

INSPECTION REPORT

LITTLE ILFORD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Browning Road
Manor Park
London
E12 6ET

LEA area: 316 Newham

Unique reference number 102776

Headteacher: Mrs Pam Belmour

Reporting inspector: Mrs Val Lynch
1475

Dates of inspection: 15th -18th May 2000

Inspection number: 185442

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Browning Road
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London

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Ian Powell

Date of previous inspection: 1 May 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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George Knights	Team inspector	ICT	Teaching and learning
Mark Sims	Team inspector	English Pupils with English as an additional language	
Marguerite Presman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Angela Fraser	Team inspector	Science	Quality and range of opportunities for learning.
Brian Downes	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages Special Educational Needs.	
Vera Grigg	Team inspector	Design and technology	
John Flinn	Team inspector	Religious Education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
David Wasp	Team inspector	History Equal Opportunities	
Ronald Fewtrell	Team inspector	Physical Education	Staffing accommodation and learning resources.
Keith Smalley	Team inspector	Geography	Pupils' welfare, health and safety.
Richard Evans	Team inspector	Music	
Eric Forster	Team inspector	Art	
Bob Battey	Team inspector	Integrated provision for pupils with language and communication difficulties.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Little Ilford is an 11-16 comprehensive school in the London borough of Newham. The school has 1310 pupils on roll and has grown slightly since the previous inspection. There are more boys than girls in every year in the school because there are two girls' schools close by.

The number of minority ethnic pupils and the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is well above the national average. Fifty-four point four percent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is also well above the national average and an increase on previous years.

Seventeen percent of pupils join or leave the school during their secondary education and 148 pupils are refugees. Data available on pupils' reading ages and their Key Stage 2 tests indicate that attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average. Key Stage 2 results in English and mathematics are below the Newham average, significantly so in English.

The percentage of pupils who have statements of special educational need is above the national average. The total number of pupils on the special educational needs register is slightly below the national average. The school has special provision for up to 20 pupils with specific difficulties in language and communication.

The school is part of the London Borough of Newham Excellence in Cities programme¹ and is part of a mini-achievement zone with local partner schools from April 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Little Ilford School is an improving school with many good features. Attainment is better than in similar schools because teaching is good overall. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the governing body, well supported by senior and middle managers, has brought about significant improvements. All aspects of the school's provision are at least satisfactory and often good. The strengths identified outweigh the areas for improvement. The school gives good value for money and no longer has any serious weaknesses.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve results at the end of their time in school that are better than those achieved by pupils in similar schools.
- Good teaching overall ensures that pupils of all abilities make good progress in many subjects, particularly in art, drama, geography, history, physical education and science.
- The headteacher and governors, supported by senior and middle managers successfully make sure that plans for improvement are put into practice.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developed and used in many subjects, particularly business studies, design and technology, drama, geography, history and science.
- Teachers are very professional and their in-service training is effective.
- There are good relationships, positive attitudes and good behaviour in nearly all lessons.
- The many different cultures that make up the school community are understood and valued.
- Provision is good for disaffected pupils and very good for those with difficulties in language and communication.

What could be improved

- Attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3.
- The overall quality of teaching in French and mathematics.
- The co-ordination of the teaching and development of numeracy skills in all subjects.
- The use of day-to-day and other assessment both to guide pupils in how to improve their work and to guide departmental curriculum planning.
- The use of information and communication technology to extend pupils' learning in all subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

¹ A national initiative to raise standards in larger cities that helps schools to find new ways of supporting pupils, particularly those who have special needs or who are gifted and talented.

The school has improved considerably since it was inspected in 1995 and identified as needing special measures. Changes have been made to systems and procedures to make sure that improvement continues. Test and examination results vary year on year but are improving.

When Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the school in 1997 they identified at least satisfactory progress in nine out of the 12 key issues identified in 1995. There remained work to be done to raise standards and ensure that mixed ability teaching met the needs of all pupils. Standards have continued to improve and in drama, history, geography and art there is exemplary mixed ability teaching. Where mixed ability teaching is not successful those departments are looking at alternative arrangement for grouping pupils. More work needed to be done to improve the quality of teaching. Teaching has improved with at least nine out of 10 lessons now satisfactory or better, three out of five good or better and in one in five lessons teaching is very good or excellent.

Inconsistencies in assessment practice have been reduced. The recently appointed assessment co-ordinator and the special education needs co-ordinator are leading and supporting curriculum team leaders in using National Curriculum levels when they are assessing pupils. They also provide data from tests on entry and Key Stage 2 National Curriculum assessments so that departments can plan schemes of work and lessons that meet pupils' needs.

The skills of middle managers have been developed through their involvement in an extensive and rigorous programme of observations of teaching and learning and by regular checking of their work. They are now effective leaders of their curriculum or year teams.

The school has continued in its drive to improve attendance further and has maintained attendance above the national average. Accommodation in technology has been upgraded but some health and safety issues remain. Resources have been improved for information technology but more work needs to be done to develop the use of information and communications technology in other subjects to support pupils learning. The school knows that more work has to be done and has included these aspects in their development plan

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 tests	E*	E*	E*	D
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Test results at the end of Key Stage 3 place the school in the lowest five per cent of all schools and are below the results in similar schools. GCSE results are well below the national average but are better than those in similar schools. Both Key Stage 3 and GCSE results are improving at a slightly better rate than results nationally. The school has set challenging targets for results in Key Stage 3, knowing that this is where significant improvements can still be made. It has set a predicted figure for the percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades in 2000 and will set targets in 2001 based on accurate assessment of pupils on entry. Standards are below average in all subjects with the exception of art and drama where in both key stages standards are good. Standards in mathematics are poor. From a low standard on entry pupils make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have good attitudes towards learning and want to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	In lessons behaviour is generally good. Out of lessons behaviour deteriorates and is sometimes unsatisfactory.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good and there is racial harmony.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall but unauthorised absence is above national averages in spite of hard work by the school to reduce this.

Nearly all pupils come to school and want to learn. Their behaviour is good in lessons and they get on well with each other and their teachers. A small number of pupils have difficulty in maintaining good behaviour, particularly at breaks and lunchtimes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching throughout the school is at least satisfactory in 91 per cent of lessons; it is good in 60 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in almost 25 per cent. It is unsatisfactory in nine per cent of lessons. The teaching of English is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In mathematics teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 but unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 3. Teaching is good in science. In all other subjects, with the exception of French, teaching is satisfactory or better. Good work is done throughout the school to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers generally plan their lessons well and have good levels of expectations of what pupils can achieve. Many make insufficient use of assessment in lessons and of pupils' work to tell pupils about how they can improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: Drama, physical education, music and art enable pupils to show their talents. The needs of all pupils, including those who are at risk of not completing their education, are well met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress towards their targets. Pupils with specific difficulties in language and communication make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good: support is very effective in lessons and the way this is organised develops subject teachers' skills in working with such pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides good support and guidance and promotes the welfare, health and safety of its pupils within a caring environment.

The school wants to work in partnership with parents. Parents trust the school with the task of educating their children and sometimes this means that parents are not as involved as much as they might be. The curriculum is a real strength of the school in the way it is designed to meet statutory requirements but also to meet the needs of pupils. The school does all it can to make sure that pupils

with behavioural difficulties remain in the school if at all possible and therefore have the best chance of making a success of their lives.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the headteacher believes passionately in providing the very best for pupils and has secured the commitment of key staff to this ideal.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good: governors meet all their statutory responsibilities and are very appropriately involved in making sure that the school improves.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: there is rigorous checking on the quality of teaching and learning and on how well key staff and their teams are working. The school therefore has a very accurate picture of how well it is doing.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: the school makes good use of its budget and additional funds to achieve its priorities.

The school has an adequate number of staff but there are too many temporary staff because there are difficulties with recruitment. Accommodation is generally adequate but not for design and technology, music and outdoor physical education. Learning resources are adequate and the library is particularly well equipped. The number of computers per pupil is just below the national average and the school has a five-year plan for improving this and for upgrading machines.

Leadership and management throughout the school is a strength and there are no weaknesses. The school compares its performance with other schools, challenges its own practice, seeks to obtain the best service at the right price and seeks the views of teachers, pupils and parents.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Children make good progress. • The school welcomes parents if there are problems or complaints. • The school has high expectations for pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework in Key Stage 3 and a greater consistency in the quality of work set. • The information on how well their children are progressing. • A closer working relationship with parents.

There were 342 responses to the parents' questionnaire and 17 parents attended the parents' meeting. Parents were unanimous in recognising that the school has improved. The meeting, however, did indicate a range of views in relation to pupils' behaviour. Concern was expressed about the difficulties that the school has had in recruiting good teachers and concerns about behaviour in lessons were linked to poor and often temporary teachers. The inspection team found that the school has too many temporary teachers but nearly all their teaching during the inspection was at least satisfactory. The school and the inspection team share parents' concerns about this situation. Behaviour outside lessons was also a concern for parents. Boisterous behaviour by boys was evident in the playground and pupils did speak about bullying but thought that incidents were dealt with effectively. Younger pupils, particularly boys, feel intimidated at times by older boys.

The inspection team found inconsistencies in the setting of homework. However, the school is aware that a number of parents do not encourage pupils to do homework, trusting the school to manage pupils' learning within the school day. The school should do more to help parents see how work at home can support learning. The format of reports has been improved and these, along with the academic review day planned for the summer term, should help parents to be more informed on pupils' progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 The attainment of pupils when they join the school in Year 7 is well below the standard expected of pupils aged 11. Not only are the Key Stage 2 results well below the national average in English and mathematics they are below the Newham average results in English significantly so. The school only has data on approximately two-thirds of its pupils but this indicates that there are few gifted and talented pupils joining the school. A number of pupils join the school after Year 7: most have English as an additional language and over half have refugee status. The school therefore has difficulty establishing what all pupils have achieved before they join the school. There is now a series of tests done when pupils join the school to help the school predict what pupils could achieve.

- 2 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science is below the national expectation but not as far below as it is at the end of Key Stage 2 when pupils join the school. Results in end of key stage tests have improved over the last three years at a slightly faster rate than seen nationally. Although there are differences in the attainment of boys and girls these differences are not great in English, mathematics or science. Pupils are further behind in mathematics than they are in English and science. At the end of Key Stage 3 results in English and maths are below those in similar schools but in science they are in line. In all other subjects with the exception of art and drama standards are below those expected nationally. On the basis of the data on attainment on entry pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress.

- 3 The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A* - C is well below the national average as is the percentage of pupils gaining five GCSE grades A* - G. However the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A* - G has improved considerably from a very low 64 per cent five years ago to 84 per cent in 1999. There has also been an increase in the number of pupils entered for GCSE examinations. Average points scores² are also improving at a rate that is slightly better than the national picture. Results in English, mathematics, science, textiles, French, German and physical education are significantly below the national average. Results in religious education where all pupils take the short course are similar to results nationally. However, results in art, business studies and drama are better than the national average. Both boys' and girls' results are generally below the national average. Girls do better than boys in all subjects except Urdu and mathematics. A higher proportion of girls gain higher grades. Higher proportions of boys leave school with no qualifications. Results at the end of Key Stage 4 are better than those in similar schools and at the end of Key Stage 3 are well above the results in schools with similar prior attainment. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make good progress in Key Stage 4.

- 4 Attainment in lessons reflects the test and examination data. In Key Stage 3 standards of pupils' work are below those expected nationally with the exception of drama, art, music, physical education and in personal, social and health education.

² This provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained in Key Stage 3 tests or GCSE examinations by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in other schools.

In Key Stage 4 attainment is below the standards expected nationally in all lessons except art, drama and personal, social and health education. Standards in drama at both key stages are good and better than seen in other schools. In both key stages standards in lessons in English are below the national expectation. In mathematics standards are low, although pupils in the top set in Year 10 are working at a level above national expectations. In science attainment in lessons in Key Stage 3 is better than the 1999 results would indicate. This reflects the progress made by the department on such aspects as assessment and literacy. Standards of work in information technology are below national expectations. However, the work of pupils in Years 7 and 8 indicates that they are on target to reach higher standards at the end of Key Stage 3 than the current Year 9. In religious education in Key Stage 3 standards are below the expectations of the agreed syllabus. The work of pupils in Year 10 indicates that they should obtain GCSE results in line with the national average. In both key stages gifted and talented pupils are identified within subjects and in English, mathematics and science they are benefiting from working on occasions with pupils of similar abilities from other schools.

- 5 Standards of attainment in literacy are low. Standards of speaking have improved and many pupils are confident and articulate. Opportunities for extended speaking are limited and this is a weak area. Pupils' listening skills are good and in lessons they listen well to teachers and each other. Reading has improved as a result of initiatives that have been introduced. Pupils read silently to each other and to the teacher using a range of texts, both non-fiction and fiction. Pupils are encouraged to use the local library. Writing is the weakest aspect. Standards of presentation are below what they should be. Some pupils are still writing in pencil in Key Stage 3. Presentation and the range of writing have improved by Key Stage 4. Pupils can write for a range of purposes.
- 6 Standards of numeracy are low but do not prevent learning. This is because when numeracy skills are needed they are well taught in the subject where they are being used. For example, the good work done on graphs in science is usually taught in the science lesson prior to it being needed by the pupils. Pupils measure accurately and weighing is carried out competently when required. They can draw graphs and interpret them.
- 7 Standards in information and communications technology at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectations, but are much improved on those at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils gain skills in all aspects of the subject through a well planned programme of one lesson per week. There are only limited opportunities in other subjects to develop and apply information and technology skills. Pupils studying the GNVQ course in information technology are performing below national expectations, but are doing well in relation to their prior attainment. For other pupils attainment is below national expectations because there are limited opportunities to apply information and communications technology skills in other subjects.
- 8 In the absence of accurate data on pupils' prior attainment the school has set predicted figures for GCSE results rather than targets until 2001. For the Year 11 in that year they will have sufficient data to be able to set challenging targets and to add a value-added factor. In 1999 the results were slightly better than were predicted. The school has set challenging targets for Key Stage 3 results as part of its submission for the mini-achievement zone.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development

- 9 Pupils have good attitudes to school and their behaviour is generally good. They respond well to the opportunities that the school provides to support their personal development. There has been a significant improvement in attitudes since the last inspection.
- 10 The inspection occurred whilst Year 11 pupils were on study leave, but some Year 11 pupils came in especially to talk to inspectors about their work. They presented themselves as polite mature pupils who were coping well with the build up to their examinations.
- 11 Most parents who replied to the parents' questionnaire indicated that their child enjoys coming to school and this is evident in most lessons. Most pupils are keen to learn and make good efforts in class. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson pupils arrived from assembly and settled immediately to routines, entering the date and title in their book whilst the register was called. A high quality discussion then followed about electro-magnetism where the teacher stimulated pupils' learning with skilful questioning which developed their thinking. Pupils clearly enjoyed this and good learning took place.
- 12 Similar good learning took place in drama lessons. Pupils' support and encouragement for one another provided an atmosphere in which all could try out their ideas. This helped build confidence, particularly for those who have English as an additional language. In all lessons pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to their work and make good progress especially where they have extra support in class.
- 13 A few pupils, mainly from older year groups, have poor attitudes to work and are not interested in their education. There are pupils with poor attendance patterns and some whose behaviour is poor and identified as a difficulty for them. The school is working hard to provide these pupils with an appropriate curriculum and many pupils are responding positively to this flexible approach to meet their needs. A testimony to the schools' work in this area is seen in the fall in the number of exclusions over the last academic year. So far the figures for the current year, particularly in the number of permanent exclusions, are lower still.
- 14 Behaviour in lessons is good overall. Occasionally where the pace of lessons is slow, where the activities planned do not capture pupils' interest and where pupils are not involved sufficiently behaviour deteriorates. Very occasionally there is some silly behaviour from boys which disrupts the learning of others. The quality of behaviour has improved considerably since the last inspection; only rarely does poor behaviour in lessons disrupt learning.
- 15 During other times in the day such as between lessons, during break and especially at lunchtimes pupils' behaviour is sometimes unsatisfactory. There is a distinct contrast in the quality of behaviour in and out of lessons. Behaviour on the narrow staircases is sometimes rough, despite teacher supervision, and at lunchtimes in the hall the arrangements create a disorganised atmosphere.
- 16 Older pupils generally feel happy in the school. All pupils who spoke to inspectors agreed that bullying and intimidation does occasionally take place but is dealt with well by staff. Younger boys tend to keep to their own areas of the school and playground as they sometimes feel threatened by older boys. There are twice as

many boys in the school than there are girls and almost all the aggressive behaviour is from boys.

