, although many seem to enjoy writing rather than talking, sometimes starting on a worksheet well before the teacher has instructed them to do so.
- 179 One lesson in five in Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. The rest is satisfactory or very good. In Key Stage 4 two thirds of teaching is satisfactory and one third is good. In the sixth form, all teaching is good. Very good subject knowledge is a strength of most teaching which allows competent and confident delivery and gives a clear sense of purpose to the lesson. This is particularly evident in A level teaching where pupils are well challenged by the teacher's questioning. Lessons are well planned, usually with a variety of activities to maintain a sense of pace, and introduced by objectives which pupils understand and against which pupils' learning is assessed at the end of the lesson. Where interesting stimulus material is used and challenging tasks set, pupils respond well and apply much intellectual and creative effort.
- 180 After watching a video film showing a series of volcanic eruptions, a Year 9 class produced very good writing, geographically accurate and engagingly lively, in the form of a commentary on the eruptions. More often, however, much less use is made of visual stimuli. This diminishes pupils' understanding of the scale of geographical processes and engages their interest much less well. Related to this is an over-reliance on worksheets rather than using more stimulating and challenging primary source materials. Many worksheets that are used reduce learning to the accumulation of a series of small elements in which the whole is not apparent until the tasks are complete. Higher attaining pupils are often not given the intellectual challenge of seeing the whole situation at the outset before then seeking to interpret and explain it. Unsatisfactory teaching combined poor subject knowledge with unchallenging worksheets and some weaknesses in discipline so that pupils' did not work hard or learn effectively.



- 181 The leadership and management of the department is good. There is a clear sense of purpose about priorities and a very well presented handbook containing policies, plans and scheme of work. A major weakness is that teaching is not monitored. Formal assessment of pupils' work in relation to Key Stage 3 assessment, GCSE and A level is done carefully and thoroughly. Pupils are informed of their results and are clear how they need to improve their work. There are two well qualified and experienced specialist subject teachers but some non-specialist teaching diminishes pupils' progress.
- 182 Accommodation is barely satisfactory. Of the two adjoining specialist rooms, one is so small that it is very difficult to arrange pupils into groups for shared activities and to allow pupils to use a variety of information sources during a lesson. Resources are unsatisfactory. Although the department tries to plan the use of ICT in pupils' work there is only one computer in the department and access to the school's central provision is difficult. Audio visual resources are inadequate as there is no departmental television and video recorder, no meteosat weather link and the overhead and slide projectors are outdated. This lack of resources contributes directly to the lack of stimulus material in teaching.
- 183 Improvement since the last inspection is good. There is a considerable improvement in teaching, which is now more challenging. There is effective use of ICT within the limitations of the school provision. Pupils' standards of achievement have improved so that all achievement is at least satisfactory and much is good.

## **HISTORY**

- 184 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above national expectations. Pupils have an excellent understanding of chronology; their understanding of history is of a very high standard. Pupils are able to describe specific periods and societies, including beliefs and attitudes of people in the past. Higher attainers are able to identify trends within and across periods. Historical interpretation and historical enquiry, although of good standard, is less well developed.
- 185 Attainment in the 1999 GCSE examinations was well above the national average. Results compared favourably with those of grammar schools and pupils performed significantly better in history at GCSE than in most other subjects. Results have seen an upward trend since the last inspection. Pupils demonstrate good understanding and knowledge of the past, including the process of historical change. They have developed good skills of historical understanding and investigation and can analyse problems presented by historical issues. Particularly in the case of lower attainers, they are less able to judge, argue and debate on available evidence.
- 186 A level results have shown a consistent improvement since the previous inspection with a notable increase in A and B grades. Results are well above national expectation and are commensurate with grammar schools. Pupils have excellent factual knowledge which is used to provide supporting evidence to help answer historical questions. They have good written communication skills and are able to evaluate factual evidence in making historical conclusions. Higher attainers are able to provide a hierarchy of causes and show their links.

