

INSPECTION REPORT

Cator Park School for Girls
Kent

LEA area : London Borough of Bromley

Unique Reference Number : 101657

Headteacher : Mrs. Ann Tigin

Reporting inspector : Grace Marriott
3674

Dates of inspection : 4th – 8th October 1999

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Comprehensive
Type of control :	Community
Age range of pupils :	11 to 18
Gender of pupils :	Girls
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Appropriate authority :	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mr. M. Blazey
Date of previous inspection :	March 1995

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Brenda Loydell	Geography	Leadership and management
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Progress in English is good in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form and appropriate at Key Stage 3. The pupils show real enthusiasm for the subject across the school.
- Attainment in design and technology is above average at all stages in the school.
- Over half the teaching seen was good or very good. The teaching is good overall in English, design and technology, history, three dimensional art, media studies, drama and dance. Overall, 92% of the teaching was satisfactory or better.
- The separate sciences of physics, chemistry and biology are well taught at GCSE and A Level.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The curriculum is well-matched to the needs of the pupils, particularly in modern languages and in personal, social and health education.
- The quality and range of work in the Sixth Form is good.
- The very good community links enrich the pupils' education.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including music, dance, drama and sport.
- Careers education prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Where the school has weaknesses

- Attainment and progress in science and mathematics are not as good as in English.
- Assemblies are good, but the school is not fully meeting the statutory requirement to provide an act of collective worship every day for all pupils.
- The school is not fully meeting statutory requirement to provide religious education (RE) in the Sixth Form
- Teachers are not always making enough use of information from assessment to provide work which is well matched to the range of ability in the class.
- The relatively small amount of unsatisfactory teaching is mostly the result of teachers not having high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve or who are less effective in managing difficult behaviour.
- The time allocated to general physical education (PE) and RE in Key Stage 4 is low and this is affecting progress.

The school's strengths undoubtedly outweigh its weaknesses. The governors' action plan, which will be sent to the parents and guardians of all pupils, will set out how the weaknesses are to be tackled.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made steady progress in addressing the key issues of the last report. The development plan now provides a detailed statement of priorities in the context of the school's aims. The whole school assessment policy provides a good framework for assessing pupils' attainment. The electronic registration system has enabled staff to monitor attendance more closely. Unauthorised absence has gone down and there is virtually no truancy from lessons. The school's accommodation has been greatly improved in the previous year by the addition of a new teaching block and this term by the provision of science laboratories. In the core subjects, attainment in English has improved and in mathematics and science it has remained broadly the same as at the time of the last inspection. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
Key Stage 3 tests	D	B	<i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
GCSE examinations	D	A	
A/AS – levels	C	N/a	

The table shows how the 1999 results in the school compare with all schools nationally and with schools with a similar proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. The Key Stage 3 results were below average in national terms but above average in terms of similar schools. Almost 70% of pupils achieved Level 5 or better in English which is a 16% improvement on the previous year. In mathematics 46% achieved level 5 or better compared with 40% the year before and in science 37% did so compared with 30% the year before. The GCSE results overall were well above those of similar schools, though still below the national average. The 1999 GCSE results were better than 1998 particularly English, though science and mathematics results also improved. The small numbers of pupils entering for A Level examinations make comparisons with national figures unreliable but in 1999 the average A Level points score for pupils taking 3 A levels rose from 13 in 1998 to 17.7 which is average

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Satisfactory	English, history, design and technology	
Years 10-11	Good	English, history, physics chemistry, biology design and technology	
Sixth form	Good	English, sciences, GNVQ, history	
English	Good	Sixth Form	
Mathematics	Satisfactory	Key Stage 4	

92% of the teaching was satisfactory or better. 16% was very good and 42% was good. There were examples of very good teaching in English, history, RE, mathematics, art, science, geography, IT, design and technology PE, Russian, and careers. The teaching is strongest overall in the sixth form where over a third of the teaching seen was very good. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is better than in Key Stage 3. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in English, art, geography, history and design and technology and no pattern of unsatisfactory teaching in other subjects. The weaker lessons were spread across a variety of subjects and year groups. The unsatisfactory teaching resulted mainly from expectations which were not high enough and at times, difficulty in dealing with challenging behaviour. In the very good lessons teachers showed a high degree of knowledge, great enthusiasm for the subject and matched the work very well to the needs of the class.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Most pupils are polite and behave well. A small minority is not always well behaved.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and unauthorised absence is low.
Ethos*	The school has high expectations for its pupils. Most pupils have good attitudes to work and relationships are good.
Leadership and management	The school is well managed. The senior management team provides good leadership and share a common sense of purpose with staff and governors.
Curriculum	The curriculum is broad and provides an exceptionally wide range of opportunities, particularly in modern languages and in the Sixth Form.
Pupils with special educational needs	The provision for these pupils is well managed. The targets on their individual education plans are becoming better focused and the pupils are generally making good progress.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for social development is very good and it is good for spiritual, moral and cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The accommodation is much improved, staffing levels are adequate though there have been some difficulties in mathematics and temporary difficulties in RE. Resources are adequate.
Value for money	The school is benefiting from improvements to the facilities for science, IT, and other subjects. Provision in Key Stages 3 and 4 is at least satisfactory and Sixth Form provision is good. Overall the school is giving reasonably good and improving value for money.

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teachers are accessible to parents •Parents are kept well-informed about their daughters' progress •The range of extra-curricular activities, particularly music and sport is good •The homework set is generally suitable to the age and needs of the pupils •The opportunity to choose from and to study a range of languages is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A small minority of parents think that behaviour well with bullying •A few parents thought that the school did not •A few parents are not happy with the amount of •A few parents complained about the book deposit

149 parents expressed their views of the school in response to the questionnaire, and 40 wrote to the inspection team. 35 attended the parents meeting. The inspection team supported the largely positive views expressed. Most parents are rightly appreciative of the opportunities available to their daughters and the information they receive. In general the pupils do not see bullying as an issue and are confident that it will be dealt with. The school tries, and mostly succeeds, to maintain good communications with parents. Most pupils behave well though a small number of pupils are very challenging in their behaviour. It is too soon to say whether the book deposit will have an adverse effect on attainment and progress, but the senior managers and governors are aware that this will need to be kept under review. Homework is generally appropriate to the age of the pupils, though in mathematics pupils in the lower sets are given less homework than the higher sets which could disadvantage them.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to maintain the drive to raise standards the Headteacher, staff and governors should build on the good practice and expertise already in the school to:

improve the rate of progress and raise attainment in science and mathematics;

(Paragraphs 7, 70,71,80,81)

work to raise the satisfactory teaching to the level of the good and eliminate the relatively small amount of unsatisfactory teaching by:

improving the use of assessment to make sure that they provide work which is well matched to the range of ability in the class.

raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve;

make sure that the behaviour policy is implemented as consistently as possible and that staff use the full range of skills to assist them in dealing with the challenging behaviour of a few pupils;

(Paragraphs 24, 25,37,76,90,91,100)

ensure that the school meets the statutory requirement to provide RE in the Sixth Form;

(Paragraphs 27,30,52,141)

In addition the governors should consider including in their action plan:

increasing the time allocated to PE in Key Stage 4

(Paragraphs 10,28,132)

providing more time for RE in Key Stage 4 to teach the agreed syllabus

(Paragraph 29,141)

ensuring that school meets the statutory requirement to provide an act of collective worship every day for all pupils;

(Paragraph 39,52)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

Cator Park School for Girls is a larger than average secondary school situated in Penge in the London Borough of Bromley. It has 1253 girls on roll. It is a 7 form entry 11 to 18 school. The school takes a number of pupils from Lewisham, Lambeth and Southwark. Penge is one of the least affluent areas of Bromley and almost a third of pupils are entitled to free meals which is above the national average. About a third of pupils come from ethnic minorities, and about 10% speak English as an additional language.

Attainment on entry is below average overall, though a small number of pupils are above average. Approximately 15% of pupils are on the special educational needs register which is about average. Most of these are Stage 1 and 2, but 66 pupils are at Stages 3 to 5, including 29 statemented pupils which is 2.3% or about average. Most of the pupils on stages 3 to 5 have moderate learning difficulties.

The school is committed to raising academic standards and providing a wide range of subjects and courses in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. Recent building priorities have been to improve the facilities for science, IT, design and technology and special needs, to provide new teaching rooms for mathematics and humanities and better Sixth Form facilities. The school now wants to improve the outdoor recreational provision

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3

For latest reporting year:

Ye	Boys	Girls	Total
19	0	204	204

National Curriculum Test		English	Mathem	Science
Number of pupils At NC Level 5 or Above	Boy			
	Girl	143	94	77
	Tot	143	94	77
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	Sch	70(54)	46(41)	38(31)
	Nati	64(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	Sch	21(27)	21(20)	10(12)
	Nati	28(35)	38(36)	24(27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathem	Science
Number of pupils At NC Level 5 or Above	Boy			
	Girl	143	115	84
	Tot	143	115	84
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	Sch	70(72)	56(55)	41(42)
	Nati	64(61)	64(64)	60(61)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Percentage at NC	Sch	15(38)	23(8)	18(21)
Level 6 or above	Nati	31(30)	37(37)	28(30)

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest Reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	
1999	0	190	

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils Achieving Standard specified	Boy			
	Girl	86	176	185
	Tot	86	176	185
Percentage achieving Standard specified	Sch	45(32)	93(87)	97(96)
	Nati	48(45)	88(90)	94(95)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or

Units and percentage of *such pupils* who achieved

All those they studied:

	Number	%
S	0	N/a
N		N/a

Attainment in the Sixth Form³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examinations in the latest reporting year:

Ye	Male		Total
19	0	5	58

Average A/AS points score	For candidates entered for 2 or more A Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A Levels or equivalent		
	Ma	Fe	All	Mal	Fem	All
Per candidate	N/a	17.	17.	N/a	6.3	6.3

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

³ Figures in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

National	N/a	N/a	17.	N/a	N/a	2.8

Number in final year of approved vocational		Nu	%
Qualifications and percentage of <i>such</i> <i>students</i> who Achieved these qualifications:	Sc	28	100
	Na		N/a

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions)			
Missed through absence for the latest Complete reporting year :	Author	School	9
	Absenc	National	7
	Unauth	School	0
	Absenc	National	1

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age)		
During the previous year :	Fixed period	1
	Permanent	6

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :		%
	Very good or better	16
	Satisfactory or better	92
	Less than	8

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

Pupils join the school with levels of attainment which span almost the full range of ability, but the information from tests taken at the start of Year 7 show that approximately four out of every ten pupils are working at a level which is below average and relatively few pupils are potential high fliers.

