

INSPECTION REPORT

FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Bristol, Avon

LEA area: Bristol

Unique reference number: 109290

Headteacher: Mrs Nicola McAllister

Reporting inspector: Dr Kenneth C Thomas
3390

Dates of inspection: 10 – 14 January 2000

Inspection number: 185515

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Fairlawn Road
Montpelier
Bristol

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Reverend Dilwyn Edwards

Date of previous inspection: 25 September 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Kenneth C Thomas	Registered inspector	Business studies	What sort of school is it?
			What should the school do to improve further?
			How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements.
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Ann Taylor	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development?
		Special educational needs	How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
John Brigden	Team inspector	Art	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Ian Cleland	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Janet Flisher	Team inspector	English	
		Drama	
		English as an additional language	
John Forster	Team inspector	Music	
Rick Fuller	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mark Gill	Team inspector	Geography	
Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector	Religious education	
Anthony Pearson	Team inspector	Physical education	
Clive Potter	Team inspector	Design technology	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	16
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	22
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	23
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	26
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	28
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	33

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fairfield High School is an 11 - 16 mixed comprehensive school. The school draws most of its pupils from the culturally and socially diverse districts of Montpelier, St Paul's, Easton and St Werbergh's in the city of Bristol. At the time of the last inspection the school had a very small and uneconomic sixth form. The sixth form was discontinued in 1998 and the last sixth form students left the school in 1999. Although the number of pupils in the school has risen since the last inspection, the total number of pupils is 482, which means that the school is much smaller than most secondary schools. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, at 58 per cent, while high in comparison with the national average, is representative of local communities: most of these pupils come from Pakistani or black Caribbean or Indian backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language, at 24.6 per cent is also high. The school is in receipt of additional funding through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant or Local Education Authority to provide additional language support for 20.5 per cent of pupils. This is a substantial increase since the last inspection when it was about five per cent. The attainment of pupils coming into the school is wide-ranging and, in most years, below the national average, overall. The proportions of pupils identified as having special educational needs, at 30 per cent, and those with statements, at 2.5 per cent, is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, at 37.4 per cent, is above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fairfield High School provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Standards of attainment are well above average in comparison with similar schools and the school has a rising roll. The quality of teaching is satisfactory as is the quality of leadership and commitment to school improvement. Governors and school staff create a very positive school ethos within which relationships are harmonious and pupils from different ethnic groups feel secure and well supported. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment are well above those in schools with similar intakes.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to school and to their learning.
- The school provides an environment in which pupils feel valued and where relationships are harmonious.
- In valuing the rich cultural diversity of its community, the school fosters a respect for the beliefs, values and traditions of others.
- Pupils' learning and personal development is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities from which many pupils benefit.
- Provision of work-related education and careers guidance is good.
- The governing body is very supportive and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

What could be improved

- The changed roles and responsibilities of some key staff are not clearly defined; this leads to a lack of clarity and understanding of their function.
- The school development plan, in its current form, is not a useful working document. It is too detailed and does not focus enough on how standards can be improved.
- The current system of monitoring and evaluation is not sufficiently developed to enable the school to plan for sustained improvements in teaching.
- Nine per cent of lessons are unsatisfactory and there are weaknesses in the teaching of science and design and technology.
- Insufficient use is made of pupils' assessment information to improve curriculum planning.
- There are inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work and pupils are not always provided with adequate guidance about what they need to do in order to improve the quality of their work.
- There are weaknesses in the co-ordination and management of special educational needs; and in the deployment and use of special educational needs and English language support teachers in

lessons.

- School reports do not provide parents with clear information about the standards achieved by their children and the progress they are making.
- Provision of information communication technology does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected 25-29 September 1995 and has made satisfactory progress since then. Standards of attainment in end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests have improved at a rate that is consistent with the national trend and GCSE results show improvement over the past two years after a period of decline. There is now more stability in the school's management and the quality of teaching has improved. The attendance rate has improved and the number of exclusions has decreased. The school has established a comprehensive record of pupils' assessment information, which is being analysed to provide useful information on differences in performance between groups. The school is more cost-effective as a result of the disbandment of the small and uneconomic sixth form.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key Stage 3 tests	E	E	D	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	D	E	D	A	

Overall attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 was below average, compared with all schools nationally, and well above average when compared with similar schools. Results in English and mathematics while below the national average were better than in science, where they were well below average. When compared with similar schools, mathematics results were very high, English results were well above average and science results were above average. Overall end of Key Stage 3 test results in 1999 were improved over those in 1998.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes to school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is evident in most lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school generally is satisfactory. Most pupils are good-natured and helpful to visitors. However, there are a minority of pupils who have difficulty in sustaining concentration and whose behaviour can be especially challenging in lessons.

Personal development and relationships	The good quality of the relationships amongst all groups is a strength of the school. Pupils work and play in harmony and display a high level of respect for the values and beliefs of others. This has a positive effect on pupils' personal development.
Attendance	Much improved and satisfactory overall.

The majority of pupils are well motivated and keen to learn, both in school time and extra-curricular activities. They contribute well to the life of the school through drama productions, performing music and in sports activities.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	N/A

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 91 per cent of the lessons and slightly better at Key Stage 4, where just over a half of lessons were good or very good, than at Key Stage 3, where about one third of lessons were good or very good. There are, however, examples of excellence in teaching in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3. Teaching is unsatisfactory in 9 per cent of lessons at both key stages. The overall quality of teaching in English is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In mathematics it is good at both key stages and in science it is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. A lack of challenge is associated with unsatisfactory teaching in science in Key Stage 3 and in design and technology in Key Stage 4. Unsatisfactory teaching in history at Key Stage 3 is linked to inadequate lesson planning. There are weaknesses in the marking of pupils' work and the use of assessment to guide lesson planning in English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and business studies. Many pupils do not know the standards they are attaining in terms of National Curriculum levels and GCSE examination grades. Teachers are generally competent in the teaching of basic skills not only in English and mathematics but also in other subjects of the curriculum. Homework is generally well used to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory and enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. Co-ordination is poor and the expertise of support teachers is not always used to best effect in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Good support provided by the ethnic minority achievement support team but effectiveness lessened by a lack of use of support teachers' expertise in lesson planning in some subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory with some good features, particularly in the appreciation of the richness of cultural diversity. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory with few structured opportunities provided in subjects other than religious education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils. Awareness of health and safety, and child protection is satisfactory. However, insufficient use is made of assessment information to help pupils improve.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all subjects other than information technology. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 builds upon good links with the primary schools. Although a broad core curriculum is provided at Key Stage 4 it does not include vocational courses. This restricts opportunities for pupils suited to these types of courses. Link courses are being developed with a local college of further education in order to broaden the range of courses available. Provision for careers guidance and work experience is good. Strategies led by the English and mathematics departments have helped standards of literacy and numeracy to improve. Provision for pupils with special education needs lacks co-ordinated planning and there is a lack of understanding on the part of subject teachers of the role of ethnic minority achievement support teachers in the classroom. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. The school has satisfactory links with most parents. However, the general level of involvement of ethnic minority parents in the life of the school is low.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and improved since the last inspection. However, there is a lack of clarity in some key management roles and the co-ordination of special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil most of their statutory responsibilities. They have a strong commitment to the school and a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school engages in regular reviews both by members of the senior management team and the LEA. The school development plan is too detailed and objectives are not sufficiently focused on raising standards.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes satisfactory use of its resources and provides satisfactory value for money.

The headteacher provides a clear educational direction for the school and this has a positive effect on the school's ethos. There is a spirit of teamwork amongst all staff and harmonious relationships between pupils of different ethnic origins and between pupils and adults. This provides a supportive learning environment and one in which there is equality of opportunity for all. The new functions of pastoral heads who have been given additional responsibilities for monitoring pupils' academic progress are not well understood by all staff. There is also a lack of understanding of the roles of the ethnic minority achievement support co-ordinator and support teachers on the part of subject teachers. The overall quality of management provided by subject co-ordinators is satisfactory with examples of good management in design and technology and physical education. However, there is a need for subject co-ordinators to be more involved in the review and evaluation of teaching and for more rigour in management in science. The management and co-ordination of special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Governors have a clear understanding of these weaknesses. The governing body is generally effective and supportive and meets most of its statutory responsibilities. The annual income per pupil is above the national average for schools of similar size as a consequence of additional LEA support for small schools and of additional income received to support the large proportions of ethnic minority pupils and pupils with special educational needs. This income is used for the purposes intended and the school applies the principles of best value in all spending. The overall provision of resources is satisfactory although there are some shortages in science. The school library is well-resourced and well used. The deployment of non-specialist teachers in some areas of design and technology has an adverse effect on teaching and learning. Space is at a premium, particularly for music, drama and physical education which limits learning opportunities.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That children like school. • The progress their children are making. • That the school is approachable. • The ways in which the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. • The teaching their children receive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • More information on how their children are getting on. • Extra-curricular activities. • Involvement of parents. • Behaviour.