- 187 During Key Stage 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, pupils make sound progress through the reinforcement of knowledge and evaluation skills. Extended writing skills are developed through filework and projects across both key stages, although achievement in this area is not as high as it could be. In the sixth form, progress is made through the ability to analyse and discuss documents and sources of evidence, and through practice in examination essays. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Generally they settle quickly to work and listen attentively. Relationships with teachers are based on mutual trust and respect in the majority of lessons. Sixth form pupils have a mature and responsible approach to independent learning.
- 188 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is always satisfactory and, in approximately one third of lessons, it is good. The quality of teaching within Key Stage 4 is always satisfactory. Good lessons are characterised by variety and range of task, quick pace and opportunities for independent and collaborative work through timed exercises. Negative features are over-emphasis on teacher led approaches to learning based too much on textbook tasks, and lengthy introductions and explanations. Within Key Stage 3, pupils remain unchallenged in some groups through inappropriate and outdated materials. Overall, there are few opportunities for independent learning or active participation of pupils within lessons. In the sixth form, the quality of teaching is satisfactory with some successful features. Teaching is characterised by a very good subject knowledge and excellent pupil teacher relationships. Learning is given depth and accuracy through meticulous note-taking and excellent examination preparation. There is still, however, an over-reliance on textbook activities and formal teaching methods. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural experiences are limited by the need for more links with the local community and enrichment opportunities outside the classroom.
- 189 Expectations are high in a significant number of lessons and effective discipline enables close monitoring and support of individuals and groups. However, methods and organisation are not always suited to the needs of all pupils. Learning opportunities are missed through the lack of quality and variety of additional sources of information. Opportunities for independent learning and extensive work are under-developed and affect the progress of all pupils within Key Stage 3 and 4 but particularly the higher attainers. Their needs are not being met as there are few opportunities for choice of task and alternative methods of learning. The inclusion of literacy and numeracy policies and approaches within schemes of work and lesson plans would further develop the progress of all pupils, but in particular lower attainers.
- 190 The history department is well managed. The ethos of the department is focused on raising standards through sound monitoring of pupil progress. Classrooms are not conveniently centralised and too cramped for larger groups which would make the use of computers difficult. The department has made good progress in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection. Learning has been enhanced by detailed and structured lesson plans with clear learning outcomes and emphasis on study skills. These developments have been responsible for the improvement in the GCSE and A level results.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- 191 The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A\*-C was above the national average in 1999 as it has been consistently in recent years. Both boys and girls performed above the national average and over the last three years there has been no consistent difference between their performances. Attainment in A level computing examinations matched national results.
- 192 Standards of attainment are average at the end of Key Stage 3. Attainment in most aspects such as word processing, use of database and spreadsheets is above average because pupils are often well taught and they have sufficient time to study the subject. Standards are not high enough in the use of computers to control devices and in using sensors. The school has insufficient resources to teach these skills. In other aspects of the subject, achievement and progress over time are good in Key Stage 3. Pupils enter the school with widely different levels of experience. In Year 7, pupils quickly learn to use computers confidently and competently for word processing and illustrating their work with pictures. They use the internet to research information for History lessons, such as technology in Roman times and the Battle of Hastings. By the end of the key stage, pupils use spreadsheets confidently and understand their use in business situations. For example, they can model the costs of an archaeological excavation. They make illustrated presentations, using computer software, about world food issues and malnutrition. This helps them to understand the principles and importance of a healthy diet as well as understanding the plight of those who are less fortunate. Pupils make satisfactory progress with learning to write sets of instructions to control events on screen but are not able to use these, for example, to control model traffic lights because there are not enough specialist resources.
- 193 Standards of attainment in Key Stage 4 are above average in most aspects for those who study the subject to GCSE. Other pupils who are dependent on the subject being taught in other areas of the curriculum, do not reach appropriate standards for their age because they have insufficient experience. Pupils do not reach appropriate standards in control aspects of the subject because of the insufficiency of resources.
- 194 Pupils who study the subject as part of GCSE build on previous experience and learning when they use spreadsheets and data bases to provide ICT solutions to solve business problems. For example, they design systems to run a restaurant or to manage a rugby club. They develop desktop publishing skills to design and produce logos and stationery items for the businesses and they use the internet to research information. Achievement is good because pupils are provided with a choice of challenging activities, such as choosing which businesses they work on. By the end of the key stage, these pupils use computers confidently and are able to select and use the most suitable computer applications for the tasks. They have a good understanding of communicating with an audience and select appropriate fonts and lettering styles, setting out their work to have immediate positive impact.
- 195 For those pupils who do not study the subject separately, attainment is unsatisfactory. They do have some good quality learning experiences in some subjects, for example in French, when pupils develop language through researching information from French cookery websites, use CD ROMs to research information in science and study notation in music. Overall, because planned, complete coverage of the National Curriculum is not in place, they are unable to reach appropriate standards for their age. Within this general limitation, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because they are well supported in lessons by teachers who explain tasks clearly and carefully.