The 1999 Key Stage 3 results in English, mathematics and science were below average in national terms. When compared with similar schools, the overall results were above average. In 1999 almost 70% of pupils achieved Level 5 or better in English which is a 16% improvement on the previous year. In mathematics 46% achieved Level 5 or better compared with 40% the year before and in science 37% did so compared with 30% the year before.

The GCSE results overall were well above those of similar schools, though the proportion of pupils achieving 5 A* to C grades is still below the national average. The 1999 GCSE results are better than 1998 particularly in English, though science and mathematics results also improved. The small numbers of pupils entering for Advanced Level (A Level) examinations make comparisons with national figures unreliable but the A to E pass rate is above the national average. In 1999 the A Level points score for pupils taking 3 A Levels rose from an average of 13 in 1998 to 17.7. Results in vocational courses show all pupils achieving the GNVQ qualification at the intermediate and advanced levels. The school has only just introduced the foundation level of GNVQ into Year 10 and although progress is good, there are as yet no results.

Overall, standards of English are close to the average at the end of Key Stage 3 and average at the end of Key Stage 4. Attainment and progress are better in English than in mathematics and science. Literacy skills are well used across the curriculum. Literacy skills were observed in subjects such as history which draw heavily on speaking and listening, reading and writing but also in less obvious subjects such as design and technology where there were good examples of technical writing. Written presentation is neat and legible, especially in music. In English lessons pupils have the opportunity to develop good literacy skills and many pupils offer original, thoughtful views, which are a delight to hear and read. Their written work is often profound, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In a few English lessons pupils' speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped and they do not express themselves fully in written work. Reading then lacks fluency and enjoyment. Most pupils read a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction using the library and individual subject areas as a resource. Key Stage 3 pupils make appropriate progress and in Key Stages 4 and the sixth form it is good. Middle and high attaining pupils in particular make good progress in Key Stages 4 and the sixth form.

Attainment in mathematics is well below average in Key Stage 3 and below average in Key Stage 4. The numbers taking A Level are too small to make comparisons reliable. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 in lessons, and make good progress in A level classes. Progress was unsatisfactory when pupils were not clear what they were doing, or they had copied down definitions from the board without clearly understanding them. Pupils can calculate mean, median and mode and understand the correct terminology. In Key Stage 4 some pupils are able to stretch a two-dimensional figure and to work out by how much the area of the shape has changed. Numeracy is developed in some curriculum areas in the school, although it is not consistent across the school. Pupils use tally charts, graphs and pie charts well in investigative research and analysis of ideas in all areas of design technology at Key Stage 4. In geography they use line graphs and

predict and estimate distances in Year 8. In English in Year 8 pupils carry out a survey of their favourite books and draw bar charts and pie charts. In information technology pupils use spreadsheets to analyse survey data and to create graphs.

In science at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils achieve a standard of work that is below national expectations, but a significant minority in the top sets are achieving standards which are better than this. In Key Stage 4 the minority of pupils taking the separate subjects of biology, chemistry and physics are achieving standards that are above national expectations. For example in Year 11, they can interpret the graph from their experiments to determine the rate of a chemical reaction. They explain the shape of the curve using their knowledge of the particulate theory of matter and using the graph they can calculate the reaction rate. The good standards in these sets and the improving GCSE results in science indicate that overall standards are rising. This should be further supported now the school has gained adequate accommodation to teach science. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Overall the pupils make sound progress at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Progress is unsatisfactory for many pupils in some of the lower sets at both Key Stage 3 and 4. This is because expectations are lower and their work is not sufficiently challenging. At the beginning of Year 7 pupils are working at a level, particularly in the experimental work, normally found in the upper junior school and are not being challenged beyond this. In contrast pupils in the highest sets beyond Year 7 make good and frequently very good progress. Students in Year 12 and Year 13 consistently make good progress.

In the foundation subjects attainment is above average and progress is good in design and technology at all stages, including the vocational courses in the sixth form. It is above average in art in Key Stage 4, though average at the end of Key Stage 3 and at A Level. Progress in art is good in Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. In GCSE PE, music and the examination courses in IT, pupils are achieving above average results and making good progress. Those who are taking non-examination courses in PE are working at a below average level and progress is not satisfactory. This is mainly because of the limited amount of time available in PE. IT is not used enough in other subjects and therefore pupils not taking an examination course do not make enough progress. Attainment in PE, music and IT is average at the end of Key Stage 3.

Attainment in geography is better than the examination results suggest mainly because of the action taken within the faculty to raise standards. It is broadly average in Key Stages 3 and 4 and above average in the sixth form. Progress is sound overall. In history standards have risen over recent years and are average at the end of Key Stage 3, slightly above average at the end of Key Stage 4, above average in the sixth form and progress is good. Attainment in modern languages is average overall at all stages, but there are variations between the subjects. For example in Key Stage 4, attainment in Russian is above average, French is average and Spanish is below average. Attainment in RE is average in Key Stage 3 and progress is broadly satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 attainment in the general RE lessons seen is average and progress is satisfactory but the limited time allocated means that the pupils are not making enough progress over a period of time.

In the school as a whole where attainment is above average or where standards are rising this is mainly because faculties have made this their main priority and the teaching has focused very clearly on this. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and are making good progress overall towards achieving the targets on their individual education plans. Most of the time they benefit from working in small sets and the use of the 'SuccessMaker' program is helping to raise their standards in basic skills.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

In most classes pupils have a good attitude to their work. In the best lessons pupils react with enthusiasm to skilful teaching and work hard to improve their knowledge and understanding. This is particularly so in the sixth form where the work ethic is excellent. There, students have a disciplined approach to their work and show an obvious enjoyment in what they are doing. In the school as a whole, pupils are confident to work on their own, sharing ideas in design and devising sequences of movement in dance. There is good paired work in all subjects and research teams such as in IT work with purpose. There are opportunities at all levels for discussion and peer evaluation. A minority of pupils do not share the prevailing attitude to work and this can be disruptive of lessons.

Most pupils are polite and well-behaved. The school's discipline policy places emphasis on developing positive attitudes to learning, but this is not always enforced in all classrooms. In the most successful lessons, good classroom management and effective discipline contribute to the improvement of standards. In a minority of lessons where pupils do not understand teachers' expectations, an unsatisfactory response and lack of attention adversely affect progress and learning. In a small number of lessons the poor behaviour of a few pupils disrupted the work of others in the class. The school is aware of this and the behaviour policy has gone some way towards dealing with the problems. The previous report noted that the school had some difficulties with the behaviour of a minority of pupils. The issues raised are still being addressed and new procedures have been put in place this term.

Bullying is not seen to be a problem by pupils. If it occurs they are confident that staff will deal with an issue quickly and efficiently. The number of fixed term exclusions in the previous year was higher than the average. Exclusion is used for serious misbehaviour or for abusive language towards staff. Procedures for exclusion are appropriately followed and parents are involved with arrangements to reinstate pupils in the school. The overall level of exclusion has remained broadly the same over the last few years.

Pupils form good relationships with each other, amongst the cultures and ages, helping those who have newly arrived and who may have language difficulties. Relationships with adults, their tutors and teachers are generally good and they are confident to approach senior staff members for further advice. The school provides opportunities for self discipline but these are not always taken. However, students are self-motivated in the sixth form taking the initiative for instance in modern foreign languages and pupils at all ages frequently show good levels of self-discipline in sports.

Pupils happily take responsibility through their school life. As form representatives they become involved with decision making in the school council and help in staging school events. A third of the sixth form have volunteered to help in the lower school with tutor periods, with reading support and with subjects of their own choice. The prefects drawn from the sixth form take much of the responsibility for organising day to day activities. This they do unobtrusively and efficiently.

Attendance

Attendance at the school is satisfactory and the level of unauthorised absence is low. Registers are taken in accordance with legal requirements and reasons for absence are followed up effectively. Punctuality at the start of the day and for lessons is generally good. When a pupil is late there are procedures to register the facts and detentions are given as necessary. Since the last report, the school has invested in an electronic registration system. This has been well accepted by tutors and provides senior management with early warning of truancy and information on attendance patterns they may be monitoring. The taking of registers in all lessons using this system has virtually

eliminated truancy from lessons.

The overall attendance was just below the national average in the previous year. Slight improvements have been made and only Years 9 and 10 recorded levels of attendance below 90%. The early warning and the closer monitoring of pupil movements are seen by the staff as the means for improved attendance. There is a core of poor attenders in all years. The main reason for authorised absence is medical, but extended holiday absence also has an effect. The school has good relations with the education welfare officer. Because of its wide catchment area, education welfare officers from other boroughs have to be consulted.

The previous report noted a similar rate of attendance including the two main reasons for absence. Since then, the monitoring of attendance has improved and the rate of unauthorised absence has declined. This is shown by better follow up of non-attendance, the effective use of the home school agreement and the use of the electronic registration system. The report also noted that attendance figures were not reported in the governors' annual report. These are now reported.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

92% of the teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory or better. 16% was very good and 42% was good. The school has maintained and slightly improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The teaching is strongest overall in the sixth form where over a third of the teaching seen was very good. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is better than in Key Stage 3 mainly because expectations are higher. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in English, geography history and design and technology and no pattern of unsatisfactory teaching in other subjects. In all the good and very good lessons the relationships with the pupils are good and teachers deal in a calm, confident, pleasant but firm and authoritative manner with any problems of work or behaviour.

There were examples of very good teaching in English, history, RE, mathematics, art, the sciences, geography, IT, design and technology PE, Russian, and careers. In the very good lessons in all stages teachers show a high degree of knowledge, great enthusiasm for the subject and match the work very well to the needs of the class. The balance between direct teaching and pupils undertaking their own research is very effectively maintained. Pupils are challenged and high standards are expected of them. Lessons are clearly targeted and evaluated. In English, the Year 10 lesson on Macbeth and the Year 8 lesson on Romeo and Juliet reflected this enthusiasm. A very good history lesson on the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the form of a debate, was skilfully managed to ensure that all pupils participated and understood the issues at stake. A very good physics lesson in Year 13 was a typical example of the very good sixth form teaching. It was delivered in a knowledgeable and confident way with many opportunities for the pupils to discuss and try out their ideas.