There is a good measure of support for the school from parents and inspectors endorse parents' positive views. There is a need for the school to provide parents with more detailed information on the standards their children are achieving and the progress they are making, in school reports. Some parents had mixed feelings about homework and extra-curricular activities: inspectors found homework to be generally well used and a good range of extra-curricular activities in which substantial numbers of pupils participate. The school makes strenuous efforts to involve parents and many respond positively. Inspectors found behaviour both in lessons and around the school generally to be satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are taken together, pupils' attainment in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, was below the national average. Pupils are attaining slightly higher standards in English and mathematics than in science, where standards are well below average. However, in comparison with similar schools overall attainment in the core subjects in 1999 was well above average. Again there are differences between subjects. Although attainment in science is above average in comparison with similar schools, attainment in English is well above average and attainment in mathematics is very high. Examination of results over the past four years shows that although there is a tendency for girls to outperform boys in English there is no consistent tendency in mathematics and science, where boys outperformed girls in two years and girls outperformed boys in the other two years. The average National Curriculum tests points score for all core subjects shows a rising trend over the last four years that is broadly in line with the national trend. Work in English and mathematics at this key stage is a strength and this is reflected in the National Curriculum test results over the last four years. Following a decline in 1997, results in English have risen sharply over the past two years, while results in mathematics show a sustained improvement, at a faster rate than that observed nationally, over the period from 1996. Standards in science are below those attained in English and mathematics and show a decline between 1996 and 1998 before rising in 1999. Work in art, design and technology food and textiles, information technology, music and physical education is also a strength at this key stage with achievement in these subjects broadly in line with national expectations. Achievement in other subjects is below expectations. There are no consistent differences in performance between ethnic groups and pupils with special educational needs are generally achieving satisfactory standards.
2. The 1999 results in the GCSE examination taken at the end of Key Stage 4, at the age of 16, show that 37 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A* - C grades compared with the national average of 46 per cent and 80 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A* - G grades compared to 91 per cent nationally. There has been an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades over the past four years, but a decrease in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-G grades. The average total GCSE points score per pupil shows a decline from 1994 to 1997 before rising in 1998 and 1999. As a consequence the trend in the average points score per pupil was below the national trend. Although the average points score of boys was higher than that of girls in 1999, the general tendency is for the average points score of girls to be higher than that of boys. Standards in English have shown an improvement over recent years. In 1999 boys achieved higher standards than girls, which is against the national trend. There are no significant differences between boys and girls currently in Key Stage 4. Pupils from different ethnic groups attain broadly similar standards and Asian girls attain higher standards than they do nationally. Standards in mathematics, although below the national average, showed a significant improvement in 1999. Boys achieved higher standards than girls in 1999 and the performance of girls in mathematics, relative to their other subjects, has been significantly lower for the last three years. The percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* - C in science 1999 showed a sharp rise on the 1998 results to be broadly in line with the national average. Boys' performance is much better than girls' and overall, ethnic minority pupils do not perform as well as white United Kingdom heritage pupils. Standards in art have been maintained to be generally in line with the national average. GCSE results in food technology have been above the national average for the last two years. However, in graphic products, whilst there was a slight improvement in 1999 over the 1998 results, the results remain well below national expectations. The results in GCSE resistant materials over the last two years have been poor with only 5 per cent of entries achieving A*-C grades.

3. Although GCSE results in geography have been improving over the last three years, in 1999 they were below those gained at the time of the last inspection. Performance in the GCSE examination is below the average of other subjects in the school and well below the national average with the performance of girls below that of boys. Similarly, GCSE results in history have also been improving over the last three years but are below those gained at the time of the last inspection. The attainment of boys and girls at Key Stage 3 is similar but by Year 11 that of the girls falls significantly behind and their performance in the GCSE examination is significantly weaker. There are no GCSE examination entries in information technology. However, inspection evidence indicates that standards of attainment are broadly in line with expectations at the end of the key stage with no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls or between ethnic groups. The school has established an information technology Certificate of Competence covering word processing and spreadsheets. During a recent test all Year 11 pupils secured a pass in both areas. GCSE examination results at the higher A*-C grades in both French and Spanish were well below the national average in 1999, although an improving trend in Spanish was maintained. In both languages boys did better than girls. There are differences in performance between ethnic groups with white pupils tending to achieve higher standards than others. The decline in French results compared to 1998 was largely due to a sharp deterioration in the performance of girls. The small numbers of pupils taking the GCSE examination in music in recent years have all achieved A*-C grades. Inspection evidence indicates that current Year 11 work is of a similarly good standard. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in physical education in the 1999 GCSE examination was similar to that found nationally. Results have improved year on year since 1997. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls or between pupils of different ethnic origin. Attainment in the GCSE religious education examination in 1999, as in the previous year, was slightly below the national average, although less than a dozen pupils are entered for the full GCSE examination in any year. Inspection evidence indicates that the standards of pupils currently in Key Stage 4 are generally in line with national expectations.
4. Although there is wide variation in pupils' standards of attainment on entry to the school with some pupils attaining standards that are well above average, the standards of attainment of a large number of pupils are below and well below average with the consequence that overall standards of attainment on entry are below average. Comparisons of pupils' average end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum points scores with those obtained at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show that pupils' attainments are in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 3 in English and mathematics, but just below in science. Comparisons of pupils' average end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum points scores with average GCSE points scores show that pupils' attainments are broadly in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. Those who are proficient in English achieve appropriate standards in lessons and in Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. Pupils who enter the school with little or no prior knowledge of English quickly acquire a functional level of language because of the very good teaching and support they receive from the ethnic minority achievement support team. In mathematics and science pupils who have English as an additional language receive good support from their fellow pupils which increases their rate of progress.
5. The school is at an early stage in the process of developing cross-curricular approaches to the teaching of literacy skills. Most pupils are able to read the materials presented to them in lessons and they are given plenty of opportunities to read both silently and aloud, for enjoyment and for information in several different subjects. Writing skills are less well developed. Some teachers use key words to equip pupils with subject specific terminology but few departments systematically teach the specific styles of writing that pupils need for success in that subject. The school has begun to address these and other related issues and is moving towards the development of a school literacy policy.
6. The strong emphasis on number work in mathematics lessons, particularly in Year 7 and Year 8, ensures that pupils of all levels of attainment can use their knowledge appropriately in other subjects across the curriculum. At Key Stage 3 mathematical skills such as the measurement of length and weight, calculation of volume and density, graph work and the use of scales, are applied competently in science, design and technology and geography. Data handling skills,

the use of data bases and graphical representation, including pie charts and tally charts are regularly used in a range of subjects. In physical education personal fitness measurements are made but there is no use of graphical representation of the results obtained. Effective use is made of mental arithmetic skills throughout the key stage. At Key Stage 4 in science the use of numerical skills increases to include percentages, speed and derived units such as ohms; graph work is extended to lines of best fit and patterns in data. In some subjects lower attaining pupils leave more complex calculations and graphical work and are not always required to complete unfinished work. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs do not include numeracy targets and there is no procedure for assessing the numerical skills of these pupils. The school is considering how a school numeracy strategy could offer additional support for the development of numerical skills in all subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. The attitudes of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are generally good. Almost all of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that their children enjoy coming to school and this is evident in most lessons. The majority of pupils show that they are keen to learn and make good efforts to achieve their learning goals. In mathematics, for example, pupils are attentive to teachers' explanations, as in a Year 7 lesson, where pupils showed interest and enjoyment in estimating areas. Pupils are prepared to discuss their work in order gain greater understanding, as in a Year 11 lesson where well focused discussion between pupils led to the formulation of a general algebraic rule. In art, in Key Stage 4, pupils are keen to ask questions about the tasks that they are set and what is expected of them. They listen carefully to learn about the progress that they are making and how to improve their work. Enthusiasm for the learning of a foreign language is demonstrated by the good number of pupils in Years 8 and 9 who willingly attend after-school sessions to start learning Spanish and many of these pupils take the language as a GCSE subject in Key Stage 4. Pupils' attentiveness and enthusiasm for new experiences is also evident in music where a Year 7 class listened with interest to traditional Chinese music and a Year 8 class to the music of the Baroque period. The enthusiasm of the pupils is also evident in the use that pupils make of the music department at breaks and after school when a significant number of pupils routinely use the resources of the department. In a minority of lessons pupils display unsatisfactory attitudes. In these lessons, small groups of pupils are not responsive and do little work. In a Year 7 geography lesson, for example, a small number of pupils, though willing to contribute to class discussion, were slow to settle to written work and were easily distracted, while the poor attitudes of a small group of pupils in a Year 9 history lesson were close to being disruptive to the whole lesson. Similarly, in a design and technology lesson in Year 11, a small number of pupils maintained a steady conversation while the teacher was outlining the lesson tasks. These circumstances are most likely to occur when the lesson tasks have not fully aroused pupils' interest.
8. The good quality of the relationships amongst all groups is a strength of the school. Pupils work and play in harmony and display a high level of respect for the values and beliefs of others. This has a positive effect on standards of attainment. The willingness of pupils to mix with and get to know other pupils is apparent in the use of randomly generated seating plans in the mathematics department. The department uses these plans to determine where pupils sit in lessons. The plans are changed from time to time and pupils accept the changes without fuss and the benefits are apparent in the good quality of relationships in lessons. The benefits of good quality relationships can also be seen in English, as in a Year 9 lesson where the good relationships provided pupils with the confidence to take risks in the volunteering of ideas in class discussion. Pupils co-operate well with each other when engaged in small group and collaborative work. This was evident in a Year 7 design and technology food lesson, for example, in which pupils were excited at the prospect of producing food in the next lesson and shared information with each other with enthusiasm. Also, in a Year 7 history lesson on the life of Julius Caesar, pupils worked well in small groups to produce the key facts of the lesson. Collaborative working is particularly evident when pupils share computers when large numbers attend the computer clubs during the lunchtimes and after school. The good quality of the relationships between pupils is particularly evident in the support that pupils provide for some of their fellow pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Some of these pupils

arrive at school with virtually no knowledge of the English language but are ably supported, not only by teachers, but also by their peers who translate for them and ensure that they become familiar with the school routines. Good relationships are not confined to the classroom and it is evident from the busy life of the very small playgrounds during breaks that all pupils mix well together in an atmosphere that is free from racism and sexism.