- 17 The quality of behaviour on the playground, in the dining hall and in corridors has improved when compared to the previous inspection, although there remains scope for further improvement. Younger pupils, particularly boys, feel intimidated at break and lunch times by older boys. Most parents who replied to the parents' questionnaire agreed that pupils' behaviour is good.
- 18 There is a very good mix of pupils from many different racial groups in the school that helps to give the school a vibrant multiracial character. Generally there is no racial tension and the atmosphere is harmonious. Different cultures and traditions are respected and accepted well. Despite the higher ratio of boys to girls, girls are confident enough to contribute well in class and boys do not generally dominate in discussions. However, girls do feel that there is little for them to do at lunchtimes and that boys' games of football dominate in the playground.
- 19 Good quality relationships between most staff and pupils and between most pupils help pupils to learn in a positive and friendly atmosphere. For example, in a geography lesson Year 9 pupils applauded having heard a fellow pupil read out a good response to a question. Pupils generally work well together as a group. In another Year 9 drama pupils worked well in groups to act out a family scene, developing their ideas on character through role-play. Here both boys and girls coped very well, especially those boys who had to play a female role because of the shortage of girls in the groups.
- 20 Most pupils are polite and friendly. They were willing to talk about their work maturely and sensibly. In the playground pupils were keen to know how inspectors had found the school and felt it had improved over the years.
- 21 Pupils are not afraid of expressing their opinions and they know they will be listened to fairly. They respond well when provided with opportunities to nurture their personal development and maturity. Several of these initiatives involve Year 9 pupils who are very enthusiastic and show a high degree of responsibility. A recent success was the planning and organisation of a Valentines Disco at an outside venue, spoken of with enthusiasm by teachers and staff. A group of pupils takes part in organising assemblies and pupils volunteer to be librarians. Another good example of pupils being responsible is in their production of a Year 11 Yearbook, which contains some poignant and some humorous reflections of their time at the school.
- 22 Although pupils show initiative and take responsibility in aspects of school, life they rarely do so in lessons because teachers do not provide enough opportunities for this. For example, pupils' homework is often not completed on time. Although the library is well used by departments and at lunchtime and after school it is not well used for independent research.
- 23 The school's attendance has risen from 81 per cent during the last inspection to just over 90 per cent over the last academic year. This is higher than the borough average and reflects the very good rate of progress made over the years. The school's attendance is now broadly in line with the national average for all secondary schools and the school is seeking to improve on this. The overall figure is especially positive taking into account the number of families who take extended holidays overseas.

- 24 The school's rate of unauthorised absence is high and for the last academic year it was 4.2 per cent, which was well above national averages. This is largely accounted for by extended holidays. The school has set targets to reduce this figure. Signs are so far encouraging and the rate for the autumn term fell to an average of 3.63 per cent. Timekeeping is generally satisfactory in lessons, although a significant number of pupils are late to school in the mornings. A few pupils truant from lessons and the school has just employed an attendance officer specifically to help overcome this.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 25 The overall quality of teaching in the school is good and has improved considerably since the time of the previous inspection. Teaching is now at least satisfactory in over nine out of 10 lessons. It is good or better in over three fifths of lessons and very good or excellent in almost a quarter. There is little difference overall between the quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. In only one lesson in 11 is teaching unsatisfactory and much of this unsatisfactory teaching is in mathematics and French. There is a difference in the quality of teaching between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in these two subjects. Frequent good teaching enables pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- 26 The teaching of English is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Pupils make satisfactory gains in their grasp of English during their first three years in the school, laying a secure foundation to further develop their English skills during Key Stage 4. The work of the English department is complemented by the contribution of many subjects to the effective development of pupils' literacy skills in accordance with the school's policy. In business studies, for example, pupils are encouraged to be sensitive to the needs of different audiences when writing reports and letters and they have good opportunities to learn the skills of drafting and editing.
- 27 The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory at Key Stage 4, but is unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 3. The unsatisfactory teaching for younger pupils is partly a consequence of some weak pupil management which results in many pupils not being involved sufficiently in their learning. It is also a consequence of planning which does not take account of what pupils need in order to make progress in their work. At Key Stage 4 teaching in mathematics is inconsistent. While some teachers make good use of assessments to guide the work of individual pupils, others do not ensure that work is sufficiently well matched to the needs of different pupils in the group. As a result, some pupils make little progress.
- 28 The teaching of science is good overall, enabling pupils to develop their scientific skills well. Teaching is very good in drama and is good in geography, history, design and technology, art, music and physical education. It is satisfactory overall in German, religious education, personal and social education and information technology and is unsatisfactory in French. In many subjects teaching is never less than satisfactory. The unsatisfactory teaching in French is brought about by a range of factors, but mainly because teachers do not always use the target language sufficiently in lessons and because work is not well matched to the needs of the pupils in each group.
- 29 Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and a clear grasp of how to teach their subject. Many pupils are enthusiastic about their work as a result of the stimulating way in which teachers prepare and present their lessons. This is a particular feature of many lessons in drama and history. Many teachers work hard to help all pupils, and especially those for whom English is an additional language, to gain a good grasp of all aspects of literacy. Some good contributions are made to

the development of pupils' numeracy skills, especially in science, but there is no whole school approach to developing these skills and hence some opportunities are missed. A similar situation exists regarding the development and application of information and communications technology skills in subjects across the curriculum. Partly as a consequence of limited facilities, but mainly because teachers are not yet fully aware of the potential in their subjects, applications of information and communications technology beyond information technology lessons are under-developed.

- 30 Teachers generally have good levels of expectation of what pupils can achieve. This is particularly true in geography, history, drama, music and in some design and technology lessons. In a Year 9 geography lesson, for example, the teacher set out clearly what was required and in turn pupils produced some very effective writing on aspects of developments in Brazil. These high expectations translate into lessons that provide stimulating and challenging activities to which pupils respond positively and in which they make good progress. In a Year 9 design and technology lesson, for example, challenging questions enabled pupils to develop some sophisticated ideas about the mechanisms they were studying. In almost all subjects pupils of different abilities are taught together. Many teachers seek to produce work that is well matched to the differing needs of individuals in their classes. Sometimes this is done through the use of different materials while at other times teachers skilfully match the questions they ask of each pupil to their prior attainment. When these skills are well used pupils are enabled to build on what they already know and make good progress. Overall teaching of mixed ability groups is successful when teachers understand how to meet the range of individual needs; there is particularly impressive practice in geography. It is not successful in modern foreign languages nor in mathematics at Key Stage 3.
- 31 Many pupils show enthusiasm for their lessons and work very hard, sustaining concentration for the whole of lessons. This is helped by the care with which many teachers structure lessons to help maintain pupils' interest. In a Year 10 drama lesson, for example, a very good structure to the lesson maintained a sharp focus on the work stimulated by a poem. The pupils were absorbed and focused on their work throughout, producing some high quality drama as a result. Teachers in most subjects provide a variety of activities appropriate for the purposes of the lessons. In a Year 10 science lesson, for example, a stimulating introduction to a sequence of lessons on resistance in electrical circuits had a well structured set of activities which helped pupils gain a clear grasp of the principles of resistance. The planning of many lessons is guided by the identification of clear lesson objectives. In the best lessons these objectives are carefully shared with pupils at the start and then used later to review how successful the work had been. Pupils appreciate being given a clear indication of the purpose of each activity. Time spent reviewing the lesson helps pupils to know what they have learned. Only in some lessons in mathematics and French are activities not well chosen and in these lessons pupils make less progress.
- 32 Teachers generally have very good relationships with pupils and this helps most lessons to be well managed. When teachers show respect for pupils this is reciprocated, making most classrooms harmonious. Only occasionally are lessons not well managed and pupils do not learn properly. This is a feature of some French and mathematics lessons. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher did not make clear to pupils when they were to be writing and when they should be joining in a whole class activity. This led to confusion with pupils maintaining chatter when the teacher was attempting to speak to the class and pupils missed the main teaching points as a result.

- 33 One area of relative weakness in the teaching of many subjects is the use of assessment. The school has good overall arrangements for the assessment of pupils at the ends of topics and units of work and a clear strategy is in place to guide the marking of pupils' work. Marking is generally carried out diligently and in accordance with school guidelines but teachers are not always using the outcomes of this marking or their informal lesson by lesson assessments sufficiently well to guide their planning of lessons and activities. Neither do they always give pupils a sufficiently clear indication of how well they are doing or of what they need to do to improve their work further. Hence, in many subjects such as mathematics, religious education, physical education and information technology pupils' knowledge of their own learning is not as good as it could be.
- 34 The school has a clear policy related to pupils having work to do outside lessons. This homework is carefully scheduled and tasks are set to pupils in many subjects on a regular basis. In the best circumstances and particularly in science, music, geography and history teachers carefully ensure that pupils record these tasks properly in their diaries and then follow up on this work in future lessons, monitoring any which is not done. Elsewhere pupils do not always complete the tasks set and teachers do not check this work. This lack of consistency diminishes the efforts of all teachers, confuses pupils and in turn limits the opportunities pupils have to extend their learning.
- 35 Teachers have a good understanding of the needs of particular groups of pupils and seek to help them. In many lessons materials are adapted to help pupils with special educational needs or those for whom English is an additional language. Generally support staff in lessons are deployed well to help specific individuals and groups of pupils.

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

- 36 The curriculum now meets statutory requirements in all subjects of the National Curriculum and meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. It has good breadth and balance and is relevant to pupils' needs. The school is involved in a number of curriculum projects to raise standards further. Those designed to support literacy are particularly effective. Drama is a strength and along with music, art and physical education provides very good opportunities for pupils to engage in expressive performance. Enquiry and research support pupils' learning in geography and science. Overall, the school has made very good improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection.
- 37 Curriculum planning is now good. Information on pupils' achievements is used very well by middle and senior managers for planning an appropriate curriculum with particular analysis of language and special needs. Schemes of work are now comprehensive. They give detailed guidance to teachers and ensure appropriate development year by year. The curriculum is generally effective in matching the level of work closely to pupils' language needs. At Key Stage 3 there is now appropriate time for art, music, drama and for personal social and health education.
- 38 At Key Stage 4 the range of courses has improved. A major curriculum review has ensured that all pupils now follow a modern foreign language. Community languages are being phased out because of the difficulty in recruiting teachers and the reduction in the number of pupils wanting to study these languages. Option choices include

drama, business studies, media studies, graphics and sports studies. GNVQ courses in information and communication technology and art and design have provided a good alternative to GCSE for some pupils. Business studies makes a good contribution to raising achievement by the good development of basic skills and a positive awareness of business and industry. Changes in particular subjects have helped to raise standards of achievement. For example, science now has a modular course and all pupils take the double award. Setting³ arrangements for physical education and some grouping of higher attaining pupils in science have improved pupils' performance in this key stage.

- 39 The school has placed particular emphasis on literacy to enable everyone to learn in all subjects. All pupils have time during form periods to read silently and intensively for a short period. Implementation of the school's policy for literacy is effective in raising standards in subjects other than English, such as science and history, but pupils do not consistently experience appropriate written work in art. The school does not currently have a numeracy strategy and this means that departments have to make sure that they teach the numeracy skills needed for their work. Pupils receive their entitlement to information and communication technology in Key Stage 3, but do not have sufficient opportunities to use these skills across all subjects in Key Stage 4.
- 40 The school's programme for personal, social and health education makes a sound contribution to the well-being of pupils. They now have a suitable programme of careers education and a number of good opportunities to consider important aspects of health, sex and drugs education. The focus is changing to provide an increased emphasis on basic and higher order skills of problem solving. The oldest pupils have sessions on study skills and find them valuable. The programme is currently under review, in order to improve coherence between Key Stage 3 and 4, to provide an increased emphasis on key skills and to take full account of the citizenship elements for Curriculum 2000. The homework policy is not consistently applied in all subjects and therefore is not fully effective in encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their work outside of lessons.
- 41 The school conveys a very strong commitment to equality of access and opportunity through its ethos, its aims, its curriculum policies and its approach to social inclusion. Pupils are encouraged to use their own language in activities such as drama productions. Programmes of alternative education offer good provision for those who might otherwise be excluded from school. The "Little Ilford School Alternative" project is successful in providing pupils in Key Stage 3 with a suitable programme of work designed to meet their needs. In Key Stage 4 a small number of pupils attend an alternative curriculum provision run by the borough and arranged through the local college of further education. A wide range of awards such as the Youth Award and alternative accreditation in English, science and geography provide opportunities for a range of achievements to be recognised. The school makes good provision for pupils with special education needs. Individual education plans are available in lessons and inform planning. Higher attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented have satisfactory support in the curriculum and opportunities outside lessons to develop their talents still further.
- 42 There is a wide range of additional planned activities. For example, the school held a science and technology week encouraging pupils to embark upon challenging and stimulating tasks. Similarly, the geography department celebrated Geography Action week. School plays such as "Hamlet" are remembered by older pupils as memorable

³ A way of grouping pupils so that there are pupils of very similar abilities in one class.

events. The school welcomes expert artists, poets and sports people to work with pupils. Frequent visits include trips to theatres, museums, excursions abroad and outdoor education. The school council is respected and strong in the school. For example, several Year 9 pupils were unhappy about not being included in an extra revision programme recently held and are pursuing this matter through this channel. Pupils have say in who is elected to the school council through a voting system where potential candidates deliver a speech in assembly.

