

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Kenton

LEA area: Harrow

Unique reference number: 101563

Headteacher: Mr M Earley

Reporting inspector: Michael Buckley
30517

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd March 2001

Inspection number: 185469

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Michael Daly
Date of previous inspection:	November 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Gregory's is located on the borders of Brent and Harrow, in north-west London. It is a mixed, voluntary-aided Roman Catholic comprehensive school for pupils aged from 11 to 19 years. It is about the average size for a school of its kind, with 987 pupils on roll. The sixth form has 149 students but there are only 53 in Year 13. There are more boys than girls in most year groups. Almost 30 per cent of pupils are from a minority ethnic heritage. This proportion is about average for an outer London borough. The largest minority groups are Black Caribbean, Black African and Greek. Seventy-four pupils (over 7 per cent) are learning English as an additional language but only seven are at an early stage, with support through additional funding. These figures are low for outer London. After English, the most common languages are Greek and Portuguese. Altogether, 171 pupils (17 per cent) are known to be eligible for free school meals. This is about the national average. The attainment of most pupils when they enter the school in Year 7 is broadly in line with the national average. Overall, 115 pupils (nearly 12 per cent) are on the school's register of special educational needs. This proportion is below the national average. Twenty-seven pupils (2.7 per cent) have statements identifying the additional support they need and this is in line with the national figures. Of these, about half are classified as having specific learning needs and the others have emotional and behavioural needs. The school has money from 'Excellence in Cities' for creating a programme of learning mentors and for work with gifted and talented pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. Standards of attainment are above the nationally expected levels and the quality of teaching is satisfactory with many strengths. There is strong leadership from the headteacher and management overall is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment are high and they are rising consistently over time.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory with many strengths.
- Teachers' day-to-day use of assessment is good.
- There are good procedures for monitoring academic attainment and progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs, those who are gifted or talented and those learning English as an additional language all make good and often very good progress.
- The school has a good partnership with parents.

What could be improved

- Option choices in Years 10 and 11 are limited and there are too few courses in those years and in the sixth form as alternatives to GCSEs or A-levels.
- Information and communication technology is not properly co-ordinated and does not meet statutory requirements in Year 10.
- Extra-curricular provision is very limited.
- The governors are not closely enough involved with the life and the work of the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in November 1995, it has made very significant progress in raising standards of attainment, teaching and learning and in departmental management. Progress has been good in mathematics, science, art and music and satisfactory in all other subjects except information and communication technology and physical education. Although extensive staff training has been provided in information and communication technology and other targets in the last action plan have largely been met, the school has still not made enough progress in some of the key issues identified in the last report, such as the co-ordination of information and communication technology and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, improvements to the sixth form curriculum and the closer involvement of the governors.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	A
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	E	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The average GCSE point scores have been consistently above the national average for the past three years and, in 2000, they were well above those of schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. The best results were in science, English and mathematics. However, progress across Key Stage 4 is not as good as that made by most schools achieving similar scores in 1998, at the end of Key Stage 3. In the 2000 tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the school's results were well above the national average in English and they were above the national averages in mathematics and science. They were well above the average for schools with a similar percentage of free school meals. There has been a similar pattern for the past few years and results are improving over time at a similar rate to that seen nationally. Teachers' assessments were better than or in line with the nationally expected level in all subjects except in information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and music. The results at A-level were below the national average in 1998, close to the national average in 1999 but well below national figures in 2000. Nevertheless, three students went on to Cambridge in 2000. The most successful A-level subjects were modern foreign languages, art and history. In almost all tests and examinations across the school, girls did significantly better than boys. The school sets challenging but carefully judged targets and most pupils are on line to achieve them. Inspectors found that standards in Years 9 and 11 are above national expectations in English, mathematics, science and geography. Standards are at the expected levels across both key stages in all the other subjects except information and communication technology, where they are lower. Work in the sixth form is above the expected levels in English and geography and in line with them in all the other subjects except mathematics, where they are lower. Achievement is satisfactory overall, although it is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 in English, mathematics and science and, in geography, it is good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Progress by pupils with special educational needs and by gifted or talented pupils is generally very good. The seven pupils beginning to learn English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and there are no significant differences between the achievements of different ethnic groups.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils like school and have good attitudes to it. They are generally interested and enthusiastic in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons is generally good and sometimes very good, although there are some exceptions. Behaviour around the school, in corridors and at breaks can be unsatisfactory.
Personal development and	Relationships are good and pupils work well together. Personal

relationships	development is satisfactory and pupils are not given enough opportunities to take responsibility.
Attendance	Close to the national average. There is too much lateness.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with many strengths. It was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of the lessons seen, good or better in 59 per cent and very good or excellent in 22 per cent. The quality of learning is satisfactory in all age groups. Teaching is good in English and mathematics and satisfactory in science. Literacy and numeracy are well taught. The highest proportions of good or better teaching were in design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education and the highest proportions of unsatisfactory teaching were in modern foreign languages and science. In science, particular difficulties are being caused by the comparatively high proportion of temporary teachers. Careers education is very well taught. The distribution of good or better teaching was fairly even across Key Stages 3 and 4 and the most consistently good teaching was in the sixth form, where one in every three lessons was very good or excellent. Strengths of teaching include teachers' knowledge of their subjects, the quality of their assessment, their high expectations, the organisation, pace and timing of lessons and the good use made of support staff. Pupils acquire practical skills and learn to solve problems well, although they occasionally work slowly. In a few lessons, teachers did not manage classes well. Overall, this is a significant improvement on the findings of the last inspection.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall but unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4 where the range of option choices is narrow.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, particularly in Key Stage 3. Support in class and in groups who are withdrawn from class is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good across the school. Those in the early stages of learning English receive effective special support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual and moral development is good. There are satisfactory arrangements for supporting social and cultural development. Schemes of work refer to these aspects but implementation is not systematically monitored.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A strong picture overall. Good monitoring and support for pupils. Good arrangements for care and health and safety.

Statutory requirements for information and communication technology are not being met in Year 10 and limitations to accommodation make it difficult to offer the full requirements for physical education. A very high number of pupils in Year 10 have been allowed to drop elements of the National Curriculum in breach of statutory regulations. The school offers only a limited range of courses as alternatives to

academic GCSEs and A-levels. There is an unsatisfactory range of sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities, although the number of extension and revision groups is good. Pastoral support is good. There are good links with the main primary schools and with relevant external agencies. The school has good links with parents, who generally have positive views of its work. Information provided to parents is good and they make an effective contribution to their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. The headteacher provides strong academic leadership and sets demanding targets for teachers as well as pupils. Senior managers and heads of department generally perform their duties well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are not closely enough involved with the school's life and work. Some statutory requirements are not being met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Systems of review are effective and targets in the development plan are appropriate. There is a very good system of departmental reviews.
The strategic use of resources	Support staff are well deployed and work well. Financial resources are put to proper and effective use.

There are weaknesses in the management of information and communication technology mainly due to the absence of a key member of staff, and the head of geography is on long-term sick leave. Personal and social education and aspects of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are not being monitored effectively. There are very good systems for monitoring teaching and for staff development. The school has been accredited by 'Investors in People' for this work. Arrangements for appraisal and performance management are also good. Financial management is good and the school rigorously applies the principles of 'best value'. Overall, the school is not making effective use of information and communication technology. The number and qualifications of staff are adequate for the curriculum offered except in science, where there are two temporary teachers. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils make good progress. • Expectations are high. • Teaching is good. • Very good help and support from staff. • Good quality information. • Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour in some groups. • The amount of homework set. • The working relationship between school and parents. • The range of extra-curricular activities.

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents. They also agree that behaviour outside classes can be unsatisfactory and that the range of extra-curricular provision is limited. In the judgement of inspectors, the levels and frequency of homework are satisfactory and the working relationships with parents are generally good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of the majority of pupils when they enter the school in Year 7 is close to the national average. The information available shows that, in 2000, Year 7 pupils' results in the end-of-Key Stage 2 tests were in the average band nationally for English and science and slightly above the national average in mathematics. The school's own assessments of pupils in Year 7 show that reading ages on entry have remained close to the national average, with little variation over the past ten years. Other analyses conducted by the school, based on reading ages and on cognitive ability, show a very even and wide spread of ability across the year groups, closely corresponding to the national picture.
2. In 2000, the percentages of pupils reaching the expected levels in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and the average point scores were well above the national averages in English and above the national average in mathematics and science. The percentages of pupils reaching higher levels were above the national averages in English and mathematics and well above this standard in science. When the results are compared with those of schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the average point scores and the percentages reaching the expected levels and the higher levels were well above the averages in all three subjects.
3. Over the last five years, Key Stage 3 results in English and mathematics have improved faster than the national trend while those in science dropped in 1999 and picked up again in 2000. The overall trend over time is similar to the national one, although the actual results are above the national averages. There has been a marked decline in the performance of boys in science and a similarly marked improvement in girls' results in mathematics over the past four years. In the last three years, girls have done significantly better in mathematics than girls nationally. In 2000, teachers' assessments showed that attainment in history was well above the national average and it was above the national average in geography, design and technology and physical education. Girls outperformed boys in every subject and very significantly so in design and technology, information and communication technology and art.
4. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations and the average point score were above the national average in 2000 and have been so for at least the past three years. The proportion of five or more A* to G grades was close to the national average and has been for the past four years, although a smaller than average percentage succeeded in obtaining one or more A* to G grades. Girls' results were well above the national average for girls and have been for the past three years. Despite a slight dip in 2000, caused mainly by a fall in boys' results, the school's rate of improvement over the past five years is above the national trend. The most successful subjects in 2000 were English language and literature, mathematics, science and history. The least successful were drama and modern foreign languages. One hundred per cent of the 'fast track' Year 10 mathematics group obtained grades B or better when they took the GCSE examination a year early. There has been particularly steady progress in English language and literature, mathematics and science.
5. When the results are compared with those of other schools with a similar percentage of free school meals, the proportion of five or more A* to C grades and the average point score were well above the average and the percentage of five or more A* to G grades was close to the average. However, the proportion of one or more A* to G grades remained below the average. If the results are compared with those of other schools with similar Key Stage 3 results in 1998, the proportion of five or more A* to C grades and the average point score were below average and the proportions of A* to G grades were well below average. Consequently, pupils at St Gregory's do not make as much progress across Key Stage 4 as they do in other schools where the Key Stage 3 scores were similar in 1998. This is more true of the lower-attaining pupils than it is of the more able.

6. In 2000, the average point score for students in the sixth form taking less than two A or AS-level examinations was just above the national average. It has been improving over the past five years and, despite a dip in 1999, the average for the last three years is a full point above the national average. However, the average point score for students taking two or more A or AS levels was well below the national average. The results here have varied considerably over the past five years, with no discernible trend, and there was a significant drop in 2000. The school's overall average point score for the past three years is below the national average. Nevertheless, three students went on to Cambridge in 2000 and about 70 per cent of Year 13 leavers enter higher education. The school's own figures show improvement over time, up to 1999, and then a falling off. In 2000, modern foreign languages, art and history were the most successful subjects in the school and the sciences and mathematics were the least successful. There has been a decline in all the A-level science results since 1998.
7. The school uses the results of tests at the end of Key Stage 2, reading ages and reports from departments to calculate targets for individual pupils and year groups and for individual teachers who are working with the groups. All the targets set for mathematics have been passed and so have most of those set for English. Progress in science has not been quite so successful. The targets set for the GCSE examinations were not met in 1999 but were all achieved in 2000. Evidence from the inspection shows that pupils are generally in line to meet the targets set for 2001.
8. Overall standards of work seen during the inspection were above the expected levels at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory as they make steady progress across the school. The highest standards were seen in Years 7, 10 and 12 but there was little overall difference between Key Stages 3 and 4. The most consistently high standards were in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Standards are above national expectations for the majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science and their achievements are good, particularly in mathematics and science. In Year 11, standards are also above the nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science and achievements and progress in mathematics and science are good. Higher-attaining pupils make particularly good progress in mathematics where they often take the GCSE examination at the end of Year 10. Standards in the sixth form are above the levels needed for a pass grade in English and close to those levels in physics and chemistry but they are lower in some elements of biology and in mathematics. The achievement of higher-attaining students in sixth form mathematics is not as good as it should be, mainly because of the effects of missing a year's work in the subject in Year 11. Overall, these standards reflect a significant improvement since the last inspection.
9. Pupils are working at above the nationally expected levels across the whole school in geography. Standards are close to the expected levels across both key stages and in the sixth form in art, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. In information and communication technology, attainment is below the nationally expected levels in Years 9 and 11. In the sixth form, standards are on line for pass grades in economics and aspects of business studies. They are slightly higher in psychology.
10. Achievement is satisfactory overall, although it is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 in English, mathematics and science and, in geography, it is good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in lessons, particularly in English and mathematics in Key Stage 3 and in science throughout the school. In most cases, the progress made by these pupils, including those withdrawn for individual or small group work, is little different from that made by the rest of their peers. Pupils make good progress because they are well supported in class and the quality of the teaching and support in withdrawal groups is also good. The emphasis placed on key terms, the development of relevant vocabulary and clear, structured work are all helping pupils with special educational needs to make good progress across the school, particularly in literacy. Pupils concentrate well and work hard in the withdrawal groups and, in subjects such as art, there are opportunities for pupils to operate at their own level. They are given more time and rooms are open at lunchtime and after school for extra tuition.