9. Overall standards of behaviour in lessons, and around the school generally, are satisfactory. Most pupils are good-natured and helpful to visitors, and pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons. However, there are a minority of pupils who have difficulty in sustaining concentration and whose behaviour can be especially challenging in lessons. Such behaviour was more likely to occur in Key Stage 3 where unsatisfactory behaviour was observed in one in ten lessons than in Key Stage 4 where unsatisfactory behaviour was observed in one in twenty lessons. In most of these lessons teachers exercise skilful class management to ensure that lessons proceed with minimum disruption. However, poor class management was associated with unsatisfactory behaviour in a few design and technology lessons. The challenging behaviour of some pupils is such that it inevitably leads to exclusion from school. During the last school year there were 48 fixed term and one permanent exclusions. The number of fixed term exclusions is high in comparison with similar schools. The majority of pupils excluded are ethnic minority boys, but white boys are the second largest group after black Caribbean heritage boys. The trend in the number of exclusions was rising over the period from 1993 to 1998 but has since dropped. There have been about 17 fixed term exclusions so far this school year. The number of permanent exclusions has been low over this period with no permanent exclusions so far this school year. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and takes a serious view of any such incidents. Pupils interviewed during the week of the inspection reported that while there had been occasional incidents of bullying, then these had been dealt with effectively by the school. They were also confident that any future incidents would be dealt with equally effectively.
10. A good number of pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, many of which help extend and broaden their learning. The library, for example, becomes a hive of activity when the 'Learning Zone' is in operation after school. The school keeps records of the attainment of pupils who attend the 'Zone' regularly and use this to demonstrate to pupils the positive effect that the extra support obtained can have on standards of attainment. The 'Zone' offers academic support to pupils, in an atmosphere of friendship. Pupils usually book time on the computers in the library, in anticipation of their homework needs. Often, the numbers of pupils outstrips the current provision.
11. Pupils exercise responsibility through acting as tutor group representatives and members of the school council. Through the school council pupils are able to participate in decision making of real significance. For example, pupils participated in the drafting of the school anti-bullying policy, the choice of the new school name and more recently were able to express their views on candidates for the post of deputy headteacher. Council members are currently considering the most suitable directions for movement on staircases. However, in lessons, pupils have few opportunities to take responsibility and this can lead to restlessness from higher attaining pupils who sometimes feel too restricted.
12. The schools attendance rate has risen significantly since the last inspection and is now at the 90 per cent level. Although slightly below the average for similar schools nationally, it is now judged as being satisfactory, with room for improvement.
13. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The number of exclusions is lower than the number noted in the 1995 inspection report and the attendance rate has improved. The generally good attitudes and relationships of pupils have been sustained, while behaviour is broadly similar.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and considerably improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or

better in 91 per cent of the 162 lessons observed and slightly better at Key Stage 4, where just over a half of lessons were good or very good, than at Key Stage 3, where about one third of lessons were good or very good. There are, however, examples of excellence in teaching in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3. Nevertheless, teaching is unsatisfactory in 9 per cent of lessons at both key stages and there is considerable room for improvement, especially in science and history at Key Stage 3 and design and technology at Key Stage 4. One of the most positive features of lessons is the good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils: teachers show respect for the pupils and the majority of pupils show respect for their teachers in return. This mutual respect helps to create learning environments which are supportive of pupils' learning and in particular the learning of pupils for whom English is an additional language and pupils with special educational needs. In such environments, teachers can often manage pupils with quiet yet firm reprimands, frowns and smiles, and light hearted comments, as in a Year 10 science lesson, to effect control without confrontation.

15. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and draw on this well to extend pupils' learning. This is evident in English, for example, where teachers demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the English language and set texts and of the most appropriate teaching methods to support pupils' learning. The ethnic minority achievement support teams' excellent knowledge of language teaching ensures that very good support is provided to pupils who are learning English as an additional language. This has a significant effect on the attainment and progress of these pupils. Similarly, the consistent use of French and Spanish by specialist foreign language teachers gives pupils a constant focus and reinforcement for learning. Questioning is also well used to reinforce learning. In religious education, probing questions are used to obtain answers, which demonstrate understanding. This was evident in a Year 10 lesson where the skilful use of questioning by the teacher, and knowledgeable responses to the questions of pupils, enabled pupils to gain a better understanding of Islam. The teachers' secure knowledge of the subject in art enables pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding of the work of notable artists and the ideas and concepts associated with different artistic styles and conventions. However, a lack of subject specific knowledge restricts pupils' experiences in drama in Key Stage 3 as does a very limited amount of non-specialist teaching in French. Also a number of teachers in design and technology are teaching outside their main specialisms and this is having an adverse effect on standards in the subject.
16. Teachers are generally competent in the teaching of basic skills not only in English and mathematics but also in other subjects of the curriculum. In science, for example the teaching of literacy and numeracy is competently handled as is the development of language and numeracy skills in geography. There are, however, weaknesses in the development of writing skills as a consequence of a limited range of writing tasks and spelling and grammatical errors, which are not always corrected when teachers mark pupils' work. Classroom management is generally good. Teachers plan their lessons well, have generally appropriate expectations and keep lessons moving at a good pace. When these features predominate then pupils learn well. In those lessons when they are presented with really challenging work, pupils enjoy the intellectual rigour and rise to the challenge. This was apparent in a Year 10 English lesson, for example, where pupils studying Arthur Miller's "View From the Bridge" were able to understand and identify sub-text. Similarly, a Year 8 class were able to discuss the linguistic and structural features that an author used to captivate readers in the first chapter of a novel. In drama in Key Stage 4, well planned lessons conducted at good pace enable pupils to learn new techniques and conventions rapidly so that by the end of Year 11 attainment is above average. The high standard of learning resulting from good teaching in mathematics at both key stages equips pupils with the skills to work independently and engage in purposeful discussion. Pupils of all levels of attainment are able to enjoy projects and investigations, justify their methods and progress with a certain amount of independence in their learning. In the best lessons in science, the level of challenge and pace was demanding and good use was made of logical probing questions. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils were gradually taken through the working of the blast furnace and effective use was made of the board to summarise the chemical reactions taking place inside the furnace. This sequencing allowed pupils to understand and follow the process. Effective use is made of resources and stimulus materials in design and technology. A particularly good feature of teaching in food technology is the writing of lesson learning objectives on the board which helps to provide a structure and guide

for pupils' learning. Pupils' learning in discrete information technology lessons is underpinned by clear lesson objectives and guidance for pupils and very good class management which create a positive and purposeful atmosphere for learning.