- 196 Standards of attainment are satisfactory in the sixth form. Pupils have a good understanding of how computers are used practically in business and industry, for example, for process control in manufacturing. They have a satisfactory understanding of the operating systems and potential of using computers to save time and to solve problems, for example in managing businesses.
- 197 Pupils have satisfactory and often good attitudes to learning. For example, a Year 9 class was enthusiastic about the chance to use specialist software for the preparation of talks on nutrition and a Year 11 class showed positive attitudes to learning and solving ICT problems posed in their coursework. Their respect for the teacher and willingness to concentrate in lessons enabled them to make good progress. Pupils are well behaved in most lessons and take good care of equipment. Generally pupils are prepared to work hard and sustain their concentration. Occasionally, pupils demonstrate unsatisfactory attitudes in lessons and underachieve. Sixth form pupils have mature, responsible attitudes to learning and are confident in asking questions when they do not fully understand or to extend their knowledge. Year 12 pupils take good care to present coursework folders clearly and logically. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress with learning because they are well motivated and teachers provide them with appropriately challenging work and encouragement.
- 198 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In most lessons taught by specialist teachers it is good. Lessons taught by non specialist teachers are mostly effective because they prepare lessons well and are able to communicate appropriate subject knowledge to their pupils. In the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or good in equal proportions and very rarely unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers plan their work well to build on previous skills and knowledge, using interesting and motivating activities. Pupils and teachers benefit from the good support provided by the technician to ensure that lessons run smoothly. The skills of numeracy and literacy are effectively taught within the context of the lesson topics. For example, pupils learn to summarise the information that they take from the internet and, in work on spreadsheets, make calculations using computers. Specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge which they communicate clearly to pupils. In less successful lessons however, pupils are not able to take full advantage of teachers' good subject knowledge because activities are insufficiently challenging and teaching methods are inappropriate. Teachers assess the work of pupils regularly and provide good information to pupils about their progress. Teachers engage sixth form and GCSE pupils purposefully in discussion and provide appropriately challenging work for them. They ensure that pupils know what is expected of them in examinations and provide experience of examination questions which effectively consolidates and extends their learning.
- 199 The curriculum is satisfactory in Key Stage 3. Pupils are provided with appropriate experience to enable them to use computers effectively in other subjects. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in Key Stage 4 because not all pupils have opportunities to study the subject in sufficient breadth and depth. In this key stage particularly, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to study the control element.
- 200 There are satisfactory systems in place in both key stages to assess the work of pupils in lessons where the subject is taught separately. Assessment of attainment and progress is unsatisfactory where the provision is cross curricular only. In separate lessons, assessment information is appropriately used to plan lessons and to guide medium term planning for the curriculum.

- 201 Management of the subject is satisfactory for separate provision. The planning and co-ordination of work in other subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory because there are currently no effective systems in place to manage this. This was an issue in the last inspection. Since the previous inspection there has been satisfactory improvement in teaching. There is now an additional specialist and a technician for the subject.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

- 202 In 1999 GCSE results in both French and Spanish were well above national averages. Generally, girls achieve better results than boys, although it was noticeable that in 1998 the performance gap between the genders narrowed considerably. Results for both boys and girls slipped back slightly in 1999, but the difference between the genders remains relatively small.
- 203 The assessments that teachers make at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that attainment is well above average. Nearly all pupils achieved the national expectation, although again more girls achieved the higher levels. On the inspection evidence, by the end of the Key Stage 3 attainment is above average overall. Pupils can refer to past experience and future plans, they can take part in conversations seeking and conveying information, they can understand a range of written material including some authentic texts and they are beginning to apply basic elements of grammar in new contexts.
- 204 By the end of Key Stage 4, inspection evidence shows that attainment is above average overall. Pupils are capable of sustaining conversations using a variety of tenses. They can produce extended writing, and express and justify opinions across a variety of topics. They have developed a broad vocabulary and can use a range of idiomatic expressions.
- 205 A level results in 1999 were above national averages, with all pupils attaining A-B grades in both languages. The entries were small, and no boys studied a language in 1999. Attainment in lessons is in line with expectations. Clear progress is made from GCSE. Pupils acquire an increasingly broad range of vocabulary. The range and complexity of structures they use become more sophisticated, and they are able to use idiomatic language with confidence. At times the planning of their writing of extended pieces is not clear enough. By Year 13 they are showing an increased ability to structure a written argument and to present and defend a point of view. They show a high level of appreciation of the topics and issues covered in the syllabus, and are able to communicate opinions about them.
- 206 Teaching is good in all stages. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better, with four lessons in five being good or better. There is some very good and excellent teaching. Lessons are well planned. The insistence on the use of the target language by staff for routine purposes as well as practice ensures that expectations are high. The use of a variety of activities and contexts ensures that lessons proceed at a good pace and that pupils are kept on task. Chorus work in both key stages helps pupils improve pronunciation. Material is matched to the needs of the learners, and teachers use a variety of resources well.