11. Pupils who are gifted or talented make very good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and their achievements in the sixth form are good. This is because the school identifies them early, sets extended tasks for them and provides additional tuition and revision groups. Most pupils who are learning English as an additional language are fluent enough to have at least satisfactory access to teaching and learning and they progress at the same rate as their peers. The very few who are at the early stages of learning English are well supported and highly motivated. They make good progress in learning English through the one or two sessions a week when they are withdrawn from classes. As a result, they make satisfactory progress in the other subjects being studied. There are no significant differences between the performance of different ethnic groups and the school is beginning to monitor this closely.

Literacy

12. Some productive initiatives are underpinning the development of literacy across the curriculum. For example, the literacy co-ordinator has produced a 'Literacy Record' booklet for all pupils in Year 7. This very good resource provides detailed lists of subject-specific key words and is designed to maintain appropriate reading records. In other curriculum areas, there is positive evidence of teachers developing consistent strategies to co-ordinate and extend pupils' literacy skills across the school. For example, key words are prominently displayed in art and materials for critical studies also support pupils well in applying their literacy skills. In science, teachers take care to define new terms and ensure that pupils can spell and explain them. In music, posters with key words for each year are displayed in classrooms; written work reinforces key words and concepts and pupils' evaluative skills are well developed. A systematic focus on key words and strategies to organise subject-specific reading and writing are also features in other subjects. Teachers are making productive use of grids and frames to structure writing. This activity, although not yet consistent across the whole school, indicates a constructive, creative approach to the development of literacy in a significant number of subjects. Developments are systematically monitored against a standard checklist of requirements by one of the deputy headteachers as part of the continuous review of the curriculum and literacy is a regular agenda item at meetings of the board of studies. Achievement in literacy is good across the school. Overall, the school is well placed for the full implementation of the National Literacy Strategy in September 2001.

Numeracy

13. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory use of numerical skills in their work across the curriculum. In design and technology, measuring and weighing skills are satisfactory and pupils show that they can apply spatial ideas and handle statistical information. In history, pupils can access and understand data about the First World War. Pupils have a satisfactory grasp of perspective and three-dimensional representation in art. In information and communication technology, pupils show good capacity for dealing with aspects of scale, ratio, estimation and proportion. There is no evidence to suggest that any pupil is denied access to any element of curriculum because of poor numerical skills. Some preparatory work and inservice training has been done towards the introduction of a whole school policy for the teaching of numeracy skills, but the school does not have an agreed policy for teaching numeracy yet. This means that the departments overall lack a common approach in their teaching and, therefore, the pupils' learning is less effective than it could be.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Overall, pupils' attitudes to school are good, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Although most pupils have a positive attitude towards their work, this sometimes varies in response to the approach of different teachers. Most pupils listen carefully to their teachers and are keen to answer questions. They concentrate well on the tasks and enjoy challenging work. A minority of pupils have negative attitudes to learning. They have difficulty in concentrating, disturb others and make little effort.

15. Pupils' behaviour is generally satisfactory. In lessons, behaviour is often good and this has a positive impact on learning. In these lessons, the teachers establish clear ground rules but sometimes have to work hard to maintain discipline. In a few cases, pupils chat throughout the lesson and show a lack of respect and consideration. This disruptive behaviour interferes with their learning and that of others. Sixth form students need encouragement to discuss and debate ideas in class although, by Year 13, they are more confident and answer questions with greater interest. They are not enthusiastic about attending extra-curricular activities, particularly after school when many of them have part-time jobs. A small number of students in Year 12 volunteer to help pupils in Year 7 with reading or join a lower-attaining set for one lesson a week during the year. In all cases, their help is valuable and they benefit from the experience. Prefects are not fully involved in the life of the school and opportunities for them to take responsibility are limited.
16. The last inspection report commented on the marked contrast between the good behaviour in the classroom and the disorderly behaviour in the corridors. The situation has not significantly improved and parents are right to have some concerns about pupils' behaviour. As pupils move around the school, there is often jostling in the corridors and, occasionally, on narrow staircases, this behaviour can be dangerous. Pupils drop a lot of litter in the school grounds. Parents and pupils say that incidents of bullying are usually dealt with appropriately. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions is lower than that found in similar schools.
17. Pupils' personal development at the school is satisfactory. They are generally keen to take up responsibility but there are limited opportunities open to them. The initial enthusiasm for the school council has diminished as most pupils feel that they were unsuccessful in bringing about real changes in the life of the school. Pupils take their involvement with charities very seriously and work hard to raise money for organisations such as the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development. Many pupils in Year 11 take responsibility for their own learning by attending voluntary revision classes to improve their knowledge and the standards of their work. Relationships are generally good. Pupils collaborate with each other in lessons and work well in groups. There is good racial harmony and pupils generally enjoy socialising during breaks.
18. Attendance is satisfactory but it has declined since the last inspection, when it was very good. The attendance rate of 91.2 per cent and the unauthorised absence rate of 0.5 per cent are broadly in line with national average. A significant minority of pupils are late for school, missing an important start to the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Teaching in the school is satisfactory overall and it has many strengths. It was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of the lessons seen and good or better in 59 per cent. Twenty-two per cent of lessons were very good or excellent. The quality of learning is satisfactory in all age groups. In Key Stages 3 and 4, the highest proportions of good or better teaching were in design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education and the highest proportions of unsatisfactory teaching were in modern foreign languages and science. Careers education is very well taught. The distribution of good or better teaching was fairly even across the two key stages, although it was best in Year 7 and least successful in Year 10. The most consistently good teaching was in the sixth form, where teaching was very good or excellent in one lesson in every three seen. Overall, teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection.
20. The strengths of teaching include the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects and how to teach them. In art and music, for example, teachers' skills give them confidence in practical work and demonstrations and, in geography, teachers' knowledge allows them to time lessons well and ask testing questions that make pupils think. In modern foreign languages, most teachers provide good role models when speaking the language being taught. Teachers of physical education use their knowledge to introduce a variety of planned activities. They provide clear introductions and give effective demonstrations, ensuring that all pupils are aware of what is expected of them and what they have to do to make progress. These approaches help to keep pupils motivated and on task. As a result, pupils acquire practical skills well. In information and communication technology, clear aims and objectives are set that challenge pupils' thinking and

work is well planned, with informative worksheets and computer resources carefully prepared. Successful planning is also a feature of teaching in modern foreign languages.

21. Teachers generally use assessment well. For example, in English, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities and, in design and technology, teachers use a detailed assessment scheme to track individuals' achievements and to feed back to pupils. Pupils' work in history is very well marked, with evaluative comments that show ways of improving standards and teachers make particularly effective use of displays, adding their own gradings and comments so that pupils gain a better understanding of their expectations. In most cases, teachers' expectations of behaviour and achievement are high and pupils respond positively to the challenges set. Their positive attitudes, good relationships and very good behaviour help promote a positive learning atmosphere in lessons, thus enabling good progress to be made. The school's work on developing pupils' problem-solving skills is beginning to pay dividends and pupils show initiative in several subjects, when given the opportunity. This was particularly noticeable in physical education, history, geography and information and communication technology.
22. The organisation, pace and timing of lessons are generally good. In many lessons, teachers skilfully balance whole-class teaching with paired, group and individual work to maintain the pace of lessons and pupils work hard and achieve their objectives as a result. However, this is occasionally a weakness in information and communication technology. Good use of questioning tests pupils' understanding and helps to highlight appropriate, subject-specific terminology. Frequent references to clearly displayed key words develop pupils' geographical language. In a Year 10 additional science group, the teacher combined a lively explanation with good questioning to inject real interest into the lesson and pupils became actively involved in the practical work. In English, teachers often use searching follow-up questions that require pupils to think in order to justify their views. Teachers employ a wide range of other strategies to achieve their learning objectives. For example, in one excellent lesson, role-play was used to explore questions of poverty and wealth in the developing world. In modern foreign languages, clear, shared objectives, pace, variety and humour attract and retain the involvement of pupils. Support staff are used well, particularly in physical education, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages.
23. In less successful lessons, teachers do not make it clear what pupils are expected to learn. In a few English lessons, for example, pupils were unsure where the work is leading or what skills they were developing. This is occasionally compounded in art and physical education, for example, by the failure to have a short summary of the learning that has taken place at the end of the lesson. In mathematics, teachers do not always push pupils to discover answers and formulate hypotheses for themselves. Although teachers generally manage their classes well, management of pupils is a weakness in a number of lessons, particularly with lower-attaining pupils. When this is combined with slow pace or lack of confidence, the rate of learning diminishes and pupils produce an unsatisfactory amount of work.
24. Teaching in the sixth form is very good in business studies, economics and psychology. Teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of these subjects. They frequently stimulate lively debate, showing an infectious enthusiasm and an enjoyment that students greatly appreciate. Most lessons get off to a punchy start so no time is wasted and the objectives and structure of lessons are made clear. Work is marked regularly and consistently, particularly in economics, with many helpful comments about how to improve answers and detailed points made about how to tackle questions. Exemplars of very good answers are given to pupils and displayed in classrooms. Students are encouraged to keep neat notes and the majority do, using the skills they have been taught. Teachers carefully relate theory to relevant topical materials that students find interesting. Ethical and moral issues are addressed well. Teachers' questioning skills are particularly good. Revision is tailor-made to students' needs and teachers put much effort into going over the topics studied methodically and helpfully.
25. Teachers in all subjects consider pupils with special educational needs in their planning and are careful to set appropriate tasks. In some subjects, such as design and technology, additional targets are identified alongside those in the individual education plans. In a few cases, the targets in the individual education plans are too vague and offer little guidance to teachers. The teaching

and the work of support staff successfully encourage the good progress made. The work done in support of pupils who are gifted or talented is also successful, with additional tasks and extra sessions being a strong feature. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English are well supported. Literacy is well taught across the curriculum and key words are displayed and used frequently in lessons. Very few departments have policies for numeracy but, nevertheless, it is satisfactorily taught in most subjects. There are examples of good work in economics and business education, where the students are given the opportunity to use statistical concepts and techniques, and in sixth form science.

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

26. The school's curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in most respects. It provides the full range of strands in music and design and technology in Key Stage 3. However, unsatisfactory indoor accommodation and outdoor space mean that it is difficult for the school cannot to offer all the required elements in physical education. Information and communication technology is taught as a discrete subject only in Year 7, in the examination groups in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form as an examination subject or as a key skill. It is incorporated in planning for other subjects in the rest of the school and some opportunities for development are provided in Years 8 and 9. Although all pupils in Key Stage 4 who are not studying the subject for the GCSE examination follow a short computer literacy and information technology course, this does not cover the full range of activities set out in the National Curriculum and, in many cases, statutory requirements are not being met. Classes in most subjects have only limited access to computers and coverage of the requirements of the National Curriculum for information and communication technology across the curriculum is not being adequately monitored.
27. Religious education has a central place in the curriculum across the whole school. Good procedures ensure literacy is well taught across the school and, although there is not a formal policy, numeracy is also promoted to a satisfactory level. Sex education and education about drugs are provided through the personal, social and health programme and through science and religious education. Personal, social and health education is taught as a discrete subject only in Years 7 and 9. In the rest of the school, the planned topics are supposed to be embedded in the schemes of work for other subjects. These arrangements are not satisfactorily monitored. Careers education is well planned and there is appropriate provision for work experience. However, the time allocation for careers education is not clearly identified.
28. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 study English language, mathematics, religious education and double or single science and have a limited choice of one area of design and technology, one modern language and one humanities subject. They can then choose two further subjects from additional science, another language or humanity, art, drama, music, information and communication technology, physical education or business studies. Pupils are strongly urged to take the additional science option and most do so, including the unusually high number who are following the single science course. This means that options are restricted for many pupils, particularly if they want to specialise in the arts. The high numbers taking the single science option mean that many pupils will not be able to continue with science at A or AS level. This is an unsatisfactory situation and the curriculum in Key Stage 4 is not broad enough. not balanced. There is a limited range of non-academic courses available.
29. The school was quick to act on the proposed changes to regulations regarding disapplication from the National Curriculum that were emerging in the spring of 2000 and decided to allow pupils to drop either design and technology or a modern language. To the school's surprise, over 100 pupils applied for this option. Acting in good faith and on their interpretation of the guidance then available, the school's senior management eventually allowed disapplication to 100 and eight pupils in order to provide them with a more flexible range of choices. As the new regulations were clarified, it emerged that this was a wrong decision. Firstly, the school was in breach of the spirit and the letter of the new regulations, since the disapplications were not made in 'exceptional circumstances' and, within such a large percentage of the cohort - about 60 per cent - many pupils

could be deprived of opportunities for 'continuing studies beyond Key Stage 4' by dropping a modern language. Further unforeseen consequences were that those pupils who chose not to continue with design and technology could not study the full National Curriculum for information and communication technology, as the school teaches some elements only through the design and technology course.