17. Unsatisfactory teaching in design and technology in Key Stage 4 is associated with low productivity and a slow pace of working. The level of challenge is too low and as a consequence, the work of Year 10 pupils in resistant materials is of a standard normally found in Key Stage 3. In Year 11, pupils' output and physical effort in resistant materials is poor. The learning objectives are not always clear with the consequence that pupils do not understand what they need to do in order to make progress. There are also weaknesses in the graphics products course where the intellectual challenges presented to pupils are too low. A lack of challenge is also associated with unsatisfactory teaching in science in Key Stage 3. In these lessons the pace is too slow, with the result that the interest of pupils is not aroused and the learning environment is not productive. Unsatisfactory teaching in history at Key Stage 3 is linked to inadequate planning, with the consequence that in some lessons there is little consolidation of previous learning and so a firm base for new learning objectives is not established. There are weaknesses in the marking of pupils' work and the use of assessment to guide lesson planning in English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and business studies. Marking in many instances consists of a series of ticks or brief comments, which do not give pupils clear information on the standards they are achieving. English and business studies pupils in Year 11, for example, were not aware of their predicted GCSE grades and a group of Year 9 pupils did not know the National Curriculum levels at which they are working. At the same time teachers are not making sufficient use of assessment information to identify pupils' weaknesses and build on strengths. Homework is set regularly in most subjects and used to reinforce and extend pupils' learning. However, the completion of homework is not always monitored and in science, for example, teachers do not ensure that homework is completed by all pupils.
18. Pupils for whom English is an additional language receive very good teaching from the ethnic minority achievement support team. Those who enter the school with very little English quickly acquire a good working knowledge of the language, not only because of the good teaching they receive when being taught in small groups by the support teachers, but also through the support they receive from other pupils. They display very positive attitudes towards school because the school does everything within its power to make them feel valued, confident and welcome. The support teachers also work alongside subject teachers to support developing speakers of English within the classroom. Although the work they do is valuable it is less effective than it could be because some class teachers do not fully understand the role of the support teachers. As a consequence, the experience and expertise of the ethnic minority achievement support team is not being fully exploited. In many lessons, for example, class teachers do not involve support teachers in the planning of the lesson activities. In these lessons the teaching and learning styles tend to be too teacher centred and support teachers are unable to give attention to all of the pupils who would benefit from additional support. Insufficient use is made of the skills of the support teachers in preparing learning resources that are suited to the needs of pupils with English as an additional language and their advice is not sought on how best to adapt teaching methods to provide better support for these pupils.
19. Because most teachers have a good knowledge of the majority of pupils in the school, teaching generally meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs. As a consequence, they make satisfactory progress in their learning and achieve satisfactory standards relative to their capabilities. However, as with the ethnic minority achievement support teachers, the maximum benefit is not obtained from the special needs support teachers in the school. This is again because some teachers do not fully understand the role of the support teachers. The support teachers are not consulted in lesson planning and so full use is not made of their expertise. A further weakness is the fact that the objectives in pupils' individual education plans tend to be more concerned with attitudes than learning outcomes and so are of only limited use to teachers in their lesson planning.
20. The school has made satisfactory progress in improving the quality of teaching since the time of the last inspection. There has been a significant reduction in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching from 22 per cent to 9 per cent. Approximately four in ten lessons are good or better,

which is a similar proportion to that noted in the previous inspection report. The school has made some progress in attending to the serious shortcomings in the teaching of history that were identified in the last inspection. The quality of teaching in history is now good at Key Stage 4 and, although unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, this is mainly due to inadequate planning and not to a lack of subject knowledge. However, there are still weaknesses in the teaching of design and technology and these include weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge in some design and technology areas. Overall, there remains considerable room for improvement in the quality of teaching.

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

21. The curriculum provision in the school is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements in all subjects other than information technology, where the coverage of measurement and control both in information technology lessons and in application through the subjects of the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements. A generally broad and balanced curriculum taught on a two-week cycle is provided in both key stages and the school has responded successfully to the weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection. The teaching time of 25 hours in both key stages fully meets the DfEE recommendation and is generally used effectively. Information technology provision is much improved and this has had a marked effect on standards of attainment. There is a homework policy and through the record kept by pupils in a homework diary, parents are kept informed of pupils' homework demands. A well-attended homework club meets in the school library on four evenings each week. Registration and tutorial time is part of the provision for assemblies and personal, social and health education, which is organised within the pastoral system. This gives coherence to the personal development aspect of the curriculum. However, the programme's effectiveness is reduced because it is delivered by non-specialist teachers, many of whom have received little or no training for the role. The school has recognised this weakness in provision and is in the process of deciding how best the programme's can be taught. Overall the curriculum provides an appropriate range of opportunities for all pupils including those with special educational needs.
22. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 builds upon good links with the primary schools from which it draws its pupils. It is planned effectively in most subjects to ensure continuity and progression and there is comprehensive support and guidance at the points of transition between the key stages. All National Curriculum subjects together with personal, social and health education, form the basis for the curriculum. The curriculum is taught through mixed ability teaching groups in Year 7 with the opportunity for setting in Year 8 and Year 9. French is the main modern foreign language taught, with the opportunity for more able pupils to study Spanish largely through after school sessions. There are no formal policies for literacy and numeracy but strategies led by the English and mathematics departments have helped standards to improve.
23. Support for pupils with special education needs and those supported as part of the ethnic minority achievement strategy lacks co-ordinated planning and this detracts from the overall effectiveness of this provision. Some improvements in special educational needs provision have recently been made, such as a review of the special educational needs policy. The policy now includes criteria on how special needs pupils should be identified; however, a lack of full consultation and involvement in this process means that there is no overall consensus between subjects about how special educational needs provision should best be made. For example, there is no clear understanding of how subjects should contribute to the construction and review of individual education plans and no systematic process to ensure that reviews take place on time. The school is currently monitoring a pilot project to determine how this can be done most effectively.
24. At Key Stage 4, pupils are provided with a broad core curriculum of English language and literature, mathematics, science, French, religious education, physical education and personal, social and health education, together with options chosen from twelve largely traditional subjects areas. The school does not, at present, offer vocational subjects and this restricts

opportunities for pupils who might be more suited to these types of courses. The school has recognised this and is in the process of negotiating link courses with a local college of further education in order to broaden the range of courses available in Key Stage 4. Within the personal, social and health education programme, which also covers sex and drugs education, pupils have a number of good opportunities, which help them to prepare for working life. Building on the self-awareness programme in Years 7 and Year 8, within personal, social and health education, pupils have extensive support at the time of options choices in Year 9. This includes Saturday workshops on 'opportunities' for both pupils and parents. These are also provided in Urdu. There are extensive careers education and work experience programmes in Year 10 that lead to an 'employability fair' in Year 11 which in turn is well supported careers workshops for both parents and pupils. A small mentoring programme linked to adults from the community is being piloted. Overall this provision is a strength of the school.

25. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra curricular activities, which are popular with pupils, often closely linked with class work and help to increase pupils' interest in school. The after school clubs include the provision of a 'Learning Zone' in the school library. Provision of the 'Learning Zone' is supported by external funding and valued by pupils who are given the opportunity to use the library facilities after school, up to four nights each week, during term time where they have access to computers and the Internet together with the use of reference books and other resources. Good support is available from the librarian, special educational needs staff and subject teachers to help pupils with learning activities that they find difficult to complete during school time or at home. A number of subject based after school clubs also provide additional study support for pupils, as does an Easter holiday revision week, which helps support pupils as they prepare for their GCSE examinations. Visits out of school include a residential trip for Year 7 pupils to the Forest of Dean. Geography field trips are organised for pupils in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Pupils visit local galleries, museums and other places of cultural and historical significance. Theatre visits are arranged for pupils to see drama performances at the Bristol 'Old Vic' theatre. Other clubs include Greek and Asian dance groups, music and pop group activities and workshops in mathematics, information and communication technology and art. Pupils also have the opportunity of participating in drama productions and musical activities and to experience broadcasting through the school's 'Radio Fairfield', which is organised and run by the pupils. Within all of these activities, the rich cultural diversity of the school population and the local community is recognised and celebrated with the consequence that pupils are helped to gain an understanding of their own cultural traditions and the richness and diversity of others. Pupils recognise that extra-curricular activities enable them to meet new friends and learn with those who share a common interest. Pupils have used their school council effectively to comment on how the provision could be improved and the school has recently carried out a questionnaire survey to obtain pupils' views on extra-curricular provision. The school has firm plans to carry out an audit of extra-curricular provision and to attempt to evaluate its impact on pupils' personal and social development and on their other achievements in school.
26. The school responds well to the local community. The school is careful to respect and incorporate the views of local residents and the headteacher takes a strong lead in this respect. The school makes good use of a wide range of local sporting facilities, which helps to compensate for the inadequacies in the school's own sports facilities. There are good contacts with the arts groups and local theatres; for example, pupils were invited to take part in a production at the 'Old Vic', which marked the end of the 'Respectable Trade' exhibition, where they met the playwright and a nationally acclaimed poet. Pupils exhibited their 'Tree of Aspirations' at the Royal West of England Academy Exhibition, when pupils and staff were presented to the Queen. These initiatives help to foster the personal development of pupils, by developing a sense of pride in their school and in their own achievements. Such outside connections are also helping to raise the school's profile in a positive way within the local community.
27. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is largely restricted to aspects of religious education and only occasionally arises in other subjects. In English, for example, opportunities to reflect on the human condition sometimes arise in the study of texts, such as coping with the death of a friend in 'Goodnight, Mr Tom'. When these opportunities arise they are dealt with sensitively and pupils are offered insights into the nature of relationships and their significance in

everyday life. In religious education, spiritual development is treated as something that affects the every-day lives of all people. Creation stories are taught in a way that encourages pupils to reflect on self, God and nature and how these inter-relate and topics such as death and final judgement are faced honestly. However there is little evidence in other subjects that any systematic attempt is made to enhance pupils' spiritual development. The school has not constructed a curriculum map of opportunities to enhance spiritual development with the consequence that when these opportunities do arise they are mostly missed. The school does not comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. The school sought determination from the appropriate authority to avoid the requirement for Christian worship, which has recently been refused. School assemblies are held weekly and, in view of the multi-faith nature of the pupils, assemblies are seen more as opportunities for underlining moral aspects of life than of engaging in collective worship. Nevertheless, the school ethos is one in which there is a high level of respect for the traditions and religious beliefs of others and this is shown in, for example, the way that a room was set aside for Muslim pupils' prayers during Ramadhan.