- 207 Very good and excellent teaching is marked by the following characteristics. High levels of engagement are brought about by an insistence on the part of the teacher that they extend their contributions beyond the minimum. Imaginative contexts reinforce meaning for pupils and make it clear. Thus, in a Year 9 Spanish lesson, a considerable amount of language was produced by pupils in a simulation of the TV game show “Blind Date”. A sense of urgency and pace exists throughout the lesson. Tasks are relevant to pupils’ interests and are thus more motivating.
- 208 Marking is regular, but comments are not specific enough to be of sufficient help to pupils by showing them how to improve. The department marking policy is under review, and is informed by the school policy. The use of target language comments in marking is inconsistent. Teachers use the results of day-to-day assessment to inform subsequent planning. The strengths of teaching are the careful planning by teachers, the energetic and lively presentation of new language, the imaginative reinforcement of language through context, the insistence on the use of the target language, the variety of activity and the match of material to the needs of pupils. There is occasionally a weakness in the use of time in lessons, with some activities not broken down into sufficiently small steps to keep up the pace, which means that pupils lose momentum and the sense of urgency is lost to some extent.
- 209 Pupils learn well. They are attentive listeners, they acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at a satisfactory rate, and the department’s monitoring systems ensure that they have an awareness of their own progress. They co-operate well in pair and group work situations and produce a good amount of work in all four language skills. They have opportunities to use ICT to support their learning. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs in both key stages is satisfactory. However, subject-specific targets are not set for pupils on the special educational needs register. Teachers know the pupils on the register and are aware of their individual targets. Mechanisms for review are not yet fully in place, making it more difficult to track the progress of individual pupils on the register through the department.
- 210 Pupils behave well in class. They are for the most part orderly and attentive and show positive attitudes to the subject. Where this occasionally breaks down it is directly linked to the teacher’s use of time in lessons – where the lesson does not have a sense of urgency created by tightly sequenced and rigorously timed activities, then pupils lose momentum and off-task behaviour can set in. They show responsibility in that they can work in pairs and groups without the need for close supervision, and can work individually on ICT exercises and remain on task. They respond well to role-play activities and participate well in games and songs. Their exercise books are well cared for, and the work inside usually well presented. Pupils often help each other unbidden. The quality of relationships is high. For example the head of department participated in the “Blind Date” simulation in fancy dress, much to the enjoyment of the group.
- 211 The department is well led by a good classroom practitioner who has vision and a firm commitment to improvement. She gives clear educational direction to the department’s work and leads by example by inspiring good classroom practice. She has created a strong and effective team ethos which means that staff constantly review their approaches and share ideas on teaching methods.

- 212 These positive aspects of the departments' work are not yet fully supported by documentation. Elements of the scheme of work are better suited to the handbook, and there are some omissions in the area of policy. The departmental statement on equal opportunities is minimal, and the section on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is biased towards the cultural aspect, and some of the links to the spiritual aspect are tenuous. The scheme of work meets statutory requirements. It is under review to reflect the changes in the new orders for modern languages in the new National Curriculum, although it lacks overt references to National Curriculum levels and programme of study, or to the use of ICT.
- 213 The departmental development plan follows the school model. Objectives are appropriate and targeted at improvement. Success criteria are not always stated in precise measurable terms. Arrangements for regular formal monitoring the quality of teaching are not yet fully in place. The general departmental review is useful for setting overall targets, but there are limited opportunities for staff to engage in professional discussion about a shared focus with their managers with the ultimate aim of raising standards. The department does analyse pupil performance by gender at the end of Key Stage 3, but do not use national comparative data as a matter of course as a means of identifying potential underachievement. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is embryonic. Baseline assessment of attainment on entry is beginning to be established. A broad understanding of how best to use this information for the purpose of raising standards has yet to be achieved. Staff are beginning to arrive at a good, shared understanding of the National Curriculum levels through a portfolio of exemplar material at the different levels, which is derived from a discussion between teachers about the standard of the work.
- 214 The level of staffing is adequate for the delivery of the curriculum, and there is a good match between staff qualifications and curricular need. The department is housed in a suite of three rooms in the new building, with its own office and storage areas. The level of display, including pupils' work, is high, and the department have worked hard to create an ambience of the target language countries within their area. Accommodation overall is cramped. Two of the rooms are small for the size of some groups that use them. The language laboratory is of a good size, but the inflexible nature of the furniture places constraints on the ways in which the space can be used effectively. Room ventilation is poor. Roughly a quarter of all lessons happen in teaching spaces that do not belong to the department. Some of these spaces are wholly unsuitable for the purpose of teaching a modern language.
- 215 Since the last inspection the department has made very good progress on almost all the issues raised in the report. Learning is more secure, more work is done on pronunciation and there is more extended writing undertaken by pupils. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject have improved, the level of challenge in lessons has increased, and there is a greater variety of teaching approach.

## **MUSIC**

- 216 Standards of attainment in music are above the national expectation at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The school has not entered pupils for GCSE A level for three years. There is one A level pupil in the current year.