30. These difficulties spring from the school's failure to follow the regulations and to meet the five statutory criteria for disapplication. For example, curriculum plans were not drawn up for each pupil, the modified curriculum was not monitored and short-term decisions were taken that did not necessarily safeguard pupils' education after the age of sixteen. One further breach of regulations affects pupils with statements of special educational needs. At least five of these pupils have statements requiring them to have access to the full National Curriculum but decisions to disapply them, along with the others in their year group, were taken without the necessary reviews or consultations. The school recognises these errors and plans to remedy the situation next year.
31. In Year 12, most students choose four from the large number of AS courses offered. These include the subjects offered at GCSE level and media studies, government and politics and psychology. Flexible arrangements for teaching groups are generally successful in providing the combination of courses that pupils want. Some groups are very small, particularly those for languages and history, which means that students benefit from individual attention but lose the valuable opportunities for debating and sharing ideas with their peers. The school has not sought to remedy this by arrangements such as jointly teaching Years 12 and 13 for part or whole of the timetable or sharing some courses with another school. An Intermediate GNVQ course in information and communication technology is being offered for the first time and a few pupils are following the Advanced GNVQ course in business studies but there are no other vocational courses. GNVQ courses do not have high status within the school, although the quality of provision has improved since the last inspection. The school offers a useful course leading to the 'Community Sports Leadership Award' but its value is limited because it is timetabled against the AS and A-level courses in physical education.
32. The school has introduced information and communication technology and communications as key skills in Year 12. Many students have completed the written part of the communications course and several have made presentations in lessons, particularly in media studies and business studies AS-level and Advanced GNVQ. Some use sophisticated 'Power Point' applications. Sixth form students have one religious education lesson a week but no longer follow a personal and social education programme or a general studies course. Tutor time three mornings a week is used to cover administration, monitor key skills and progress applications to university and to address other important issues. The limited time allocation for these activities means that it is difficult to develop them properly or to invite in visiting speakers. The number of extra-curricular activities offered depends on the expertise and time that sixth form tutors have available but interest is low. Sixth form students, therefore, experience a narrow curriculum beyond their academic studies. The subjects offered in the sixth form are rigorous and challenging and the GNVQ courses are now well organised and properly verified. This represents satisfactory progress since the last inspection but the school still does not offer an appropriate range of vocational courses or other courses with alternative accreditation. The small size of some teaching groups remains a concern.
33. In Key Stage 3, teaching departments place pupils in bands or sets according to ability and the school monitors their progress carefully to ensure that they are receiving appropriate challenge. Timetabling arrangements sometimes mean that decisions about groupings made by one subject affect arrangements in another and, occasionally, pupils with ability in one subject may find themselves in a lower group than they should be because of this. Elements of the curriculum are designed with the special educational needs of pupils in mind. The use of withdrawal groups is well planned and successful, particularly for improving literacy. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the single science award GCSE course. Additionally, a few opportunities are provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to follow courses offering alternative accreditation, such as environmental studies and English for business. However, the school does not offer a sufficiently wide choice of these courses, either in Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form, and it makes too little use of certificates of achievement. The very few pupils who are at the early stages of language

acquisition are well supported and others learning English as an additional language are enabled to make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils are quickly identified and the school provides further activities for them in most subjects, including English, mathematics, science, art, modern foreign languages, geography and information and communication technology.

34. Apart from the good range of additional extension or revision classes, the provision of extra-curricular activities is unsatisfactory for a school of this size. There is a limited range of activities related to sports, games or cultural development. Opportunities for field study are also restricted and this affects pupils' progress in subjects such as geography. The school has good links with a number of the primary schools supplying pupils who enter in Year 7. These are used well to build curricular links between the key stages, particularly in English and mathematics, to share teaching approaches and to plan provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented. On the other hand, links with institutions offering sixth form or other post sixteen education are weak, limiting what can be offered. The school participates in the local education-business partnership and this supports the work experience programme. Local employers also come into the school to help with careers interviews. Overall, the school has satisfactory links with the local community, with pupils undertaking some fund-raising for charity and sixth form students spending time in primary schools or in a nearby hospice.
35. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The last inspection identified the lack of co-ordination of these important areas of learning as a key issue and the school has made some improvements. There is a policy on spiritual and moral development and all four of these aspects have been built into schemes of work in a very systematic manner. They were included in the curriculum reviews in 1999 and 2000 but However, the practical results they are still not regularly monitored by the school's senior management.
36. Provision for spiritual development is good. Acts of worship are often well planned and led. They are rooted in the Roman Catholic and Christian ethos of the school and make important contributions to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The school chaplain plays a significant and valued role in the spiritual life of the school. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have opportunities to take part in a retreat. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils followed up the theme of self-esteem that had been explored during the retreat. In art, there are very good opportunities to reflect on spirituality. For example, pupils explored themes of death and the frailty of life evoked by the music of the 'Danse Macabre'. Prayers are often said at the end of the day.
37. The school's provision for moral development is good. Most adults working in the school have very clear expectations of behaviour in the classroom and provide good role models for the pupils. For example, in a music lesson, the teacher was respectful and patient and emphasised consideration for others. There are often good opportunities for discussion. For example, in history, pupils reflected on the effects of apartheid and, in English, pupils explored the moral dilemma of buying designer clothes, knowing that they are produced by slave labour.
38. The provision for social development is satisfactory. As at the time of the last inspection, opportunities for the pupils to develop their social skills and exercise their responsibility are patchy. The gifted and talented pupils are able to take part in a good range of extra-curricular activities, but these are not seen as being open to all pupils. Annual retreats and activity week provide good opportunities for bonding and teamwork; some sixth-form students support younger pupils with reading and other pupils act as librarians. Work on producing a 'Jubilee Sculpture' provided very good opportunities for collaboration on a joint task. The school council endeavours to bring about real changes in school life but is rarely successful. Pupils are encouraged to think of others through charity work and sixth form students work with the community. Prize Night celebrates academic and sporting success.
39. The school's provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. Little has been done to address the issue of co-ordinating cultural development as identified in the last inspection report. The inspection team shares the parents' concerns about the lack of school trips and residential visits. The school introduced an 'Activities Week' in response to the previous report and this provides some limited opportunities for pupils to widen their understanding of their own and others'

cultures. There is some good practice, for example in art, where pupils visit galleries and a party recently went to New York. Pupils explore Australian Aboriginal art, African and Asian art, as well as the work of European artists. Subjects such as geography and French encourage appropriate cultural understanding.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The school provides good educational and personal support and guidance for its pupils. Tutors and heads of year know their pupils well and procedures for monitoring and supporting personal development are good. Staff work closely with pupils who have academic or personal problems. The school has good links with a number of external agencies, such as the Bishop Harvey Family Service, and the parents appreciate the support given to pupils and their families. The school's chaplain adds a valuable dimension to pastoral care, for example through her work on retreats. The pupils learning English as an additional language value the good quality language support they receive.
41. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Teachers keep careful records of homework grades, taking due account of effort, and record the results of end-of-unit tests and examinations. In design and technology, for example, profiles of performance are completed at the end of each module and passed on to the next teacher so that targets can be noted and standards developed. In modern foreign languages, pupils' performance and progress are monitored regularly and pupils change groups if necessary. Each half term, teachers give pupils a plus or minus for overall performance in each subject. Form tutors then note whether any pupils are under-achieving and take appropriate action, such as setting daily targets.
42. A considerable amount of data is available about pupils' standards of attainment when they enter the school and progress is measured carefully. The headteacher analyses the results of tests and assessments, GCSE and A-level grades in great detail and uses his own system, combined with other, nationally recognised systems, to predict performance in the future. Thus, individual pupils, classes and year groups, teachers and departments all have their own targets that feed into those set for the school as a whole. Pupils understand their targets and know what National Curriculum levels or grades they should aim for. The procedures for monitoring and supporting progress are good and they have certainly contributed to the improving point scores at GCSE. Teachers respond to assessments and results by adjusting the curriculum, altering their lesson plans or changing the emphasis of their teaching. For example, despite pupils analysing questions most competently, results in business studies in 2000 were slightly disappointing, so teachers are now making sure that pupils learn enough facts as well. In Year 7, the sequence of topics in the English scheme of work was modified following evaluation of the previous year's performance and mathematics teachers regularly adjust lessons according to the results of tests.
43. The day-to-day, practical arrangements for assessing pupils with special educational needs are good, beginning with close links with the pupils' former primary schools. The guidance in the Code of Practice is closely followed and annual reviews are well organised. Parents and pupils attend, the objectives in individual education plans are reviewed and the school is alert to opportunities for recommending changes to pupils' statements of special educational needs. Throughout the year, learning support assistants maintain good records of progress towards the targets set, especially those concerning literacy and behaviour. Teachers are aware of the targets and generally take them into account in their planning but they seldom complete the proformas supplied by the co-ordinator and intended to identify the strategies used and evaluate the progress made. There is good practice in some departments. For example, in design and technology, teachers keep assessment profiles for individual pupils, illustrating progress over time. Pupils know where these are kept and have access to them, discussing their achievements with the teachers. The school is beginning to monitor closely the progress and attainment of different ethnic groups.
44. There are good procedures for securing the pupils' welfare, health and safety. The school's arrangements for child protection are good and a sound policy is in place. A deputy headteacher has received appropriate training and carries out his duties effectively. Most other adults working in the school have received good basic awareness training on this issue. The arrangements for first

aid are very good. One of the welfare assistants is very experienced and well qualified in caring for pupils and another member of staff is also qualified in first aid. The medical room provides appropriate accommodation for the treatment of pupils who are ill or injured and there are very good procedures for the administration of medication. The school pays good attention to health and safety. The bursar handles the day-to-day management of health and safety issues effectively and the concerns raised in the last inspection have been addressed. Teachers and the bursar make regular checks of the building and risk assessments are undertaken. Various minor health and safety issues were identified during the inspection and the school has taken note of these.

45. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The school strongly discourages parents from taking their children away on holiday during term time and pupils are rewarded for very good attendance. Procedures for registration meet requirements and office staff follow up unexplained absences immediately. Heads of year work closely with the educational welfare officer to monitor and support pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. The school has clear procedures for monitoring and promoting punctuality but these are not always effective.
46. The school has satisfactory procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour but there has been little development in this area since the last inspection, particularly with regard to pupils' inconsiderate behaviour outside the classroom. When pupils are not closely supervised in the corridors, in the canteen and in the playgrounds, behaviour is often too rumbustious, with there is often rowdiness pushing and a general lack of respect for the environment. Within the classrooms, most teachers have established clear classroom routines to encourage pupils to behave well. Pupils and parents value the commendations and certificates awarded. A few teachers, particularly those who are temporary, struggle to maintain discipline and are insufficiently skilled in dealing with anti-social behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are generally satisfactory. A clear anti-bullying policy has been drawn up and pupils say that incidents of bullying are usually dealt with effectively.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. The vast majority of parents and carers have confidence in the school. They generally expressed positive views about the school at the pre-inspection meeting and through the OFSTED questionnaires. They feel that their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress. They say that the teaching is good and that their children like school. They value the way in which the school keeps them informed about how their children are getting on. They say that if they have concerns or problems the staff are very approachable and they are pleased that the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. However, a significant minority of parents have concerns about pupils' behaviour, especially in the corridors and around the school. Over 20 per cent of the parents who returned the questionnaire are unhappy about the lack of educational visits and school trips.
48. The school has effective links with the parents and carers of its pupils. The vast majority of parents feel that the school works closely with parents and parents are encouraged to visit or telephone the school if there are problems. The student planners are often used as an effective means of communication between home and school. The impact of the parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. Parent governors support the school well and help to shape its future. The parent teacher association works hard to raise funds for activities and equipment, such as the minibus. Most parents have signed the home-school agreement.
49. The school provides good quality information for parents and they are pleased with the communications sent home. New parents receive good information through meetings, a helpful prospectus and a valuable booklet about the curriculum and homework. The annual governors' report is informative although it does not contain all the information required by the Department for Education and Employment. and the newsletters provide parents with information about future events and celebrate the school's successes. Overall, the pupils' annual reports are of a satisfactory quality but some of the suggestions on how pupils could improve their work are too vague. Throughout the school year, parents are kept well informed about how their children are getting on through six-weekly checks on academic progress, a mid-year progress report and

consultations with teachers. These provide good opportunities for parents to review their children's progress. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in the annual reviews.