- 43 The school has invested significant time in raising achievement through literacy projects that take place out of school hours. Year 6 pupils attended the summer literacy school giving them good preparation for entry to the school in Year 7. This provision has been extended to a Saturday school. There is also a Saturday school for Year 6 pupils and their parents.
- 44 A comprehensive range of other extra curricular activities includes many opportunities to excel in sporting activities, especially in netball, basketball and football. Individuals and teams receive merits for good performance and are a credit to the school. Music and drama make a significant contribution to the life of the school. Clubs provide good opportunities for pupils to improve their work. The learning support team offers homework clubs including early morning support where 12 or more pupils gather with adults to discuss schoolwork. Subjects offer continuing support for pupils during the year by allocating times after school when pupils can go for further revision.
- 45 The school has good relationships with partner institutions, contributing positively to pupils' learning. Links with local primary schools are strong. Pupils are well prepared to transfer to secondary school with good liaison by the special needs co-ordinator, the team leader for Year 7 and by most curriculum team leaders. The school has very effective links with partner primary schools through drama and physical education through pupils running workshops for younger children. Year 11 pupils have contact with colleges providing sixth form courses, with good information evenings, involving parents.
- 46 The business community supports the school well. As part of the "Excellence in Cities" initiative with other secondary schools pupils have supportive links with learning mentors. The school involves pupils in community life through charitable events. Year 9 recently sang to raise a good sum of money for charity and geographers raised money for OXFAM.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- 47 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported by a whole school policy and all subjects are expected to identify the contribution that they can make. The provision is good overall and represents an improvement from the previous inspection when only a minority of subjects were involved in supporting its development.
- 48 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Teachers are sensitive to the broad range of different religions represented in the school community and this is reflected in lesson planning in subjects such as art, history and religious education where information and examples are taken from different religions. Drama provides opportunities for pupils to develop self-awareness through their interpretation of different themes. In religious education pupils are supported in talking about their own beliefs and values with lessons planned to incorporate individual pupils

experiences such one boy's feelings on his pilgrimage to Makkah. Links with local religious leaders have been established and there is a room available for Muslim prayer. Science allows pupils to consider different religious attitudes in the study of genetics. Whilst there has been good planning within a few subjects for the inclusion of the spiritual dimension within lessons, it remains low profile in most subjects.

- 49 The school has developed a wide range of themes for the once a week assembly for each year group and to support form teachers in discussing the theme with their groups at other times during the week. These provide very good opportunities for pupils to reflect upon a wide range of social and moral issues such as the unity of the year group. The spiritual dimension is not a strong feature of assembly planning and delivery. Assemblies are well organised with pupils attentive and responding positively to the awarding of certificates and recognising success. All form groups are responsible for organising and presenting one assembly each year and this makes a good contribution to pupils' individual personal development. The school did not provide a daily act of collective worship at the time of the last inspection. Progress has been made through the development of a theme for the week but the school does not fully meet statutory requirements.
- 50 The provision for pupils' moral development is good, supported by high expectations of good behaviour linked to a system of rewards and sanctions. Positive behaviour is recognised and celebrated in assemblies and recorded on the school's Roll of Honour. Pupils treat other pupils' views and ideas sensibly in class discussion activities. This gives all pupils the confidence to express opinions. The personal, social and health education programme reinforces the development of moral values throughout the course and provides many opportunities for pupils to present their own views. Religious education encourages pupils to link their own religious beliefs to a wide range of moral issues such as divorce, euthanasia and abortion and to form their own opinion. Geography encourages pupils to consider moral issues linked to poverty and drama promotes pupil understanding of moral issues in the themes selected for lessons.
- 51 Opportunities for pupils' social development are good across the whole range of the school's activities. Teachers encourage pupils to work in pairs and groups, which enhances both social skills and the ability to work with others to complete a task. In religious education the creation of mixed gender grouping is addressing the issue of the separation of boys and girls within individual classes although in other subjects there has been little change and boys and girls work separately. In physical education the promotion of fair play and teamwork is developing all pupils' social skills. Pupils have taken responsibility for their own social development through being active in the school council and in organising activities such as a fund raising for charity and the Year 11 Yearbook and leaving celebration. Most pupils relate well to staff and this supports pupils in discussing problems. Extra curricular activities linked to subject areas such as drama, physical education and music are popular and enable pupils to work together and enhance their social and performance skills.
- 52 Pupils' cultural development is good. The school values the many and varied backgrounds of its pupils and has celebrated the images and values of different groups through special activities and displays. Displays have included black history and One World Week. An emphasis on different cultures is evident in the work of many subjects but in some cases, for example geography, little use is made of pupils' own cultural background. Black poets and storytellers have supported work in English and in drama pupils use their community languages in parts of their practical work and school performances. Religious education involves pupils in a consideration of places special to different religions with a focus on Jerusalem and

on the religious and cultural similarities and differences of festivals. This is reinforced in English with pupils exploring their own culture in relation to growing up in Britain. Music from different cultures, for example a Tamil lullaby, is used to stimulate pupils' awareness of the reasons for the importance of music to different people. Art provides a wide range of art from different cultures for pupils to study including aboriginal dream paintings and encourages pupils to use the ideas and techniques to create their own pictures. Work in art and on textile design is supported by visits to museums and art galleries. Visits to France and Germany provide opportunities for pupils to experience firsthand different European cultures. The recent cross-curricular study experience visit to Disneyland supported by the Newham Business Partnership gave pupils in Year 10 the chance of working together in a different environment. The wide range of cultural activities represents a significant development from the time of the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 53 The school provides good support and guidance and promotes the welfare, health and safety of its pupils in a caring environment. There has been much progress made in this area since the last inspection.
- 54 Child protection procedures meet statutory requirements and staff are aware of the designated senior member of staff responsible. A nurse from a nearby clinic regularly works on first aid and safety with groups of pupils. The recent external Safety Audit in November 1999, conducted by the London Borough of Newham, showed that the safety management features of the school, safety training, accident reporting, risk assessment, fire and first aid fully complied with statutory requirements.
- 55 The school has very good procedures in place for monitoring and improving attendance which are very effective. Group tutors conduct registration efficiently and accurately at the start of the working day and after lunch. Heads of year monitor the process and good use is made of class logbooks which accompany classes to all lessons for teachers to note down, amongst other things, non-attendees. Form tutors, heads of year, the education welfare officer and the attendance officer work together to monitor and promote attendance and involve parents as necessary.
- 56 All staff work hard to promote high standards of behaviour. There is a school code of conduct and a home-school agreement where responsibilities are made explicit. Pupils discuss what appropriate behaviour is and any behaviour related issues in personal, social and health education lessons. There are appropriate rewards and sanctions. Staff in the learning support team and two full time learning mentors in the behaviour support team work intensively and successfully with pupils who have specific emotional or behavioural difficulties. When pupils follow an alternative curriculum because they are disaffected specific behaviour problems are considered and worked on.
- 57 There are well-documented procedures for monitoring and eliminating poor or oppressive behaviour. The school has a good anti-bullying policy with an emphasis on what teachers can do. Pupils know who to turn to in case of any difficulty. There is a full racial harassment policy. A log is kept showing the details of any racial incident with statements from all concerned as well as details of the remedial action taken.

- 58 The school has good procedures for assessing pupils' academic attainment and progress. All departments assess pupil attainment using a range of appropriate methods and each term pupils are given a national curriculum level in each subject. The levels are collated centrally and added to the expanding central database. This includes available levels in core subjects from partner primary schools, available scores in nationally recognised tests of verbal and non-verbal reasoning and other statistical measures such as the borough's test for bi-lingual English language speakers. The Key Stage 3 database is relatively recent and is a result of the work of a new assessment co-ordinator and the special educational needs co-ordinator. A similar database that includes examination information has existed in Key Stage 4 for a longer period. The senior management team, to ensure that assessment is valid and reliable, monitors practice in departments. Assessment procedures and systems in most departments are good; in mathematics, information technology, art, and religious education procedures are satisfactory. There are weaknesses in assessment in French where no Key Stage 3 assessment data is available. There are good procedures in place for assessing the attainment of pupils with special educational needs. The school monitors results to identify any differences between boys and girls and to look at the attainment of gifted and talented pupils but does not monitor academic performance in terms of ethnic groupings.
- 59 The school is beginning to make good use of assessment information. Key Stage 4 assessments have been analysed centrally by the senior management team and the assessment co-ordinator. Variations between and within departments are identified and those departments monitored. Examination performance is analysed and discussed with curriculum team leaders. Both the school and departments have begun to use this information better in their bid to raise standards for individuals, classes and groups. The data has been used, for example, in discussions about mixed ability teaching, as in the mathematics department where in Year 10 they have changed from mixed ability teaching groups to groups based on ability. The data has also been used to identify the higher prior attaining pupils so that suitable work and activities can be provided. There has been specific help given to pupils who might get a GCSE grade C or D and to those that teachers think are underachieving
- 60 The collation of Key Stage 3 information is more recent. The assessment co-ordinator and curriculum team leaders, including the learning support team, are beginning to monitor pupils' academic progress but pupil tracking by curriculum team leaders and year team leaders is in its early stages. Tutors will use this information in preparation for an academic review day later this term where individual pupils and their parents will discuss attainment and progress, agree appropriate targets and begin action planning.
- 61 Some departments are making good use of their assessment information. In history, geography and science, for example, pupils are given their level each term with suggestions as to what they need to do in order to gain the next level. In this way pupils are beginning to become more aware of their own learning and become more responsible for their progress. In science individual target setting is well-developed but in most other subjects, although pupils are given their attainment grades, they do not always know what to do to improve. Currently the use of assessment information to help pupils to know how to improve their work and to guide curriculum planning is the least well-developed strand of the schools assessment system.
- 62 Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are in place but are not well established as yet. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported both by staff in the learning support team and by form tutors. Pupils' individual education plans are generally good, but in a minority the focus for

individual targets is not sufficiently clear to give the pupil or the teachers specific enough objectives. The specialised provision for pupils with language and communication difficulties is monitored carefully with good termly reviews of pupils' needs, involving parents should they wish it. All annual reviews of statements of special educational needs are in place.

- 63 The school provides good support and guidance for its pupils. Pupils receive individual help from their form tutors who know them well, despite staffing changes. The heads of each year provide good support that helps tutors and teachers to meet the needs of pupils by identifying and sharing considered approaches to common problems. Special educational needs staff provide caring and sensitive support for those for whom special provision is made. All teachers are charged with promoting good behaviour, and the comprehensive policy provides them with clear guidance on issues like bullying, racism and oppressive behaviour. Good attendance and punctuality are successfully promoted. A school diary is used well in the earlier years. It provides an effective way to record achievements, informs parents of homework tasks and work to be done and helps pupils to take responsibility for their learning.
- 64 At the last inspection there were two key issues relating to this aspect. The school has successfully used a range of strategies to improve attendance. Assessment was judged not to give clear guidance on levels of achievement across the curriculum. In 1997 HMI monitoring stated that only limited progress had been made in remedying these deficiencies in assessment. Significant progress in assessment procedures has been made, particularly in the last year.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 65 Parents come from a rich variety of cultures, many of whom have different expectations of what constitutes a "parent partnership" according to their own traditions and cultural backgrounds. The school is sensitive to this, although there remains scope for the development of a closer working partnership between some parents and the school. The school rightly concentrates on conveying to parents their right for their child to receive a good education, on encouraging parents to read their child's annual report and on asking for permission before taking their child away from school on visits to family abroad. The school is successfully working to realise these aims.
- 66 The headteacher is available to see any parents who visit the school with concerns and values opportunities to meet parents at parents' evenings. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall. Termly newsletters provide a wealth of information. As the school only sends out these three times a year if one copy is not taken home by pupils or is lost there can be a gap in communications.
- 67 There is a satisfactory level of communication between the school and the many parents whose home language is not English. Notices of important dates are sent out in different languages and staff act as translators at parent's evenings. Some departments have tried to organise parents' information evenings, but this has met with a disappointing response from parents. Few parents of Somalian pupils attended an informal get together with agencies experienced in supporting Somalian families, attended by school staff. The school could do more to improve contact with parents of different cultures so that both parties can gain a greater appreciation of each other's role in supporting pupils' education. There is effective communication with parents of pupils with special educational needs who are formally invited to reviews and encouraged to attend.

- 68 The school has spent much time in improving the quality of pupil's annual reports. Inconsistencies in the quality of comments between subjects still exist despite rigorous monitoring, although the comments from most subjects are good and very informative. Overall, reports are satisfactory. Most contain clear targets to help pupils improve their work. Inconsistencies within targets set exist, with some being quite specific whilst others are too vague such as "continue to work hard" or "maintain high standards". For Year 11 pupils personal and motivational notes for pupils and their parents about coursework deadlines and exam targets between February and May are especially helpful.
- 69 The school works hard to encourage parents to attend the evening meeting where pupils' annual reports are discussed. Reports are handed over when parents come in to school to collect them and no report is released otherwise. Teachers contact parents who do not attend this annual parents evening; some do home visits. Because of the school's hard work in this respect attendance at parents' evening is generally good.
- 70 Parents have little impact on the work of the school. The exception to this is in the work of the governing body where many governors who are also parents give time willingly to provide skilful school management. Parents prefer to attend events that they can identify with as being familiar to their own culture - for example, the fashion show held two years ago as part of a religious education week. Some parents recently attended the black history month fashion show organised by the technology department. The use of community languages and shalwar kameez in drama is increasingly attracting parents to come to school productions.
- 71 Parental involvement in learning is satisfactory. Some parents trust the school explicitly to deliver education and have little concept of questioning what the school is providing. Many parents value education very highly whilst taking this approach. For some parents difficulties with the English language plus pupils who skilfully manipulate this to their advantage means that checking to see if homework is completed and signing diaries is unfamiliar. For other parents the concept of learning taking place in the home as well as in the school is also unfamiliar. Some parents, for a variety of social and economic reasons, find it very hard to support their child's education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 72 This is a school that is exceptionally well led and managed. The work of the governing body and the headteacher is outstanding, reflected in the considerable improvements that have taken place over the last five years. All staff with responsibilities are effective in their roles and are committed to providing the best quality education for their pupils. They provide good role models in terms of gender and ethnicity.
- 73 The headteacher and the governing body provide inspirational leadership and give a very clear sense of purpose and direction to the school. Governors are very active and support the school by working appropriately with officers from the LEA. Their work to secure improvement to the school roof is a good example of this. They are also active in the local governor network and have participated in national research on effective governing bodies.
- 74 There is an absolute and unwavering commitment from the headteacher and governors to raising standards through improving teaching and learning and this commitment and the school's values are reflected in all its work. There is also a total

commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils and all pupils are equally valued and respected, including those who at times have difficulties with their learning or behaviour. The school's equal opportunities policy is comprehensive and rigorous and is very practical and monitored regularly. All statutory requirements including those that relate to pupils with special educational needs are met.