The main features common to the good lessons are that teachers push the class to work at a fast pace, ensuring that no time is wasted. In the most successful lessons the specialist vocabulary of each subject is systematically and effectively taught. The teachers match the work well to the needs of the class. They make objectives clear at the start of the lesson and use reviews at the end and other strategies to re-inforce what has been learnt. In mathematics, for example, a teacher made good use of one group of pupils to explain the work to another group who had missed the previous lesson. They use a range of good teaching styles and questioning techniques to make the girls think hard and draw on existing knowledge. In a Year10 food technology lesson the

teacher asked them questions about the function of gluten in flour when making choux pastry, quietly phrasing and rephrasing the same question until all could answer at their own level. In geography thorough planning and preparation of attractive up-to-date and varied resources contributed to the success of lessons. In modern languages the regular and consistent use of the target language and a wide variety of different activities contribute to the standards achieved. In the good and very good teaching the assessment of pupils' work is used to plan the next stage. Homework is used consistently in all classes to re-inforce and extend what is done in school.

The main differences between the good and satisfactory teaching are that expectations of pupils are not always high enough. In English this was noticeable in the lower sets and in science in the middle and lower sets. A few teachers have a tendency to assume that, because they are teaching a group based on ability, that the work planned for a class will be suitable for all pupils and this is not always the case. In most subjects marking is regular, with grades and comments, but does not always help pupils know how to improve. The results of assessments are not used effectively in all classes to plan future work and ensure that pupils make good rather than satisfactory progress.

The weaker lessons were spread across a variety of subjects and year groups. The unsatisfactory teaching resulted mainly from expectations which were not high enough and at times difficulty in dealing with challenging behaviour. In some lessons the lack of clear explanations of the task before the pupils start work made it more difficult for them to succeed. On a few occasions the work was too easy and pupils did not make enough progress. For example a Year 7 science lesson revised work done in the primary school but did not extend the pupils' knowledge. In other lessons too little time is spent on reinforcing particular skills before moving on to new work. In relation to behaviour, where the teaching was unsatisfactory, teachers were not always applying the school's behaviour policy consistently enough. In contrast to the teaching which was satisfactory or better, they did not always make their own expectations clear and they tended to ignore unacceptable attitudes too often. They were not always able to ensure that those pupils who wanted to work could do so.

In general the teaching of pupils with special educational needs matches the targets set on individual education plans and enables the pupils to make good progress overall. Staff are aware of the requirements of the individual plans and try to translate these into suitable activities for lessons. Where this is most effective, for example music, the targets are made explicit in lesson planning. In other subjects, for example modern languages there is more variation between teachers in approach and the match of work is not as good.

The curriculum and assessment

The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that effectively meets the aims it has identified. Curricular provision is good overall with significant strengths. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and those in the sixth form benefit from a curriculum that meets their academic needs and prepares them for the next stage of their education or employment. The overall planning and content of statutory National Curriculum subjects, the personal, social and health education (PSHE) course and the extra curricular activities serve the needs and interests of pupils well. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and innovative use of computers to provide a structured programme of materials suited to their individual targets. The school does not provide religious education in the sixth form which is a statutory requirement.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to study modern languages. They can choose from French, German, Russian, Italian and Spanish. Higher attaining pupils can also study Latin. All pupils study drama as part of the English curriculum. The time allocated to subjects is mostly average except for design and technology which is above average. The time allocated for PE is inadequate. The curriculum includes an appropriate range of activities but the one-hour lesson each week does not give enough time for pupils to develop their skills and to work in depth. Their

attainment and their progress suffer. IT is effectively taught in separate lessons but few subjects exploit the cross-curricular potential. The uneven provision in subjects and the inadequate time for PE were both highlighted in the previous report as a weakness and remain so.

At Key Stage 4, alongside the full range of statutory subjects and option courses leading to GCSE qualifications, additional appropriate vocational courses have recently been introduced. These include office practice and a GNVQ course at foundation level. These courses are designed to meet specific needs, the latter for pupils who find the burden of 10 GCSEs too great, and provide improved balance and added breadth within the curriculum. The amount of time on the timetable for the teaching of general religious education is below the time recommended by the locally agreed syllabus and is not satisfactory. Similarly, the time allocated to general PE lessons is low.

The sixth form curriculum offers a good range of academic subjects and vocational courses. The variety of languages on offer provides added enrichment. Students choose between A and A/S level examinations, intermediate and advanced vocational qualifications and GCSE courses. Individual time-tabling arrangements provide added flexibility and enable students to select a mix of courses at levels that best suit their prior attainment and career aspirations. However in meeting students' needs for particular courses some group sizes are smaller than the ideal and students miss out on the lively and challenging interaction that can take place between students in larger class sizes. Individual subjects help in developing improved study skills and provide added support for English, mathematics and information technology. Students are well supported by careers counselling, in work experience placements where appropriate and in making applications to colleges and universities. Whilst the school provides formal opportunities for students to consider moral and ethical issues as part of a sixth form conference there is no planned provision for regular religious education. In this respect the school is failing to implement the requirement of the Agreed Syllabus.

There is a well-planned and comprehensive PSHE programme. Careers education, sex and health education and drugs awareness form part of the programme available for all pupils from Year 7 to Year 11 and in the sixth form. The Learning for Life Course offers pupils valuable opportunities to consider the moral, social and health related issues about, for example, drug misuse. The school has actively sought to establish positive relationships with the wider community and local services, many of which support the careers education and work experience programme. Visiting speakers provide good support in the delivery of the pastoral programme. A good range of extra-curricular activities are offered. Approximately a third of the school take part in sports and games fixtures and practice sessions. There are also visits to local theatres and participation in a range of musical activities.

All subjects have good quality schemes of work that promote continuity in learning year on year and a structure that encourages life-long learning. Homework is regularly set, helping pupils to work independently and plan and manage their time efficiently. A strength of the curricular provision, in the school as a whole, is that there is an element of choice for younger as well as older pupils and that this, together with the use of target setting, helps motivation and encourages pupils to take responsibility for their learning. In the sixth form pupils continuously monitor their own progress. They are very well informed, both about the course content and assessment criteria and how well they are achieving.

The curriculum is planned well and enables pupils to have equal opportunities to succeed. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school policy meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator has worked hard to make the individual education plans more manageable and the target setting more precise. She has good systems in place for managing and monitoring special needs provision.

Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in compiling and implementing a whole school policy for assessment. The policy promotes pupils' learning through a range of assessment techniques and by working with pupils to set targets for improvement. The responsibilities to oversee and manage the arrangements for assessment are shared at all levels of the school management team and with pupils. The policy makes explicit reference to the responsibilities of pupils and implicitly the part played by parents and carers. The systems and procedures that are now in place are good.

The quality of marking is good overall with a few inconsistencies. It is particularly good in Key Stage 4 and sixth form classes where the combination of diagnostic and constructive comments from teachers, pupil evaluations and target setting are helping pupils make progress and improve their attainment in examinations. A promising start has been made to a programme of academic tutoring for pupils in Years 7 to 13 bringing together the pupil, parent and form tutor to review achievements and set academic targets. Periodic checks and termly reports provide a useful up-to-date account of pupils' progress and effectively used in discussion with pupils, parents, teachers, form tutors and year heads.

The school has made good use of the information derived from assessment to make adjustments and changes to the curriculum and timetable. For example half hour sessions in languages are very effective in helping pupils make progress. Additional courses specifically designed to meet the needs of particular groups of both lower and higher attaining pupils have been introduced and enrich the scope and quality of the curriculum on offer. On the basis of teacher assessments and National Curriculum tests, pupils are placed in subject based ability groups. The arrangements are soundly based and appropriate for most subjects. However in a number of lessons teachers did not take enough account of what pupils had already achieved to plan the next stage of their learning. The introduction of setting has not removed the need to plan lessons that match the needs of these mixed ability groups. In the lessons where pupils lose concentration and behaviour deteriorates this is often because of weaknesses in planning and assessment. The use teachers make of assessment is broadly satisfactory with some good features at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, but is less well developed at Key Stage 3.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school gives the girls a very good social education through PSHE and Learning for Life teaching. Girls learn about a range of social issues including drugs and sex education. Several subjects such as PE, drama, design and technology, music and history teach co-operation as part of the work and a social skill. This teaching is reinforced with social opportunities such as a good range of clubs, house activities, performances and evenings for old people. The mini-enterprise scheme, Youth Award Scheme, the prefect system and Sports Leadership programme teach older girls the value of responsibility and initiative.

The school provides a good moral education through the high personal standards promoted by the school rules and the expectations of pupils. These values are further promoted through assemblies and the teaching of English, history, religious education and sports. PSHE and Learning for Life teaching provide further opportunities for discussion of issues such as drugs, bullying and abortion.

The school provides good spiritual education. The religious education programme is rich and varied. Pupils study Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. This is reinforced in a variety of subjects as different as textiles and mathematics in which aspects of religious design are considered. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on their experience during assemblies and collective acts of worship conducted over the school tannoy system and in House Assemblies. The themes of assembly include reason and passion, rules and tolerance, beauty, responsibility as well further

consideration of a range of religions. Assemblies are often enhanced with live music. However the arrangements for assembly do not fully meet statutory requirements as the girls do not have daily opportunities to take part in collective worship.

Cultural education in the school is good overall. There is a good range of cultural activities through music, drama, English and sports. The language department covers a wide range of European languages as well as Russian, Chinese and Turkish. In geography girls conduct case studies on cultures of the world. There have been improvements in the provision for multi-cultural education since the last inspection but the celebration and study of other cultures is not yet an explicit feature of subject development planning.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

Since the last report, the school continues successfully to create a secure, safe and healthy learning environment. Pupils are well known by their tutors and are given extra guidance by their form teachers and their Head of Year. Pupils feel safe and are confident to go to the appropriate member of staff if they have any difficulty.

In both key stages, pupils are well informed of their progress by half-termly report sheets covering all subjects. These give targets for improvement. Shorter term report sheets operate if a pupil is causing concern. Parents are involved if their child is on a report sheet and other concerns are expressed in the contact notebook, which are carefully checked by tutors and teachers. Annual reports and the progress cards give further details of progress including grades in each subject and attendance information. The reporting system in the sixth form is excellent, covering effort, quality of work, deadlines and attendance and includes targets and a target grade.