28. Overall provision for pupils' moral and social development is satisfactory. Particularly strong contributions to pupils' moral development are made in English, drama, religious education, and personal, social and health education. It can also be found in geography, for example in comparisons of relative wealth and poverty in different countries, and in considering the moral issues surrounding different forms of relief work. Acceptance of the importance of rules and principles is taught, for example, in physical education where pupils learn to accept decisions without rancour. Pupils are given a clear picture of the difference between right and wrong and on how to live out principles of respect and justice in a diverse community. The ethos of the school contributes strongly to this. The recent removal of the sixth form has meant a shift in emphasis with increased responsibilities being given to Year 11 pupils. As befits their new senior status, Year 11 pupils have been given the responsibility of managing their own common room, which is contributing significantly to their social development. Pupils' social development is enhanced through the opportunity to elect tutor group and year group representatives to the school council, where they are able to offer opinions on decision making in the school. Adults provide good role models for pupils to follow, particularly in the way in which all pupils are treated with respect and afforded equality of opportunity. The school's contacts with The Gambia have provided opportunities for pupils to help raise money for others; there is now a 'Fairfield Centenary Well' in the grounds of a Gambian primary school. The recent fundraising for Kosovan families was made more poignant by the recent arrival of Kosovo refugees as pupils in the school.
29. The school has generally effective relationships with its partner primary schools. There is an annual tradition of inviting in the current Year 5 primary school pupils to see an outside theatre company perform - this year it was 'The Last Tyger'. Teachers from the primary school are invited in during the spring term to see the work their previous Year 6 pupils are now producing and to renew acquaintances. Whilst there is a satisfactory exchange of information about pupils' academic attainments from primary to secondary level, this information is not always effectively disseminated to staff within the school with the consequence not used to best effect in curriculum planning. The school is extending its links with Bristol College where some pupils are currently taking a National Vocational Qualification in computer studies as part of their GCSE course. An effective link has also been made with a local school which caters for the 11 – 18 age range through which sixth form places are made available for those Fairfield pupils wanting to continue into post-16 education. The school has also developed effective links with the local universities through these links, volunteer university students are recruited to assist with extra-curricular activities and confrontative advice has been received to help with staff development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The school takes its responsibilities for child protection and pupils' welfare very seriously and has established good procedures for ensuring the protection and welfare of pupils. The school provides a supportive environment in which to learn. Partly due to the school's relatively small size, staff have a very good knowledge of individual pupils and their particular social and

educational needs. This knowledge underpins the school's provision for pupils' personal development, which is a strength of the school. Both parents and pupils are very appreciative of this aspect of the education that the school provides.

31. The school successfully promotes an ethos in which respect for the rights of the individual and tolerance towards each other's customs and beliefs are paramount. Parents agree that the school is particularly successful in this respect and is helping their children to become mature and responsible adults who are well prepared for life in society today. The school considers the rights of the individual to protection from harassment or bullying as vitally important. The school has a number of procedures through which pupils can notify staff of any incidents that may occur. A counsellor from the National Society for the Protection and Care of Children holds a clinic, which is usually fully booked, in the school on one day a week and forms are discretely placed around school which pupils can use to alert staff to any problems. Pupils agree that these systems are used effectively and that the school treats all pupils concerns very seriously. The school has effective methods for recording and monitoring any incidents and these procedures help to ensure that pupils are able to give their full attention to learning. In order to ensure the continued good care for pupils, the newly appointed member of staff designated as responsible for child protection has highlighted the need to update the training of all staff on child protection matters.
32. In their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed some concern about the standards of behaviour in the school. There is a certain amount of boisterous behaviour when pupils are moving around the school, which is largely due to the fact that large numbers of pupils are passing through narrow corridors and hallways. Teachers supervise the main intersections and younger pupils interviewed in the week of the inspection said that they did not feel unduly concerned or in any way threatened at these times. Although the overall standards of behaviour in lessons are satisfactory, there are a small number of pupils who exhibit seriously challenging behaviour which can be disruptive to lessons. The school works hard to encourage good standards of behaviour and the procedures for managing challenging behaviour are generally effective. However, these procedures are constantly under review and the school has identified some areas where there are weaknesses, particularly in relation to the support provided for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Guidance is being sought from the LEA on how this support can be improved.
33. Overall procedures for assessing pupils' attainments and progress are satisfactory. However, insufficient use is made of assessment information to inform teaching and curriculum planning. The school is developing a useful system to collect and analyse all assessment information, including end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results and the results of non-verbal reasoning tests taken in Year 7. This information, showing the fluctuations from year to year in the attainment levels of the school intake, is made available to assistant directors of achievement and to subject co-ordinators. The school uses this data to set Year 8 pupils' predicted end of Key Stage 3 targets, but this information is not shared with pupils. Similarly in Year 10, GCSE examination targets are also set for pupils on the basis of their end of Key Stage 3 tests results, but these are used mainly by the school to measure performance against prediction. Insufficient use is made of this information in teachers' planning and to monitor the progress of pupils across all subjects. Subject targets based on the available assessment information are not being shared with pupils at either Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 to help them to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There is a need to improve liaison between subject co-ordinators and assistant directors of achievement in order to ensure that pupils' academic progress is monitored more closely and effectively. Insufficient attention is given to tracking pupils' progress on a regular basis to provide targeted learning support or guidance for those that might otherwise not realise their academic potential. The school produces a number of very useful analyses, which include comparisons between the performance of girls and boys and the performance of different ethnic groups. However, the school has no system for ensuring that the implications of these analyses are taken into account in subsequent curriculum planning.
34. The school assessment policy provides general information and guidance including criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of subject assessment policies. A separate marking and grading policy provides information about the use of effort and attainment grades and how these relate

to National Curriculum levels and GCSE examination grades. There are, however, inconsistencies in the way in which subjects are implementing these policies. In mathematics and information technology, specific skills related to National Curriculum Programmes of Study are regularly assessed, but there are weaknesses in other subjects in this respect. The marking of pupils' work provides pupils with generally constructive information in art, geography and in some areas of design and technology with the result that pupils have satisfactory levels of understanding of the standards of their work and their rates of progress. However, pupils are provided with insufficient feedback through marking of the standard of their work in terms of National Curriculum levels and GCSE examination grades in other subjects. Time is given to subject departments for the process of standardising their assessments and to ensure that teachers are consistent in the way in which teachers mark and grade pupils' work. As a consequence, a generally consistent approach is taken in mathematics, science and art but practice in other subjects is inconsistent.

35. The school has effective procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. As a consequence, the attendance rate has risen significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The school is working hard to continue to improve attendance and has been successful in attracting considerable outside funding to support a new attendance initiative, the 'High Attendance – High Achievement' project. The additional funding is providing a 'first day call' system to ascertain the reason pupils are away and will allow the school to devote dedicated time to work with parents to raise awareness of the importance of regular attendance to pupils' standards of achievement.
36. The school has made some progress in attending to the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. Good progress has been made in improving assessment procedures and in the ways in which assessment information is analysed to provide very useful information for all staff. However, attention needs to be paid to the use that is made of this information in curriculum planning and for target setting and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress. There is also a need to ensure greater consistency in marking so that pupils, and parents, are provided with clear feedback on the standard of work in terms of levels and grades, and what must be done in order to improve.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. Parents have a generally positive view of the school. A significant number of parents feel very loyal to the school and have specifically chosen it for their children. They feel Fairfield is an 'improving school' and a school that provides an educational experience that is particularly relevant to life in modern society. In this context parents are particularly appreciative of the general atmosphere of harmony, friendliness and care for pupils that is evident in the school.
38. The school has satisfactory links with most parents and teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' and their families. This provides a considerable support to pupils' learning. The school is welcoming to parents and, in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the majority of parents expressed satisfaction about the approachability of the school. The school holds a good range of curriculum information evenings, which many parents attend. Topics such as drug and sex education and preparation for the demands of the GCSE examination help to familiarise parents with the curriculum and ways in which they can support their children's learning at home. Parent governors spoken to during the week of the inspection and parents attending the pre-inspection meeting all found these meetings useful. There are many families for whom English is not the home language, and the school attempts to ensure effective communication with these parents by using translators at parents' meetings and by holding out of school meetings in local community halls that are conducted in minority languages. However, the general level of involvement of ethnic minority parents in the life of the school is very low and both the governors and the senior management team recognise this as a matter of concern and an area for improvement. The school has recently taken direct responsibility for the ethnic minority achievement support team who have begun to develop strategies to improve the quality of contact with ethnic minority parents and the level of involvement in their children's education.
39. A number of parents express concern about a lack of general information from the school.

Informative newsletters are sent out to parents once a term and parents are contacted by telephone or letter as the need arises. However, the overall quality of the school reports to parents is unsatisfactory. Two reports are issued each academic year. These include an interim and a full annual report. The annual report although well laid out shows variation in the quality of comments provided by subject teachers. There is a lack of focus on standards in terms of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades in pupils' reports. Also, annual reports are not consistent in the way pupils' strengths and weaknesses are summarised, the progress that they have made over the year and how this compares with the previous annual report. Targets set out in reports are inconsistent, the most useful are subject specific but others focus heavily on attitudes and behaviour and some such as, 'continue to work hard' are meaningless in terms of providing a target for improvement.