50. The parents' contribution to their children's learning is good and the school values the involvement of parents in their children's education. The vast majority of parents attend parents' consultation evenings. If pupils are underachieving, 'target reports' are sent home each day and parents review their children's progress. Parents support their children with their homework. The school provides parents with a clear and comprehensive guide on homework and they sign and comment in the student planner each week. However, a few parents drew attention to the fact that planners are not always kept up-to-date by the teachers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher provides strong, clear academic leadership. His tenacious focus on monitoring standards of attainment in order to set targets for individual pupils, classes and year groups and for individual teachers and departments has driven standards up year after year. The headteacher conducts a rigorous analysis of prior attainment and sets challenging but realistic targets. However, some departments feel that their own assessments have not been taken into account and their views about other factors that may affect attainment have not been considered. Despite this, there is a strongly shared commitment to raising standards and to the overall improvement of the school. The academic aims of the school are fully reflected in all aspects of its work but the other aims, as stated in the mission statement, are less clearly represented in the school's day-to-day life.
52. Routine planning and management are effectively carried out through weekly meetings of the leadership group, made up of the headteacher, the two deputies, the director of studies and the four assistant headteachers. This group also closely monitors progress in the development plan and standards of attainment in all year groups. The deputies have school-wide responsibilities and the assistant headteachers also act as heads of year. A curriculum and performance management planning group made up of the headteacher, the two deputies and the director of studies, also meets weekly. This group is responsible for ensuring that curricular targets are met through overseeing the work of the departments. These arrangements generally work well, although there are weaknesses in the monitoring system that adversely affect personal and social education and information and communication technology. There is good leadership in English, mathematics, science, art, history, business studies and modern foreign languages and satisfactory leadership in most other subjects. Staff absences and unclear lines of accountability have led to unsatisfactory leadership in geography and information and communication technology. Heads of department have clear plans and objectives and they monitor each teacher in the department twice a year.
53. Heads of year are effective. They carry out their pastoral duties well, as well as monitoring behaviour and attainment across their year groups. The head of sixth form has few free periods to cope with the demands of her role and her teaching base is quite far from the sixth form block. Nevertheless, she provides clear guidance for the tutors and is knowledgeable about the progress and needs of all students, including those for whom English is not their first language or those with financial difficulties, problems at home or commitments outside school. She has prepared helpful study skills booklets for Years 12 and 13. The co-ordinator for special educational needs manages the department well and provides good guidance for teachers and support staff. She ensures that the guidance in the Code of Practice is followed and monitors pupils' progress closely. Overall, the provision made for these pupils is good. However, the senior management of the school failed to observe all the required procedures when disapplying pupils from the National Curriculum.
54. The full governing body meets at least four times a year and the finance committee and the premises committee meet two or three times a term. These committees carry out their duties rigorously. The other committees through which the governors conduct their business meet as required. Meetings are generally well attended and detailed minutes are kept, showing that discussions are focused on the school's development and on raising standards. Heads of department give presentations of their work that are generally linked to curriculum reviews and the

headteacher and bursar provide regular reports. Nevertheless, only a few governors are closely involved with the school's work and, apart from the special educational needs governor, none is linked with any of the teaching departments. A few key governors actively pursue their responsibilities but the remainder seldom visit the school and the governors overall are not sufficiently involved. They tend to respond to proposals, including those affecting the school's development, rather than taking a more active stance. This can place them in a weakened position. For example, they have not fully met their statutory responsibilities in several respects, particularly regarding the curriculum.

55. The school development plan emerged from the key issues identified by the last inspection, with the headteacher placing highest priority on improving teaching and learning and strengthening departmental management. Steps were taken to address all the key issues through the development plan but the three main ones have taken most of the energies of the leadership team and progress on the rest has slowed. Consequently, there has been very good improvement in teaching, learning, attainment and departmental management since the last inspection. However, although the school has met the majority of its targets for other key issues, these were generally not very ambitious. As a result, insufficient progress has been made with matters such as the closer involvement of the governors and the co-ordination of provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The targets in the present development plan are appropriate and the leadership team conducts a formal review of progress each term, with reports going to the governors twice a year.
56. An annual planning cycle, involving all staff through staff meetings, training days and departmental meetings, reviews the priorities in the plan. This is linked to a rolling programme in which the work of each department is reviewed by external consultants at least once every two years. These departmental reviews are managed by the director of studies. They involve the scrutiny of curriculum planning and coverage as well as observations of teaching and they result in written reports to the headteacher. The reports, in turn, are used in the annual review of each department, in setting targets and planning for each department's development. The system has been very successful in raising standards.
57. One of the deputy headteachers is responsible for staff development and the present arrangements are very thorough and effective. The school has been accredited by 'Investors in People' for this aspect of its work. Each teacher is monitored in the classroom at least once a year by senior managers and at least twice a year by the head of department, as well as being seen by external consultants. Teachers also now observe one another teaching. Detailed records of observations are kept and discussed with individual teachers and with departments and are used for professional development. Very good opportunities are provided for in-service training and development and there has been an extensive programme to develop skills in information and communication technology. The school has good systems for appraisal and performance management. New staff and newly qualified teachers are given a well planned and effective induction programme.
58. Financial management and administration are effectively and efficiently carried out by the bursar who ensures that all the cost centres stay within their limits. Financial planning is firmly based on the school's academic priorities and specific grants are used appropriately. Overall costs per pupil are about average for schools in London, the sixth form is financially viable and the school provides satisfactory value for money. The headteacher keeps a close watch on expenditure and meets the bursar each week to monitor emerging trends and patterns. An overspend in the last financial year has been corrected in the current year and spending is strictly contained within the budget. Audits are conducted every year and the last audit was favourable, with no major concerns. The school is making good progress in its implementation of the principles of best value. It has a written policy statement agreed by the governors. Most of the school's activities, such as the curriculum reviews, the use of maternity cover, general purchases and the rental of playing fields, are now closely scrutinised according to these principles. The school secretary manages the administration of the school well and she and her staff act as welcoming first points of contact for pupils, parents and other visitors.

59. Staffing is satisfactory overall, with some weaknesses. Staff are generally well qualified to teach their subjects. Teachers are committed to working outside lesson time and pupils respond positively to this. The English, mathematics, art, geography, history and special educational needs departments are staffed adequately or better. However, the school has been experiencing difficulties in recruiting enough suitable permanent staff in science and music. This had led to serious problems in science, particularly, where two temporary or supply teachers have had to be employed. The instability caused is having an unsettling effect on teaching and learning in some classes. The co-ordinator for is on long-term sick leave and, Although some staff are receiving training in information and communication technology, this subject, there are not enough specialist staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. There are enough support staff to cover the needs of the modern foreign languages and science departments and classroom support for pupils with special educational needs is good. The level of support provided for pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language is appropriate for the low numbers in the school.
60. Although there are some deficiencies, the accommodation is adequate for the demands of the school's present curriculum, with the significant exception of physical education. The poor accommodation in this subject limits the school's ability to meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum. The rooms designated for information and communication technology are excellent but, in other rooms, the layout and the accessibility of computers is unsatisfactory. Display in most classrooms is good, reflecting the current topics being studied and celebrating the quality of pupils' work, but the corridors are not bright or welcoming. The sixth form block is attractive and includes two new computer rooms.
61. Resources are good in art and modern foreign languages and satisfactory in the other subjects, with an adequate supply of books and equipment. However, although the school has a better than average supply of computers, access to information and communication technology is not satisfactory, except in modern foreign languages. This reduces the opportunities for extending pupils' experience of recording and research. Overall the school is not making satisfactory use of the new technology. The issues from last inspection have been acted on and there are now more educational visits to enrich learning in art and a better supply of information sources in geography. In some subjects, such as history and geography, storage is a problem and the provision of additional cupboards interferes with the quality of display and prevents teachers using the teaching spaces more flexibly.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to continue to raise standards in teaching, learning and attainment and to support the improvements made in other aspects of the school's work, the senior management and the governors need to:

- review the way the curriculum is organised, with a view to improving the range of choices in Years 10 and 11 and meeting the spirit of 'Curriculum 2000' in the plans for these years and for the sixth form (paras 28, 31,32,33);
- ensure that provision for information and communication technology is properly co-ordinated across the school so that pupils do not lose their entitlement under the National Curriculum (paras 26, 68, 94, 102, 107, 122, 125, 126, 131, 144);
- improve the range of extra-curricular provision, particularly in sporting and cultural areas, and extend links with the community to support pupils' learning (para 34); and
- involve the governors more closely in the work of the school so that they are better placed to shape the school's development (para 54).

In addition to these key issues, senior managers and governors should consider the inclusion of the following matters in their action plan:

- improving the co-ordination of and provision for personal and social education and for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (paras 27 and 35); and
- as and when resources permit, improving the accommodation and outdoor facilities for physical education (paras 26, 60, 153, 154).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	198
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	19	36	34	6	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	838	149
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	171	N/A

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	115	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	74

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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
	2000	76	93	169

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	55	51	48
	Girls	83	71	62
	Total	138	122	110
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (74)	72 (67)	65 (67)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (37)	51 (44)	39 (28)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	48	52
	Girls	74	71	71
	Total	115	119	123
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (70)	70 (66)	73 (62)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (33)	44 (37)	38 (32)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	90	63	153

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	45	78	81
	Girls	40	61	64
	Total	85	139	145
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (57)	91 (89)	95 (94)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.3
	National	38.4

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	25	36	61

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	10.5	14.1	12.6	4.0	3.0	3.3
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

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

International Bacculaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Bacculaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School		N/A
	National		N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	97
Black – African heritage	85
Black – other	24
Indian	24
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	7
White	700
Any other minority ethnic group	50

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	5	1
Black – African heritage	5	0
Black – other	2	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	8	0
Other minority ethnic groups	2	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	62.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	290

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.4
Key Stage 4	20.6

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3,114,000
Total expenditure	3,227,000
Expenditure per pupil	3,246
Balance brought forward from previous year	273,000
Balance carried forward to next year	160,000

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	987
Number of questionnaires returned	100

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	46	7	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	48	5	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	49	15	6	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	50	15	2	1
The teaching is good.	34	53	6	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	31	4	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	25	5	6	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	26	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	43	38	11	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	44	36	8	4	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	48	6	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	47	15	8	8

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

ENGLISH

62. Standards of attainment in Key Stage 3 show a rising trend. The results of the end-of-key stage tests in 2000 were above the national average and compare very well with the performance of schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. The percentage of pupils obtaining higher than the nationally expected levels was better than the national average and the average for similar schools. The proportion of sixteen-year-olds gaining A* to C grades in the 2000 GCSE examinations showed a steady improvement over previous years in both English and English Literature. In English, performance at higher grades was well above the national average for all schools. In English literature, almost all the pupils entered achieved A* to C grades. Pupils studying A-level English continue to do well and the 91 per cent pass rate for the examinations in 2000 confirms a consistent pattern of success.
63. The work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are above national expectations for the majority of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In all age groups, higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and those learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. The more successful pupils show very good control of sentence structure and an impressive range of vocabulary and they can interpret character and themes in some challenging texts. For example, a Year 7 group, studying 'Born Yesterday' by Philip Larkin, were able to use sophisticated language in response to the hopes and fears of the parent for his new-born child. Pupils show highly developed oral skills and make good use of writing to organise ideas and information in both fiction and non-fiction texts. A Year 10 class, for example, produced well-structured group responses to three thematically linked short stories about relationships, making close reference to the relevant text to illustrate key points. A Year 11 class, studying arguments and opinions in a newspaper article, showed similarly high levels of skills in literacy, selecting, evaluating and interpreting factual information to support a point of view.
64. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in lessons, where structured oral work enables them to reflect upon and develop their ideas before writing. Those at early stages of learning English are making satisfactory progress. Some examples were seen, however, where pupils moved too early into the written task and produced only a narrow range of responses. For example, pupils in Year 9, preparing for the forthcoming teachers' assessments, produced quick, superficial written answers that did not do justice to the understanding shown when they were talking about the set passage. Pupils across the ability range in both key stages make adventurous choices of vocabulary in their own writing. Handwriting and spelling are mostly good, although lower-attaining pupils in the younger age groups show insufficient understanding of the structure of words. For example, they make errors, such as 'vere' for 'very' and 'injoy' for 'enjoy'.
65. The most effective development of pupils' oral attainment is in the top groups in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In a Year 13 lesson on 'The Country Wife', the students themselves led a very productive discussion on the social conventions presented in the play. They showed high levels of independent learning in the purposeful way that they had prepared for the discussion and in how they managed it. Pupils' motivation is good. They sustain concentration well and show impressive readiness to consider alternative viewpoints. Good, productive working relationships among pupils and between pupils and the teacher are a feature of almost all English lessons. Pupils collaborate well in group and paired work, including mixed gender groupings, actively encouraged by teachers. Positive attitudes to learning are consistently promoted and achieved across both key stages and in the sixth form.
66. The teaching of English is good overall. It is most consistently good in the GCSE groups and the sixth form, where some very good and excellent teaching was also seen during the inspection. In one lesson in Key Stage 3, teaching was unsatisfactory. The most effective teaching is

characterised by tasks that are well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers skilfully and successfully balance whole-class teaching with paired, group and individual work to maintain the pace of lessons and challenge pupils to think for themselves. The majority of lessons, especially in Key Stage 4, also involve the good use of questioning, requiring pupils to build on their initial ideas by follow-up questions, such as, 'How do you know?' and 'Where is the evidence for that comment?' In some lessons, however, there is insufficient clarity about what pupils are expected to learn. Teachers' plans describe the aims for each lesson but these are set out in general terms and are rarely shared with pupils or used as the basis for reviewing what has been learned. The pupils themselves are then unsure where the work is leading or what skills they are developing. Given their level of motivation and the high expectations of most tasks set for them, this is a missed opportunity. Pupils are not being helped to recognise their achievements in order to raise further their own expectations of success.