- 217 In recent years music has been an unpopular option and comparatively few pupils have chosen to study GCSE music. In 1999 four pupils took GCSE and they all passed with A\*-C grades. Three of the pupils gained A grades. In 1998 seven pupils took GCSE music and five of them gained A\*-C grades. One pupil gained an A grade. Until September 1999 the number of pupils taking instrumental tuition was low and the standards of musicianship was marked by very few pupils gaining Grade V and above in the examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. The standards of orchestral and choral extra-curricular activities are reported to have been lower until recently than those often found in selective schools.
- 218 Near the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils are now attaining levels above the national expectations because they have received, in the current academic year, a rigorous and challenging musical education that has covered, and at times exceeded, the requirements of the National Curriculum. Standards of performance, composition and appraisal are rising rapidly. Standards of pupils' instrumental playing and singing in concerts are rising in response to frequent and challenging extra curricular rehearsals, extended instrumental tuition opportunities and also many performance opportunities. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is appropriate because the teaching is especially adapted to their individual needs.
- 219 Since the previous inspection the department has been revitalised by a new head of department who has rewritten the departmental handbook and schemes of work and has initiated a varied and challenging extra-curricular programme. Many more pupils are participating in instrumental tuition, extra curricular activities and concert performances.
- 220 The teaching of music throughout the school is now very good. It is characterised by enthusiasm, competence, dedication and commitment to the raising of musical standards throughout the school. The A level candidate is being taught how to distinguish the various periods in musical history and is learning to compose in a variety of styles. Teaching is tailor made to the individual and is ensuring that the syllabus is well covered and that the pupil receives challenging targets to improve. For example, the teacher has chosen excellent examples of performances by Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald to teach the key elements of the Blues style and also taught a Year 11 pupil how to write a blues scale and a bass 'riff' with imagination and creativity. Teaching about the classical period to Year 10 has inspired the pupils to want to hear more of the music of Mozart and Haydn because the teacher painted a vivid, interesting and accurate picture of the context and stylistic features of ternary and sonata form. Teaching of the younger pupils is characterised by presenting many opportunities for pupils to make music together and to gain merits and other rewards for working hard and having positive attitudes to performing and composing. Teaching ensures that all pupils have a very good grounding in traditional notation and that all pupils read music as early as possible. The head of music works very closely with the instrumental tutors to make sure that the learning of gifted musicians is appropriately extended in class music lessons.



- 221 Pupils of all ages learn very well in response to the inspirational teaching they receive and the variety of musical opportunities they are offered. Pupils behave well in lessons, support extra-curricular activities enthusiastically and enjoy class music making activities. Many pupils perform in the choir and the orchestra and are keen to sign up for the musical productions. Year 7 pupils worked hard at composing and performing their own rhythmic patterns after having listened attentively to the music of Steve Reich. Year 9 pupils enjoyed listening to the music of Brazil and entering into carnival music with a range of percussion instruments. GCSE pupils are creatively involved as they learn to compose in various styles and as they begin to recognise the importance of chordal progression and harmonic textures within their compositions. The choir sings music from contemporary musicals with good vocal control and diction and thoroughly enjoy the camaraderie of rehearsals. The pupils in the orchestra enjoy playing a waltz of Strauss and work hard to improve their overall performance.
- 222 This is a rapidly improving department which is extremely well led. New schemes of work are comprehensive and cover the National Curriculum thoroughly. They have been translated into lesson plans that enable pupils to benefit from a very comprehensive coverage of the history, form, structure and performance of many kinds of music. The syllabus covers the music of many countries with a strong multicultural emphasis. The head of music and her peripatetic colleagues maintain accurate and useful data on pupils' work. The peripatetic instrumental teachers are integrated into the department. The head of music meets with all of them on a regular basis and ensures that all the teachers monitor and record the progress of their pupils in order to raise the standards of music in the school.
- 223 The limited accommodation for instrumental tuition and the limited availability of computers and software restrict learning opportunities. Much needed computer aided technology would improve access and learning for all pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)**

- 224 In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well above the national average, but below the level expected for selective schools. All pupils who entered the examination gained at least a grade G. In 1998 the results were well above the level expected for selective schools. Standards of attainment are similar to those reported in the last inspection. There is little significant difference between the performance of boys and girls or pupils from different ethnic groups or backgrounds. The A level examination is not taken in this subject.
- 225 Evidence gained during the inspection indicates that attainment in practical activities by pupils near the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly average, and near the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is generally below the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are similar to those reported in the last inspection with the exception of gymnastics, where standards have declined. Standards at Key Stage 4 have also declined since the last inspection.