40. The overall impact of parental involvement in school work is satisfactory. Those parents who are governors have a clear commitment to improving the school and a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The Friends of Fairfield High School, is a small group who were particularly active during the school's Centenary celebrations. These celebrations succeeded in raising pupils' pride in the school and the schools profile in the wider community. The school works closely with many parents, particularly in the area of improving behaviour. However, some parents find it difficult to support their children's education and the numerous efforts taken by the school to involve them in their children's education meet with little success.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection the school senior management team was in a state of transition due to the extended absence of the headteacher through illness. The report identified a number of weaknesses in management. However, these weaknesses could not be fully redressed until the senior management positions were clarified and stabilised. It was not until some time after the inspection that it was possible to do this with the appointments of the new head, following the retirement of the previous head, and the new deputy head, following the promotion of the deputy head to the position of headteacher. Since then, although a number of weaknesses remain, the management of the school has improved considerably. Both the senior management team and the governors have identified these weaknesses and, in several instances, begun taking action to try to rectify them. However, as at the time of the previous inspection the school is once again in a period of management change. Following the promotion of a deputy head to the headship of another school in the area, the school is one deputy head short until the new deputy joins the school in February.
42. The headteacher provides a clear educational direction for the school. The headteacher is dedicated to the continued improvement of the school and in this she is well supported by the senior management team, which is currently made up of the headteacher, deputy head, director of achievement and the bursar. The headteacher leads by example both in her commitment to the pupils, which is clearly demonstrated in her regular teaching commitment, and in her emphasis on open collaborative management to ensure that the school provides an inclusive education for all pupils. This has a positive effect on the ethos of the school as exemplified in the attempts that are made to ensure that the views of pupils are taken into account in decision making. This emphasis on teamwork is reflected in the school motto, 'Learn together - achieve together', which was devised by all members of the school community. The success of the school in translating this motto into practice is evident in the harmonious relationships that exist both between pupils of different ethnic origins and between pupils and adults. This provides a very supportive learning environment for pupils and one in which there is equality of opportunity for all. This is evidenced by the fact that many parents choose to send their children to Fairfield School, even though it means travelling considerable distances from their homes. This level of commitment, is a contributory factor to the results obtained in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 and the GCSE examination, taken at the end of Key Stage 4, both of which are well above average in comparison with similar schools.
43. In order to raise standards through the provision of more closely linked academic and pastoral

support, the school has recently appointed a director of achievement. Part of the intention of this initiative is an attempt to ensure that pupils' academic and personal development is more systematically and rigorously monitored across all subjects. At the same time heads of year have been re-titled assistant directors of achievement and given additional responsibilities for monitoring the academic and personal development of pupils within the year groups to which they are attached. Whilst the functions of these staff are clear to the senior management team, their functions are not well understood by the staff as a whole. As a consequence much of the work of the assistant directors continues to be mainly focused on pastoral concerns. There is a need to ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and in particular of how the responsibilities of the director of achievement and assistant directors mesh with subject co-ordinators with regard to the monitoring of pupils' academic progress. There is also a lack of understanding of the roles of the ethnic minority achievement support co-ordinator and support teachers on the part of subject teachers, with the consequence that the most effective use is not being made of the available expertise in lesson planning.

44. Following a period of extensive consultation the school has reformulated its mission statement so that the vision for the development of the school is shared by all staff. The mission has been translated into a number of aims, which are identified in the current school development plan as five priority areas for improvement. The five areas are: personal development; curricular and extra-curricular provision; ethos and community profile; parental and professional support; and school environment. Each of the aims has a number of specific objectives which identify the particular department and member of staff responsible for achieving the objective. They in turn have been required to respond by indicating how the objective will be achieved. However, the plan is too detailed to serve as a useful working document and many of the identified objectives do not specify outcomes in terms of raising standards. As a consequence, many of the objectives, such as 'increase the use of information technology', could be achieved without necessarily having any impact on the raising of standards.
45. The school has begun to establish a system for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. This started with the induction of the head and deputy head into the use of OFSTED type lesson observation schedules, since when both have engaged in the systematic observation of lessons. Following these observations feedback is given to teachers and departments on the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and pupils' learning. Through these observations the school has already identified, for example, the weaknesses in teaching in science and in design and technology, and the general weaknesses in marking, and has begun to take appropriate action. However, the system for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' learning is heavily dependent on the school's senior management and does not at present sufficiently involve subject co-ordinators. As a consequence, although weaknesses in teaching are identified, and brought to the attention of teachers and subject co-ordinators through professional development interviews, there is no system for ensuring that appropriate action follows and that any action taken is monitored and evaluated by subject co-ordinators. At the same time, the teaching strengths are not being identified in a way that would allow these to be shared with other teachers. In view of this it is necessary to extend responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching to subject co-ordinators if the improvements in teaching are to be sustained.
46. The overall quality of management provided by subject co-ordinators is satisfactory with examples of good management in design and technology, where the subject co-ordinator monitors teaching performance and sets a good example by clearly demonstrating how pupils' attainment and learning can be improved, and in physical education. Effective subject leadership and good teamwork is evident in art and the leadership given by the history co-ordinator creates a positive ethos for the subject. The recently appointed co-ordinators for English and information technology are beginning to have positive effects on the organisation and teaching of the subjects. However, there is a need for more rigour in management in science and there are weaknesses in planning in geography and history. Also, a number of single teacher subjects, such as music, are disadvantaged by the lack of opportunity to interact with, and observe others, with the same teaching specialisms.
47. The management and co-ordination of special educational needs is unsatisfactory. There is a

lack of understanding of full requirements of the Code of Practice with the consequence that special educational needs staff are not deployed to the best effect in lessons. They are rarely consulted by subject teachers about the most appropriate teaching strategies and resources needed in lessons to cater for pupils' needs. Pupils' individual education plans are mainly concerned with pupils' attitudes and rarely specify learning targets and appropriate strategies. As currently formulated, they are of little use in the support of pupils' learning. There has been little past involvement from the two governors who share the role of being responsible for special educational needs. However, governors now have a clear understanding of the weaknesses in this area and are in the process of re-establishing their monitoring role in order to ensure improvement in special educational needs provision.

48. The governing body is generally effective and supportive. It meets most of its statutory responsibilities through a well-considered committee structure. Governors are actively involved in overseeing the work of the school and provide the school with a substantial amount of specialist help and guidance. Positive relationships exist between the governing body and the senior management team. Governors receive regular reports from the headteacher and other senior members of staff and are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The quality of financial planning is satisfactory. Governors are actively involved with the headteacher and senior management team in financial planning and monitoring and are given good support by the bursar. The school has effective procedures to ensure that the principles of best value for money are applied in the use of its resources. Action has been taken to attend to the few issues raised in the most recent auditors report.
49. The school development plan and the budget are prepared at the same time, so that decisions on spending are informed by the school's development needs. The annual income per pupil is above the national average for schools of similar size. This is a consequence of additional LEA support for small schools and of additional income received to support the large proportions of ethnic minority pupils and pupils with special educational needs. This income is used for the purposes intended. At the time of the previous inspection the school had a very small and comparatively expensive sixth form. This situation has now been rectified by the disbandment of the sixth form. The school has a complicated formula for the allocation of funds to departments which is unclear to many staff. Nevertheless, most subject co-ordinators are satisfied with the allocations they receive and the overall provision of learning resources is satisfactory. There is, however, a weakness in science, where there is a shortage of textbooks and some basic equipment for experiments. On the other hand the resources available in art considerably enhance the nature and range of pupils' learning experiences. The school library is well-resourced and well used. It offers pupils a good range of books, computers and audio-visual materials to support learning.
50. The number, qualifications and experience of the teachers match the demands of the curriculum for most subjects. However, in design and technology the deployment of non-specialist teachers detracts from both good quality teaching and high standards particularly in control systems electronics and technical graphics. Some temporary teaching arrangements for French are not conducive to high standards. Provision of language assistants for French and Spanish and technician support for art are good and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. However, the time allocated for technician support for science is inadequate.
51. The school is housed in a 100 year old, listed, three-storey building with some outside classrooms. Most subject areas benefit from suites of rooms which are usually large enough for the size of classes, though not in geography or modern languages, where pupils in large sets are cramped. A rolling programme of decoration enhances the internal appearance of classrooms. In classrooms and open areas there are attractive displays which celebrate the work of pupils and illustrate the wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities the school provides, as well as the school's cultural diversity. However the nature of the site prevents expansion. There are no playing fields, and so time is lost as pupils have to travel several miles for games lessons. There is a gymnasium but this is too small and cannot be used for gymnastics. The narrowness of entrances, exits and staircases causes congestion at times of lesson changeover, which will be exacerbated as the number of pupils on roll increases. The inadequacy of some of the outside accommodation, such as that for music, restricts both teaching strategies and pupils' learning opportunities.