Tutors regularly monitor attendance through an effective system to track absence. The school's expectations of good behaviour are displayed in classrooms. There are also clear guidelines on behaviour management in the discipline policy though not all staff are able to implement these consistently in lessons or around the school. Pupils are encouraged to improve their personal achievements in their work, attitude and behaviour through numerous awards and the house system, which recognises their efforts and successes.

Careers education is good and the careers department is well organised. Pupils are well advised on option choices and the provision of work experience through a wide range of contacts makes a valuable contribution to their personal development. The advice on higher or further education is well structured.

Pupils take part in a personal and social educational programme, which includes issues such as health education, diet and drugs awareness, sex education and in the sixth form, preparation for life after school. The school nurse visits regularly and there are fully qualified first aid staff in the school office, the sports hall and science laboratories. The school follows the Local Education Authority health and safety guidelines and laboratory staff and technicians check equipment. Some health and safety issues concerning inadequate window catches await attention by the builders of the new block. A teacher governor has charge of the overall well being of pupils. Child protection procedures are fully implemented and staff have received training in correct practice. A member of staff has overall responsibility for child protection in accordance with statutory requirements.

Partnership with parents and the community

Most parents are supportive of the work done by the school and find it easy to visit and meet with staff. The introduction of the home school agreement has successfully concentrated attention on standards and means whereby parents can help to make improvements. However a minority of parents is not satisfied with the school. They do not believe that complaints are well handled, and feel that the school is slow to respond to letters. They are rightly concerned, as is the school, about the standards of behaviour of a minority of pupils. A minority also feels that they were not fully consulted over the

introduction of the book deposit.

As in the previous report, the general channels of communication with parents are good. The contact notebook continues to be well used as an effective link between home and school. The annual reports on pupils' progress include a judgement on pupils' personal as well as academic development though they could be more informative. Parents' consultative evenings are well attended and school productions are exceedingly popular. The Friends of Cator Park Association encourages parents and members of the community to be involved in organised events and fund raising for the school.

Excellent links continue to be maintained with the feeder primary schools with some new initiatives such as sharing the IT network with local primaries and use of the literacy and numeracy program known as SuccessMaker. Relationships with colleges of further education are good and the school values its links with the world of work. There are well over one hundred firms who provide work experience placements, many of whom send representatives to the annual Technical Fair held at the school.

The school opens its doors to adults and children in the community who join the Saturday Club. They work together with pupils, in a number of subjects such as cooking, design and technology. The school holds termly concerts and tea parties and visits the elderly in the community. The school newsletter is quite widely distributed. Supermarkets are generous in supplying ingredients and a number of local furnishing stores are helpful with fabrics for design and school productions.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

The school is well managed. The Headteacher and other senior staff provide good leadership and with the Governing Body set a clear educational direction for the school. This is further demonstrated through the leadership and work of Heads of Faculties and Key Stages. Effective teams reflect critically on practice and set targets to improve with a clear sense of purpose among the vast majority of the staff. The Headteacher and senior staff monitored all subjects in the eighteen months prior to this inspection, and middle managers are now continuing this process by observing lessons and scrutinising books to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and raise standards of achievement.

The school's aims, values and policies are reflected through the work of all staff, helped by recent new appointments and revised curriculum management structure. Job descriptions are clear, understood and realistic. Departmental action plans are constructed from regular review, improving the relevance of staff development. The Headteacher collates these into the School's Development Plan, a weighty comprehensive document which is used to guide planning and to measure success. Governor involvement comes through the various sub-committees.

The majority of parents support the school's aims and practice, and the majority of pupils support the school community in many different ways. However, a minority of parents and pupils have yet to be convinced that the school is providing a good education for all pupils. The Governing Body is very supportive, with greater involvement from the chairs of committees than previously. On the whole very good relationships exist in the school among and between teachers and pupils. There is equal access and equal opportunities for all pupils, and those from diverse ethnic backgrounds are well integrated and supported. The school is meeting statutory requirement except in relation to the provision of religious education in the sixth form and in providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

The school continues to enjoy the services of a hardworking and well-qualified staff at all levels. Half the staff have ten years or more experience of teaching. Some of them have been in post for a number of years. Of the newly qualified staff and those who have joined the school recently or been promoted, there are well designed procedures, such as the allocation of a mentor, to help them to assimilate quickly. They benefit from a comprehensive staff handbook and the discipline policy gives clear guidance on the standards of behaviour expected in classrooms. The match between qualification and teaching subjects is good and the deployment of experienced teachers across the sets is satisfactory. There have been some recent staffing difficulties in mathematics which have affected attainment in the subject. These are in the process of being resolved. In religious education there are temporary staffing difficulties which are somewhat limiting attainment and progress.

The support staff, including those helping pupils with special educational needs, are equally well experienced and qualified. They work well with teachers they support and make a positive contribution to the progress of pupils. However, because some are employed by the local education authority and work part time it is more difficult to include them in departmental meetings.

The comprehensive appraisal procedure is carried out through the year by the staff development officer and line managers. These include observation of teaching and pupils' written work. Appraisal is summarised at the end of the year and is the basis for professional development training agreed between teacher and school. The appraisal system is positively accepted by almost all staff. In-service training needs are identified within faculties and tied in with the appraisal system and the school development plan. Most plans are linked to a school initiative such as target setting. The impact of training is monitored by line managers formally and informally. There are areas, for example, implementing the discipline policy where some colleagues need more support in managing behaviour.

Accommodation

Since the last report, a substantial new block has been built. This has provided sixteen much needed classrooms for mathematics and humanities, a special educational needs suite, and a spacious area for the sixth form including common room and kitchen. In addition, the science block has been developed to provide laboratories, which were lacking at the time of the last report. In all subjects, accommodation is satisfactory to meet the needs of the curriculum. Some classrooms are small for the larger sets particularly in music and geography. The IT suite, though well laid out, is also cramped. Classrooms are well timetabled but not all rooms allocated to IT are taken up. Most subjects are now taught in specialist rooms, though the humanities subjects share the new suite of rooms. The condition of the classrooms in the new block is good and has been enhanced by interesting displays. In the older blocks, decoration of classrooms is satisfactory. The sports hall is spacious but it is poorly cleaned and not in good decorative order. There are limited social areas both outdoors and indoors during wet weather. The dining hall though re-decorated has not improved since the last report and the serving and paying arrangements are not well laid out. The school's main playing fields are not extensively used because of the distance involved.

Learning resources

The provision of learning resources is adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum at all stages. As in the last report there continues to be a variation in the level of resources across the departments. There has been an improvement in resources for science and IT and design and technology are well provided. In geography and religious education, resourcing is now adequate but in both subjects, there is a lack of audio/visual aids. In art, there are still insufficient materials such as sketchbooks and stimulating examples of artistic work and design. Resources for PE, which are just adequate, have been added to by outside funds. Many pupils go out of school for extra sport. Spending on resources is low by comparison with similar schools according to national statistics. In general, resources are allocated in accordance with school planning. Funds allocated are monitored by heads of departments. The library is well supplied with a broad range of books that caters for most of the needs of the curriculum. It also provides sufficient computer based references on CD ROMs for investigations. The school has introduced a £30 book deposit scheme per family. This has provoked very mixed reactions amongst parents. It is too early for there to be any firm evidence of the effect of this on pupils who are unable to take books home, but the senior management and governors are aware that they will need to keep this under review.

The efficiency of the school

The school's finances are carefully managed to support its educational aims. Financial planning is closely linked to the priorities of the school development plan, but the school's ability to manage within its budget has been affected by circumstances relating to the new buildings that were largely beyond its control. The current deficit is being systematically reduced without harm to the curriculum or staffing, though spending on resources has been lower than the school would wish. The senior staff and governors are fully aware that decisions must be as cost-effective as possible. They monitor decisions carefully in the light of academic standards, as well as the overall quality of education the school is providing.

The funds available to the school for special educational needs are used effectively to provide a good range of support. The recently appointed co-ordinator has instituted a good system of managing the provision and monitoring the progress of pupils and the staff are efficiently deployed. Similarly the funding available for staff development is carefully targeted towards whole-school priorities, without neglecting the needs of individuals. Staffing and resources are all well deployed and managed. The premises are also well managed.

Financial administration is good. The school has appropriate systems in place and the internal controls are supported by thorough monitoring of expenditure by the governors' Finance Committee. The minor items identified on the most recent auditors' report have all been dealt with.

The school is beginning to benefit significantly from improvements to the general accommodation and facilities for science and IT. In the light of the attainment on entry and the attainment and progress in the core subjects, the school is providing reasonably good, and improving, value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 the test results show pupils' attainment was well above schools with a similar background, and close to the national average. This is an improvement on previous years. In 1999 the English GCSE results were better than the national average for all pupils and close to the national average for girls. When compared with schools with a similar background, the results are above average. The 1999 results show an improvement in attainment in English, drama and media studies. In the sixth form, attainment at A Level is below the national average though results for 1999 indicate an improvement.

The inspection findings show that attainment in English is average. By the end of Key Stage 3 the progress of pupils is appropriate and at the end of Key Stages 4 and the sixth form it is good. Middle and high attaining pupils in particular make good progress at the end of Key Stages 4 and the sixth form.

The literacy policy receives a high priority. The Special Educational Needs Department organises a 2-week literacy Summer School for the new Year 7 intake and staff from all departments help and take part. Years 7 and 8 have a literacy lesson once a week and use it for quiet, sustained reading and reading aloud. This is monitored and recorded. Pupils are comfortable and secure in this lesson; it is a natural progression from their experience of the literacy hour at primary school.

Overall, standards of literacy are sound. There were good examples of technical writing were seen in design and technology. In modern languages there is an effective use of grammar in the target language. Confident, articulate pupils were noticeable in English and history and good literacy skills were observed in subjects which draw heavily on speaking and listening, reading and writing. Written presentation is neat and legible, especially in music. In English lessons pupils have the opportunity to develop good literacy skills and many pupils offer original, thoughtful views, which are a delight to hear and read. Their written work is often profound, especially at Key Stages 4 and the sixth form. In a few lessons pupils' speaking and listening skills are undeveloped and they do not express themselves fully in written work. Reading then lacks fluency and enjoyment. Most pupils read a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction using the library and individual subject areas as a resource.

The last inspection highlighted assessment, the use of pre-20th century literature and access to IT as issues for the faculty to address. All of these areas have been acted upon. There is a detailed, workable assessment policy, pre-20th century literature is a regular feature and all classes have regular access to IT.