- 75 The headteacher's open and collegiate management has increased the involvement of middle managers in taking responsibility for the development of their areas and teams. The leadership and management of curriculum and year teams is nearly always good. The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs, including the specific provision for pupils with language and communication difficulties and those with English as an additional language is good.
- 76 Development planning is thorough and each year there is a detailed evaluation of the progress of the previous plan. This year all priorities have been targeted at improving teaching and learning. They include the issues identified by the inspection, namely the development of a numeracy strategy, the development of information and communications technology and further work on assessment. The cycle for reviewing the previous plan and formulating the new one is dovetailed into the financial planning cycle, ensuring that resources are used to achieve priorities. There is also effective planning for the use of additional resources that comes with the school's involvement in Excellence in Cities and in the mini-achievement zone with partner primary schools. Spending decisions although monitored carefully are not systematically evaluated for their impact on standards. For example, the decision to spend more on administrative support staff has been informally evaluated and the school knows that teachers are not spending time on tasks better done by others. However, this evaluation has not gone as far as it might in investigating the impact on teaching and learning.
- 77 Senior managers work well with curriculum and year team leaders to both support them and hold them accountable for the work of their teams. The monitoring of teaching and learning at a departmental level is good, thorough and systematic and has led to developments and improvement. This includes observations of lessons using inspection criteria. The use of these criteria, whilst helpful in ensuring a level of satisfactory teaching, does not provide the school with information that would help it tackle some identified areas for improvement, for example, the underachievement of boys and the use of information technology in Key Stage 4. Monitoring extends to all aspects of the work of the school and has been significant in securing the improvements made over the last five years. The increased use of information technology is helping the school to monitor pupils' progress more effectively and there is now a wealth of data to help teachers plan the curriculum and their teaching.
- 78 The school is strong on comparing its achievements with other schools both locally and nationally and over the last five years has consistently challenged its own practice. It is very strong in seeking the best use of resources through competitive tendering and always considers alternative providers of services. Consultation with staff and pupils is good and although there could be more consultation with parents, the school is very committed to providing best value. Senior managers and governors are determined to improve by appointing good staff and putting systems in place that will secure improvement not only in the short term but also in the future.
- 79 There are sufficient experienced and qualified teachers and support staff for effective teaching of the curriculum for pupils of differing levels of ability, including those who have special education needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

This is despite there being a number of temporary staff who although qualified do not have their qualifications recognised in this country. Staffing is now a strong feature in English, history, art, drama and physical education, contributing significantly to pupil learning and progress, but is a weakness in design and technology and mathematics. Administrative and premises support is good and staff in these areas make a substantial contribution to an orderly and well-run school.

- 80 The school has demonstrated a very strong commitment to professional development. The programme has many impressive features including a new staff review process to replace the previous appraisal scheme. This brings together the monitoring of the work of individual teachers and their plans for professional development. Monitoring and evaluation of staff development to assess its impact on teaching is thorough and recognised in the school's Investors in People award. As a result all teachers are given relevant training and support, have clear job descriptions and understand their roles. A learning culture is developing amongst the teachers with appropriate emphasis on evaluation at individual and whole school level. There is also a good programme supporting both newly qualified teachers and initial teacher training students. The school has a significant problem in recruiting permanent teachers in some subject areas and there are currently 18 teaching posts advertised. This difficulty is resolved by employing a large number of qualified, temporary, 'agency' teachers which has an adverse affect on the delivery of the curriculum overtime. There are some high quality agency staff who bring an added dimension to the work of the school. Long term, staff absence is a concern and the school is working to reduce this by supporting staff should they experience difficulties.
- 81 Accommodation is good in art, drama, mathematics and for indoor physical education. It is inadequate in design and technology, music and for outdoor physical education. New fencing has significantly improved school security and there have been a large number of completed projects within the building which have enhanced the learning environment. The school has made very good progress under the guidance of the new resources manager in implementing the premises development plan. There is, however, still much to be done in order to improve the working environment. The outdoor playground is bleak and uninviting and litter is a significant problem following the morning and lunchtime breaks. A large number of the outsides of the windows in the school are in need of both repair and decoration. Within the building some toilets for pupils are in poor condition and the staircase for A and B blocks is inadequate for the number of pupils and staff using it. The physical education changing rooms are in a poor condition. There has been considerable concern regarding the state of large areas of the school roof and the borough has agreed to fund the most urgent work. It is important that the remainder of this repair is completed as soon as possible.
- 82 The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in improving the quality of teaching resources and the overall budget for the departments is now at a satisfactory level. Music, history, art and drama are very well equipped, enhancing teaching and learning although there are a number of shortcomings in design and technology and modern foreign languages.
- 83 A number of improvements have been made to the library since the last inspection. The most important was the appointment of a talented and enthusiastic librarian who makes sure that the library is open when pupils might want to use it. It is much better equipped and more attractive, although the number of seats is very small for the size of the school. The good provision enables and encourages pupils to read more widely. The layout of the library has been completely revised to improve access to

the room. The book and material supply has been renewed. A new security and administrative system has been developed. Uptake of the library is rigorously monitored and the most popular books and authors are recorded. All pupils' borrowing is monitored throughout their school life to establish the most active readers. Borrowing is monitored by gender. By Year 11 girls take more than 1,000 more books than boys. The librarian makes strenuous efforts to obtain fiction and non-fiction which will appeal to boys, particularly sport and science fiction. There is a good supply of dual language texts in a range of community languages. Despite these improvements the library is still under-resourced in comparison to other schools.

- 84 There has also been a significant investment in the provision for information technology throughout the school and there are many attractive displays around the building. The new media resources room is an important element in the improvements that have been achieved in the general level of resources throughout the school.
- 85 Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection in the quality of staffing, accommodation and resources and this has played an important part in raising the morale of teachers and pupils at the school. As a result there is a much more positive learning environment and this has contributed to improved teaching and learning and improved standards.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards in the school the governors, headteacher and staff should:

Improve levels of attainment in English by:

- focusing on writing and presentation skills; (Paragraphs 5, 105, 110, 150, 151 and 190)
- ensuring that all teachers are able to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language; (Paragraph 106)
- increasing the number of pupils entered for Key Stage 3 tests; (Paragraph 110)
- extending links with primary schools; (Paragraph 111)

and in mathematics at Key Stage 3 by:

- using assessment information to make sure pupils are working at their right level; (Paragraphs 27 and 124)
- keeping the way pupils are grouped under review; (Paragraphs 27, 120 and 123)

improve the overall quality of teaching in French by:

- regularly assessing pupils and using this information to plan the curriculum and lessons; (Paragraphs 28 and 171)
- using National Curriculum level descriptors to set work at an appropriate level of challenge for the range of attainment in classes; (Paragraphs 171 and 172)
- using the target language more frequently in lessons; (Paragraph 172)

and in mathematics by:

- developing strategies to maintain pace when learning is individualised; (Paragraph 120)

- improving classroom management skills; (Paragraph 120)
- defining and sharing good practice in mathematics teaching; (Paragraph 118)

develop and implement plans to co-ordinate the teaching of numeracy skills across the curriculum by:

- finding out what numeracy skills are needed and taught in all subjects; (Paragraphs 6 and 39)
- developing a numeracy policy and strategy; (Paragraphs 29 and 117)
- monitoring its implementation in mathematics and in other subjects (Paragraphs 117 and 120)

make better use of day-to-day and other assessments by:

- using assessment information to guide pupils in how to improve their work; (Paras 33, 61, 96, 164 and 171)
- using this information to plan the curriculum and lessons; (Paragraphs 33 and 61)

develop the use of information and communications technology to extend and enrich pupils' learning in all subjects across the curriculum by:

- improving facilities and resources for information and communications technology throughout the school; (Paragraphs 29, 139 and 166)
- ensuring that all curriculum team leaders know how information and communications technology can be used to help pupils learn in their subject. (Paragraphs 7, 29, 39, 125, 128, 165 and 171)

In addition the school should:

- continually help and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour; (Paragraphs 15, 22 and 34)
- make sure that when younger pupils feel intimidated it is always dealt with; (Paragraph 16)
- continue to push for improvements in the accommodation that the staff and pupils deserve. (Paragraphs 81, 147, 182 and 187)

OTHER FEATURES SPECIFIED FOR INSPECTION

The provision for pupils with language and communications difficulties

86 The provision for pupils with language and communication difficulties is very good. It is well managed and is a strength of the school. The first four pupils joined the school in September and therefore it is not possible to comment on their attainment. There is a shared commitment to enable all pupils to have full access to the National Curriculum. This is achieved with a high level of very effective in-class support from teachers, speech therapist and support assistants, as needed, across all subjects.

87 The development of pupils' work is achieved through an excellent working relationship between the co-ordinator, speech therapist, subject teachers and support staff. There is a very good shared awareness of pupils' needs which is key in supporting improvements in their understanding and securing progress. The tasks

pupils are given are very carefully planned and modified to meet their discerned needs. Clear, measurable learning targets are used to plan teaching support. There is a very good use of explanation and questioning to assess how much the pupils have learnt and understood and work is well adapted to the level of pupils' new learning. For example, in lessons observed during the period of inspection teachers and support staff always help pupils to interpret and understand the class teacher by sitting next to them, giving them clear explanations to aid their learning. When pupils in class are given written tasks, pupils with language and communication difficulties are given a suitably modified task to meet their needs. This very high level of support enables all of them to make good progress in line with their abilities across all subjects.

- 88 Planning, assessment and record keeping are seen as a continuous process and are made possible through the close liaison between all involved staff. All pupils with language and communication difficulties have a statement of special educational needs. This is reviewed annually with all involved professionals, parents, carers and pupils. Individual education plans identify targets. Some of these targets are not specific to the period of review, which is termly. However, the very close and effective working relationship between all staff and the work given to pupils further develops their targets step-by-step in practice. This provides a very careful sequence of learning activities matched to their needs. This continued assessment of needs greatly aids pupils' progress and provides a wealth of information on the provision for each pupil. This is well used to inform the termly reviews of individual education plans and yearly reviews of statements.
- 89 Pupils with language and communication difficulties have very positive relationships with their peers who do not have such difficulties. This was very well demonstrated in a mathematics lesson when one of the pupils with language and communication difficulty was asked to describe to the whole class with the use of the whiteboard the mathematical properties of the shape of a kite he had drawn. He gave a confident, well received, clear explanation. The rest of the class listened intently. When he had finished there was a murmur of congratulation that went around the class, praising him for his efforts. Many appreciated his achievement, aware of the problems he had in expressing himself. His efforts were excellent. All the pupils with language and communication difficulties work well in their classes, concentrating on their tasks. They are developing their confidence and are learning independent and collaborative learning skills. They are very effectively integrated throughout the school and show a mature attitude in lessons.
- 90 Provision is enhanced throughout the school because there is a commitment from everyone to including these pupils in all aspects of the school's work. This is demonstrated very well in practice and in the very positive attitudes that staff and pupils have. The appointment of the speech therapist to the education department within the local education authority provides a most effective input to securing the personal development and educational standards of the pupils. She is a full member of the team of teacher and support staff, who are all working together extremely well to provide the pupils with a full, meaningful equality of access to the school's curriculum and a high quality provision.

The provision for pupils with English as an additional language

- 91 One fifth of pupils at the earliest stages of English language acquisition achieve national standards by the end of Key Stage 3 in English despite entering the school with little or no English. Seventy four per cent of the school's intake has English as an additional language including 283 pupils at either Stage 1 or 2 of English

language acquisition. Whilst overall standards are below other similar schools at the end of Key Stage 3, they are above other similar schools at the end of Key Stage 4. Thirteen per cent of pupils who began at the school with the earliest stages of English language acquisition achieve GCSE English grades A* to C, whilst 46 per cent achieve grades A* to G.

- 92 Pupils who have English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress in all National Curriculum subjects except in modern foreign languages. In over half of the subjects progress is good. Standards of support teaching are good overall, which leads to effective learning. Relationships between support teachers and pupils and partnerships between teachers are good. Support teachers' knowledge of pupils' needs is good.
- 93 Support teachers are effective in working with the whole class and are actively involved for much of the lesson. They intervene effectively when further explanation is required. Appropriate work is set for pupils of different levels of attainment. Support teachers clarify tasks and check pupils' understanding. All mainstream teachers are fully informed of pupils' level of fluency in English, having received detailed explanation of the stages and suggested appropriate activities for the different stages. The extent to which the information is used to inform planning varies from department to department but good models of practice have been established in history and science. Pupils are encouraged to use their first language to support their learning. Where support staff are bilingual they assess pupils in both languages.
- 94 Where support teaching is not effective there is no clear focus on targeting specific pupils in mainstream lessons. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged and have answers given to them. Understanding of concepts is not checked. Support staff are under utilised at times and in some cases do not have equal status and respect in the eyes of pupils. Only pupils at Stages 1 and 2 are identified on most teachers' lesson plans. Subject teachers do not monitor the progress of Stages 3 and 4 closely enough to ensure that potentially higher attaining pupils with English as an additional language are not under achieving.
- 95 Pupils are supported across a wide range of curriculum areas. Generally pupils with English as an additional language make greater progress in curriculum areas where there is more support, notably English, science, history and design and technology. Whilst only one period per week is allocated for the assessment of casual admissions the introduction of an authority wide assessment process in the autumn was time consuming and drew support away from subject areas. The time taken for assessments had an adverse effect on good models of partnership teaching established.
- 96 Data on the progress of pupils with English as an additional language is still incomplete. A centrally held spreadsheet for Year 7 and 8 pupils is in place but it is difficult to track the progress of pupils in Year 9 or above. Not all teachers use the assessment information. The end of Key Stage 3 standard assessment tests and GCSE results are monitored by pupils' stage of English language acquisition.
- 97 Staff who support pupils with English as an additional language are actively involved in extra curricular activities including the breakfast club and homework club to support learning. Some bilingual pupils have benefited from using a commercial scheme to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills.

- 98 There has been a major reorganisation of how the provision for pupils with English as an additional language is made and managed since the last inspection. The grant for this is now devolved to schools and has led to the organisation of a language and learning support faculty, led by the special educational needs co-ordinator who is providing strong leadership. The team supporting pupils with English as an additional language are highly committed and experienced although few have specific qualifications in this area. The faculty is strongly committed to partnership teaching in mainstream classes in order to develop the skills of all teachers in working with pupils with English as an additional language.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	188
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	59

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4	20	38	29	8	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1310
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	712
Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	56
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	243
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1079
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	112
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	118

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	150	110	260

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	32	51	47
	Girls	39	28	27
	Total	71	79	74
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	27 (38)	31 (27)	29 (24)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	3 (12)	12 (12)	7 (7)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	55	54
	Girls	46	48	38
	Total	91	103	92
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	36 (27)	40 (43)	36 (36)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	12 (12)	11 (20)	12 (19)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	148	96	244

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	27	119	138
	Girls	28	86	94
	Total	55	205	232
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	22.2 (15.8)	83 (80.3)	95 (90.9)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	28.4 (26.0)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate	
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	27	74.1
	National		[n/a]

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	31
Black – African heritage	120
Black – other	14
Indian	238
Pakistani	178
Bangladeshi	318
Chinese	1
White	117
Any other minority ethnic group	64

NB. 229 pupils whose ethnicity is recorded as “unknown” because entry forms did not require this data until recently.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	24	1
Black – other	7	0
Indian	10	0
Pakistani	24	1
Bangladeshi	38	1
Chinese	0	0
White	25	7
Other minority ethnic groups	11	2

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	74.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	778

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	20.9
Key Stage 4	20.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	3,624,933
Total expenditure	3,679,060
Expenditure per pupil	2,808
Balance brought forward from previous year	+49,896
Balance carried forward to next year	-4,433

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 33.7%

Number of questionnaires sent out

1298

Number of questionnaires returned

342

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	43	5	5	2
My child is making good progress in school.	40	48	8	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	32	9	10	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	38	16	7	2
The teaching is good.	28	47	16	5	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	36	17	9	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	36	10	4	9
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	31	4	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	27	37	19	9	8
The school is well led and managed.	26	39	15	7	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	41	11	4	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	36	13	7	10

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Only 17 parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector. These parents provided a mixture of both positive and negative views on school life whilst giving a comprehensive list of how the school has improved over the years.

Inspection findings do not support the negative views expressed. Little Ilford is an improving school and is very well led and managed. The quality of teaching is good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. Both teaching and management are important school strengths. The quality of extra curricular activities is good and there is a wide range of opportunities offered for pupils. The provision and quality of homework is satisfactory overall and good for pupils in Key Stage 3. The issues concerning the school working with parents and information about progress are handled satisfactorily by the school. Because the school has been unsuccessful in the past the inspection team believe that it is proving difficult for the school to alter its now undeserved reputation in the wider community.