67. The dual management of the department is effective. Both part-time heads of English have clearly defined individual as well as joint areas of responsibility in their job descriptions. It is a credit to both teachers that the arrangement works with such clarity and shared direction. The curriculum for English is broad, balanced and well planned. Schemes of work in Key Stage 3 show good links with the National Curriculum and provide a firm basis for further development of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, work is effectively planned to meet the requirements of examination courses. The development plan for English identifies appropriate priorities and provides a secure basis for evaluating the impact of developments over time. Teaching and learning are monitored but not enough use is made of the considerable teaching experience in the department through sharing the many examples of good practice. A more systematic approach to monitoring would ensure more consistent expectations and support further progress in implementing the national Key Stage 3 strategy from September 2001. The department has made a good start in this area through productive first-hand contacts with literacy developments in Key Stage 2.
68. Accommodation for English is satisfactory. A suite of departmental rooms is brightened by attractive wall displays that raise the status of pupils' work and add to the positive learning environment in the department. Resources are adequate for the department's current stage of development but the need for more culturally diverse texts has yet to be fully addressed at Key Stage 3. Although there are some impressive examples of work produced by word-processor or desktop publishing, the use of information and communication technology remains underdeveloped in English lessons.

Drama

69. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils achieve standards consistent with national expectations. They can sustain a role and use drama techniques such as 'hot-seating' and 'tableaux' to reflect upon and present experience. They also demonstrate good evaluative skills. The percentage of candidates obtaining A* to C grades in the 2000 GCSE examination was below the national average. This can be partly explained by the wide ability range amongst the pupils involved, especially in Year 11. In lessons, pupils across this ability range make satisfactory progress in building and reflecting upon character and situation, using a range of theatre skills. In the sixth form, students achieve results consistent with their previous attainment in the subject. The standards of performance in pieces devised for the final assessment at AS level confirm that the range of attainment in the examination is likely to be between grades C and E.
70. Teaching is satisfactory overall and it is good in the sixth form. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and manage practical work effectively. They also raise pupils' expectations of their work by sharing assessment requirements as a basis for self and peer evaluation. Pupils respond well to their teachers and their attitudes and behaviour in drama are good. They show interest, demonstrate purposeful working relationships in group tasks and show good listening skills in discussion and feedback. The management of the drama curriculum is effective in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In Key Stage 3, links with the English department are satisfactory in Years 8 and 9, where an additional lesson is used for drama. However, provision in

Year 7 is not so well planned or co-ordinated. Resources and accommodation are adequate for the specialist demands of examination courses.

MATHEMATICS

71. In 2000, fourteen-year-olds gained results that were above national averages for the National Curriculum tests by every measure. When compared with the results obtained by pupils from similar schools, the results were well above average. In the years 1997 to 2000, the end-of-Key Stage 3 results have been above the national average. Girls' results have improved more quickly than boys so that now boys' and girls' results are broadly similar. Over the same period, mathematics results have been lower than those achieved in English and science. The trend in recent years has seen attainment rising in mathematics at about the same pace as national results.
72. Up to the age of fourteen, pupils' mathematical skills show good improvement. The achievements of the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, are consistently good. Attainment is broadly in line with national norms when pupils join the school at the age of eleven and standards improve over the next three years, so attainment is above the expected level in Year 9. The work of many higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 shows them capable of reaching the highest levels in the coming summer's National Curriculum tests. They display good understanding of basic loci. They can solve simultaneous linear equations by graphical methods and deduce the equation of a straight line from examining its graph. Pupils of average ability are on line to reach the expected level or better. They solve quadratic equations by trial and improvement, answering to a given number of decimal places, and they can solve straightforward inequalities. Most are secure in their understanding of the angle properties of a triangle and of angles at a point. Lower-attaining pupils recognise number patterns and can state a rule for them, although not in algebraic terms. They measure accurately with a ruler and can use a protractor to draw angles to within a degree or two of accuracy. Basic numerical work is of a good standard.
73. The percentage of pupils obtaining A* to C grades in the summer 2000 GCSE examinations, combined with the results of pupils who entered a year early at age fifteen in 1999, were well above the average for all schools and for schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. Results in the GCSE examinations have risen year on year. Between 1996 and 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades has risen at a higher rate than that seen nationally. Boys performed better than girls in the year 2000 examinations.
74. The work of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is better than national norms and, in some cases, much better. All top set pupils take GCSE at the end of Year 10. Year 11 top set pupils then study the GCSE course in statistics. All look likely to achieve a good grade. Pupils in middle ability sets use Pythagoras' theorem and the trigonometry for right-angled triangles well. In algebra, they can use expanding brackets and factorise. They can draw up a table and a graph for cumulative frequency. Lower-attaining pupils can find the angles in a quadrilateral and know the sum of the angles in a triangle. They can multiply a bracket by a scalar accurately, but, in more complicated cases, do not always collect like terms to simplify their answers.
75. The number of students studying mathematics in the sixth form has risen over the last three years so that 19 or 20 are now regularly entering for the A level examinations. Results, however, lag behind national averages. Standards in the work seen in the sixth form were below national norms. In mechanics, all but the lowest attainers have a satisfactory understanding of vector algebra and projectiles. In the elements of pure mathematics, students show reasonable facility with basic differentiation and stronger candidates are comfortable with product and quotient rule also. Integration, particularly integration by parts and by substitution, is not well understood by any other than the highest-attaining students. In statistics, most cope with Boolean algebra for probability and deal easily with frequency histograms. They are less confident in recognising the difference between permutations and combinations.

76. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress up to the age of sixteen. The use of the 'Successmaker' computer programme for Year 7 pupils plays a part in this progress. Good support from classroom assistants, as well as teachers, is also a feature. Those few pupils learning English as an additional language also do well. Gifted pupils have a special programme involving extended tasks and make very good progress up to Year 10. Pupils who are not making the progress expected of them in the early years in the school are closely monitored and given extra support. Sixth form students' achievement over the two years on the course is unsatisfactory, in spite of good teaching. They show surprising weakness in fairly basic algebraic manipulation in Year 12, given that there are very few who begin the courses with less than a C grade at GCSE. All progress with their algebra but there are still weaknesses evident in Year 13 when integrating and when manipulating trigonometric equations to show identities.
77. The arrangements for more able pupils to follow an accelerated course and take GCSE a year earlier than usual are successful up to a point. Last summer, for instance, all of these pupils gained a grade B or better. However, this policy also contributes to the decline in progress and attainment in the sixth form. To take the whole of Year 11 to study for a further GCSE in statistics is not the best use of valuable curriculum time for those who are to continue with their study of mathematics. Examination grades in statistics are high but too easily attained. The outcome is that the most able students begin their A-level work in Year 12 with weaker basic skills than they had twelve months previously and a higher opinion of these skills than is justified. An indication of this is that those who begin on the course direct from GCSE are achieving better than many of those who were ahead of them mathematically 12 months before.
78. Teaching is good at every stage. In none of the lessons seen was teaching rated as unsatisfactory. The teachers set high standards for the pupils and, in the main, they organise lessons so that pupils learn well. Teachers manage the pupils well so that little time is wasted. The contribution made by learning support assistants is effective. Not enough use is made of teaching aids, such as overhead projectors. Teachers' work on the board is usually of a high standard but it lacks the pace of delivery and quality of presentation that can be achieved with an overhead projector, for example, when demonstrating transformations or drawing graphs. Teachers provide very helpful and clearly written sheets of notes that aid learning and understanding. They work very hard to ensure that pupils understand mathematical concepts and techniques but often provide too much information, rather than encouraging pupils to discover answers and formulate hypotheses for themselves. Too little time was spent on discussion and reflection in almost all of the lessons seen in the main school. The outcome is that, when they arrive in the sixth form, too many of the pupils lack the confidence and ability to think and speak for themselves.
79. Behaviour and attitudes to work are always satisfactory and generally good. Pupils concentrate hard when listening and when completing written and graphical work. This good behaviour is, to a large extent, a response to good teaching and, where teaching is not so good, standards of behaviour are not quite so high. Relationships in the classroom are good and this contributes significantly to the progress made. The mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced. It covers all required elements of the National Curriculum with the exception of information and communication technology for Years 10 and 11. In these years, provision is inadequately addressed within the schemes of work and pupils' access to computers during mathematics lessons is very limited.
80. Departmental leadership is good. The acting head of department is fully capable of coping with the extra responsibility and is currently in her second spell of tenure, pending the recruitment of a new head of department. She is highly organised and is intent on raising standards in the classroom. The teachers' work is well supported by her classroom observations and feedback at least once a year, and usually more frequently. The newly qualified teacher is well supported and receives helpful and effective guidance. Regular weekly team meetings keep the teachers on course. Monitoring of the teachers' marking and record keeping is frequent and effective.
81. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved substantially in Key Stages 3 and 4. The difference between boys' and girls' achievement is no

longer significant. Numeracy skills are much improved. Teaching is consistently satisfactory or better and it is good in the sixth form. Pupils' attitudes to their work are much improved. Classrooms are now all close together so that communication and mutual support are much improved. Issues still not completely resolved are that there are still too few opportunities for pupils to talk about their mathematics and academic standards are still too low in the sixth form.

SCIENCE

82. The results of the 2000 national tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average, as they have been for the past four years. Attainment was well above average in comparison with schools having a similar percentage of free school meals. The overall trend in the results over time is similar to the national trend, although the school's levels of attainment are higher. Girls and boys achieve similar results, although boys' results have declined. This decline can be explained by staffing problems, which resulted in lower than average grades for a few lower-attaining pupils. As a result, the science department did not achieve the basic target for 2000, set by the headteacher, although it did achieve the target set for the higher-attaining pupils.
83. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the percentages of sixteen-year-olds awarded grades A* to C and A* to G were above the national averages in both double and single-award science. The percentage of pupils entered for the GCSE double-award science was much lower than the percentage of pupils entered in most other schools. After the last inspection, examination results have risen rose steadily. until 2000, when they fell. Within the school, pupils performed better in science than in other subjects. Girls performed slightly better than boys, mirroring the national picture. Higher-attaining pupils fulfil their potential in the GCSE examinations and this is an improvement since the last inspection.
84. At the time of the last report, many students in the sixth form did not reach the nationally expected levels in the A-level examinations. Initially, the science department improved results significantly in biology, physics and chemistry, with all students achieving a grade. However, results in the last two years have been affected by staff absences and by significant turnover amongst key A-level teachers. These factors have led to lower standards, particularly in the 2000 results. In comparison with national figures, students' attainment in A-level physics was close to the national average; in biology, it was below the national average and, in chemistry, it was well below the national average. There have been problems in staffing in both physics and biology. Students' attainment in all three subjects was below the predicted grades based on their prior attainment, particularly in biology and chemistry.
85. In Year 7, standards seen during the inspection were at the nationally expected level. In one lesson, some pupils were starting to use abstract ideas, using stationary objects to illustrate a balance of forces. In a group with lower-attaining pupils, most could predict that a spring would increase in length by adding more weights. A few knew the correct units for measuring mass and weight. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English, make good progress through the key stage and, by Year 9, standards are above those expected nationally. Higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of photosynthesis and are acquiring a good scientific vocabulary. They can draw accurate graphs and correctly interpret their results. A few gifted and talented pupils can use symbol equations and explain that the carbon dioxide given off during an experiment is an indicator of photosynthesis. One middle-ability Year 9 group are not working at the expected level and their understanding of indicators is not secure.
86. Pupils' attainment and achievement in some classes are affected by the absence of permanent teachers. Nevertheless, in spite of the staffing difficulties in Key Stage 4, the overall standards in written work and in lessons continue to be above the nationally expected level. Higher-attaining pupils can relate the structure of a plant cell to its functions. The progress and achievements of most pupils, at all ability levels, are good. They know the differences between mitosis and meiosis. Standards are high and achievement is good. Pupils in the middle-ability groups are working at the expected level and lower-attaining pupils can correctly answer a range of questions on energy and gravity. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in scientific enquiry is the

same as in other aspects of science, although it is comparative weakness in Year 9. Good use of correct scientific language extends pupils' language in most classes.