The teaching is good overall and there was no unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection. The vast majority of lessons are good and very good at Key Stage 4 and all are good and very good in Years 12 and 13. English lessons are characterised by the teachers' zest and love of the subject. A Year 10 lesson on Macbeth and a Year 12 lesson on Ghosts by Ibsen reflected this enthusiasm. Pupils are challenged and high standards are expected of them. Lessons are clearly targeted and evaluated with appropriate planning and structure. The teachers catered for different abilities in each lesson and use a range of teaching and learning styles. Pupils are encouraged to think. The best lessons fizzed with excitement and paused for reflection and recollection. Romeo's first meeting with Juliet was evocatively re-created in a Year 8 lesson using the lovers' dialogue and classical music. In many

lessons the pupils were required to undertake extensive research in order to place a text in context. They did this thoroughly using the history department, the library, the Internet and encyclopaedias. The pupils respond well to the challenge of good and very good teaching. In a minority of lessons where high expectations were not always evident, particularly in lower sets their concentration and behaviour lapsed at times when idle talk was tolerated and the pace of the lesson was inappropriate.

The curriculum is relevant and stimulating. The contribution of drama and media studies both separately and in English lessons informs pupils' progress. Extra-curricular activities enrich and extend pupils' involvement and enthusiasm. An after-school class for pupils who were expected to gain a grade D at GCSE resulted in all these pupils gaining a grade C. Assessment is constructive, ongoing and informs pupils' progress putting a true value on their work. A reflective, spiritual element was seen in some lessons utilising music, movement and drama. Pupils study the effects of bullying, racism and gender stereotyping in a sensitive, mature manner. The English faculty promotes an atmosphere of open-mindedness and empathy for all human beings.

The Head of Faculty has a clear vision for the subject, what she wants the pupils to achieve and how that will happen. Faculty staff share the same commitment. Teachers work very hard and are focused in their determination to help the pupils attain the highest possible standards.

Mathematics

At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' standards of achievement in mathematics are well below the national average. GCSE results are below the national average for maintained comprehensive schools and below national averages for girls in maintained schools, though well above those of school with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Pupils make satisfactory progress between Year 9 and Year 11 in national tests and examinations, but results remain below the national averages. Pupils taking GCSE statistics as an option subject achieved better results in 1999 than in 1998, although there are no national averages for 1999. A Level mathematics results are below national averages, and have been in previous years except in 1997, when they were higher. However, the small numbers involved make comparisons unreliable. Results of the one or two pupils who take further mathematics are very good with all pupils entered obtaining grade A.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall at Key Stages 3 and 4 in lessons, and make good progress in A level classes. GCSE resit classes are not well organised yet and progress is not satisfactory. In Year 7 pupils are consolidating work carried out in primary school and extending it. In Year 9 pupils investigate patterns made with pentominoes and develop their spatial concepts. Pupils can calculate mean, median and mode and understand the correct terminology. In Key Stage 4 some pupils are able to stretch a two-dimensional figure and to work out by how much the area of the shape has changed. In Year 11 all pupils carry out a practical task for their GCSE coursework. During the lessons, pupils make sound progress in using the data to find conclusions of their practical task. One task was to find the "average" pupil in a year by asking pupils' questions about themselves and analysing the data. Progress is unsatisfactory when pupils are not clear what they are doing, or they copy down definitions from the board without clearly understanding them

The school intends to implement its numeracy policy for the whole school in the year 2000. Numeracy is developed in some subjects, though not consistently within the subjects or across the school. Pupils use tally charts, graphs and pie charts well in investigative research and analysis of ideas in all areas of design and technology at Key Stage 4. In geography they use line graphs and predict and estimate distances in Year 8. In English in Year 8 pupils carry out a survey of their favourite books and draw bar charts and pie charts. Geography uses measurement in drawings and interpreting plans and maps. They also make tally charts and bar charts to display data of travelling to school. In IT, pupils use spreadsheets to analyse survey data and to create graphs.

Pupils' attitudes in mathematics are generally good. In more than half the lessons pupils behave well, listen quietly when the teacher is working with the class, and concentrate well when working individually. Pupils willingly answer questions and are positive about their work. There are good relationships with the teacher and with other pupils. Some pupils are confident to give answers or to ask for help for themselves and offer help to other girls in the class. In a small minority of lessons pupils' attitude is unsatisfactory. In these lessons pupils chatter while the teacher is talking to the class, and a few girls are particularly rude. When the pupils are working in groups the few disruptive girls disturb other pupils who are trying to work. Occasionally pupils work and talk to each other at the same time, thereby reducing their work output and disturbing others in the class.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in approximately half the lessons, and unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons. It is very good in a small minority of lessons. Where it is very good, the teachers sets a very fast pace to the lesson. They makes their objectives of the lesson clear at the start of the lesson and prepare work for all pupils to ensure no time is wasted. In one lesson the teacher made good use of one group of pupils to explain the work to another group who had missed the previous lesson. Some teachers ensure that pupils practise work from the text book until they understand the concept, and then move on. Where there are weaknesses in the teaching pupils are all expected to work through the same exercise, even if they understand the work well. Sometimes pupils copy work from the board without understanding it. Occasionally there is too little direct teaching and the pace of the lesson is too slow. In some lessons pupils are insufficiently challenged. Sometimes the teacher does not give sufficiently clear explanations of how to tackle a problem before she sets them to work on an exercise. The management of pupils is inconsistent within the department. Usually it is satisfactory or good. However, in some classes teachers tolerate too much talking and a slower pace to the work. Where pupil management is weaker pupils can disrupt others.

Homework is set regularly and when carried out it often enhances pupils' learning. However, some pupils do not have similar opportunities to others in the class as they do not have a book to take home for their homework and instead have a photocopy of the exercise set. Pupils in the lower sets are given less homework than the higher sets, which does not give them equal opportunities to make the same progress as pupils in the higher sets. On a few occasions homework was set early and some pupils finish it before the end of the lesson.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and satisfies statutory requirements. All teachers mark pupils' work according to the school assessment policy. However, this day-to-day assessment does not sufficiently highlight pupils' strengths and weaknesses and does not inform teachers' lesson planning sufficiently. Good provision is made for the high attaining pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11. They have one lesson where they are withdrawn to study higher level work for the standard assessment tasks in Year 9 and for GCSE. The number of pupils in the lowest set in each year is small and supports pupils well in their learning. Class sizes in some classes in Key Stages 3 and 4 are rather large. However in the sixth form classes are small.

The Head of Faculty and the senior management team monitor the quality of teaching. Recent staffing difficulties beyond the control of the school, have had an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and on attainment and there is currently an action plan to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The last report stated that the department should consider ways of extending its teaching strategies to further enhance pupils' performance. There has not been enough improvement in this area, and pupils' performance has not improved. The lack of pace and of variation in activities within lessons is still a feature of some lessons and pupils' confusion still sometimes goes unrecognised. All teachers now need to improve progress from satisfactory to good, thus raising achievement, particularly for the average attainers.

Science

In tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 pupils' results are well below the national average. At the end of Key Stage 4, in the 1999 GCSE examinations, the number of pupils achieving A* to C in Science GCSE examinations is below the national average though results improved this year. The results in the set which takes examinations in the separate subjects of biology, chemistry and physics have been either in line with or just below the national average over the last two years. The good standards seen in the top sets and the improving GCSE results in science indicate that overall standards are rising. This improvement should be further supported now the school has gained adequate accommodation to teach science. This situation is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

Standards of attainment are good in Year 12 and Year 13. In examinations this year for A level chemistry all students passed, with over one third achieving grade A or B. Similar standards were achieved in A Level physics. The pass rate for A Level biology was below the national average but a significantly larger number of students took this examination.

From the evidence of the inspection, at Key Stage 3, pupils achieve a standard of work that is below national expectations. Whilst this standard relates to the majority of pupils, a significant minority in the top sets are achieving standards which are better than this. Standards are the same at Key Stage 4. Overall pupils are achieving a standard of work that is below national expectations but the minority of pupils taking the separate subjects of biology, chemistry and physics are achieving standards that are above national expectations. For example in Year 11, they can interpret the graph from their experiments to determine the rate of a chemical reaction. They explain the shape of the curve using their knowledge of the particulate theory of matter and using the graph they can calculate the reaction rate. Standards of attainment are good in Year 12 and Year 13. An example of this is in a physics lesson in Year 13 demonstrated that the pupils know the criteria needed to form a main sequence star and they can explain the formation of this type of star. They can use the laws of energy and fusion to explain brown dwarfs and other astrophysical phenomena.

Overall the pupils make sound progress at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 but progress is unsatisfactory for many pupils in some of the lower sets at both Key Stage 3 and 4. This is because expectations are lower and their work is not sufficiently challenging. At the beginning of Year 7 pupils the work set particularly in the experimental work, was at a level normally found in the upper junior school and the work was not enabling them to make further progress. In contrast pupils in the highest sets beyond Year 7 make good and frequently very good progress. Students in Year 12 and Year 13 consistently make good progress.

Most pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn. They sustain concentration and they are prepared to contribute well in class discussions. They answer questions thoughtfully and complete their practical work carefully and safely. At Key Stage 4 a minority of pupils are noisy in class and call out distracting and irrelevant comments out of turn. They lack concentration and do not do enough work. Pupils in the sixth form are highly motivated and clearly enjoy their studies. They ask far-reaching questions and confidently explain difficult concepts.

Overall the quality of teaching is sound, but at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 it ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. When teaching is very good the lessons are interesting and set high standards of learning appropriate for the ability of the set. These lessons have a lively pace and the organisation of the laboratory and management of the pupils is very good. Unsatisfactory management of pupils and insufficient challenge leads to the unsatisfactory teaching seen at both key stages and is found in the teaching of some middle and lower ability sets. The quality of

teaching in Year 12 and Year 13 is always good and often very good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge. For example the physics lesson already mentioned was delivered in a knowledgeable and confident way with many opportunities for the pupils to discuss and try out their ideas.

There are sound schemes of work and the pupils' work is regularly assessed and monitored. The department is managed effectively and efficiently. The laboratory technicians make a very valuable contribution to the smooth running of the department. However temporary problems arising from the incomplete refurbishment has led to some equipment being faulty and unchecked before being put out for use.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

The 1999 teacher assessments of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 96% of pupils attained standards in-line with or above expectation. These assessments were not supported by evidence available during the inspection. Whilst in the lessons seen attainment of the majority was in line with expectation, for a significant minority standards were lower.