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

ENGLISH

- 99 Attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are well below national averages and below those in similar schools. Twenty seven per cent of pupils reach Level 5 compared to 64 per cent nationally. Only three per cent of pupils reach Level 6. There has been an improvement in results over the last five years. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are below national averages in English language and English literature and girls do better than boys.
- 100 Taking account of the fact that nearly all pupils in the school have English as an additional language to their home language their achievements in English are good. They make progress in line with or better than expected, particularly in speaking and listening and are making considerable gains in understanding English grammar. Pupils know what metaphors and register are. In a Year 7 lesson on the poem 'Ogun' pupils could explain similes, onomatopoeia and metaphors giving examples from the text. Higher attaining pupils know about the use of dialect and accent.
- 101 Pupils show understanding of significant ideas, themes, events and characters in texts. In a Year 9 lesson on 'Poems from other cultures and traditions' pupils understand how the theme of tongue has a range of meanings in language. Pupils are also able to interpret the meaning of the poem 'Search for my tongue'. A small number of high attaining pupils are able to articulate the poet's feelings, emotions and thoughts. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are able to access the meaning of the poem through effective support and appropriate supplementary material.
- 102 Pupils can talk for a range of purposes in different contexts. They can listen carefully in discussions with teachers and each other. In Year 10 pupils can take different views into account, cite evidence and construct persuasive arguments by defending a person who may be guilty from the story 'Turned' by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.
- 103 Reading aloud at Key Stage 3 lacks expression although pupils are confident and enthusiastic about reading and speaking aloud in class. In a Year 7 library lesson higher attaining pupils have learnt to use voice and expression to good effect in creating animal noise whilst reading a poem of their choice to the class. In one Year 9 lesson higher attaining pupils spoke articulately about their religion and culture whilst lower attaining pupils spoke briefly and with a lack of fluency or extension in their explanations. Pupils can infer from text. In a Year 7 lesson on "Journey to Johannesburg" pupils could infer information from the text about the main characters.
- 104 Pupils can use dictionaries to find the meanings of obscure or unfamiliar words, for example, from Shakespeare's 'All the world's a stage' in a Year 7 lesson. In the same lesson pupils collaborated in pairs or groups, discussed ideas and fed back their ideas to the whole class.
- 105 Standards in written work especially at Key Stage 3 are well below national averages. In some Year 7 classes pupils are still printing letters and using pencils. Pupils show sustained progress, however, and by the end of Key Stage 4 pupils can write in a range of forms which show independent and critical thinking, in particular newspaper reports and formal letters to the Minister of Transport concerning a recent oil disaster

- 106 Teachers employ a range of teaching styles to help pupils to learn, including pair work, group work and whole class teaching. All the teaching seen at Key Stage 4 and over half the lessons seen in Key Stage 3 were good. A small proportion of lessons at Key Stage 3 was unsatisfactory. The large turnover of staff has had an impact on learning. One Year 8 class has had four different teachers already this year. Long term sickness and the use of agency staff have also had an effect on standards. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and learning outcomes on the curriculum plan, unit planning sheets and lesson plans. Parents are kept informed of progress through a parents' booklet. The themes explored are of relevance and interest to pupils, particularly the unit on culture and tradition which drew heavily on pupils' own experiences and skills in their own language. Pupils who have special educational needs or English as an additional language are well supported although the overall level of support has fallen this year. In some lessons where there is no support, higher attaining pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language do not have their needs fully met. The department has a strong commitment to including all pupils in all aspects of the English curriculum. This encourages pupils at the earliest stages of English language acquisition to develop their oral skills and begin emergent writing. Group work and pair work supports these activities, as does the emphasis on structured talk. Mixed ability groups are well taught and pupils at different levels of attainment have their needs met. Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning.
- 107 Lessons encourage pupils to think for themselves and express their opinions. In Year 10 pupils can argue verbally for or against a character either in small groups or to the whole class. They readily ask questions of the teacher and each other. They listen well to other points of view and respond well to other pupils talking about their own religion or home language. They respond well to instructions. Pupils are willing readers, individually, in groups or to the whole class. Good use is made of the library in Key Stage 3 through regular library lessons. Links with the library are strengthened through activities such as "Book Week" and silent quiet uninterrupted individual reading time ('Squirting'). Information technology is used well by some pupils to enhance their presentation but there are insufficient opportunities for this. Pupils can write for a range of purposes including newspaper style, diaries and letters.
- 108 The school recognises that more work needs to be done on literacy. In certain departments good practice has been established, notably in drama, geography, history, science and physical education, to support the work done in English. Other departments including business studies, information technology and design and technology have made progress. Pupils' literacy skills are less well-developed in mathematics and in modern foreign languages. A range of activities have been introduced to promote literacy within the school including a visiting poet, work with the literacy centre at the local football club, a literacy summer school and a Saturday literacy school.
- 109 Behaviour in most lessons is good. The behaviour of some pupils, particularly boys, needs to improve in Year 9. Books are regularly marked and contain effort and attainment grades as well as targets for improvement. Progress at Key Stage 3 has been adversely affected by teacher changes. Previous work has not been regularly marked and homework not regularly set.
- 110 Whilst improvements have been made in speaking, pupils still need to develop their skills in extended speaking. Pupils' written skills and standards of presentation need further development. There is still a high non-entry level for standard attainment

tests at the end of Key Stage 3. In some cases where no support is available pupils who have English as an additional language or who are higher attaining do not make sufficient progress. Assessment is thorough at the end of each unit at Key Stages 3 and 4. However, teacher assessments for Level 5 and above at Key Stage 3 are above levels achieved in tests. Further work will be required to ensure accuracy of assessment.

- 111 Leadership in the department is good. There are now well-qualified specialist teachers in the department. Newly qualified teachers and students receive good support from the department in a programme of mentoring and support. The new information technology room for English and literacy is having an impact on raising standards. A programme of alternative accreditation is in place for Year 11 pupils below Level 3 on the National Curriculum. There are a range of extra curricular activities which enhance the curriculum, including Book Week, a building design project and Readathon in Year 9, theatre trips and workshops with professional storytellers. Displays are of a high standard and reflect exemplars of high quality work, for example, Year 10 work on Shakespeare and Roald Dahl in each other's style. There are insufficient links with partner primary schools for teachers to be absolutely sure that they are building on what pupils have already achieved, particularly in literacy.
- 112 Since the last inspection leadership and management in the department have been revitalised. Schemes of work have been revised and there has been a more planned approach to the curriculum. The quality of teaching has been significantly improved. A conference and series of workshops has sought to improve standards. Opportunities for pupils to speak in lessons have improved. There has been a rise in the percentage of pupils entered for GCSE. The number of pupils achieving Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3 has increased. There has been a large turnover of staff with only one member of the department still in post from the last inspection.

MEDIA STUDIES

- 113 The percentage of pupils achieving A* to C grades at GCSE is in line with the national average. Pupils can summarise the main elements of films and identify the key characteristic of the leading characters. They can analyse character, setting and storyline and higher attaining pupils have the opportunity for extended speech to develop their ideas. Pupils' coursework on magazines and journals draws heavily on their own cultural experiences, Indian fashion, film and music. Higher attaining pupils make use of radio drama techniques.
- 114 The teaching of the subject is satisfactory although the long two-hour lessons hinders sustained concentration of pupils. Pupils are noisy in group work although they do engage in the task of comparing and contrasting elements in films. Film stereotyping of gender roles are challenged and the teaching encourages pupils to think through how female roles have changed in recent years. Pupils contribute to whole class discussions although boys dominate discussions and do not always listen to quieter girls. Some pupils are happy to sit passively and not participate in discussions, however.
- 115 Attendance is an issue because if a pupil misses one lesson the whole curriculum time for that week is lost. Pupils' work in Year 10 on science fiction is affected by the number of pupils who were absent when the film was shown in class.

MATHEMATICS

- 116 Pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 3 in the national tests are well below national average. When compared with similar schools they are below the average. The performance of boys is better than girls at the end of Key Stage 3. GCSE results for pupils gaining the higher grades of A* to C are well below national average, although results for pupils gaining grades A*-G are similar to the national average. Far more boys achieve grades A* to C than girls and girls' results are very low. The percentage entered for GCSE is similar to the national average.
- 117 In lessons standards are low. In nearly all lessons pupils' attainment is at, below or well below the expected standard. However, in the top set in Year 10 pupils are working at a level above the national standard. Numeracy skills are low but do not hinder learning in other subjects. In geography pupils are taught to draw accurate and well-presented climate graphs in Key Stage 3 as well as using pie charts in their study of land use, employment structure and population pyramids. In art there is accurate use of number and measurement by the end of Key Stage 4, such as pattern work based on grid structures. Pupils carry out some work on statistics in nineteenth century history on industrial and population development. There is no whole-school approach to numeracy so there is a lack of clarity about who is teaching what aspects of numeracy and when. The role of the mathematics department in the teaching of numeracy is also not clear. Pupils made good progress in mathematical understanding although few pupils reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. In Key Stage 4 progress of pupils in lessons is good overall and in Key Stage 3 pupils make sound progress in most lessons.
- 118 The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in slightly less than eight out of 10 lessons and was unsatisfactory in the rest. The quality of teaching was good in almost four out of 10 lessons. Teaching is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. It is good where the teachers have sufficiently high expectations and ensure pupils are well involved in the work. When teachers explain the work well pupils understand and make good progress. In a Year 7 lesson the teacher helped pupils to find strategies for solving a number puzzle. Pupils were then able to find how many ways there are of adding two sets of two digit numbers to make one hundred without using any single digit more than once. In a Year 9 class where pupils were learning about enlarging a shape by a scale factor the teacher's explanation was clear and helped pupils make good progress. Most teachers manage pupils well and ensure that they behave well throughout the lesson, staying focused on their work. Some teachers keep very good records of pupils' progress and attainment to support their lesson planning. However, this is not consistent across the department. Teachers who know their pupils well offer good extra support, particularly to pupils of lower attainment. In some lessons good resources are used and the teacher gives different work on the same topic to suit pupils of differing abilities. Where teaching is good teachers' subject knowledge is good and the work is explained. In the more successful lessons teachers make the aims of the lesson clear to pupils at the start and during the summing up period at the end of the lesson find out what pupils have learnt. There is some good extension work prepared for pupils who finish their work quickly. The quality of teaching is generally better in the classes in Key Stage 4, where pupils are set according to their ability, than in the mixed ability classes in Key Stage 3.
- 119 Generally where the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better the pupils who have English as an additional language or have special educational needs are well catered for by the teachers and make satisfactory progress. However, in those lessons

where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory these pupils make less than satisfactory progress.

- 120 Where there are weaknesses in teaching it is usually because the management of pupils' behaviour is not sufficiently strong. In these lessons teachers continue to address the class while pupils are talking. This slows down the work-rate for the class. In these lessons many pupils were not involved in the lesson because the teaching was unsatisfactory. Where teachers tolerate an unacceptable level of noise in the room pupils cannot concentrate. Although most lessons include time when all pupils are working on the same material, lessons or parts of lessons do not always cater for the range of pupils in the class. Some teachers work through a numerical investigation with a class without teaching them how to solve such investigations. Where teachers' writing on the board is untidy or they draw diagrams without using a ruler they set a poor example to pupils. In part of a lesson where the Secondary Mathematics Individualised Learning Scheme was used the pace of the work was slow. Although the department has begun numeracy lessons in Key Stage 3, many teachers are not teaching pupils sufficient strategies for using number in mental mathematics. Apparatus is not used enough to support pupils whose ability to manipulate number is limited. In mixed ability classes when pupils are all being taught the same topic sometimes the lower attainers receive insufficient help and consequently make insufficient progress.
- 121 Pupils' attitude and behaviour is mostly satisfactory and often good. It is unsatisfactory only when the teaching is unsatisfactory. However, in one lesson where the teaching was unsatisfactory the class continued to work well and made satisfactory progress. This is because the quality of the work prepared by the department compensated for the teaching and pupils worked well. Pupils usually have good relationships with their teachers and have a positive attitude to their learning, which helps them to make sound or good progress in most lessons. Where there is insufficient challenge and insufficient pace in lessons pupils sometimes misbehave.
- 122 There has been a marked improvement in mathematics since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since 1995 when the quality of teaching mathematics was satisfactory or better in only 45 per cent of lessons. It is now satisfactory or better in 78 per cent. The marked improvement in the quality of teaching is helping to improve the standards in mathematics. However, there have been too many changes of staff in the past few years, which continue to have a detrimental effect on standards.
- 123 There has been increased monitoring of teaching and learning by the curriculum team leader and the senior management team, which has resulted in greater consistency in teaching. The department has changed the curriculum in Key Stage 4 from an individual learning programme and has put pupils into groups according to ability. The newly set classes in Year 10 are working well and pupils are making good progress in their lessons. There has been a marked improvement in the percentage of pupils entered for GCSE as only 68 per cent were entered at the time of the last inspection whereas 95 per cent were entered in 1999. Computerised class records are relatively new and show pupils' attainment and progress over time and will become more valuable for monitoring progress when there is more information available.
- 124 The individualised mathematics scheme used has good built-in assessment to help pupils to work at their correct level. However, teachers do not use them well and consequently pupils are not always working at their correct level in Key Stage 3.

Records of the work that pupils' have completed are kept up-to-date, but are not always dated. The best records show clear progress and effort.

- 125 Information technology is under-developed in mathematics and the department recognises this, particularly in Key Stage 4. There is no standardised way for teachers to record progress in Key Stage 3 or in Key Stage 4. There is a need for pupils' records to be individualised and classwork to be improved to ensure continuity of learning so that pupils make the best possible progress.

SCIENCE

- 126 By the end of Key Stage 3 the 1999 test results showed performance in science to be well below the national average both for the number of pupils reaching the expected level 5 and the higher levels 6 and 7. When compared with similar schools results were average. Comparisons indicate girls did not perform as well as boys. Results have shown gradual improvement over a period of four years since the last inspection. Taking into account the large number of pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs this represents good achievement over time for the school.
- 127 By the end of Key Stage 4 the 1999 test results showed performance to be well below the national average. The number of pupils achieving the higher grades A-C was well below national averages, but those achieving the grades A-E was closer to the national average. When compared with similar schools results were above average. The school has shown marked improvement in performance in 1999. The comparisons for all GCSEs indicate girls did not perform as well as boys. Results show improvement since the last inspection. The number of pupils entering GCSE or alternative examinations has improved over four years.
- 128 Attainment is better than indicated in the 1999 results although below national averages at the end of both key stages. Pupils in the higher ability groups generally reach national expectations in using language to explain scientific ideas, although lower attaining pupils find this more difficult. For example, Year 9 distinguish between the size of particles in rocks and the speed of cooling volcanic materials. Higher ability pupils reach appropriate standards in the use of number, but most pupils find the application of number to experimental results more difficult. They reach appropriate standards in preparing graphs but find analysis and evaluation of information more difficult. They do not reach high enough standards in the use of information and communication technology to record and analyse information. It was not possible to observe lessons in Year 11, but scrutiny of written work shows the highest attaining pupils reach national or better standards because emphasis on language helps pupils write successful experimental accounts, drawing effective scientific conclusions.
- 129 Achievement is good throughout the school. Pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress in lessons. For example, Year 7 pupils grasp the differences between solids, liquids and gases by carrying out a series of stimulating observations. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 make good gains in knowledge of sound waves, confidently using terms such as frequency and amplitude, drawing the shape of waves accurately. Lower attaining pupils make good progress, particularly those with very little English and those with special educational needs, supported by very good practical experimentation and high quality visual material. Achievement is very good in Year 10. For example, they gain a good appreciation of genetics through good illustrations of differences between girls and boys, by reading newspaper articles and arguing their own viewpoints. Higher attaining pupils deduce

formulae for the relationship between the variables of current and voltage, gaining a good understanding of resistance. As a result of very good teaching pupils improve their understanding of proportionality. Achievement in the process of planning, obtaining, recording and evaluating evidence is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4.