52. The school is an established provider for initial teacher training; the co-ordinator for which is also the induction tutor for the school's newly qualified teachers. The school provides good support for newly qualified teachers. This support includes regular teaching observations from a member of the senior management team, together with a reduced teaching load. All teachers new to the school are also allocated a personal mentor in addition to the subject co-ordinator who is responsible for their induction. Arrangements for the appraisal and professional development are satisfactory and the school has recently been awarded 'Investor in People' status.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

53. In order to raise standards and the quality of education provided, the governors, senior management and staff of Fairfield High School, with the help of the Local Education Authority should:
- Ensure that all management roles are clearly defined and that responsibilities linked to the roles are carried out effectively and clearly understood by all staff.
(Paragraphs: 33, 43, 46, 74, 75, 82, 122)
 - Review the school development plan to ensure that it is sharply focused on raising standards and contains clear strategies that can be implemented, monitored and the outcomes evaluated in all subjects.
(Paragraphs: 44, 101, 108, 121, 130)
 - Agree and implement rigorous procedures to ensure that teaching is systematically monitored, evaluated and improved in all subjects, and in particular in science and design and technology.
(Paragraphs: 7, 9-10, 14-17, 20-21, 45, 57, 62, 67, 71-72, 80, 88, 90-93, 95, 99-100, 106-107, 120-122, 127)
 - Make better use of pupil assessment information to identify differences in individual and group performances, and to guide curriculum planning.
(Paragraphs: 17, 29, 33, 36, 60, 73, 75, 107, 121)
 - Ensure that all teachers mark pupils' work regularly and consistently, in accordance with the school's marking policy, and that the marking provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve the standard of their work.
(Paragraphs: 17, 34, 36, 66-68, 72, 86, 94, 107, 120-121, 134-135)
 - Ensure that there is effective co-ordination and management of special educational needs and that there is a clear strategy that is fully understood by all teachers for the development of collaborative teaching to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.
(Paragraphs: 18-19, 23, 43, 47, 68, 98, 105, 139-140)
 - Improve the quality of information provided in reports to parents so that they have a clear understanding of the standards their children have attained, the progress they are making and what they must do in order to make further progress.
(Paragraphs: 39, 73, 94, 121, 136)
 - Meet all statutory requirements for the teaching of information communication technology at both key stages; ensure that information communication technology is planned and taught effectively in all subjects.
(Paragraphs: 74, 100, 198, 110-113, 115)
 - In addition, paragraphs: 5-7, 9, 11, 16, 21, 27, 32-33, 38, 40, 46, 49-51, 67, 74-75, 94, 99, 119, 128, 135, 142; include weaknesses which have not formed the basis of key

issues identified above: the school should consider including these in the governors' post-inspection plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	162
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	75

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	10	32	48	8	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	482	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	176	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	118	N/A

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	119

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	47	43	90

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	18	24	20
	Girls	32	28	20
	Total	50	52	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56	58	44
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22	36	18
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	17	22	12
	Girls	32	27	19
	Total	49	49	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54	54	34
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23	36	10
	National	31	37	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
	1999	44	37	81

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	21	36	40
	Girls	9	29	35
	Total	30	65	75
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	37	80	93
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31
	National	37.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/A	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
		1999	4	1

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	7	6	6.8	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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		82.5

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	33
Black – African heritage	13
Black – other	46
Indian	22
Pakistani	78
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	8
White	203
Any other minority ethnic group	74

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	13	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	9	0
Bangladeshi	1	0
Chinese	0	0
White	11	1
Other minority ethnic groups	12	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	35
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	103

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	25.0
Key Stage 4	23.4

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	1,342,626
Total expenditure	1,350,390
Expenditure per pupil	2,917
Balance brought forward from previous year	100,215
Balance carried forward to next year	92,451

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	482
Number of questionnaires returned	97

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	52	46	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	47	3	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	42	11	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	48	19	3	1
The teaching is good.	30	60	5	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	46	15	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	31	1	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	35	8	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	29	49	12	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	44	38	7	3	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	40	4	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	38	17	3	6

Other issues raised by parents

Fifteen parents offered additional comments in response to the questionnaire. Most of these comments were very supportive of the school and several commented very favourably on the quality of relationships in the school. A few parents expressed concern about pupils' behaviour and a lack of information from the school,

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS

OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

54. Pupils' attainment in English is below average at the ages of 14 and 16 when compared to national standards. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attainment, as reflected in the 1999 National Curriculum test results, is below the national average but high in comparison with the standards achieved by pupils in similar schools. Results have risen sharply over the last three years and girls achieve higher standards than boys at this stage.
55. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment is still below average but the 1999 GCSE results are closer to the national standards than at the end of Key Stage 3. The standards that pupils achieve are high in comparison with pupils in similar schools. In 1999 boys achieved higher standards than girls, which is against the national trend. There are no significant differences between boys and girls currently in Years 10 and 11. Pupils from different ethnic groups attain broadly similar standards and Asian girls attain higher standards than they do nationally. Standards have shown a gradual improvement over the last three years.
56. Pupils are confident and fluent speakers and are willing and able to use talk and discussion to explore complex ideas. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are competent readers. Most pupils are keen readers for enjoyment and also are able to use books and other resources to gather information. The English department encourages the development of reading skills through the library lessons and opportunities in other lessons to read texts aloud.
57. Pupils' writing skills are below expectations, particularly in Key Stage 3. They are given too few opportunities for sustained writing and some of the work in exercise books is untidy, poorly presented and sometimes unfinished. There is a marked improvement in Key Stage 4 and many pupils achieve high standards in their creative and discursive writing and in their writing about literature. Pupils' literacy skills in general are sufficiently well developed to enable them to access the full curriculum. There is a developing awareness in some other departments that pupils need to be taught the specific styles of reading and writing needed in different subjects. Many teachers use the teaching of key words to help pupils acquire subject specific knowledge. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson pupils learned about "staccato" and "tempo" in relation to film scores. In some departments there is still a lack of understanding of the importance of language.
58. Pupils display positive attitudes to their English lessons. Most pupils are keen to learn and succeed and they show interest in the range of activities. Their behaviour in English lessons is satisfactory. They are usually courteous and respectful and form positive relationships with each other and their teachers. The different ethnic groups work well together and they respect each other's values, customs and opinions.
59. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Teaching has many strengths; teachers have good classroom management, plan their lessons well, have generally high expectations and keep lessons moving at a good pace. When these features predominate then pupils learn well. In those lessons when they are presented with really challenging work, pupils enjoy the intellectual rigour and rise to the challenge. This was observed when a Year 10 class studying Arthur Miller's "View From the Bridge" were able to understand and identify sub-text. A Year 8 class were able to discuss the linguistic and structural features that an author used to captivate readers in the first chapter of a novel and encourage them to read on.
60. There are some weaknesses in teaching, most apparent in Key Stage 3 lessons. Teachers sometimes do too much talking in lessons, telling pupils about new learning rather than enabling them to learn for themselves. This feature is linked with the ineffective use of learning support assistants in some lessons. When the lesson is too teacher centred then learning assistants are unable to give appropriate support to pupils with special educational needs. Insufficient use is made of day-to-day assessment to show pupils how to improve their work. Pupils are not clear about their levels of attainment and during the inspection Year 11

pupils were not aware of their predicted GCSE grades. Teachers do not consistently use marking to set targets which will help pupils to identify the weaknesses in their own work.

61. Since the previous inspection, the department has improved the level of challenge in lessons. In most lessons the work is matched to pupils' needs and in the few lessons where expectations are low it is because the teacher does too much of the work and does not give pupils the opportunity to learn for themselves or take responsibility for their own learning. Issues connected with assessment and the use of learning assistants remain. The recently appointed subject co-ordinator is aware of these and is addressing them through the development of a common English curriculum for all pupils which will enable pupils' work to be assessed with greater consistency by all teachers. As a consequence, the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

DRAMA

62. Drama is taught as a separate subject to all pupils in Key Stage 3 and as an optional GCSE subject in Key Stage 4. At present the headteacher takes responsibility for subject leadership in drama and there is no other drama specialist in school. As a consequence, the teaching of drama at Key Stage 3 is marked by a lack of the confidence and skills in drama necessary for pupils to be able to explore the full range of experiences possible through the subject. This is affecting the quality of the experience being offered to pupils with the result that standards of attainment at the end of the key stage are below average. During Key Stage 4, teaching is more securely based in a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and the framework of the GCSE examination. As a consequence the quality of teaching is very good and pupils learn new dramatic techniques and conventions rapidly so that by the end of Year 11 attainment is above average. The pupils presently in Year 10 and Year 11 have very positive attitudes towards drama and are highly involved in their drama work. They participate enthusiastically in the various lesson activities and the supportive learning environment helps them to express their feelings and take risks.