87. Attainment in A-level physics lessons is in line with national expectations in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students in Year 13 have sound understanding of electromagnetic induction and can use calculations appropriately. Year 12 biology students are developing relevant practical skills. A few understand that a locust uses environmental adaptation to maintain body temperature but not all have made this link. Students' knowledge and understanding are lower than expected but the head of department is taking action to improve their attainment. Year 13 biology students did not do not have a regular teacher for some weeks some lessons and, although their work is being marked, standards of attainment in some modules are below expectation. Attainment in Year 12 chemistry is close to expected level. Students can use a range of practical skills to carry out investigations into an unknown organic compound. In a Year 13 chemistry lesson, where only two out of the four students were present, attainment was below expectation. Students had a range of practical skills but they were not able to interpret their results accurately. The only student to complete the work was unable to spot the titration error and explain unexpected results.
88. The achievement of all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. Those with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets. Learning support assistants provide good in-class support and regularly record pupils' achievement in their individual targets. In spite of the problems in staffing, some pupils attend a science club for the gifted and talented and more attend revision classes after school. Many pupils enjoy science, particularly the practical work, which motivates them. Behaviour is generally satisfactory and most pupils behave sensibly. However, in a significant number of classes, particularly those with temporary and inexperienced teachers, some pupils do not behave well. There are a few groups with a high proportion of potentially disruptive pupils. If the teacher does not exercise sufficient authority in these groups, pupils go off task and this affects their own and others' learning. Attitudes in most sixth form classes are good. However, there are some students, particularly in Year 13 chemistry, who do not attend regularly or finish work.
89. Teaching of science is satisfactory overall. The well established teachers have good routines and procedures resulting in good achievement. However, during the period of the inspection, teaching and learning in a number of classes was disrupted by staff turnover and illness. The school has found it difficult to recruit permanent teachers. As a result, there are two temporary teachers and one on a short-term contract. The other two are daily supply teachers. This instability is adversely affecting learning and the quality of teaching and learning in some lessons in Key Stage 4 was unsatisfactory.
90. Most of the teachers are confident about teaching science and some are particularly good at providing illustrations to help pupils learn. For example, in a Year 10 additional science group, the teacher engaged the pupils' attention with a lively explanation and good question and answer technique. He was able to make a routine topic on plant structure interesting. In other lessons, teachers use a good range of teaching styles that help the pupils understand difficult ideas. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher provided a simple model, helping the pupils to understand that the electrons in a circuit are present in the wires and the battery provides the push to move them. In good lessons, teachers ensure that practical work is used to make the pupils think. For example, in a Year 12 physics lesson, whilst the students carried out practical work on specific heat capacity, the teacher made sure that they understood the underlying theory. As a result, students were stimulated and fully engaged in the work and their learning was good. Where practical lessons are focused only on skills, opportunities are lost for increasing knowledge and understanding. Where learning is good, teachers manage their classes well. In most lessons, teachers check that key ideas are understood before moving on. Teachers pay good attention to safety in lessons.
91. Weaknesses in teaching are associated with poor classroom management skills and a limited range of teaching approaches. This is particularly the case with lower-attaining pupils whose listening and learning skills are not well developed. Constant repetition can result in slow pace and pupils then become restless. Homework is set and marked, although there is some inconsistency

in the quality of marking. Not all pupils know what they should do to improve their work. For example, classwork was not marked for a Year 13 chemistry student and, as a result, she did not know how to improve her work and this is unsatisfactory. Pupils are aware of their National Curriculum levels, which give them an understanding of standards.

92. The science curriculum is broadly based and balanced and meets the statutory requirements. Provision for information and communication technology is improving and is planned for, but not all teachers make sufficient use of it in lessons. The school provides appropriate time for science and all pupils have access to a science subject. The placing of double science in the options means that a higher proportion of pupils than in most schools take single science. These pupils are then unable to study science courses for higher awards. In Years 9, 10 and 11, the provision for scientific enquiry is satisfactory. The new scheme of work provides sufficient opportunities for the teaching of the skills of scientific enquiry in Years 8 and 9 but pupils' work indicates little is done in practice. The department follows a clear policy on assessment and teachers use the results of assessment to place pupils in groups and to inform the teaching of the curriculum.
93. Leadership is good, with clear educational direction. The head of department finds out what is going on by monitoring teaching and test results by teaching groups. In spite of the day-to-day stress caused by constantly changing supply teachers, the head of department continues to monitor pupils' progress regularly. This is a good system. He has good records of how well all pupils are achieving and takes action when they are not working at the expected level. Records show that, in spite of all the staffing problems, pupils continue to make progress in most classes. Where progress is reduced by the lack of a regular teacher, the head of department runs revision classes after school.
94. There are adequate books and equipment but the department has unsatisfactory access to any networked computers. Teachers can book the school's facilities but, because of staffing problems, this has not been possible for all groups. Teachers are undergoing training in information and communication technology but its use in science is unsatisfactory. The technicians are efficient and effective and they provide very good support to the department.

ART AND DESIGN

95. In 2000, the results of teachers' assessments were in line with the national average and the inspection found that pupils in Year 9 are working at the levels expected nationally for their age. Pupils of all abilities in Year 9 can translate observational drawings of figures into three-dimensional sculptures using wire, card and cane. Higher-attaining pupils understand the connection between their work and the work of the sculptor Naum Gabo. The progress made by pupils, including English language learners and pupils with special educational needs, is satisfactory in all age groups. The standards being reached by sixteen-year-olds are close to those expected nationally. The results of the GCSE examination in 2000 were below the national average, although the downward trend in examination results over the last three years has been largely caused by a high turnover of staff. Now that the staff situation has improved once more, the department predicts improved results. This is supported by inspection evidence showing that attainment in Year 11 is close to the nationally expected standard.
96. Pupils of all abilities understand the importance of research as they prepare for the GCSE examination. Most of these pupils have visited galleries in London - some on their own initiative. They used these experiences well to inspire and inform their work and the value of these visits is demonstrated by the good quality of the work in their sketchbooks. The work of higher-attaining pupils, in particular, shows how much they have learned from the work of other artists. The art department organised a life drawing workshop provided by the Royal Academy and attended by gifted and talented pupils aged between eleven and sixteen. This has had clearly beneficial effects on the development of pupils' observational skills and self-confidence. In 2000, all the candidates entered gained passes in the A-level examination but, as the group was small, numbers cannot be compared with national figures. Students in the sixth form are working at an appropriate level for a pass grade. They demonstrate their technical skills in the sensitive handling of pencil to produce

high quality tonal drawings. In a life class, they used oil paint effectively to suggest folds of sumptuous fabric draped around the model.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory across the school. Teachers have good subject-specific skills that give them confidence in their knowledge base. They have high expectations, with the result that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are encouraged to try hard to reach their potential. A consistent approach within the department to classroom management ensures that pupils experience stability. Teachers are committed to working outside lesson time and pupils respond positively to this, extending their learning in a supportive environment. Work is marked with helpful comments informing progress. As a direct result of these approaches, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory in all age groups. They are polite and respectful, listening intently to teachers and answering questions thoughtfully. Many pupils return voluntarily to work at lunchtimes and attend the two-hour GCSE revision sessions after school. Relationships are good between pupils and staff, creating a warm and positive working environment.
98. There are a few areas of teaching that could still be improved. For example, teachers seldom make enough use of suitable visual material, such as large poster-size pictures, theme boards or more display on the walls, to stimulate and inform pupils and support classwork. There is too little evaluation at the end of lessons, so that progress is not always checked, good ideas and problems are not pointed out and shared with the group and opportunities for raising self-esteem through the praise of the peer group are sometimes missed.
99. Over the past four years, several changes in the staffing of the department have had a detrimental effect on attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. Short-term appointments have adversely affected continuity and progress. The range and complexity of the work that can be undertaken in Years 10 and 11 are limited by the lack of double periods, small rooms and a lack of adequate storage. Otherwise, the quality and quantity of resources are good, with an extensive collection of slides, books and equipment, including overhead projectors and a slide projector in each room. There are inadequate opportunities for staff and pupils to use information and communication technology.
100. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has drawn up comprehensive schemes of work that meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. These form the basis for the medium-term planning at departmental meetings, where each member of staff makes a contribution. The regular monitoring of teaching ensures consistency within the department, supports the sharing of good practice and focuses on areas for improvement. Pupils' work is regularly moderated to ensure consistent standards across all age groups. The rigour of teachers' planning for all abilities, especially in relation to literacy, is a strength of the department. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, are well supported or extended through the use of key words and writing frames and the use of a students' art handbook enables all pupils to work towards their potential.
101. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The curriculum has been thoroughly revised, the quality of teaching has improved, the working environment has been improved and standards are now satisfactory overall. In the sixth form, the size of teaching groups has increased and results in the A-level examinations have improved. Generally, pupils know more now about other artists and cultures is improved through the research carried out in their sketchbooks and the increased number of visits that have taken place to all major London galleries and to New York. The ways forward have been identified in the very good department development plan.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. Observation of lessons, teachers' assessments and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that, overall, standards in Year 9 are at about the nationally expected level. Pupils build up a folder of work for each module in a programme covering food studies, textiles, resistant materials, electronics, graphics and control technology. Folders provide evidence of how pupils have developed their ideas and planned their project work. Their achievement is generally satisfactory across Years 7, 8 and 9, although the quality and range of their work in graphics is a comparative weakness. Teachers

make some use of information and communication technology but patterns are irregular because of the limitation of equipment. By working in different media, pupils develop a range of practical skills that enable them to produce a variety of products. Standards of practical work are generally satisfactory, although pupils do not always take sufficient care with detail and finish. Teachers have focused attention on the development of a technical vocabulary and this is contributing to improvements in written work. Pupils are able, through the series of modules, to acquire knowledge and develop a range of skills that can be employed in the more open-ended work in the GCSE courses. Pupils are made aware of the assessment criteria and the measures they should take to improve their work. Teachers and pupils, including those with special educational needs, contribute to an assessment profile during each module and these details provide important information on progress and attainment.

103. Last year, the number of pupils gaining higher grades in the full course GCSE examination was close to the national average. Evidence from the inspection also indicates that attainment in Year 11 is about the nationally expected level across all the aspects of the subject. Work in Key Stage 4 is more focused and pupils may opt for one of four GCSE courses from food, textiles, graphics or resistant materials. These programmes make different demands on pupils but all use a common planning structure. Through a series of tasks and design assignments, pupils gain experience of producing well designed and made products. Manufactured and practical work is of a commendable range although, as in Key Stage 3, more emphasis is needed on presentation and finishing. Design folders provide evidence of pupils' work in generating and developing ideas leading to well designed products. The work is not presented to best effect, owing to the undeveloped quality and range of pupils' graphical techniques. Pupils are provided with clear outlines of their tasks, assessment criteria, timescales and the resource implications. This structured support has made an important contribution to the improvement of standards and progress is satisfactory. A range of skills in information and communication technology is used in design folders but problems of access to computers are a limiting factor.
104. There are only small numbers of students in the sixth form but they are developing individual styles of designing and they are working at an appropriate level for the courses being followed. They build on their interests and demonstrate a capacity for individual work. For example, two students in Year 13 have developed interesting and innovative solutions to local problems or issues.
105. Most pupils show interest and enthusiasm for their studies. Behaviour is generally satisfactory and pupils respond positively to the range of activities offered to them. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils with special educational needs are clearly identified by teachers. They receive effective support from learning support staff and make sound progress, as do pupils learning English as an additional language. Assessment profiles enable teachers to negotiate appropriate targets and progress is periodically reviewed. Pupils work within a structure so that they are clear about what is expected of them. Overall, these pupils are making satisfactory progress. Pupils observe codes of conduct in specialist rooms and attitudes towards work are generally positive. Health and safety matters are given priority and pupils adopt a sensible approach to using tools, equipment and machinery.
106. The quality of teaching is generally good and there are examples of very good teaching. The best lessons have pace, high expectations, structure and purpose and teachers demonstrate a high level of control and management skills. Teachers are hard working and they organise learning resources well. They use display to provide pupils with useful exemplar materials. Teachers operate a detailed assessment scheme that provides important information about progress and attainment. The assessment details enable teachers to track individual achievement and also to feed back to pupils. The team is supported by two experienced technicians who contribute a great deal to the smooth running of the department.
107. The department is led by an experienced and able teacher. Steady progress has been made since the last inspection, especially in raising standards. Accommodation has been refurbished but further upgrading is required. Some equipment is old and needs replacing and there is a need to improve provision for information and communication technology. Some improvements in electronics and control technology are necessary, requiring additional financial resourcing.

Documentation is sound and schemes of work are clear and detailed. Some health and safety issues need attention and the school is aware of these.

GEOGRAPHY

108. Teachers' assessments in 2000 showed that pupils' attainment towards the end of Key Stage 3 is above the nationally expected level. Evidence from the inspection confirms that this judgement was reliable. The results of the GCSE examination in 2000 were above the average for similar schools. Girls obtained better grades than boys. The results of the A-level examination in 2000 were good, although the percentage of students obtaining the highest grades was below the national average.
109. Standards of attainment in work seen in Year 9 were above the nationally expected level. Pupils understand about different energy sources and their location and how humans adapt the physical environment and resources to meet their needs. They understand the contrast between the rich and poor in the developing world. Higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 can use primary sources to generate hypotheses. For example, after reading letters from young people on both sides of the poverty divide, they responded intelligently to questions about the economics of the developing world. Lower-attaining pupils found this more difficult and focused appropriately on the presentation of the data. Higher-attaining pupils also understand the characteristics of suburban communities through the study of local settlement patterns and service locations.
110. Attainment is also above the nationally expected levels in Years 11 and 13. In Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress in their revision for the GCSE examination by planning how to interrogate a specialised website on the Internet. In their GCSE coursework, pupils made good progress by collating and analysing evidence from their fieldwork and drawing conclusions independently. They also showed good analytical skills when evaluating data about local transport patterns. Students in the sixth form can debate the effects of different types of mining and tourism on the environment, critically evaluating sources of evidence and using them in the discussion. Progress is good in all key stages and pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly when they have in-class support. Those who are learning English as an additional language also make good progress owing to the support they receive and the emphasis placed on language and literacy.
111. In all lessons, relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teachers know their pupils well and work hard with them. They frequently place pupils in groups so that they can support one another or to ensure an appropriate balance between boys and girls. Pupils respond well to this and work well together. Most pupils have positive attitudes to the subject, arriving at lessons with the correct equipment and some pupils attend the additional work sessions at lunchtimes and after school.
112. Teaching is consistently good. It was very good in almost half the lessons seen and one lesson was excellent. All teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, allowing them to time lessons well and ask probing questions. They challenge pupils to extend themselves and develop their knowledge. Frequent references to clearly displayed key words develop pupils' geographical language. Teachers employ a wide range of strategies to achieve their learning objectives. For example, in one excellent lesson, role-play was used to explore questions of poverty and wealth in the developing world. Teachers structure their lessons in ways that pupils understand and that assist learning. Previous work is quickly revised and lessons are summarised to prepare for the next lesson. Homework is always set. In the very good lessons, tasks are time-limited and extension work is provided for those finishing their work early. Teachers are not distracted from their work by minor difficulties and deal with them with minimum disruption to the lesson. Pupils' work is very well marked with evaluative comments that show ways of improving standards. Day-to-day assessment is a good feature of all lessons, informing students and teachers.
113. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met. Accommodation is adequate but rooms are dispersed around the school, complicating the management of the department and access to resources. Display is very good in all rooms and clearly related to the work being undertaken. Resources are good in all geography rooms. The library is well resourced with suitable texts. The

department has a clearly stated development plan that identifies the main issues but it has no financial costings and does not indicate when reviews will take place. The management structure of the department is unsatisfactory and it is not always clear who is responsible for taking decisions.