- 130 Teaching is good overall. Over two thirds of lessons were good or better, with one of outstanding quality. Teaching in Year 10 was very good. No lessons were unsatisfactory, which is a tribute to the team. The teaching of basic skills in literacy is very well developed. Written support materials and reading materials are adapted for particular groups and usually match pupils' needs well, particularly those with lower levels of language acquisition. In one lesson a very good computer programme enabled pupils to label human body organs in line with their reading level. At best teachers are imaginative, preparing materials and practical experiments very well to motivate pupils. A strong emphasis is placed on speaking, and when they encourage pupils to enter into the role of researchers or scientific experts pupils make very good progress. For example, pupils in Year 9 produce very good information on chemical processes, preparing talks for other groups that they read well. Relationships with pupils are good.
- 131 A further strength of teaching lies in the high expectations that teachers have for pupils to gain good subject knowledge, encouraging pupils to explore scientific ideas for themselves through practical investigation. Teachers praise enthusiasm and hard work and encourage full participation in discussion, ensuring girls and boys have sufficient opportunities for answering questions and giving opinions.
- 132 Planning is good. Lesson objectives are clear and teachers explain them carefully to pupils. Teachers organise well, making good use of time and resources, well supported by competent technicians. Lessons usually have a good pace with plenty of variety. Support teachers and learning assistants support pupils with special educational needs well, but this level of support is not often available. Teachers generally take care to monitor the progress of pupils whilst they are working. In satisfactory lessons learning is not effectively reviewed because the end of the lesson is too rushed.
- 133 Assessment has been a major development this year and is a strong feature of the department. Pupils know their levels of attainment in Key Stage 3 and their minimum target grade in Key Stage 4. They understand the criteria for assessing practical investigations. They are beginning to have a good understanding of how to improve through good marking and detailed discussion of their work. However, there is currently no system for assessing their progress in the use of information and communication technology. Teachers set homework regularly, expecting pupils to complete homework diaries, but pupils do not always have them.
- 134 Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. They respond very well to lively teaching and are generally serious minded about their work. However, in satisfactory lessons some become restless and time is spent supporting and renewing their concentration. They manage practical resources well and participate in discussion, although some are rather reserved until prompted. Pupils usually support each other well, talking about ideas that they find difficult. They work well in teams, older pupils developing good concentration. They enjoy very good relationships with teachers, steadily increasing in maturity. All pupils follow safety procedures.

135 The department is very well managed. The quality of monitoring is very good and has resulted in significant improvement in pupil achievement since the last inspection. The department has improved continuity through each key stage through very good schemes of work and is now in a position to show teachers how to incorporate skills, including those of information and communication technology, year by year. The very good work in assessment is beginning to give pupils confidence to participate much more in setting targets for improvement.

ART

136 The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was better than the national average for both boys and girls. The proportion of those achieving grades A*-G was better than the national average for girls and close to the national average for boys. This continues the previous trend of pupils achieving above the national average in A*-C at a time of growing numbers taking the examination.

137 In work seen during the inspection the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 at age 14 are good and are often above the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils are able to apply the basic elements of line, tone, colour, texture and shape well. They employ different painting techniques from sensitive blending of colour to complex pointillism, as in their exceptionally good Aborigine dream paintings. They are familiar with a range of art of other cultures combining creative letterforms with studies of African masks in strong graphic posters. Three-dimensional skills are well developed in their large-scale vibrant and imaginative individual interpretations of animal forms in paper sculpture and in their paper vessels incorporating decorative imagery from many cultures and periods of history. Good skills in formal observational recording in line and tone are matched by successful design work from secondary sources. Pupils have a broad-based knowledge of a range of different artists' work supported by visits to art galleries. They are able to take an idea, experiment, select and develop initial studies into new creative forms. Pupils do not use computers to generate creative artwork.

138 In work seen during the inspection the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 at age 16 are good and are often above the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. They continue to explore the work of artists such as Delauney and successfully incorporate and develop these influences in imaginative stamp designs. They explore spatial values employing wire and paper to construct three-dimensional mobiles that fascinate younger pupils and stimulate discussion. Pupils continue to use influences from Western and other cultures inventively and demonstrate these influences in hand-made books. They show strengths in design, winning a competition to produce a graphic logo for a London 'maths on the move' bus campaign and use their graphic skills to raise awareness of issues such as racism. Pupils undertaking a GNVQ qualification in art understand and apply well the design process with good practice in research and well developed practical art and design skills. They are able to analyse the requirements of a design brief, using their communication skills to present information and ideas, interpreting and presenting data in a practical context.

139 The subject has made very good progress since the last inspection. Exam results are now better than average for both boys and girls with consistently good levels of achievement at both stages. There are improved book resources for art of other cultures in the library but no CD Roms to support art. Good independent learning has been maintained and there is adequate curriculum time allocation for rehearsal of skill at both stages. Year 11 pupils were not available to be observed during the

inspection but their folders of work show that pupils are now exposed to a wide range of different media and that they are productive in suitably challenging tasks. Work is consistently strong, creative and demanding in all areas with good opportunities for individual expression and decision making. Schemes of work in subject documentation now relate well to National Curriculum attainment targets. Reports are of good quality but would be better if parents were informed of the programme targets at Key Stage 3. A good three-dimensional experience is provided and adequate attention is given to Western artists such as Georgia O’Keeffe but there is still a shortage of resources for direct observational study.

- 140 The quality of teaching is consistently good, invariably producing a good learning experience for pupils of all levels of attainment. Leadership of the subject is good, teachers bring a purposefulness and enthusiasm to their lessons and use a broad range of strategies to meet individual needs. Pupils respond well to this, showing an enjoyment in their work and a keenness to do well. Good-quality group and individual interventions where teachers demonstrate their craft skill are instrumental in establishing and raising standards. Lesson planning is very clear. Pupils are kept well informed of what needs to be done, their progress is regularly reviewed and targets agreed to move pupils on even further. The use of an appropriate vocabulary for art is regularly raised with variable levels of success and the good practice of extended written evaluation and short notation in some lessons offers potential for raising pupils’ literacy ability and formalising ideas. At both stages pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language are achieving standards in their practical work comparable with their peers and often better than expected nationally.
- 141 The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are consistently good with effective arrangements in place for the few who fail to respond to the required level of acceptable behaviour. The subject is popular and attendance levels at lessons is good. Pupils are exposed to visually stimulating work environments and exemplar display is used to establish and maintain high standards and to celebrate pupils’ achievements. Pupils speak of the enjoyment they have in their art lessons and the sense of achievement they gain in succeeding in difficult and demanding tasks. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of learning are well catered for in their study of art and by the very rich and regular provision for studying the visual arts of other cultures.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 142 Standards in the GCSE examinations have risen overall from 1998 to 1999, although they are still below the national averages. The food technology results have risen from 15 to 22 per cent, graphics from 12 to 24 per cent and textiles from 37 to 42 per cent. Results in resistant materials in these grades declined from 15 to 12 per cent, which was largely due to frequent changes of staff in circumstances beyond the control of the school. The national average for pupils gaining A* to G grades is 96.4 per cent and in all subjects the percentage of pupils gaining these grades has risen. In food technology it has risen from 65 to 88 per cent, in graphics from 59 to 85 per cent, in resistant materials from 71 to 83 per cent and in textiles from 80 to 91 per cent.
- 143 When pupils enter the school the level of attainment is well below the national expectations. Very few pupils have an understanding of the design and making process and many have not handled resistant or compliant materials. Consequently, pupils make good progress from a very low base to reach levels of attainment that are, nevertheless, below national expectations in graphics, textiles and resistant

materials at end of Key Stage 3. The standards achieved in food technology are well below the national expectations. This is because the current scheme of work has only recently been introduced and pupils have not had the opportunity to make consistent progress. As no lessons were taught in Year 11 at the time of the inspection the scrutiny of work showed that standards are just below the national averages in all four subjects at the end of Key Stage 4. In both key stages the standard of the design element is lower than the making element of the subjects.

- 144 The good progress made by pupils is due to the high level of challenge in lessons. For example, in Year 7 pupils are taught both isometric and orthographic drawing very early in their graphics component. These are good design skills. Pupils enjoy the challenge and take great pleasure in writing their names in three dimensions. The understanding of ergonomics and the use of anthropometric data, which provides details of average sizes, is introduced in Key Stage 3. This provides pupils with the necessary knowledge that underpins all designing and making. Pupils use information to a satisfactory level when designing oven mitts. One pupil gathered the measurements of all the class to obtain an average. At the end of Key Stage 3 there are high expectations that pupils know, understand and appropriately use the different types of movement such as gears, cams and levers. All pupils achieve a satisfactory level of understanding of these types of movements. When pupils undertake the research set as homework good standards are achieved. For example, pupils photographed the exterior of shops in different locations, investigated child development in preparation for making a toy, researched Egyptian designs and used the Internet to find information. The main contributory factor to the low standards in the design element in both key stages is a lack of effort by pupils outside the classroom. The department does not do enough to find out why this is the case. Homework set is often inadequately completed or not attempted and opportunities given to pupils to work in the design technology area after school are not regularly taken up.
- 145 The majority of lessons in both key stages are satisfactory or better. In Key Stage 3 over eight out of 10 lessons are good or better and a quarter of lessons are very good or excellent. In Key Stage 4 over a third of lessons are good or very good. Lessons have clear aims that are known by pupils and are conducted in a brisk manner. Questioning is used effectively to determine the level of understanding and to make pupils think. For example, pupils were asked to analyse common factors in board games, an understanding of which is essential before constructing their own games. The good level of organisation in all practical sessions ensures that the pupils are fully occupied and move on in their learning. Teachers fully involve the learning support assistants so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and early learners in English, make good progress and achieve as well as other pupils. In the very good and excellent lessons the enthusiasm of the teachers transmits to the pupils. The use of key words adds to pupils' language skills and numeracy skills are constantly reinforced through their regular use in the subject.
- 146 Most pupils are totally absorbed in lessons and work well together, assisting each other in designing and making. There was poor behaviour in some Year 9 classes when a few pupils were disinclined to work and attempted to disrupt the lessons. This was immediately followed up by the class teacher and the head of department.
- 147 The recently appointed head of department is experienced and after a long period of instability in staffing in the school has created a team that works together. Much has been achieved to create common standards through the effective use of assessment. Monitoring and evaluation has also been used effectively to raise standards. The department is well supported by technicians. Accommodation is poor, with a

graphics room separate to the main technology department. The room does not have a sink, the provision of which is essential in order to teach the full range of graphical techniques. Also resources have to be carried to and from the room. The existing site of the foundry prevents its use. This, coupled with the unusable condition of the brazing hearths, prevents pupils gaining the full experience of handling metals. The lack of adequate dust extraction is a serious health hazard for both staff and pupils. The department does not have a rolling programme of resource replacement, which is essential planning where major equipment is becoming too old to repair satisfactorily. Since the time of the last report there has been much improvement in the areas of teaching and learning, but the design element is still unsatisfactory and pupils have not yet reached national expectations.

GEOGRAPHY

- 148 This is a good department. It offers a broad geography experience to all pupils and a high quality of teaching.
- 149 All pupils study a geography course in Key Stage 3. Towards the end of Year 9 attainment of pupils is slightly below that found nationally. This attainment shows very good progress by all pupils from Year 7 to Year 9. By Year 11 where geography is an option attainment of pupils is well below the national averages. This is borne out by recent GCSE results where, on a small entry, 17.4 per cent gained grades A*-C, a consistent percentage for the last three years. The level of work seen during the inspection is slightly higher as some higher attaining pupils are now choosing geography as an option.
- 150 By Year 9 pupils have acquired and use a working geographical vocabulary and have acquired a sound knowledge and understanding of geographical patterns. In their work on waterfalls, ecosystems and development they are beginning to give reasons for these patterns. Pupils are developing their understanding of environmental and other geographical issues as in their study of the impact of tourism in Kenya and how it might be managed. Some of their work is based on case studies which helps pupils understand how people live in particular places. Pupils show sound research skills in gathering information, as in the Year 7 work on London. Their mapping and graphical skills are well developed and their use of information and communications technology is increasing. Pupils are good in oral work but, although many can write fluently and well, there is still a large number whose weak literacy skills hinder progress even in descriptive work. For pupils to attain higher levels in the national curriculum they need to show that they can conduct focused, structured and sequenced enquiry work of an increasingly independent kind. They also need to develop their thinking skills more and offer more reasons and explanations for geographical features. All pupils, including the higher prior attainers and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, are making very good progress in acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills, making major learning gains in Key Stage 3.
- 151 Because of Year 11 study leave and the pattern of the timetable few lessons were seen in Key Stage 4. Their written work shows that by the age of 16 pupils have gained a sound knowledge and understanding of a good range of geographical patterns and processes, each studied in a particular place. They produce sound detailed written and diagrammatic work on the different stages seen in a river's development. They show good understanding of environmental issues such as acid rain. Many write in an interesting and extended way when considering the firewood crisis in Africa. A major strength lies in their course work investigations. However, in too much work at this stage pupils describe rather than explain or justify their

findings. All pupils, including the higher prior attainers and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make good progress, as their course work exemplifies. Pupils who take geography to GCSE level tend to be the lower attainers because of the way option choices are made. These pupils make good learning gains in these two years.

- 152 Pupils' learning is very good. In nearly all the lessons seen pupils showed a good level of interest, high levels of concentration and all worked on task well. Their behaviour is very good, they listen well and there is an atmosphere of attentive learning in almost all classes. There are good relationships between pupils and between the pupils and their teacher. Most pupils show some initiative; younger ones when given the opportunity to research; older pupils in their course work.
- 153 Teaching is nearly always good or very good. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and show a very good understanding of how pupils learn. All the work is planned carefully. Lessons have a clear focus, shared with pupils. They are structured with timed tasks always matched to the needs of the pupils. There is a good emphasis on language and how to approach work systematically. Challenging questioning and the good tasks set, together with a clear indication of the behaviour required, show that teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They offer good support and much helpful feedback. Where the teaching was very good, as in the Year 9 lessons on the growth of south-east Brazil, these features were exemplified. After a brisk question and answer session where pupils were encouraged to use terminology correctly, such as investment, resource, energy and infrastructure, work was set at three different levels and each group had an appropriate task to complete. Pupils collected information, fed back ideas to the class and then began another related task. The lesson was completed with a clear summary of what had been learned. In a Year 10 challenging lesson the teacher led pupils to analyse and make good generalisations from a difficult graph that showed the relationship between the speed of a river and the size of particles carried. A major strength of the teaching is the quality of the feedback about their learning, attainment and progress that pupils receive. In Years 7 to 9 regular assessment gives pupils a National Curriculum level with an indication of what they have to do to improve. However, in some lessons pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to write in their own words and pupils have few opportunities to learn through discussion.
- 154 This strong geography teaching team is well led and managed by an able head of department. There is good detailed documentation to support the broad and balanced curriculum. Fieldwork is being developed, particularly for the higher prior attainers. There is a need to provide more geographical investigative and progressive enquiry work across Key Stage 3. Assessment is a major strength within the department. Pupils' work is accurately and rigorously assessed and the good levels of feedback to pupils ensure that they know their strengths and what they need to do to gain the next level. There is a good departmental development plan. Monitoring of teacher's work in the classroom is well developed.
- 155 Since the previous inspection the department has improved beyond recognition. Almost all the earlier weaknesses have been given due attention and much improved. The quality of teaching has changed from being satisfactory in under half the lessons to the current high quality. Standards in key stage three have improved markedly. Standards at GCSE remain at a low level.