- 226 On entering the school, pupils' attainment is broadly average, and the majority of pupils make a good beginning in the study of games. This is well illustrated in basketball, where pupils apply newly acquired skills effectively, alongside tactical awareness in small sided games, and in cricket, where the 1999 Year 7 cricket team won the Salford Schools' Cricket League. By the time they reach the age of 14, sound standards in football are achieved by most boys and girls in lessons. Higher attainers perform at an above average standard, and the Year 9 boys' team was runner-up in the Trafford Schools' Soccer Championships. Satisfactory standards in orienteering are gained by pupils, of all levels of attainment, throughout Key Stage 3. Good work is seen in dance, where pupils show imaginative and innovative ideas, as they create and develop their own movement phrase. In boys' gymnastics, standards are below average. Many pupils lack control and body tension, and the quality of movement is poor. A good feature of the gymnastics lessons was the co-operation and trust, which developed through the group work involved in creating a group balance. Planning and evaluating skills develop well in some lessons. Pupils evaluate each others' work, effectively, although they rarely observe, analyse and comment on performance against specific criteria.
- 227 By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment in the core PE programme are good in soccer, but are below average in the other games observed. In volleyball, for example, many pupils have yet to master the basic skills of the game and this inhibits their effectiveness in play. This fall in standards at Key Stage 4 may be attributed to the constraints of the accommodation available for these games, and the lack of clear National Curriculum objectives. GCSE pupils show good standards of practical work and fitness in planning and implementing a sport-specific circuit training programme, and their written coursework reflects an above average knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. However, some GCSE pupils do not take the theoretical aspects of the course seriously, for example, less than half the group observed handed in their homework on time. ICT is used effectively by this group to access a multimedia sports programme and to identify appropriate revision topics. Good standards are achieved by Year 10 pupils who have elected to study dance as a practical option.
- 228 Standards in extra curricular sport are high, with school teams and individual pupils gaining representative honours at district, county and, sometimes, national level. Having won the Trafford Schools' League, the Year 9 boys' football team has been representing Trafford in the Heinz Cup this season and reached the last 32 teams in the country from 600 entrants. The under 16 basketball team has reached the semi-finals of the Trafford Schools' League, and one member has been selected for the under-16 English Schools' Basketball Squad. Two pupils represented the county at the English Schools' Athletics Championships. The school is also well represented by nine pupils in the Trafford Youth Dance Theatre.

- 229 The quality of teaching is satisfactory, resulting in satisfactory learning in Key Stage 3, although there are a few examples of both very good and unsatisfactory teaching. At Key Stage 4 the teaching is at least satisfactory in the GCSE course. However, the quality of teaching in the Key Stage 4 core curriculum course for all pupils is unsatisfactory, overall, because teachers do not plan to teach the full National Curriculum programme of study. The quality of teaching is broadly similar to that observed in the previous inspection. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils, and this creates a supportive learning environment, contributing to pupils' good behaviour and high levels of participation in lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3. Most pupils are well motivated, and have a positive attitude to learning, although this begins to deteriorate in some classes towards the end of Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching and learning is hindered by the department's choice of a 100-minute period for all lessons in Key Stage 3. This is too long for most physical activities to be sustained at a brisk pace, and the pupils' focus and concentration often declines and they are allowed to coast. There is no sense of urgency as pupils arrive, change and assemble for registration and this slow pace often causes a waste of time at the start of lessons.
- 230 Pupils of all levels of attainment make gains in knowledge, skill and understanding in the majority of lessons, because teachers share the objectives of the lesson with the pupils and check that they understand the tasks. In the majority of lessons teachers use a wide range of strategies to enable pupils to improve their work; for example, discernible progress was made in a Year 7 basketball lesson where pupils were given good opportunities to practice and develop their skills. In orienteering, skilful questioning was used to good effect to enable pupils to evaluate their work. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the PE programme and make progress at the same rate as their peers. They receive sensitive support in group work from fellow pupils. Low attaining pupils make sound progress because they concentrate well in lessons, and teaching is planned to allow a careful development of skills, as in soccer, where pupils consolidated their scoring skills effectively. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their work in most lessons contribute well to the development of basic skills. Literacy skills are used as they plan and evaluate their work in orienteering, discuss their group work in gymnastics and learn the technical language of dance. Numeracy skills are put to good effect in work on grid references in orienteering.
- 231 Very good teaching takes place when the teacher has good subject knowledge, as is seen in the teaching of dance at both key stages, together with clear learning objectives and high expectations of the pupils, who are challenged both physically and intellectually at a brisk pace. Such teaching results in pupils responding well to the teacher, the momentum of the lesson being maintained, and pupils making a well-focussed physical and creative effort. In relation to their prior attainment, pupils generally achieve as well as expected in most aspects of the subject. However, in gymnastics at Key Stage 3, pupils do not make the progress that might be expected, because teachers' planning does not give sufficient attention to their prior attainment. The teachers' expectations are low and pupils are not made to work hard enough; poor work is insufficiently recognised or responded to, and planning for progression is not structured in such a way as to improve the quality of the pupils' work.