114. Teachers' understanding of human geography has improved since the last inspection through a specialist appointment. Boys' attainment in the GCSE examinations is improving, although it still remains as an issue in the development plan. Oral work in lessons is improving and the quality of teaching has improved. The school's timetabling means that pupils in Key Stage 3 do not have equality of access to geography.

HISTORY

115. In 2000, standards in the teachers' statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average and showed an improvement on the previous year's results. Boys and girls performed well but girls did significantly better than boys. In 1999, the GCSE results for history were below the average nationally but, in 2000, results from a similarly sized cohort were close to the national average. Girls achieved a higher average point score than boys in both years. Further consideration should be given to the appropriateness of the existing curriculum for pupils predicted to achieve grade D or less at the end of Key Stage 4. In 1999, results of the A-level examination were close to the national average and, in 2000, the average point score improved significantly to a point slightly above the national average. All candidates passed the A-level examination in 2000. The size of the A-level entry does not permit comparisons between the performance of boys and girls in either year.
116. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is around the level expected nationally. In the work seen during the inspection, overall standards remained at the national average through Key Stage 3. However, in some lessons, such as a Year 8 group discussing religion in medieval England or a Year 9 group researching World War 1, pupils showed good understanding of documents and well developed skills in interrogating their significance. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate speaking skills that are slightly below the national average, although higher-attaining pupils can confidently formulate and test hypotheses. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in acquiring knowledge and understanding despite weaker recording skills, particularly in lessons where learning support is provided. Satisfactory progress is made by pupils learning English as an additional language.
117. Pupils in Key Stage 4 become increasingly confident in the use of extended writing. They often learn from one another, although many activities emphasise individual work. In those lessons where a framework for collaborative working is established, such as revision strategies for dealing with end of module tests, learning is often accelerated. Pupils understand how to deal with documentary material effectively. Their recall of previous work, for example on South Africa and Russia, is generally satisfactory and sometimes good and overall standards in Year 11 are at the expected level. Pupils are prepared to persist with challenging work, such as analysing the meaning and context of political cartoons. Standards in the very small sixth form group are close to the level needed for a pass grade in the A-level examination.
118. Throughout both key stages, pupils' attitudes to learning are good and sometimes very good. Their concentration is usually high and pupils of all abilities are keen to do well, although they are sometimes unwilling to question staff in cases of difficulty, particularly in Key Stage 3. The general respect shown for others' opinions in all age groups was well illustrated in a sixth form lesson discussing the revival of Tory fortunes under Robert Peel and in a Year 7 class discussing the merits of the writings of Chaucer. Pupils rise to the occasion, even when their arguments are put under sustained challenge. The majority of pupils enjoy their historical studies and many would appreciate the possibility of more fieldwork and trips to deepen their understanding of the subject.
119. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and, sometimes, excellent and this promotes high standards. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good and their expectations are high, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Marking is of good quality and, generally, clear targets are set.

This results in pupils having a good grasp of how well they are performing. The most effective lessons, such as a Year 10 class dealing with twentieth century protest and civil rights movements, end with brief plenary sessions where pupils report back on their perceptions of what they have learned. The pace of lessons is good, particularly in Key Stage 4, and tasks are challenging.

120. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on developing the skills needed to do well in the external examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 but the breadth of the curriculum offered is rather narrow at Key Stage 3. In a minority of lessons, teaching is didactic, with insufficient involvement of pupils. This limits opportunities for pupils to feed back on what has been learned. Class control is occasionally unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 9. Teachers make particularly effective use of displays, adding their own gradings and comments so that pupils gain a better understanding of their expectations. They also provide pupils in Key Stage 4 with excellent guidance on how to answer questions.
121. The good leadership and management of the subject make a positive contribution to the education of pupils of all abilities. Documentation is focused and purposeful and regular, minuted departmental meetings produce clear outcomes and promote development. Staff development is good and the department is appropriately placed to develop the curriculum further. Enthusiastic leadership has resulted in history becoming a more popular option, particularly in the sixth form. However, teachers do not yet make full use of the increasingly wide range of performance data made available to them. Assessment is not sufficiently linked to an agreed profile of skills reflecting verbal and non-verbal attainment.
122. Schemes of work in Key Stages 3 and 4 are generally sound and support the school's policy of promoting appropriate spiritual, social moral and cultural education but those for the sixth form do not fully reflect the changes to the National Curriculum. Schemes of work generally lack sufficient guidance on teaching strategies and their link to effective learning. The school allocates insufficient time to history in Years 8 and 9 for pupils to make appropriate progress or for teachers to ensure that standards are maintained in line with national expectations. Information and communication technology is not used enough, limiting pupils' access to an appropriately balanced curriculum and to some important skills in investigation and in testing hypotheses.
123. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. In particular, standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the A-level examinations have improved. Teaching is now monitored more thoroughly, although the links between targets in the scheme of work, the teaching approaches adopted and learning outcomes are not always adequately explored, particularly in Key Stage 4. Extra-curricular enrichment is still poor in all age groups, limiting essential opportunities for pupils to learn history through their own experiences. This was a shortcoming identified by the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

124. Standards in information and communication technology across the school, including the current GCSE and in A-level computing groups, are generally below those expected nationally. Attainment and progress have been adversely affected by difficulties in obtaining qualified teachers, staff illness and the poor provision made for the subject across the curriculum. Information and communication technology is taught to all pupils as a separate subject in Year 7 but it is not timetabled in Years 8 and 9. GCSE and GNVQ courses are offered in Years 10 and 11 and the take-up rate is good, with approximately half of all students following the course. This year is the first time the GCSE full course has been offered. In the sixth form, all students have the opportunity to extend their capability in key skills lessons and approximately 20 students each year take A-level GCE computer science. Attainment in this group is close to the expected standard.
125. Although achievement in Year 7 is not satisfactory, there are signs in current work that show standards are improving. Almost all pupils readily log on to their own work files and organise and present their work well. For example, when designing headed notepaper, Year 7 pupils followed instructions carefully and learned how to use macros to personalise all their future work. Pupils'

ability covers a wide range. The minority who have had good previous experience of the subject and have access to computers at home are making better progress than the rest and their work is above the nationally expected level. Most of them are able to amend, add to and combine different forms of information from a variety of sources, using text and images appropriately. The best work shows good understanding of the software and an awareness of the intended audience. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress across the school. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English find the icons and graphical presentations that the software provides help them to understand the meaning of the various commands. A small minority of students in Year 9 are producing work of an exceptionally high standard, linking their work in this subject with work in English by designing a Web site for publishing their own poetry and the poetry of famous authors. However, the limited experiences available to pupils in Years 8 and 9 prevents better progress being made, as the vital link between Key Stages 3 and 4 is lost. This causes attainment at the end of the key stage to be below the nationally expected level.

126. Pupils in Year 11 are not reaching the nationally expected standards in information and communication technology through the work they are doing in other subjects across the curriculum. This is because they have too few opportunities for hands-on experience in other subjects, especially in the measuring, controlling and system-designing areas of the National Curriculum. Pupils in the GCSE and GNVQ groups reach higher standards, although only 50 per cent of them are expected to reach or exceed national expectations for these courses. All Key Stage 4 pupils follow a computer literacy and information technology course that provides opportunities for them to develop their skills. However, very few are interested in the commercial aspects of the course, which is presented in a way that allows for little individuality, creativity or investigation. Overall standards are below those expected for pupils at the age of sixteen.
127. Most sixth form students taking the A-level computing course show strong commitment to the subject. They have a good working knowledge of program design and structure. Their project work for small business applications shows awareness of commercial needs and of system requirements. The best work is complete, accurate and well presented. Over the past three years, results have approached the national average for A* to B grades and current work suggests a similar standard will be reached at the end of the year. All sixth-formers follow a course in key skills that covers a wide range of individual interests and software applications. Attainment on this course covers a wide range but most students do particularly well when using desk-top publishing software for the design of promotional material. Students use the Internet effectively to research and develop their ideas for a range of publicity materials, such as holiday brochures, musical reviews or entertainment leaflets. They integrate computer applications well and some show an innate flair for graphic design.
128. Generally, pupils behave well in the computer rooms and are eager to learn new skills. They enjoy their work and appreciate the improvements that have been made to the network and to the resources. Overall, the school's equipment is well used and respected. However, a few pupils in each year group, particularly in Year 10, show a lack of interest and negative attitudes. They find it difficult to concentrate and sometimes interrupt the learning of others.
129. Teaching is satisfactory overall and it was good or better in more than one lesson in every three seen. In the best lessons, work is extremely well planned, with informative worksheets and computer resources carefully prepared. Clear aims and objectives are set, with targets for completion, that motivate and challenge pupils' thinking. For example, in Year 7, pupils carefully followed a series of oral and written instructions that helped them to create a newspaper-style article about St Gregory, using text and images downloaded from the Internet. The management of pupils promotes high standards of learning and behaviour, the pace of lessons is good and constant questioning to guide and reinforce learning is most effective. All the teachers and the technical support staff have an enthusiastic approach and the individual tuition provided for pupils of all ages is of a high standard. Teachers do not always pay enough attention to National Curriculum levels when assessing work in lessons and so the tasks they set do not contain enough challenge. In some groups, teachers strike the wrong balance between whole-class teaching and individual

work and pupils lose interest and concentration when left to their own devices for too long. Too little use is made of evaluative summaries at the end of lessons.

130. Although continual improvements are made to schemes of work, reflecting recent educational initiatives, the full National Curriculum requirements are not being met in Key Stage 4. Pupils are not all taught how to use information and communication technology to measure and record and to control applications. For example, those pupils who have been allowed to drop design and technology do not have these opportunities. The schemes of work in Key Stage 3 plan for the use of information and communication technology in English, mathematics, science and design technology but, in practice, very few activities in these subjects involve working with computers or electronic equipment. However, these subject areas do make some limited contribution to assessments of attainment at the end of Year 9. Work in mathematics makes good use of commercial software to develop the skills of lower-attaining pupils but, apart from a little work in geography and the use of keyboards for composing in music, other subjects are contributing little. However, use of the Internet is developing well and pupils are beginning to word-process some of their homework. Overall, the use of this technology across the school is considerably underdeveloped. The lack of facilities in most teaching departments and insufficient learning and technical support are holding back developments. Many teachers are keen to develop their own skills and, although a great deal of training has taken place, further opportunities for training and development are still needed.
131. There is not a satisfactory structure for the management of the subject across the school. Long-standing issues have not been satisfactorily resolved. Assessment procedures need further revision. The co-ordination of pupils' work throughout the school and across subjects needs considerable further development. Comparisons with national standards and examination analysis are not used enough to guide curriculum planning.
132. Many of the concerns expressed in the last inspection report remain, although there are signs that standards are improving. There has been insufficient progress in curriculum development since the last inspection but the quality of teaching and learning shows some improvement. The subject is beginning to make a significant contribution to pupils' personal education and the development of study skills, particularly for the older students. There are some promising recent developments, such as the increasing use of the Internet for researching a wide range of subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

133. In 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the GCSE French examinations was below the national average and below the percentages achieved in 1999. In the 2000 German examination, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades was close to the national average and the proportion of pupils entered was double that seen nationally. This was an improvement on the previous year. Compared with the school's GCSE results in other subjects, pupils' performance in French and German is among the least successful. At A level, however, all the candidates entered for the French and German examinations obtained grades from A to D. Although the entry was too small to make any valid national comparisons, the results in both languages were an improvement on the previous entries in 1998 and they were among the most successful subjects in the school at that level.
134. At the age of sixteen and in the sixth form, the standards of work seen during the inspection were generally in line with national expectations or with the requirements of the courses being followed. In Year 10, German students listen to the language and respond appropriately, manipulate sentences and learn and remember new expressions. In Year 11, French students talk appropriately about events in the present, past and future. However, lower-attaining pupils guess answers and cannot form their own sentences in French or German. In Year 12, German students take part in high-level discussions and adapt and imitate language read in authentic German texts. Year 12 students understand and answer questions on texts written in French after the teacher has provided some explanation. In Year 13, standards in French are not in line with the expected levels. Students demonstrate a poor knowledge of basic grammar and do not manipulate the language with ease.