Attainment in the GCSE examinations in 1998 was well above the national average for all pupils in maintained secondary and maintained girls' schools. In the most recent examinations attainment was lower but the overall trend is upward. The school has appealed against the 1999 results and at the time of the inspection the outcome of the appeal was not known. Examples of work show high standards of personal research and investigation. Large scale painting and three-dimensional work are evidence of extended study, alongside skilful and imaginative use of different materials and techniques. A high percentage of pupils attain the higher grades. Attainment in lessons suggests similar high standards with the exception of a minority of pupils who underachieve because their record of attendance is so poor.

Because the number of pupils taking A Level art and GNVQ art and design is usually small, it not possible to identify trends in results, nor to make valid comparisons with results nationally. All of those entered for A Level examinations have passed and some have attained high grades. Attainment in A Level lessons shows lower standards than in previous years. There is a lack of academic rigour in the quality of drawing and personal research and in interactions between students and teachers. Attainment in the intermediate GNVQ classes is average overall. Pupils can access information about artists and designers from books and computers and provide thoughtful explanations of social and historical influences on their work.

Pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. Progress is good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Where teaching was most effective, pupils of all abilities were highly motivated, challenged by the task and achieved success. The teacher's enthusiasm, shared learning targets and time deadlines, helped generate a sense of urgency and purpose. This worked particularly well in a Year 9 class where pupils were asked to construct a shoe out of paper and sticky tape. The teacher prepared them well for the task by first showing an example then asking searching questions to consolidate their understanding about the methods of construction. Working in pairs pupils remained focused and able to work out solutions to any problems of construction that arose. In contrast, where teachers had too few strategies to keep pupils on task, and learning objectives were not made explicit, the lesson lacked focus. Pupils were unable to sustain their interest and the deterioration in their behaviour hindered the progress of others in the class. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 clearly enjoy the opportunity to express ideas and personal opinions through their artwork. They gain an understanding of art in different cultures and times, through for example, their studies of the work of cubist painters and sculptors and Pop Art. Detailed comments on their progress, supported through marking, evaluations and target setting activities, have a positive impact on attainment and progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Progress could be further enhanced if major exhibitions were visited as part of the course or practising artists invited into the school, and, in all years, sketchbooks had a higher profile.

Pupils' responses are good overall. They take homework seriously and have pride in their work. Pupils' learning skills, for example their oral contributions, research and presentation skills, are weak and need to feature more prominently in teachers' lesson plans.

The quality of teaching is sound overall and a third of the teaching is very good with excellent features. The strengths, where pupils' progress in lessons is marked, are characterised by good quality longer-term plans and precise short-term learning objectives that arise from the assessments of pupils' work. Where the introduction to projects is supported by a range of resources, selected to stimulate pupils' interest and encourage independent study, their progress is good and attitudes are very positive. Teachers' specialist skills are a particular strength. In Years 10 and 11 the evaluations on pupils' records provide useful information for planning and improvement but at Key Stage 3 insufficient use is made of day-to-day assessments to plan the next stage of learning. In all year groups strategies to improve and develop pupils' critical skills, and the opportunities to practise using a specialist vocabulary, are limited in the department as a whole, although some excellent examples were seen.

Departmental documentation is sound. Teacher assessments, both during and at the end of Key Stage 3, need improvement. In lessons assessment techniques are underdeveloped and assessments of attainment of Year 9 pupils confusing. The arrangements for monitoring standards, curriculum coverage and attainment at Key Stage 3 are weak and need tightening. Unsatisfactory progress has been made on introducing IT into the art curriculum.

Design and technology

Standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 are above average. End of key stage test results are above the national average. In the majority of lessons the girls make good progress. Good investigative design ideas are explored in Years 7 and 8, with clearly labelled sketches to a high standard of graphical design in most of the specialist areas. Evidence from their practical outcomes shows that in most areas they can use a wide range of tools with increasing accuracy, for example when making nets in graphics and handling knives and electric mixers when designing their burgers in food technology.

In Key Stage 4 GCSE grades have greatly improved since the last inspection and are on an upward trend. Results were well below average in 1997, just below average in 1998 but in 1999 results are above the national average, with very good results in food technology and resistant materials. Evidence from their practical work and design folders show the majority make good progress. In resistant materials there are some very good design ideas using free sketching, good annotated drawing at the development stage, step by step designs with accurate measurements and good analytical and evaluative skills, used to the full. They make their designs to a high level of precision and accuracy, good quality finish, for example they creatively designed and made a child's wooden toy using a cam mechanism. A Level results in design and technology are good and have improved since the last inspection. Good progress is made. Year 12 girls were working at a good level with their isometric drawings of an iron. Year 13 girls were animatedly discussing and sharing their development ideas.

The girls' response to teaching is mostly good or very good. They respond well to their teachers' enthusiasm e.g. an A level student was so inspired by her design of the wheelchair she had lain awake in the night trying to solve a problem of the wheels. The majority of the girls work hard and some are stretched to their potential. Collaborative working is a strength for example in a Year 7 class, a self motivated group of five girls took responsibility for their own organisation by allocating jobs so that all had an equal role and input into the design of their bag. The majority of girls behave well and enjoy all aspects of designing and making in most material areas of design and technology.

The teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. The majority of the teachers are well motivated, competent, confident, lively specialists who set high expectations, pitching the lessons at

the appropriate level of interest for the girls. They use a range of good teaching styles and questioning techniques to make the girls think hard and draw on existing knowledge. In a Year10 food technology lesson the teacher asked them questions about the function of gluten in flour when making choux pastry, quietly phrasing and rephrasing the same question until all could answer at their own level. Relationships with most of the girls are very good, with much humour and fun. The majority of the teachers are highly organised, adhering strictly to health and safety rules. Teamwork within the department is a strength and is well developed. They have a clear and imaginative vision for the future.

Geography

The geography Key Stage3 teacher assessments for 1998 and 1999 are below national averages. The 1998 Key Stage4 GCSE results were well below national averages, 26.4% A* to C grades compared with 55.4%. According to the department's analysis the reasons why the1998 result was below the previous 3 years, were a new tiered syllabus and several changes of teachers. The 1999 results improved to 39.6% A* to C grades, still below the national average. Examination results for the sixth-form vary between years, with small numbers entered. 'A' level results for 1998 were very good, while 1999 were poor. GNVQ Advanced and Intermediate Leisure and Tourism are good, with mostly merits and all passing.

Attainment in lessons is higher than the examination results indicate, but varies with year group, ability set, teacher and topic. Geography contributes well to literacy by exercising reading skills and extended writing for the higher attainers, and to numeracy in drawing and interpreting different types of graph. There is less evidence of frequent practice in map-work or fieldwork skills. Overall attainment is average in lessons in Key Stage3 and Key Stage4, and good in the sixth-form.

Progress is sound or better in all key stages though there are variations. Progress is good where pupils consolidate previous knowledge and understanding through the teacher's initial review, eliciting correct geographical terms from the pupils. Involvement in self-assessment and setting targets also leads to good progress, allowing pupils to become more responsible for their own learning. Pupils with Special Educational Needs made good progress where work was structured in simple small steps, such as the Year 7 work on bar charts, hypothesising about environmentally friendly ways of travelling to school. Higher attainers made better progress when stretched and challenged to think, with more difficult concepts and a faster pace of work.

Attitudes to learning are good on the whole, and pupils enjoy geography, showing interest and involvement. Class rules of behaviour and presentation are clear, explicitly stated and reinforced, accepted by the majority of pupils who are quiet and attentive when the teacher or another pupil is speaking. However in a few classes there are a small minority of rude, disruptive, or inattentive pupils. Group work exercises are effectively used, such as the Holderness coastal defences role play unit in Year 10, and pupils collaborate well in teams. Relationships are very good, with each other and with the teachers. Greater interest and enthusiasm is shown when current news events and places are used in teaching and learning examples, such as the recent earthquakes in Turkey (Year 11) and mention of Comic Relief work in less developed countries in the Year 9 work on population. The awareness and use of pupils' diverse cultural backgrounds and the use of initiative, research skills and the capacity for personal study are not yet used enough to help improve pupils' response.

Teaching was at least satisfactory and most of it good across all teachers, year groups and sets, with some very good lessons. All geography teachers have very secure knowledge and understanding with enthusiasm for their subject and global concerns. The best teaching was characterised by thorough planning and preparation of attractive up-to-date and varied resources, with good control and organisation of pupils. All teachers had good relationships with the majority of pupils in their classes, and dealt in a calm, confident, pleasant but firm manner with any problems of work or behaviour. Expectations of pupils were not always related to prior attainment, and were inconsistent across sets in any year. There were many good global and national case studies, such as the Year 9 studying causes and effects of flooding in Bangladesh and the Year 10 studying coastal erosion and deposition in Britain studies, but insufficient evidence of local scale studies. Marking was regular, with grades and comments, however often these did not help pupils know how to improve. Assessment was not always related to explicit criteria, and did not always inform short-term or long-term planning. The department is developing assessment tasks and moderation of National Curriculum levels. There were examples of good, varied homework, often used to develop learning subsequently.

The strengths of the geography department are the clear leadership, comprehensive schemes of work, and good teachers. The accommodation is now good, and resources, though limited by reduced funding, are well used and monitored. The use of IT in geography needs to be further developed. Sharing good practice, developing the strengths and expertise of each teacher and developing greater consistency can further raise standards of learning

History

Progress in history is good in all stages. The end of Key Stage 3 attainment is average, by the end of Key Stage 4 it is slightly above average and the 1999 results are the best the school has achieved and therefore better than at the time of the last inspection. The A Level results are better than the national average in terms of the percentage pass rate and two thirds of pupils achieved the higher grades.

In Key Stage 3 the emphasis is on developing both knowledge and skills. A very good Year 9 lesson on trench warfare showed their depth of knowledge and their ability to apply what they knew to the questions. A very good lesson showed that pupils ask pertinent questions to establish the age and purpose of a wide variety of original artefacts ranging from a World War 2 gas mask to fragments of Roman pottery. The introductory course in Year 7 emphasises the importance of evidence and much of it is effective, however, the use of evidence with no obvious historical content is confusing for a number of pupils. The course also takes up all of the first half of the autumn term and could be condensed into a shorter period of time with no loss of quality.