- 232 Teachers have good knowledge of the GCSE course and clear objectives, with the result that pupils make generally good progress. Effective use of ICT supports and enhances the theoretical aspects of the course. Homework is set regularly and marking is thorough and encouraging. This helps pupils to know how to improve their work. The extra-curricular programme offers good additional learning opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities. Those who take advantage of these opportunities, estimated as more than a third of the pupils, make good or very good progress in their chosen activities.
- 233 Improvement since the last inspection has been generally unsatisfactory, and there are aspects of management and organisation of the subject, that urgently need attention to improve the quality of teaching, in order to halt the decline in pupils' standards of attainment. There is no formal monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum or teaching. Curriculum planning is poor. The Key Stage 4 curriculum does not meet statutory requirements, and pupils do not have equal access to all the activities in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Time allocation for the subject is below the recommended time allocation in both Key Stages 3 and 4, and does not allow the delivery of the National Curriculum in depth. Sixth form pupils have no provision for PE within their curriculum. Assessment is inadequate in its present form, as pupils are not assessed against National Curriculum criteria.
- 234 Staffing is a major problem for the department and the use of 'visiting specialists' is not wholly satisfactory. The appointment of an additional PE specialist would improve the continuity and progression of pupils' learning throughout the school. Poor accommodation for the subject is a major constraint on the curriculum, teaching and learning. The playing fields are badly drained and flood in heavy rain. The only specialist indoor space, the gymnasium, is unsuitable for teaching indoor games such as badminton, volleyball and basketball. Extra-curricular sport is a strength of the department and staff give generously of their time to provide a successful programme open to all pupils.

## **POLITICS**

- 235 A level results have shown a consistent improvement over recent years and are well above the national average, particularly with regard to the percentage of A and B grades achieved. More pupils have taken the subject due to the enthusiastic and continuous efforts to raise standards. Results compare favourably with those of other grammar schools and pupils perform significantly better in politics than in their other subjects. Pupils have a very good understanding of politics. They are able to understand biased argument and the basic principles which underpin American political systems. They have very good conceptual and analytical skills.

- 236 The quality of teaching is always good and is often very good. Good lessons are characterised by clear aims and objectives, varied and appropriate tasks involving key skills acquisition and consolidation of knowledge through accurate and directed learning with emphasis on depth of knowledge and examination technique. Pupil-teacher relationships are excellent and promote a well ordered approach to learning. There are plenty of opportunities for extended writing and research skills with strong emphasis on communication skills through pupil presentations. The use of ICT and internet research is supported and encouraged as a strong feature of planning. Assessment is used to inform pupils of their progress and in the evaluation of schemes of work. Planning and organisation suit the needs and abilities of most pupils. However, opportunities for 'active lesson participation' and alternative learning opportunities for higher attainers need further planning, through enrichment and independent learning programmes.
- 237 The department is well managed and there is appropriate and detailed documentation and sound schemes of work. The strong emphasis on key skills, ICT and pupil-centred learning has been responsible for the consistent improvement in A level results.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)**

- 238 At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 standards of attainment in lessons and in pupils' work are in line with national expectations and the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. They are lower than what could be expected given the selective nature of the school's intake and the high attainment in other subjects. There is no RE in the sixth form.
- 239 At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have some detailed knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. They use key religious terms accurately and convey their understanding articulately both orally and in writing. They appreciate the significance of key figures and writings in the development of religion. However, the overall quality of written work in exercise books is less than could be expected. Much work is left incomplete, and many pupils waste time in lessons. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson on the beginnings of the Christian church, some pupils made effective use of skills gained in English lessons to write good imaginative eye-witness accounts of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, relating it closely to the New Testament text. Others chose to write material unconnected with the topic, write disrespectfully of the topic or write very little.
- 240 At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils can make sound responses to contemporary moral issues such as crime and punishment, and war and peace. They can express opinions based on soundly assembled facts and the merits of their case, related well in some instances to Christian teaching. They demonstrate a soundly developed moral sense. However, only two thirds of pupils complete sufficient work for it to be submitted for validation to the Northern Partnership for Records of Achievement. In the unit on problems of the Third World all the work is identical and therefore largely valueless. Some of the work which is submitted is too brief and has not been treated seriously by the pupils.