135. During the inspection, fourteen-year-olds were achieving standards that were broadly in line with national expectations in lessons and in their written work. In 2000, teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 showed that the percentage of pupils reaching national expectations was below the national average. In Year 7, French students talk about what they eat and understand and respond in speech and in writing with expressions used at the table at meal times. Pupils in Year 9 ask and answer questions in French about the clubs they belong to, the activities in which they take part and the clothes and equipment they need. In Year 8, German students quickly learn to tell the time and speak and write about their school day. A minority of pupils do not perform at the expected levels. They demonstrate no knowledge of basic structures and can only repeat single words.
136. In all age groups, achievement is satisfactory in the majority of cases and pupils make sound progress compared with their own prior attainment. Higher-attaining pupils, placed in 'express' sets, make good progress. They are quick to develop language skills, which they practise with increasing confidence. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and are usually well supported by both their teacher and the foreign language assistant. Pupils learning English as an additional language are making good progress. Pupils' attitudes towards learning a language and their behaviour in class are generally good or very good. Pupils generally show positive attitudes to their work, co-operate with their teacher and each other, behave sensibly and demonstrate motivation and enthusiasm. In the small number of cases where attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory, pupils are noisy and unable to sustain concentration for more than a few minutes at a time.
137. The quality of pupils' learning is, in most cases, directly linked to the quality of teaching. In the lessons seen, teaching was almost always satisfactory and, in just under half of the lessons, it was good or very good. Teachers' own good knowledge of the language, combined with the support of French or German assistants, provides a good model for pupils to imitate. In addition, clear, shared learning objectives, a variety of planned activities, a brisk pace, a sense of humour and the consistent use of the language being taught encourage learning for pupils of all abilities. The effective use of resources, appropriate homework to complement classwork and frequent opportunities for pupils to practise and manipulate language further combine to support progress. In a small number of cases, however, pupils' learning is unsatisfactory. This occurs when the teacher has insufficient competence in the language being taught, leading to a lack of confidence in the use of the spoken language. In these lessons, pupils are not given a secure framework within which to hear and practise good models of the language. Neither the purpose of the lesson nor the learning needs of the pupils are met and unclear explanation of language points, lack of pace and variety, inappropriate homework and poor classroom management further prevent pupils from making progress in their learning.
138. The department is well led and managed by a committed head of department who has established a system of monitoring teaching, marking and recording. An efficient system of assessment is based on a portfolio of examples of work representing different levels of attainment in different aspects of the subject and language assistants are deployed to good effect. However, the marking of written work lacks consistency and pupils have insufficient access to information and communication technology. There is also an unequal partnership between the French and the German sections of the department. The latter is more effectively led and managed and this has resulted in an improvement in the standards of attainment in German at both key stages, whereas French has declined. The school's recent policy, which releases certain pupils from the need to study a modern language in Years 10 and 11, has led to high numbers of pupils opting for other subjects. This is in breach of statutory requirements.
139. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Attainment in German is now comfortably in line with national expectations. The introduction of 'express' groups in both French and German and a better match of work to pupils' abilities ensure that higher-attaining pupils are challenged more appropriately. There are also more opportunities for pupils in higher sets to work independently and engage in extended activities.

MUSIC

140. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations in Year 9 and most pupils, in all groups, make satisfactory progress. Most pupils can play simple rhythms and melodies on keyboards. They can communicate their ideas about music and suggest ways of structuring their compositions. Pupils use simple musical terms, such as 'mode' and 'riff', and can describe the elements of music. They listen attentively to musical extracts and, with support from their teacher, are generally able to identify key features. There is a wide range of ability in this key stage and evidence of underachievement at both ends of the ability range. During the period of the inspection, no outstanding work from gifted and talented pupils was observed.
141. The number of pupils entered for the GCSE examination remains small, although there is evidence that recruitment to the subject may be gradually improving. In 2000, fifteen pupils were entered for the examination. All gained A* to D grades, twelve obtained A* to C grades and three gained an A grade. These results are above the national average and evidence from the inspection indicates that attainment in Key Stage 4 is above the standards normally expected nationally. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English language learners, make satisfactory progress across both key stages. Pupils are confident in practical work, particularly ensemble performance, and make constructive criticisms of one another's efforts. Their knowledge of musical terminology and historical periods in music is developing well and they can attempt simple analyses of form, instrumentation and texture in extracts played to them by their teacher. In both key stages, written work is varied and relevant in content but poorly presented.
142. During the inspection, there was only one music teacher in the school and her teaching was good. She is well qualified and enthusiastic, with considerable skill in composition. She is able to motivate pupils well in lessons and her classroom management is good. Consequently, the quality of learning is good. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the demands of the subject and take up the challenges in listening and appraising music that are offered by their teacher, becoming actively involved. They work well in small groups and pairs on composition and ensemble performance and they sing enthusiastically in class. In one lesson, lower-attaining pupils did not make satisfactory progress because tasks had not been matched to their abilities and learning was not supported by visual aids. Spelling mistakes are not always corrected and the teacher's comments do not always provide guidance on future development. Displays of pupils' work are not situated in the best place to celebrate pupils' achievements or to facilitate further learning. Pupils learning a musical instrument are well supported by competent and experienced peripatetic staff. These teachers are not used in the classroom, where they could enrich the pupils' experience and motivate a greater take-up of instrumental lessons.
143. Schemes of work are sound, with appropriate content for both Key Stage 3 and GCSE music, including consideration of a wide variety of different music from around the world. Good use is being made of the schemes produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the teacher is developing her own methods of assessment while also monitoring closely the changes in assessment procedures for Key Stage 3. The curriculum has not been adequately adapted to maximise opportunities for the less able or the gifted and talented. Music is not a feature of morning worship and the extra-curricular provision consists only of a small keyboard club. This lack of opportunity for the further development of skills and experience in performance is a weakness in provision. In a few groups, the pupils are involved in assessing their own work but this approach is not used enough to monitor progress.
144. Resources are good. There is a generous supply of up-to-date electronic keyboards in addition to acoustic musical instruments but, at the moment, only those pupils following the GCSE course have access to computers. Accommodation is satisfactory and significant recent improvements include the sound-proofing of one of the rooms. However, the school does not have a recording studio or a similar facility that would significantly improve the coverage of information and communication technology in the subject and provide opportunities for more diverse music-making.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

145. Standards in lessons in Years 7 to 9 are broadly in line with national age-related expectations and are similar to those seen at the time of the last inspection. By the time they are fourteen, the majority of pupils are on line to achieve appropriate levels for their age. It was not possible to see any lessons for the non-examination groups in Year 11 but the majority of pupils in the Year 10 groups reach the nationally expected standards. There are no significant differences between the attainments of boys and girls. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language and the more talented or gifted pupils make good progress. Those with special educational needs make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Year 10.
146. By the age of fourteen, girls demonstrate good group balances in gymnastics and are developing their sequence work to incorporate these. In their basketball lessons, however, many still have a tendency to use netball techniques when shooting and defending in small-team games. In hockey, boys have secure basic skills and techniques and are developing their tactical awareness in small-team games. A lack of self-discipline means that some are not reaching their potential in the quality of sequence work they produce on the trampoline. By the end of Year 10, boys' hockey skills have improved further but few have learned to adapt their grip to suit different passing techniques. Girls' all-round hockey skills and techniques are secure but their tactical awareness in small teams still needs improvement. Boys in Year 10 are beginning to improve the complexity of their sequence work on the trampoline, whilst girls are enthusiastically coming to grips with the skills required for association football.
147. Across Years 7 to 10, pupils have a secure understanding of why they should warm up thoroughly. They understand the principles and are developing a repertoire of techniques and exercises so that they do well when given the opportunity to lead their own warm-up sessions. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and integrated and make good progress, although none was seen receiving additional help during lessons. Those learning English, including pupils at the early stages, achieve well. The overall challenge offered in lessons ensures that the most physically able and talented make good progress.
148. Since 1998, the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations has improved and, in 2000, it was broadly in line with the national average for all maintained schools. These results show satisfactory progress in relation to the same pupils' prior attainment at fourteen. It is not possible to comment on differences between boys and girls because so few girls took the GCSE course. In their practical GCSE lessons, Year 11 pupils have made secure progress, for example developing their competencies in rounders. In theory lessons, however, pupils' progress is more variable. In some areas, such as the knowledge and understanding of anatomy and physiology, it is unsatisfactory. A scrutiny of a sample of Year 10's GCSE theory folders indicates that pupils are being taught in a structured and purposeful way and are, therefore, making good progress.
149. Over the last three years, there has been a 100 per cent pass rate for those small groups of sixth form students following the GCE Advanced level physical education course and, in 2000, two of the four students achieved 'A' grade passes. In their lessons, the present small group of Year 13 students is making satisfactory progress in most areas of the course except for applied anatomy and physiology, where their progress is less secure. Standards are at the appropriate level. In their practical lessons, the small group of Advanced Subsidiary students are successfully developing their knowledge and understanding of performance analysis through volleyball.
150. Over the past seven years, students in Year 12 have been offered the option of following the community sports leaders award course. Although there are no formal records kept as to the numbers starting and completing the course, the pass rate has always been 100 per cent. In 2000, nine students started the course and seven went on to become accredited. This year, seven students remain from the original thirteen who started. Timetable arrangements are not helpful in that the course is run at the same time as the Advanced Subsidiary physical education course and so students cannot follow both.

151. The quality of teaching is good overall, maintaining the standards found at the last inspection. The structure of practical lessons and the use of a variety of planned activities are indicative of teachers' overall good knowledge and understanding of the activities being taught. This range of activities helps to ensure pupils and students are motivated, as well as offering challenge through, for example, paired and small group work. Teachers provide clear introductions to lessons as well as very effective demonstrations, ensuring that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are aware of what is expected of them and what they have to do to make progress. This was particularly effective in a Year 7 girls' netball lesson and, in a Year 8 boys' trampoline lesson, effective questioning helped to highlight appropriate terminology as well as improving pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils are made aware of their capabilities in practical lessons because teachers circulate well and offer praise and constructive criticism throughout.
152. In most lessons, the majority of pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers in terms of discipline, behaviour and effort. Their positive attitudes, good relationships and generally very good behaviour help promote a positive learning atmosphere in lessons, thus enabling good progress to be made. In Year 8 and 9 girls' gymnastics lessons, for example, all were fully involved in aspects of planning, performance and evaluation. This deepened their knowledge and understanding and enabled them to improve the quality of their work by the end of the lesson. However, there are a few shortcomings in the teaching. On occasion, particularly in games lessons, there is insufficient opportunity for peer evaluation and coaching because of the task-based structure of the lesson. Sometimes, at the end of practical lessons, teachers tend to do all the evaluation rather than extend pupils' thinking and analytical skills by asking them for their views about their progress and how they might improve further. On a few occasions, such as whole-group introductions and demonstrations or coaching and evaluation sessions, pupils are not fully involved. Progress is sometimes adversely affected. For example, the quality of marking and the guidance and structure given are not always consistent and, in the GCSE theory course, work is not always matched to the full ability range of the pupils. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher did not sufficiently challenge the behaviour of rude laughter and negative comments from a group of Year 9 boys in a trampoline lesson. Moreover, This behaviour, directed at the efforts of their classmates, compromised safety because members of the group were not concentrating on their role as spotters.
153. It is difficult for the school to meet The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not fully meet statutory requirements in Key Stage 3 because the school of difficulties in using it can no longer use the local playing fields. Time allocations vary for different teaching groups in these years and boys and girls do not have the opportunity to follow the same curriculum. The department has yet to review grouping arrangements to ensure that all pupils in Years 7 to 9 follow the same curriculum. The new National Curriculum assessment levels for physical education have been introduced and pupils are aware of what they have to do to achieve them. The course offered to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 does not fully meet statutory requirements. The structure of the curriculum is different in both years and time allocations in these years vary for different teaching groups. and two in-depth activities are not fully taught. However, the curriculum in the present Years 10 and 11 is strengthened by the provision of the GCSE course and there are opportunities for students to follow accredited courses in the sixth form. The school is not offering the GCSE physical education course to next year's Year 10. A range of extra-curricular activities, including inter-school competitive fixtures and recreational activities, enriches pupils' learning experiences. As a result of this provision, two boys have achieved representative honours at borough level and three at county level in association football. Boys and girls' teams have been successful in the borough cross-country championships. Nevertheless, extra-curricular provision is not the strength it is in many other schools.
154. The quality and range of accommodation are is poor and, despite the best efforts of the teachers, this significantly limits the capacity to improve further. Indoor accommodation is limited, as is on-site hard surface teaching space. The quality of the surface of the public areas used next to the school is unsatisfactory. The boys' changing room, next to the small gymnasium, has no showers and is too small for the number of pupils arriving for lessons. Boys' dignity and self-esteem are offended by having to change in the gymnasium itself. Day-to-day leadership and management remain are effective. on a day-to-day basis but longer-term developments are hampered by school's

overall timetable and curriculum policies. Some teachers have other whole-school responsibilities that reduce the commitment they can give to physical education. Consequently, despite the best efforts of the department, but overall improvement overall since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.