History is a popular option at GCSE and A Level. The Year 11 lesson on the partition of Palestine in 1948 showed that the pupils had a good understanding of the main issues and in a group discussion they were able to put forward cogent reasons for the differences between the attitude of the Jews and Palestinians. A Level pupils were using a wide range of evidence in support of their arguments and were evaluating effectively the validity of the views of different historians on England in the mid sixteenth century.

In all year groups the pupils' attitudes to history are good and they behave well. They are interested and attentive in class and work well individually in pairs and in groups. The Year 7 pupils were handling the various artefacts sensibly and handling them with care. In Year 11 they collaborated well over group presentations and in Year 8 the paired work helped pupils to establish their understanding of different social classes.

The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in about a third of lessons. There are no significant differences between the key stages. In the good and very good lessons the teaching styles keep the pupils motivated and interested. The very good imaginative presentation on Trench Warfare in a Year 9 lesson on the First World War stimulated the interest of the pupils and helped them to understand the importance of this aspect of warfare. The use of specific targets for a Year 8 lesson was effective in helping pupils to understand the purpose of the lesson and how to improve their work. The teachers managed behaviour well, using their judgement effectively to praise and encourage appropriately and making the ground rules very clear. When dealing with some challenging behaviour their judgement of what to deal with quickly and what to ignore was effective. The main difference between the good and satisfactory teaching is that the pace of the satisfactory lessons is slower and less is accomplished.

Assessment is good. Good marking leads to the higher standards though at times the marking is not precise enough to help the pupils to improve their work. Sensible homework extends the classwork and also helps pupils prepare for new topics. Work in history supports literacy through note-taking, discussion, role play, letter writing and the use of reference books. The staff are aware of the need to develop the use of IT to support history

Work in history is well managed. The recently appointed Head of Department has worked hard with the rest of the staff over the last year to update the schemes of work to provide a good basis for planning. She and her colleagues have achieved a great deal in a short time and are now working on improving the planning for the pupils with special educational needs. She has done some evaluation of the quality of work and has planned opportunities to observe and monitor teaching and learning in classrooms.

Information technology

Pupils enter the school with varied experiences of information technology and many have standards of achievement below expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3 most demonstrate attainment in line with national expectations and commensurate with their abilities. Attainment in Key Stage 4 is less satisfactory. The examination results for pupils undertaking Office Applications and RSA CLAIT courses are good. For other pupils the provision of IT through cross-curricular work does not always enable them to reach the expected standards. Students studying for GNVQ qualifications reach appropriate standards in IT key skills.

Progress in Key Stage 3 is usually satisfactory and often good. In lessons where resources and activities are well matched to pupils' need they make good progress and are well motivated. Pupils see computers as a normal part of their learning. The planning of IT activities in Key Stage 3 is sound, covering all National Curriculum requirements and ensuring that work builds progressively year on year. Other subject areas are encouraged to develop their use of IT to support learning. A Year 9 unit on IT in Society enables more able pupils to extend their skills in information gathering and presentation through a structured approach that extends their research and information gathering skills. The resulting newspaper-style reports are produced to a high standard by many pupils. All areas of the IT curriculum in Key Stage 3 are well developed, especially the use of word processing and desktop publishing, though the restricted range of software, particularly for database activities limits access for less able pupils.

Access to ICT in Key Stage 4 is through cross-curricular work except for pupils undertaking Office

Applications or RSA CLAIT courses. Progress is satisfactory and often good for those pupils on accredited courses. It is less satisfactory for other pupils who receive varied experiences that are dependent on their subject choices, and which are not yet effectively monitored. The activities offered cover all necessary elements of ICT but provide too few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills to levels beyond those attained in Key Stage 3 or to gain recognised qualifications in IT. Progress for sixth form students in developing their IT key skills in GNVQ courses is satisfactory. Social, economic, ethical and moral aspects of the use of computers are explored in some detail, especially in Key Stage 3. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good and effectively supported by the use of the SuccessMaker individualised learning system.

Teaching is almost always satisfactory, often good and occasionally it is very good. Most teachers involved in the subject are non-specialists and have a varied knowledge of the IT curriculum. They are supported by a programme of training available to all teachers in the school. This will be extended to encompass the New Opportunities Fund IT Training scheme.

Pupils are generally well behaved and motivated to work hard. Only rarely does misbehaviour and excess noise impinge on the progress of a lesson. Relationships in lessons are satisfactory; they benefit from the obvious enjoyment the pupils obtain from using the computers. Pupils are encouraged to become autonomous and responsible users of the systems, for example, through careful and planned use of the Internet and CD-ROMs for personal research on, for example, moral issues in RE, and the development of personality within a GNVQ unit on child development.

Since the last inspection the school has been able to extend and develop its IT resources considerably. Pupils have access to three main network rooms with a further suite awaiting commissioning. Plans are in hand to create a whole-school network and to extend Internet access. This will need to be supported by extending the software set to take better account of curriculum and subject requirements.

The IT Co-ordinator gives a clear lead in developing the school's use of information and communication technology. The role of the IT technicians is important in ensuring that equipment is readily available for pupils and teachers. Facilities are efficiently used, although subject departments do not always make adequate use of the times booked for them. Pupils are able to make supervised use of computer suites at lunchtimes, with additional access for sixth form students when rooms are not otherwise in use.

Modern Foreign Languages

At the end of Key Stage 3 and 4, attainment across all languages is broadly in line with the national average. In GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, results are above average in Russian, average in French and Italian and below average in German and Spanish. However since the last inspection, standards have steadily improved in all languages except Spanish with the best improvements in Russian and Italian. Compared with all maintained girls schools, results are below average.

By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils understand a range of basic instructions and classroom language and produce simple exchanges in role play using visual clues as prompts. They read short texts but this is limited to the textbook and only a minority of pupils read independently or use context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar language. Skills in writing are satisfactory with higher attainers beginning to write guided compositions and the majority writing pieces of appropriate length. Less able pupils write two or three sentences using aids like the textbook or material provided by the teacher on the board. Progress by the end of the key stage is satisfactory and is reflected in sustained opportunities for language practice and in pupils' ability to build on what they have learnt previously. This is often supported by homework used to consolidate and extend what pupils have learnt in class.

In Key Stage 4 pupils in Year 10 write paragraphs about their childhood using the imperfect tense to describe what they used to do. They make presentations to the rest of the class and demonstrate understanding of similar material heard on tape with some pupils providing answers in the target language. Evidence in written work shows several good examples of pupils writing in paragraphs and using the perfect tense. However, the range of writing is limited and some of the work consists of lists of vocabulary under various topics. Progress across all languages is broadly satisfactory but in a few instances especially in the lower sets, progress is inhibited because learning objectives are too broad and not shared with pupils to focus their learning.

By the end of their studies in the sixth form, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. Examination results in 1998 had small entries and comparison with the national average is inappropriate. Pupils demonstrate understanding of newspapers extracts and take part in lively discussions, demonstrating a high level of fluency and a good grasp of structures and a range of topics. Pupils make good progress with a good consolidation of skills in using an increasing stock of vocabulary and idioms.

In Key Stage 3 and 4, pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. They show interest and are attentive. They remain on task and sustain concentration for most of the lesson. The majority respond positively to using the target language. However they rarely use it spontaneously to ask questions or initiate a conversation and this is because the teaching does not routinely help them to develop these strategies. Relationships are good in most lessons and pupils are well behaved except in a few cases where teachers lack the experience of dealing with challenging behaviour or have lower expectations. Pupils in the sixth form take responsibility for their own learning and clearly show their enjoyment in the way they interact effectively and spontaneously during classroom discussions.

The quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory and on occasions good or very good with only two instances where it is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is better than satisfactory, learning objectives are clear and activities effectively sequenced, to enable pupils to move from rehearsing language patterns orally to exploiting what they have learnt and using it in role play and other more demanding activities. This was well exemplified in a Year 8 Spanish lesson where the teacher started with a thorough revision of numbers with clear emphasis on correct pronunciation through chorus and individual repetition and effective explanations of specific characteristics of the number system. As a follow up activity, the teacher rehearsed pupils in asking questions and then asked them to work in pairs to practise the key patterns, ending the lesson with a bingo game to reinforce what has been learnt in a realistic situation. Throughout the lesson, the teacher used the target language for most of the time and provided homework to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge of numbers.

In the few instances where teaching was unsatisfactory, planning did not take account of the need for pupils to gain oral fluency before tackling writing and the teachers used English too much. There was no opportunity to reinforce what has been learnt by a summary of key points at the end of the lesson. Even where teaching was satisfactory, teachers did not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to use the target language spontaneously and appropriately match work to pupils with special educational needs.

The offer of French, German, Italian and Russian across all phases enables pupils a wide choice of languages and is a strength in the school. Planning of the curriculum is supported by detailed schemes of work but short term planning does not exploit explicitly enough the requirements of the programmes of study. The school organises a range of trips and exchanges which enhances the curriculum and enable pupils to gain insights into different cultures. Whilst some aspects of cultural

awareness are featured in the scheme of work, they are limited to what the textbook provides and this is inadequate. Reading in Key Stage 3 and 4 is not systematically developed to address the demands of the programmes of study and is narrowly restricted to the textbook. Assessment procedures are well established and well used in Key Stage 4 to identify underachievement and raise standards. Examination data is analysed and used to inform curriculum planning and changes have been introduced with more emphasis on monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress.

The department is well led with many of the priorities in the faculty development plan being effectively implemented. Staffing is enhanced by the number of teachers offering 2 or more languages, and foreign assistants for all languages. There is a good range of resources with good facilities to view video and satellite programmes. However these are not used regularly and integrated regularly into planning.

Music

By the end of Key Stage 3 most girls are achieving standards in line with national expectations though a substantial minority do not. At this stage, girls compose sensitively and make good progress as a result of good discipline and well-organised teaching. At Key Stage 4 recent results have been consistently above or well above average. Girls show strengths in composing and listening. In Year 10 groups are small and girls make satisfactory progress as a result of good discipline and a variety of teaching methods. There is little evidence of variation amongst groups of girls at either level. Girls with different levels of ability and with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

The girls enjoy their music lessons and work well for long periods of time. Relationships between pupils and with staff are based on mutual respect. Teachers know their subject well and their expectations of pupils are satisfactory. Where aims are clearly stated and repeatedly reinforced, girls make good progress. In general teachers plan well and make good use of resources. Lessons generally go at a good pace and a lot of work is covered. Staff have subject specific education plans for girls with special educational needs and list these girls in registers. Since the last inspection teachers have developed an effective marking policy and this is well used at Key Stage 3. Marking is not as consistent at Key Stage 4. Teachers make good use of homework at both key stages. It is relevant, purposeful and consistently marked.