- 241 The progress which pupils make varies considerably between year groups and with the commitment of the pupils to the subject. In Year 7, progress is very good. Pupils quickly learn the significance of the major symbols and festivals of the major world faiths, which helps them respect the values and beliefs of others in the multi-faith community of the school. They think deeply and articulate their thoughts clearly. In lessons on the Ten Commandments, they debate in small groups the relative importance of each of the Commandments. They give sensible and sensitive reasons for their choices of innate respect for human life as the driving force of morality and for belief in God as the most profound Commandment. They synthesise information from text and a video film to deepen their understanding of the concept of a relationship between God and his people. In Years 8 and 9 progress is unsatisfactory. Most pupils in Year 8 have a good knowledge of Buddhism and some are able to debate, intelligently, the Buddhist response to the problem of suffering. Excellent work was achieved by three pupils who re-told the story of the origin of Buddhism in the form of a three-page comic strip, beautifully drawn and respectfully and cleverly written. However, much of pupils' written work in Years 8 and 9 is incomplete, there is not a great deal of written work in many books and the marking does not help pupils to know how to make better progress.
- 242 There is a similar variation in progress between Years 10 and 11. In Year 10 progress is very good, but in Year 11 it is unsatisfactory. Pupils in Year 10 follow the short GCSE course. Their thinking is mature and sophisticated and they question their own beliefs deeply. They can categorise incidents as possible miracles, accidents or coincidences, can discern what are the characteristics of something described as miraculous and consider whether miracles are a way of knowing God. Pupils write at length and with very good comprehension. Very little work is left incomplete in exercise books and it is all assessed with helpful comments so pupils know how well they are progressing. In Year 11 pupils are not engaged by the work on a careers education module which takes up part of the time for RE. The content is unchallenging and inappropriate, pupils' attention is perfunctory and they gain no new knowledge or understanding.
- 243 Most pupils are interested in RE and are willing to engage in discussion, although many will join in only when they want to, rather than when the teacher so directs them. Pupils in Years 7 and 10 behave very well, work well together in groups and respect each others' views in debate. Their relationships with each other and their teacher are very good and, again, marked by respect. The behaviour of some pupils in other year groups is unsatisfactory. They produce a constant under-current of talk in lessons and openly ignore their teacher's instructions. They do not reflect upon how their behaviour reduces the learning of others in their class and are not respectful of their teacher. Many pupils are highly self-motivated and they learn in spite of the disturbances which surround them. They begin writing, unobtrusively, as soon as possible in a lesson, ignoring the exposition and teacher led discussion, and complete the written work that will be required of them.

- 244 Three quarters of teaching in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, one quarter is good or very good. In Key Stage 4 one quarter of teaching is excellent, three quarters is unsatisfactory. All teachers have good subject knowledge in the areas in which they are teaching although most are not subject specialists, but this knowledge is not always put to good use. Where teaching is good or better, it is carefully planned with a content and approach that engages pupils. They are challenged by good discussion in which all are involved and by tasks which encourage them to think hard and independently. In a Year 10 class, the sense of intellectual engagement with the teacher in a lesson on miracles enabled pupils to address profound issues about the nature of religious belief. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, lessons are not well timed so that planned work is not completed and topics do not finish properly before another begins. In Year 8 there is no clear boundary between completing the study of Buddhism and beginning the study of Islam; in Year 9 the completion of Hinduism and the beginning of Christianity are intertwined, giving rise to confusion amongst pupils. Instructions are not given clearly so many pupils do not know what they are supposed to be doing and waste time waiting for individual instruction.
- 245 The major weakness of the unsatisfactory teaching is the poor management and discipline of pupils. Teachers are unable to stop pupils talking or diverting into activities other than those which the teacher wants. Pupils are not pressured to complete work – it is accepted that some in Year 8 will not complete their presentations on Buddhism on which others have worked very hard. Pupils learn at the rate at which they choose to learn, not at that which the teacher determines. Many therefore learn much less than they should as they waste their time in class. Others who try hard to complete written work do not have the direction or support from the teacher to which they are entitled and their learning too is diminished.
- 246 The curriculum is enriched in Key Stage 3 by visits to places of worship of the Christian, Buddhist and Muslim faiths. Twenty six pupils exercise their right to withdraw from RE lessons and suitable work is provided for them in the school library.
- 247 The department is unsatisfactorily led and managed. The sense of educational vision and clear direction for the development of the subject is coming from the senior management of the school and has not impacted upon middle management. The scheme of work meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus but is poorly produced, as is the department handbook. The department development plan is vague and generalised.
- 248 Since the last inspection there has been some improvement in the allocation of teaching time in Key Stages 3 and 4. There is also some improvement in standards of attainment in both key stages and pupils have more understanding of religious belief and practice than at the last inspection. In other respects there is no improvement or there is deterioration. There are still significant weaknesses in attainment, with evidence of under-achievement. Some classroom behaviour is inappropriate. Planning, assessing, recording and reporting of pupils' work is still not effective and ICT is not used. Departmental documentation, organisation and self-evaluation still need improvement. At the last inspection teaching was reported as sound. Most of it is now unsatisfactory.

## **SOCIOLOGY**

- 249 A level results are broadly in line with that found nationally but below those of grammar schools. However, candidate numbers are too small for fair analysis of trends across a three year period. Only one lesson could be seen because of pupils' participation in an Industry Week. Based on a limited sample of work, standards of attainment are below expectations for a grammar school.
- 250 Pupils are able to recognise contrasting sociological themes of religion, and are aware of the differences between unit sect denominations and church. They are able to consider the role of religion as a force of cultural change and recognise the multinational nature of society. Pupils have good command and knowledge of sociological investigation.
- 251 On the limited evidence, standards of teaching are satisfactory. Successful features include good pupil-teacher relationships, excellent subject knowledge and well prepared appropriate resources. Pupils are well managed and good discipline allows for individual support and monitoring. Progress although sound, is affected by general lack of variety in activities. There is also little evidence of extended learning opportunities to support subject knowledge, or opportunities to acquire new skills and learning opportunities through community involvement.