HISTORY

- 156 In recent GCSE examinations results in both the A*-C and A*-G range have been below national averages, except in 1998 when results were significantly higher when compared with national averages and results from similar schools. Results over time compare favourably with those from other subjects at the school. In the most recent examination girls performed much better than boys but in other years there has been no significant gender difference in public examination results. In lessons and in work seen during the inspection attainment levels at Key Stage 3 are mostly below national norms. A major contributory factor to this is the very poor literacy levels exhibited by many pupils, most of whom also begin Year 7 with a very low knowledge and skills base in the subject. Despite this pupils soon begin to demonstrate the capacity to acquire historical skills and develop knowledge and understanding of the subject through working with sources. They can also organise historical information in a structured way and in this context some impressive Year 9 assessment tasks on transport in 19th century England were seen, combining good presentation skills with depth of analysis. Literacy skills are fostered from the outset through the use of historical terminology and glossaries. As a result of these rapid advances attainment levels are reaching national norms at Key Stage 4 where pupils are able to examine sources critically and in depth. They are also becoming adept in extended writing and some impressive examples of this were seen during an analysis of Year 11 exercise books and coursework folders, particularly on the study in depth of the Russian revolution and its aftermath.
- 157 The quality of teaching in history is mostly good or very good. This has addressed a key issue arising from the previous inspection. Teachers have a very sound and secure subject knowledge. They plan lessons very well with clear aims and objectives. Classroom organisation is strong and gives pupils the confidence to express their opinions and develop their historical skills to the full. The slow pace and low expectations in some lessons that were noted in the previous report no longer apply. There is now a clear sense of purpose and rigour in history lessons. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 10 lesson during which pupils examined the complex roots of American isolationism after World War 1 using a variety of techniques including brainstorming, paired work, independent research and class discussion. A notable feature of history lessons is the use of a wide range of different materials to suit individual needs and to cater for differing abilities within the classroom. Extension work is provided for higher attaining pupils and suitable materials are available to ensure that many pupils who have special educational needs or those for whom English is an additional language make good progress.
- 158 This was shown to good effect in a Year 7 lesson when an impressive array of such materials was employed to help all ability groups within the class to make good progress on the topic of Henry II and the murder of Thomas Becket. The quality of teaching in the department has a positive effect upon the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. Most pupils display a very positive attitude in class. They show great respect for their teachers and for each other. They respond well and are eager participants in class discussions, although they would benefit from more opportunities to work in small groups. They display high levels of commitment and respond very well to the challenges and high expectations of their teachers. This was demonstrated in an excellent Year 9 lesson in which pupils interrogated sources on the Home Front during World War 2 in considerable depth. At the end of the lesson several pupils volunteered to present their findings to the whole class, revealing a very high level of maturity and analytical knowledge.

- 159 The department is managed very well. The monitoring of pupil performance is rigorous with a wide range of assessment tasks and the use of pupil record sheets. Exercise books are marked regularly but pupils need more specific advice on how they can improve their work. Display is used very well to improve an otherwise very poor learning environment. There is a programme of visits for Key Stage 4 pupils, but Key Stage 3 pupils also need this facility. There is little use of information technology at present and access to the facilities of the school in this area is problematic.
- 160 Overall, this is a very good department with a very able and talented teaching team. It has made excellent progress since the previous inspection, particularly in the areas of quality of teaching, improved standards, the development of suitable classroom materials and the use of assessment. There is the undoubted potential now to tackle the major challenges of raising literacy levels and improving public examination results.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 161 Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate levels of attainment below national expectations. This is borne out by the standards of work currently being produced by pupils in Year 9. Younger pupils are, however, producing work in Years 7 and 8 which suggests that their attainment by the end of the key stage will be better than for pupils currently in Year 9. The teaching programme covers all aspects of the subject and attainment levels are similar for each of these. Boys and girls perform equally well when using computers, though boys are generally more confident in discussing what they are doing. Pupils in Year 7 are able to use simple programs to design a class seating plan, using text and graphics with confidence. By the end of Year 8 pupils are able to handle data with confidence. They are able to distinguish between open and closed questions as they develop questionnaires to research public opinion and can use word processing software to produce their questionnaires. Their skills include editing text on screen, cutting and pasting text and they are able to explore different types of layout and the use of symbols to assist the presentation of their work. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of the idea of control, giving commands in order to draw polygons on screen using a graphics program.
- 162 The pupils currently studying the GNVQ information technology course in Year 11 are the first to do so and there are thus no results to compare with national standards. These pupils are studying for either foundation or intermediate level examinations and, although they are performing below national expectations, they are doing well when their prior attainment is taken into account. Two groups in each of Years 10 and 11 follow this course. For other pupils in the school the development of information and communications technology skills is dependent on the subjects they choose. Those for example choosing business studies continue to have a broad experience of information technology and achieve standards that are good in relation to what they have achieved previously. Others have a less comprehensive set of experiences at this key stage, but their grounding in Key Stage 3 helps them achieve creditable work. In design and technology pupils are able to use computer aided design packages competently and many pupils successfully use word processing packages and spreadsheets to present their work. In science pupils are able to use relevant software for modelling and monitoring, enhancing their learning in this subject.
- 163 Pupils throughout the school use computers with enthusiasm and confidence. This is a distinct improvement since the time of the previous inspection when confidence

levels were low. The regular opportunities each week to work in a computer room is a major factor in bringing about this change. Pupils work hard and concentrate well throughout most lessons. They sometimes seek to apply previous learning to current tasks, showing a good command of the computer systems they work with. Many work well together, either when it is necessary to share computers or when they collaborate on projects. Opportunities for joint working are, however, rare and this limits the opportunities pupils have to talk about their work. Only occasionally do teachers ask questions of pupils that encourage them to talk at length but when opportunities are provided pupils talk animatedly about what they are doing. Pupils handle the equipment with care and they are sensitive to the work and views of other pupils.

- 164 Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is a considerable amount of inconsistency within the department. All teachers plan their lessons carefully and identify learning aims. In the best lessons these are shared with pupils and used to evaluate the success of the learning at the end. In other lessons the aims are placed on the board but not referred to and thus pupils do not gain a clear picture of what it is that they are learning. Teachers generally manage pupils well and information technology lessons are carried out in an orderly fashion. Teachers make use of a range of written materials to present ideas to pupils in ways that take account of their abilities, but too rarely do teachers ask challenging questions of individual pupils that stimulate them to seek ways of improving the standard of their work. Clear departmental schemes of work guide lesson planning, but sometimes teachers do not sufficiently modify these plans to take account of the specific needs of individuals or groups. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work at the end of each topic are good and teachers carry out these assessments carefully. Insufficient attention is given, however, to day to day assessment, with the result that pupils are not given sufficient guidance on what to do to improve the quality of their work. Homework is set, but not all teachers follow it up, so that some pupils do not give this work sufficient care or attention.
- 165 The arrangements for teaching information technology at Key Stage 3 guarantee that all pupils are introduced to a wide range of skills and techniques. The curriculum provided covers all aspects of the National Curriculum. At Key Stage 4 provision is much more dependent on the provision of opportunities to develop and use information and communication technology skills in other curriculum areas. This provision is currently under-developed and lacks co-ordination. The school has good plans, however, for further additions to the provision of computers and relevant software and for further training of all teaching staff. Work has been done to map where other subjects can play a part in using information and communication technology, but the school's long term plans for this aspect of development are currently rudimentary.
- 166 Provision for information technology is much better than at the time of the previous inspection. The number of computers in school is slightly below the national average, but all available computers are of high specification. The school has an effective five year plan for the further development of facilities, including enabling all subjects to have access to the internet. Improvements have been to a great extent due to the careful management of the department, which has enabled the production and implementation of clear policies and plans to guide curriculum and staff development. Further work remains to be done to secure consistently good teaching within the department and to extend the use of information and communications technology across the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 167 In the 1999 teacher assessments in German at the end of Key Stage 3 the number of pupils at the national benchmark of level 5 was well below that expected for pupils of the same age nationally with only a small minority of pupils achieving above that level. Key Stage 3 assessment results were not available in French. In the 1999 GCSE examinations the level of A*-C passes was well below the national average in both French and German. Results in German were higher than those for French. Results for boys were much lower than those for girls. The numbers of pupils obtaining A*-G results was also below the national average. Results in both French and German were below those of most other subjects in the school.
- 168 In work seen during the inspection pupils' standards at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are well below that expected in both German and French. Attainment is higher in German. There is a significant level of unsatisfactory teaching in French that lowers standards despite the efforts of some good teachers. There is unsatisfactory teaching in German also, but not at the same level as in French. Evidence from the inspection suggests that attainment is rising in both languages and across both key stages because pupils now have more settled staffing. Girls' attainment is much higher than that for boys, more so than that found nationally. There are no significant differences in attainment across the four aspects of the subject, speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make progress following the same pattern as their peers. When they receive good teaching that takes account of their individual needs they achieve good standards, but when teaching is unsatisfactory they do not achieve appropriate levels. In general higher attaining pupils do not achieve their maximum potential because of deficiencies in teaching.
- 169 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils can answer questions in a basic way about such topics as travel and transport, going on holiday, leisure pastimes and sport, their family and pets and places in town. Pupils listen carefully to the teacher, to audio tapes and to other pupils when they are speaking and can respond appropriately. There are a small number of pupils who find it difficult to concentrate. Most pupils are confident when speaking and try hard with pronunciation. Their spoken responses progress from single words and phrases in Year 7 to short conversations in Year 9. Few pupils are able to carry out longer and more sophisticated conversations using a wider range of vocabulary and tenses and varying their language to meet different situations. Higher attaining pupils in particular are given limited opportunities to develop their spoken language and this restricts their learning and progress especially in French. Pupils develop their reading skills mainly by reading textbooks to find the answers to questions. Most of the texts they use are suitable for their levels of attainment. In their written work most pupils are able to write phrases or short sentences from memory by age 14. Only a few pupils extend their writing into more complex work with good accuracy and involving a range of tenses. Where teaching is good and pupils have scope to extend their writing skills they can produce work of good quality. Higher attaining pupils, for example, were able to write fairly long, accurate pieces of work in German, including letters and descriptions of their family and the area where they live.
- 170 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils return to these topics and add others such as young people in society, motoring abroad, booking into hotels and restaurants and accounts of the area where they live. The examination requirements allow pupils greater flexibility in both their written and spoken work and higher attaining pupils in particular broaden their range of oral and written responses. However, the narrow

base established in Key Stage 3 limits their progress and learning. There is unsatisfactory teaching in this key stage also which restricts attainment in both languages but particularly in French.

- 171 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall in German and unsatisfactory in French. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in German, but in French nearly one-third of the teaching is unsatisfactory. There is also good and very good teaching in both languages. In German half the teaching is good and in French nearly one-third is good or better. However, the good and very good teaching in French is mainly by one teacher. This is the major contributory factor to the lower standards in French. Where teaching is good teachers have good pupil control, usually achieved without fuss and with good humour. Teachers also provide extra classes out of school time to help pupils improve, especially in preparation for GCSE. The use of information technology to enhance and enrich the curriculum is inconsistent. The use of assessment to track pupils' attainment and progress is good in German but is not carried out systematically in French. There is very little use of data provided to discuss with pupils the level they are at now or what they need to do to improve.
- 172 Behaviour in class is generally good. Pupils have good attitudes to work and there are good relationships in lessons. Where teaching is at its best the teacher plans the work carefully to provide a range of work tailored to the needs of the range of attainment found in all classes. Teachers have high expectations of pupils especially in the spoken language and pupils respond by making great efforts to "get it right." In these lessons teachers use a wide range of strategies to encourage pupils to use, practice and vary their language to fit a range of situations. These include skilled use of question and answer, good use of the overhead projector and pair work as well as listening and writing tasks. Where teaching is unsatisfactory only some of these features are present. In a few lessons the work is conducted mainly in English and pupils have limited opportunities to actually use and practice the language being taught. It is also a feature of unsatisfactory teaching that pupils do not have to try to remember the language because they know that the teacher will tell them in English anyway. A common feature of unsatisfactory teaching is a lack of challenge at an appropriate level for the range of attainment found in all the classes. This was evident, for example, in a Year 10 French class where a fairly simple text was read slowly several times by the teacher and then repeated by individual pupils one sentence at a time before the teacher gave an English translation.
- 173 The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are taught to respect each other by listening and not being unkind when pupils make mistakes. In most lessons there is good provision for social development through sharing, taking turns and working together. There is a cultural aspect to many lessons in learning about France and Germany. There are school trips to both these countries which make a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. The provision for community languages has declined and is being phased out because fewer pupils are choosing to study Bengali or Urdu. The current arrangements do not allow pupils to study two languages should they want to do this. The overall leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The curriculum team leader for the subject and the senior management have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and of the priorities for improvement. However, the respective roles of the curriculum team leader and the second in the department lack focus, which leads to confusion over their respective roles and responsibilities.

- 174 The previous report drew attention to poor resources in the subject. This is an issue which has not yet been resolved. In particular there is a lack of textbooks for French. In many lessons it is necessary for pupils to share and not all pupils in Key Stage 4 can have books to take home. This restricts the quality of homework that can be provided. There was also no structured scheme of work at the time of the previous inspection. This issue has been addressed and there is now a very good scheme of work that provides a comprehensive and progressive programme for pupils.
- 175 A more settled staffing situation, the clear priorities that have been developed for the subject and the steady rise in attainment means that satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection.