Pupils at Key Stage 3 have a full curriculum but are not having access to IT as the National Curriculum requires. GCSE requirements are met in full and IT enhances the presentation of work. All girls have equal access to the curriculum except at Key Stage 4 where girls who wish to study 2 languages are taught music out of hours. Pupils with special educational needs are catered for with appropriate work and resources.

There is a good range of extra-curricular instrumental lessons and activities for girls to join in with: two soul choirs, the school choir, band, recorder group and lessons in violin, singing, piano, woodwind, keyboards and guitar. Regular concerts in and out of school provide good opportunities in social education. In addition girls study the music of Indonesia and China and Africa at Key Stage 3 and world music at Key Stage 4. The head of department is an experienced and informed teacher who leads an effective team. Staff are well trained and share their teaching skills so as to guarantee an even quality of teaching. They make effective plans for the department and have good links with the community. The classrooms are cheerful places and displays promote the subject

Accommodation is adequate for the demands made on it although there is not enough space for large Year 7 classes. Resources have been built up in recent years and provide an adequate range of equipment for the girls. The budget for resources is small but the staff manage it well.

Physical education

Attainment at Key Stage 3 in games and gymnastics is in line with the expectations of similarly-aged pupils nationally. Standards of attainment in physical education at GCSE are above national averages in the areas of practical skills and theoretical knowledge and understanding. The GCSE grades A*-C, were above the national average for both girls' schools and all schools in 1998, and even more so in 1999. The GCSE grades A* to C in dance were also considerably above the national average. Attainment in the sixth form is in line with national expectations in knowledge and understanding and practical ability. In A Level sports studies, the entry is too small to make a meaningful comparison with national course averages, although all pupils have achieved a pass grade in 1999 and recent years. Standards in A Level dance are above average. Standards in sports leadership are in line with the national expectations.

Pupils start Key Stage 3 with variable levels of attainment, but overall in line with the expectations nationally. They make satisfactory progress. In gymnastics pupils learn to devise sequences of controlled movement using small apparatus and they develop their confidence and cooperative skills as well as their technical ability. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their stick-handling skills in hockey, and improve their ability to pass and receive the ball, dribble with control and shoot with accuracy. Pupils in a Year 9 trampolining lesson improved their ability to perform half twists and swivels whilst performing a seat drop. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in developing skills and knowledge in physical education, in all age groups.

GCSE pupils make good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding of health-related issues, their practical abilities in a range of sports, and their understanding of the role of sport in society. For example Year 11 pupils made good progress in a lesson involving discussion of safety issues in sport. Pupils studying Key Stage 4 dance make good progress in developing composition techniques, through contact and floor work and through adapting and evaluating dance sequences. Pupils on a non-examination course at Key Stage 4 make unsatisfactory progress in developing their skills, due to a shortage of time. A minority of higher-attaining Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress, but there is inadequate opportunity to reinforce and consolidate the skills which underpin progress.

Pupils in the sixth form make good progress, largely through effective teaching. In A Level sports studies gains in practical technique are good, as for example when practising sprinting on the athletics track, and they also make good progress in learning to evaluate each others' performances. Pupils also make good progress in extending their knowledge of sports physiology and the relationship of sport with society in both in a historical and a contemporary context. A Level dance students learn to appreciate differences in dance styles and the influence on dance of significant individuals such as Martha Graham. Pupils studying for the Community Sports Leadership Award make good progress in developing their confidence and ability in devising warm-up procedures and demonstrating them to each other. Pupils on the Higher Leadership Sports Award develop a good understanding of factors such as safety, rules and supervision which are important in setting up and running a tournament for younger children.

Pupils' attitudes towards learning in PE are good in most Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 lessons, and are always good or very good in the sixth form. Pupils enjoy the blend of collaborative and competitive activities and respond well to enthusiastic teaching. They generally follow instructions well and work to the best of their ability. Older pupils in particular enjoy the opportunity to plan and evaluate their activities, responding well for example to opportunities to develop their own dance or practice routines. The motivation of most pupils is reflected in the good take-up of extra-

curricular sport. In some classes, mostly at Key Stage 3, a few pupils are not well motivated, do not listen well to instructions, and do not concentrate when asked to exercise individual initiative.

The quality of teaching in physical education is satisfactory overall. It is best in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form where all lessons were at least satisfactory and three quarters were good or very good. The good teaching has several characteristics. Planning is secure, with a range of activities and clear objectives, reflecting the good subject knowledge of the teachers. The teaching is authoritative but relaxed, so that relationships are good. Pupils respond well to the brisk-paced teaching. Appropriate homework is set in examination lessons, and pupils are encouraged to research for themselves as well as use resources provided by the teachers. Staff give up a lot of time to extra-curricular activities, and this increases the motivation of pupils and enhances their progress. Teachers demonstrate skills well, as in trampolining and hockey, and also use pupils effectively to demonstrate good practice. In the small proportion of lessons which contain unsatisfactory teaching, there is inadequate control of inattentive or disruptive behaviour, and sometimes too little time is spent on reinforcing particular skills before moving on to new activities.

There are other significant factors which have contributed to a raising of standards in physical education. The department is ably and enthusiastically led. More effective assessment procedures are being put into place. The breadth of the curriculum - specifically, the range of courses offered at Key Stage 4 and at post-16 - stimulates the motivation of pupils. There is successful competition with other schools in netball and other sports. However, the minimal time element given to physical education at Key Stage 3 and non-examination groups at Key Stage 4, when combined with the time taken out by pupils getting to off-site facilities, restricts the progress of many pupils particularly at Key Stage 4, regardless of the high quality of teaching. The issue of inadequate assessment noted in the last OFSTED report has been addressed. However, the time allocation for physical education remains considerably below the national average.

Religious Education

In the lessons observed attainment and progress in Key Stage 4 are satisfactory with a minority very good and unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 3 attainment and progress are satisfactory with a significant minority good and unsatisfactory. This is significantly better than recent examination results. At the time of the last inspection GCSE results were well above national averages now they are well below them. In 1999 eight pupils were entered, 25% got A*-C grades and 60% A*-G. Two pupils were entered for A Level, both passed. These numbers are too small to compare with the national average.

When progress was very good the teacher's expectations were high and pupils were challenged to think deeply and give of their very best. In contrast, when the progress was unsatisfactory the teacher's expectations were low, little was demanded of pupils because tasks were limited to copying from the board, re-arranging sentences and filling in missing words. The majority of pupils are well motivated and show interest in their work. In some lessons they are keen to ask questions about the purpose and meaning of life. When discussion is encouraged they respect the view of others and appreciate the opportunity to explore their own beliefs. Overall, they sustain concentration and respond well to challenge. Relationships with the teachers and between the pupils are generally good.

The quality of teaching is mainly satisfactory, but with a significant minority that is either good or unsatisfactory. When teaching was at its best pupils were challenged both intellectually and personally in exploring the literal and symbolic interpretations of Scripture. They were encouraged to evaluate a range of possible responses and to think deeply about eternal truths. In another lesson pupils were studying the arguments for and against abortion and the different religious viewpoints.

This provided a good opportunity for pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and values and to consider the views and opinions of others in the class.

In lessons when teaching was less than good the emphasis was heavily placed on acquiring factual knowledge by listening to the teacher. Activities were very limited and no use was made of visual stimulus such as text books or videos. Homework is set but on no occasion was feedback on it given in class and in the majority of exercise books there was little to indicate to pupils why they lost marks or how they could improve their standard.

The scheme of work is well developed for Key Stage 3 with clear aims, content, teaching methods and resources. At Key Stage 4 there is a scheme of work but with RE given only 2% of curriculum time it is inadequate to deliver the locally agreed syllabus. In the sixth form there is no provision for religious education and as such the school is not meeting statutory requirements.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

A team of twelve inspectors including a lay inspector spent a total of 48 inspector days in school.

During the inspection, the team:

Spent over 160 hours observing 222 lessons or parts of lessons, as well as registrations, assemblies and a number of extra-curricular activities;

Observed almost all teachers at least once and many several times;

Held discussions with the Headteacher, members of the teaching staff, and non-teaching staff, the Chair of Governors and other members of the governing body;

Scrutinised all the available written work from a representative sample of pupils covering the full ability range from each year group

Held a meeting with the pupils whose work had been scrutinised to discuss their views of the school and also held informal discussions with many pupils, both in lessons and around the school;

Analysed a large amount of documentation provided by the school both before and during the inspection.

This included:

- the school aims,
- the school development plan,
- the prospectus,
- a range of policies,
- subject schemes of work and lesson plans,
- pupils' reports and records
- attendance registers,
- minutes of governors' meetings and financial statements,
- the governors' annual reports to parents,
- the previous inspection report and action plan;

Held a meeting attended by 35 parents to hear their views on the life and work of the school, considered the views expressed in 40 letters and analysed 149 responses to a questionnaire about their opinions of the school.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1253	29	180	383

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	75.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6:1

Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked each week	317.25

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	78.9
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Average teaching group size:	KS2	23.7
	KS3	24.9
	KS4	20.0

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/9
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	£
Total Income	2958409
Total Expenditure	3068374
Expenditure per pupil	2527
Balance brought forward from previous year	-43115.35
Balance carried forward to next year	-153079.70

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

1253

Number of questionnaires returned:

149

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	19.6	58.0	12.0	7.0	2.8
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	30.1	51.0	8.4	6.3	4.2
The school handles complaints from parents well	14.7	39.2	31.5	10.5	4.2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	20.3	54.5	16.1	7.0	2.1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	35.7	48.3	11.2	4.2	0.7
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	25.2	53.1	14.7	6.3	0.7
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	23.1	53.8	14.7	7.7	0.7
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	24.5	53.8	11.2	7.7	2.8
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	16.8	51.0	20.3	7.7	4.2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	13.3	39.9	29.4	16.1	1.4
My child(ren) like(s) school	28.0	48.3	11.9	7.0	4.9

Other issues raised by parents

Parents also raised the issue of the book deposit scheme.