MUSIC

- 176 At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is satisfactory. A good feature is their ability to extemporise creatively individually and in groups. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 were not in school during the period of the inspection. Assessment of their knowledge and understanding of the listening element of the course is limited to the scrutiny of samples of their written work. Written work includes good commentaries on how the pieces were composed and performed but their knowledge of musical history, styles and instruments is limited. The taped performance of their compositions submitted for their GCSE examination shows satisfactory achievement overall although standards varied. Two thirds of the pupils' playing was satisfactory whilst the rest was below that expected at GCSE level. Pupils have composed pieces for keyboard, recorder and guitar that show satisfactory understanding of melodic structure, two-part writing and a knowledge of basic chords. Most pupils make sound progress in Key Stage 4, particularly in composition and group improvisation.
- 177 In 1999 13 pupils entered the GCSE examination achieving grades ranging from B-G. Though below national average results this represents a considerable achievement for the pupils. This is because a significant proportion of the candidates have special educational needs or are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Pupils who do not opt for music within the choices available undertake a GCSE course through a good workshop arrangement provided by the department. In 1999 four candidates were successful through this method.
- 178 Only one lesson at Year 10 could be observed during the inspection. In it the pupils considered styles of accompaniment appropriate for short melodic phrases they had composed. They were helped in this by listening to two well-chosen recorded excerpts. Later in the lesson pupils developed their techniques on guitar, recorder and keyboard. They made satisfactory progress in the lesson, including several pupils who had very recently joined the school and whose acquisition of English is at an early stage. Pupils make sound progress across the key stage, particularly in composition and group improvisation. Work and information sheets leading to the listening element are not accessible enough for the needs of the special education pupils and those with English as an additional language. The department recognises this and is devising suitable strategies.
- 179 At Key Stage 3 pupils make sound progress overall. In some aspects such as improvising and composing they make good progress. Good planning, well structured and balanced lessons and the availability and frequent use of instrumental resources help pupils to learn. At the end of the key stage pupils studying African drumming listen attentively to a recording of Ghanaian music. They correctly identify different instruments and the number of players. There is good discussion on the

impact of this kind of music on the development of American music through the transporting of Africans to America as slaves. Pupils bring good recall of learning in history to this work. Pupils improvise in small groups basing their work on what they have heard together with stimulating suggestions from the teacher. The improvisations using untuned rhythmic instruments are of high quality with pupils able to create exciting and complex rhythms whilst holding a steady beat. The groups are carefully mixed both in gender and ethnicity and pupils' cultural backgrounds contribute well to the variety of their compositions. Each group performs in turn to the others. Pupils listen appreciatively and appraise each other's work. Younger pupils listen to a Tamil lullaby song. They describe its melodic shape and correctly identify instrumental accompaniment. The pupils discuss the musical ingredients necessary for a lullaby and in groups improvise suitable accompaniments using tuned and untuned instruments. The performances of their work sensitively capture the mood of a lullaby. Pupils listen with rapt attention to each performance.

- 180 The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. It was good or better in half the lessons seen. This is a marked improvement on the findings of the previous report where teaching was unsatisfactory at both key stages. In the good and very good lessons the teachers show a high level of knowledge and expertise. They present pupils with stimulating and interesting challenges and manage the lessons well so that no time is wasted. Pupils respond well. They work hard to succeed and make progress. In their group work they collaborate well and stimulate each other in producing high quality music making. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, contribute equally in practical activities and they make good progress. In lessons that are satisfactory overall the organisation of group work contributes well to pupils' learning. However, in one or two lessons the way in which instruments are allocated and the lack of choice for pupils leads to some behavioural problems.
- 181 The curriculum team leader provides inspirational leadership. She has produced a comprehensive and detailed scheme of work that satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE syllabus. It is devised so that pupils learn through the experience of music making in a good variety of activities and aims for every pupil to achieve success. Her assessment procedures are thorough and provide good evidence of pupils' achievement. Assessments, both written and taped, are carefully and regularly recorded. The music curriculum makes a very good contribution to pupils' social development through their frequent group work. It also contributes significantly to pupils' multicultural understanding. During the inspection pupils were engaged with Western, Indian, African and Chinese music. Homework related to pupils' work in class is regularly set and the teacher insists on its completion, sometimes in an after school activity. The curriculum is enhanced by regular visits to concerts and workshops organised by professional orchestral groups. Instrumental tutors provide good support to individual pupils' development both in the classroom and in out-of-school activities.
- 182 The provision of resources is satisfactory although their frequent use means that some are in need of replacement. The department development plan is a well thought-out document with careful costing of resource and training requirements. Departmental accommodation is unsatisfactory. While one teaching room is of a good size the other is small and inhibits practical group work. Storage space is very limited. There are no designated practice rooms and some individual instrumental teaching has to take place on a staircase landing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 183 Attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 has improved since the previous inspection and are now only slightly below the national standard. Whilst in most activities at both key stages there are fewer high attainers than low attainers, there are pupils with high skill levels. In Year 8 cricket some boys have impressive bowling actions and batting techniques and in athletics there are boys and girls who can hurdle with confidence. Pupils have good running skills and fitness levels. In Key Stage 3 girls have lower levels of attainment than boys, especially in softball, rounders and cricket. Their striking, catching, throwing and bowling skills are less developed. However, girls' netball teams have been highly successful in borough competitions. Year 7 and Year 9 netball teams are the current league and knockout winners.
- 184 In Key Stage 4 in GCSE sports studies theory classes standards are well below the national ones, especially in Year 10. Pupils can express their understanding reasonably well orally, but few are able to write in detail and with confidence. GCSE results in 1999 are below national standards but show a significant improvement on previous years and are in line with other subjects at the school. Year 10 pupils have achieved good results in the department's Certificate of Achievement. At Key Stage 4 there are some very good cricketers with well developed batting and bowling skills. Year 11 and Year 9 basketball teams are the current borough league and cup winners. In all practical activities at both key stages there are no significant differences in the attainment and achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils who have special educational needs or English as an additional language have practical skills in line with other pupils and are given appropriate support in GCSE theory lessons.
- 185 Teaching and learning are good or very good in two-thirds of all lessons in both key stages and satisfactory in the other one-third. All teachers are very secure in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and plan their lessons with clear objectives. Most activities are taught at a good pace with a detailed approach for introducing new skills. High quality teaching is also evident with the gifted and talented gymnasts. As a result of this good or very good progress is made. There is effective use of different strategies for pupils of differing levels of ability and this ensures that all learn well. This is achieved by using hurdles of differing heights, rounders bats of a different size and setting alternative challenges to different groups in cricket. Planning could give even more thought to using teaching strategies aimed at pupils of different levels of ability. Teachers achieve a positive rapport with their classes, generating enthusiasm and strong motivation to do well. In Year 9 rounders and Year 7 relays the commitment, effort and enthusiasm of the pupils is exceptional. In a few lessons unrealistic objectives and a lack of different tasks for high, low and middle achievers limit pupil motivation and restrict learning. The response of the pupils is good, very good or excellent in three-quarters of all lessons observed across both key stages and satisfactory in the remaining quarter. Pupils co-operate well with each other but would benefit from being given more opportunities for taking responsibility within the various activities. When challenged in this way in athletics they responded well. The very good indoor facilities enhance learning and interest, whilst the rather bleak and uninviting outdoor playground sometimes results in a less enthusiastic approach and limited progress. Teaching contributes effectively to the development of pupils' literacy skills through the use of key words in lessons. There are good links with the English department and every opportunity is taken to promote reading.

- 186 Levels of achievement at GCSE and in all practical activities have improved considerably since the last inspection. The department has introduced some setting on ability in Year 9 and this has brought improvements in both teaching and learning. The department does not yet have enough strategies for raising the attainment levels of girls and for attracting more girls to take GCSE in sports studies. Teaching, learning and the response of the pupils are all much better than they were at the time of the last report and there are no longer any examples of disruption or unsatisfactory practice.
- 187 The department enjoys strong, committed leadership and relationships within the department are excellent. Monitoring of performance, target setting and the sharing of effective teaching strategies are well established and there is a commitment to a professional approach and professional development. Assessment is a strong feature and is beginning to be used for planning purposes. There is a wide range of successful school teams, especially in netball, football, cricket and basketball. There are many lunchtime and after school clubs which are well supported. Physical education has a strong profile and supports the ethos of the school, emphasising fair play, a healthy life style and a spirit of co-operation. It is a strength that a number of teachers from other subject areas take school teams and that outside coaches come into the school for cricket and basketball. In addition to the poor outdoor facilities, aggravated by the amount of litter left after morning break and lunchtime, the changing rooms are disappointingly unattractive and the sports hall roof is in need of repair.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 188 Religious education fulfils statutory requirements and matches the locally agreed syllabus. At the end of Key Stage 4 the short course GCSE results are in line with those achieved by all schools nationally. This course has motivated pupils across the ability range and now a large number of pupils achieve examination success. Girls achieve more higher grades than boys and the department has yet to develop strategies to assist boys in producing written work of a high standard. Pupils with special educational needs attain well in relation to their perceived ability as a result of the learning support they receive. This enables them to participate fully in the whole range of learning activities. The full GCSE course, studied by a small number of pupils, has results that are below the national average for the A* to C grades but much closer in relation to A* - G grades. This represents an improvement over recent years.
- 189 By the end of Key Stage 3 overall attainment is below the level of expectation linked to the locally agreed syllabus. Few pupils attain above Level 5 with girls achieving most of the higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve satisfactory standards. This is achieved by good in-class learning support that enables many pupils to develop and apply ideas and information that they can use to complete specially structured tests.
- 190 At the start of Key Stage 3 many pupils have limited knowledge of religions other than their own. A well-planned scheme of work addresses this issue and pupils rapidly acquire knowledge and develop understanding of the signs, symbols and places linked to religious belief. Pupils acquire a good knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and other main religions with higher attaining pupils able to recall a range of information accurately. The significance of pilgrimage is developed and all pupils are encouraged to think and talk about this and other significant religious ceremonies in relation to their own faith and experience. In many lessons

the opportunities for discussion provide lower ability pupils with the means of expressing their ideas and feelings about moral and religious issues more clearly than they are able to do in written work. Although the range of activities is wide the attainment of pupils is affected by the difficulties many face in writing in depth answers and recalling facts over time. The department should adopt a unified approach to improve the poor presentation standards of many boys as currently much work is untidy with poorly labelled diagrams which makes it difficult for pupils to use them to revise for end of unit tests

- 191 During Key Stage 4 most pupils make good gains in learning through activities that build effectively on the knowledge and understanding gained in earlier work. Opportunities are provided for pupils to learn from religion. In a lesson about the parable of the Good Samaritan higher ability pupils were able to identify ways in which the different responses occurred in different situations they had experienced. The emphasis that teachers place on involving pupils by the use of evidence from their own religious background or experience generates interest in the subject and this is supporting learning and understanding across the ability range. Teachers encourage the use of key words and many pupils show increased confidence in the use of the correct words to describe beliefs and religious practices. In a lesson about pilgrimage one boy spoke movingly about his intense feelings at being involved in the Hajj as a pilgrim and other pupils were able to select and record words that defined what he had felt. This is aiding literacy but many pupils find it difficult to write accurate in-depth answers and few lessons provide clearly structured opportunities to support the development of written work. More use should be made of visits or local religious leaders to enhance understanding of the faiths studied in Key Stage 4.
- 192 Since the last inspection there have been a number of improvements most notably the raising of standards at the end of Key Stage 4. Teaching and learning now directly matches the agreed syllabus and lesson plans provide pupils with a variety of learning experiences.
- 193 Teaching is satisfactory in both key stages and all teachers plan lessons to ensure a match with the schemes of work. Teachers show good subject knowledge but their expectations of pupils are not always high enough which impacts on learning and attainment, especially at Key Stage 3. Some use is made of extension work but not enough to ensure that the few higher attaining pupils always make the best progress. Sound support, including special needs and language support, is given to pupils across the ability range to ensure that all understand the tasks. A good range of paired and group activities is used to promote the involvement of pupils in their learning and to generate ideas and opinions. The development of mixed ability and mixed gender groups in some lessons is promoting the development of social skills and is supporting the learning of each individual. In a few lessons the teacher's selection of boys to answer questions limits the girls' opportunity to participate. Planning in relation to the use of time is poor and few lessons fully achieve their aim. Occasionally the inability of the teacher to deal effectively with a small number of pupils who misbehave affects the learning of all pupils.
- 194 Assessment has improved as a result of the introduction of levels at Key Stage 3 with pupils made clearly aware of their meaning. End of unit tests are starting to inform staff of pupils' attainment more accurately but the range of tasks is not yet sufficiently developed to secure the accuracy of all assessments. Books are regularly marked but the comments need development so that they clearly identify what is good about a piece of work or explain what will bring about improvement. Homework is regularly set with tasks linked to lesson activities. These tasks are often not supported with resources so that a number of pupils fail to complete them. Monitoring of homework

needs to be more effectively carried out. Resources are satisfactory but the use of too many information sheets not always carefully matched to ability levels hinders the learning of some pupils. The acting curriculum team leader has effectively supported a department of new teachers in their teaching. Changes in staffing have hindered the updating and development of the schemes of work and limited the introduction of information and communications technology techniques to support learning. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Drama

- 195 The standard of pupils' work in drama is very good because teaching is nearly always very good or excellent and captivates the enthusiasm of the pupils.
- 196 By the end of Key Stage 3 boys and girls are able to plan their work and share their ideas. They perform their work in a way that communicates their ideas clearly. They evaluate their own work and the work of others in a way that helps everyone understand how improvements can be made. There is evidence of expression and characterisation through the use of a range of drama techniques which, towards the end of Key Stage 3, they draw on naturally to express their ideas and feelings and to communicate these to an audience.
- 197 It was not possible to see the full range of work of Year 11 but a group did come in to show their work submitted for GCSE practical assessment. This was of an exceptionally high standard. Their imagination and confidence resulted in a real sense of stage presence in their performance. They were able to empathise with the feeling and emotions of the theme and stimuli, namely the poem "Matches" by Vernon Scannell, and convey these to an audience. They skilfully drew on a range of techniques and forms to produce a quite compelling and moving piece. Written work in Year 10 is also of a good standard. Pupils are able to record the process of their work and use diagrams to show a developing sense of stagecraft. GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 are better than results nationally and better than results in other subjects in the school. Both boys and girls do equally well.
- 198 Pupils make good gains in their learning because teaching is always satisfactory, is often good and in some lessons it is exceptional. Teachers have high expectations, very good management of pupils and their behaviour and make very good use of the time available. Pupils pick up this sense of pace and maintain their concentration throughout the lessons. Lessons have crisp starts, aims that are shared with the pupils, used throughout the lesson and at the end to assess progress. In the one or two lessons where time was not used as well as it might have been, the aims were not specific enough. Detailed planning did not focus sufficiently on what pupils should know, understand and be able to do at the end of the lesson. Teachers are very enthusiastic, know the subject well and through very effective collaborative planning have developed a scheme of work that meets the needs of all pupils and uses their interests and their cultures as a stimulus for learning. In response pupils are exceptionally interested, creative and imaginative. Teachers themselves critically evaluate pupils' work but having encouraged pupils to experiment with their own ideas they always value what the pupils have done. Speaking and listening are well taught and well used to both support and enrich drama. Because of the way teachers organise groups pupils with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language or who are new to the school are quickly immersed into the drama ethos that the department has created. Drama makes a great contribution to the development of pupils' language skills. It is sometimes used to support learning

in other subjects but not as much as it could be.

- 199 The department is exceptionally well led and there is a good team spirit both in the drama department and the expressive arts team that the head of drama currently leads. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection. The emphasis within the exemplary schemes of work on the use of language, movement and space and the teaching of specific drama techniques has raised standards, particularly in Key Stage 3. Topics are now dealt with in depth. Text is used appropriately, including Shakespeare, to help pupils understand it and to add the voice element to their presentations. The practical work seen in Years 10 and 11 shows a depth of emotion that could only be the result of them having more information and more techniques to support their improvisation and development of ideas. The annual school production is the highlight of the school year. It is exceptional in the way it uses classical text, pupils' own interpretations of a story and their own community languages to present a performance that is truly unique. Accommodation is good but one studio is in a poor state of decoration. The department does not have enough access to new technology for pupils to be able to use lighting to create further mood and atmosphere. Pupils' work is of such a standard that they are ready for this. This is a very successful department.