MATHEMATICS

63. Attainment in mathematics is below the national average at the end of Key Stage 3. However the trend from 1996 to 1999 shows more rapid improvement than that observed nationally. Boys' scores were better than girls' in 1996 and 1997; this was reversed in 1998 and 1999. Attainment in comparison with similar schools is very high and this is evident in the work seen during the inspection. In Key Stage 3 lessons the majority of pupils are working at or below a broadly typical standard of attainment for their age. The work of a small proportion shows above average standards. All the attainment targets are well covered with particular emphasis placed on number work with lower attaining pupils. This ensures that multiplication tables are well known and that pupils can solve simple mental problems by multiplying and dividing by numbers up to ten and, when using calculators, can round answers to the nearest whole number. Pupils in Year 7 show impressive recall of data handling skills for which they use a computer spreadsheet to produce and modify bar charts using data drawn from their class. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils' work includes the completion of some good investigations involving shape and space, and relating the number of edges, faces and vertices using algebra. Pupils are fluent in the use of mathematical vocabulary; they can define and use correctly terms such as data, frequency and range. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, achieve appropriate standards.
64. Although the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE grades in the A*-C range is below the national average, there was a significant improvement in 1999; just over 80 per cent of Fairfield pupils achieved GCSE grades in the A*-G range. A number of other pupils obtained merits in a nationally recognised certificate of achievement. Comparison of the most recent GCSE results with the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results obtained by the same pupils shows attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 to be in line with expectations, as does the comparison of end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results with those obtained at the end of Key Stage 2. Consequently pupils are making satisfactory progress at both key stages. At Key Stage 4, the standards being attained in trigonometry and the

application of Pythagoras' theorem show that higher attaining pupils are making the necessary progression to achieve GCSE grades in the higher range. Graphical work including quadratics, cubics and reciprocals is of a high standard and during the key stage pupils show an increasing understanding of the rules of positive and negative indices and applications to standard form. Greater emphasis is placed on number with lower attaining pupils and on the application of numerical skills to problems. As a consequence, these pupils are able to tackle simple equations with confidence and co-ordinates are extended to four quadrants to describe enlargements. Shape and space concepts are well developed; pupils are able to construct triangles using mathematical instruments and show a good knowledge of loci, symmetry properties and terminology.

65. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards mathematics lessons are never less than satisfactory. In half of the lessons observed the pupils' response was good or excellent. The highest standards are evident in classes of all attainment levels and are displayed by boys and girls of all ages including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Typically pupils are attentive to teachers' explanations and fully involved in discussion, showing enthusiasm for mathematics. Pupils are less engaged in lessons where the introduction to the topic fails to inspire them; for example, the division of a parallelogram into a pair of congruent triangles to find area without a contextual reference failed to arouse the interest of a Year 9 class. Pupils are receptive of the ideas expressed by others in the class and show tolerance of each other's viewpoint.
66. Teaching at both key stages is never less than satisfactory and most often good. Teachers' strengths include their subject knowledge and teaching of basic skills. In the very good lessons observed teachers related mathematics to pupils' everyday experiences. Use of timetables, maps of the school environment and comparisons of the weight of human babies with animals at birth with Year 8 pupils stimulated interest and enthusiasm as pupils developed a greater understanding of the use of common units and scales. The high standard of learning resulting from good teaching equips pupils with the skills to work independently and engage in purposeful discussion. Pupils of all levels of attainment are able to enjoy projects and investigations, justify their methods and logically progress with independence when appropriate. A good example is seen in GCSE coursework where Year 11 pupils develop algebraic representation of the general term of a range of sequences. The pace of pupils' learning is not always suited to lower attaining pupils who at times are not able to complete the work. Typically it is good when well judged questioning challenges all pupils and discussions inspire the kind of enthusiasm which Year 7 show when using grids to refine their estimates of areas of fields drawn on a plan. Pupils mark most of their classwork but worksheets with drawings and diagrams and those given as extension work are often not marked. Although some pupils are aware of personal mathematical targets, most are not.
67. Mathematics teaching satisfies the National Curriculum requirements for all pupils. Although there is breadth and balance in the coverage of all attainment targets, insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to work in small groups or on individual investigative work. The use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress from year to year is excellent but marking is not always used to guide planning on a day-to-day basis. An exception to this was observed when a teacher designed an additional worksheet overnight to ensure that all pupils in a Year 9 class could use building cubes and plans and elevations to extend understanding of their spatial concepts. The mathematics department has a detailed handbook, which reflects the aims of the school and underpins the direction of mathematics teaching. All mathematics lessons are taught in four very well equipped classrooms, which provide a stimulating environment that is supportive of high standards and enjoyment of the subject. Displays include pupils' work, such as computer designed advertisements illustrating uses of percentages and posters defining a wide range of mathematical terms with associated vocabulary.

68. Since the last inspection provision for lower attaining pupils has improved significantly. However special educational needs pupils' individual education plans do not include targets in mathematics. The monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress is now a strength but there are still inconsistencies in marking. Further direction needs to be given to ensure that all pupils are given the opportunity for discussion and see the place of mathematics in a wider context. A brisk pace is a feature of many lessons with department aims being consistently implemented.

SCIENCE

69. In 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 or above in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests was below the national average, while those gaining level 6 and above was close to the national average. When compared to similar schools the results are above the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* - C at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 showed a sharp rise to be broadly in line with the national average. The performance of boys is above that of girls. Ethnic minority pupils overall do not perform as well as white United Kingdom heritage pupils with the performance of pupils of Asian heritage, although similar in number, significantly below that of white United Kingdom heritage pupils. Comparative analyses of the average total points scores of the same groups of pupils in end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and the GCSE examination, shows progress to be broadly in line with expectations.
70. The attainment of pupils in Year 7 was below that expected for their age with weaknesses in their ability to recall earlier work. For example, they are not able to identify the boiling or freezing points of water. In work with electrical circuits, pupils are not able to correctly answer questions on the effects of removing bulbs. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 showed above a good understanding of acids and alkalis and are able to explain neutralisation. The link between oxygen and burning is well understood, as is the difference between different types of rock. Pupils in year 10 showed a satisfactory level of understanding of fair testing and could explain conduction of heat but are unable to identify the principles of convection. Year 11 pupils showed poor recall of earlier work and have an insecure knowledge of atomic structure and electrolysis. Where work on critical angles had been attempted in Year 11, angles had been inaccurately measured and its use in optical fibres was not well understood. This represents a level of recall and understanding that is below expectations. However higher attaining pupils in Year 11 show a level of recall of, for example, the role of mitosis in asexual reproduction and are able to explain diffusion in terms of particle movement that is above expectations. Inspection evidence indicates that although the progress of pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory, higher attaining pupils are making better progress than lower attaining pupils at both key stages.
71. Pupils' attitudes to science are generally satisfactory. In many lessons pupils show good attitudes to their work and very good attitudes towards each other. The mutually supportive attitudes seen in many classrooms create a feeling of security in the learning environment. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils showed a willingness to answer questions and to improve the presentation of their work by adding photographs taken on a visit to Pompeii to supplement work on volcanoes. Pupils showed great interest in a Year 11 lesson on genetics and gained a greater understanding the nature of genetic disorders and the consequences in terms of life expectancy. In lessons such as these, pupils' positive attitudes and approaches to learning helped to relate the lesson content to real life which in turn helped to provide a firm foundation for future learning. In lessons where pupils displayed unsatisfactory attitudes the lesson material did not arouse the interest of pupils as, for example, in a Year 7 lesson where the pupils lost concentration and became easily distracted. On a few other occasions pupils were unable to maintain concentration for the full length of the lesson and a lack of direction from the teacher affected pupil attitudes to their learning.
72. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. The teaching of basic skills is competently handled in lessons but there are weakness in the development of writing skills and insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to make oral presentations. Good teaching is exemplified by a high level of challenge and good pace with

the effective use of logical probing questions. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson, for example, where pupils were gradually taken through the working of a blast furnace and the chemical reactions which take place inside the furnace were gradually built up on the board. The clear identification and sequencing of the changes allowed pupils to reinforced pupils' learning and allowed them to gain a better understand of the process. Where class management is at its best, strategies such as quiet yet firm reprimands, smiles and light hearted comments are often used effectively to exercise control without confrontation. In these lessons, class management was often made easier by the fact that pupils sustained their concentration because they found the work interesting and challenging. On the other hand unsatisfactory teaching was most often associated with a lack of challenge, uninspiring lesson content, a slow lesson pace and teaching methods that were not suited to the needs of the pupils. The result was an unproductive learning environment. There are inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work and insufficient demand is placed on pupils to complete classwork and homework. Also, there is little evidence that assessment is being used to plan subsequent learning. The work in pupils' books shows a need for a more logical pattern of concept development. Pupils with special needs and pupils those with English as an additional language are making satisfactory progress. However, insufficient use is made of the expertise of support teachers in lesson planning. Behaviour in most lessons in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and no unsatisfactory behaviour was observed in Key Stage 4 lessons. Relationships both between pupils and between pupils' teachers are a strength of the department and the school as a whole. For example, pupils offer a good deal of support to others who are learning English as an additional language and help with such things as the use of bilingual dictionaries. However, teaching strategies tend to be very teacher dependent with the consequence that pupils are provided with too few opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning, even though investigative work has increased.

73. The department maintains records of pupils' assessments which are used to determine pupil groupings in Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 pupils' records are used to track progress and completion of coursework. However, not enough use is made of this assessment information to plan future teaching. Pupil reports based on a statement bank recognise pupils' effort and achievement. Weaknesses in pupils' work and targets for improvement are not always identified and the reports do not include a comment on progress. Inclusion of these would provide more complete information for parents and provide pupils with a clearer guide on what they need to do in order to improve.
74. There are weaknesses in the leadership and management of the department. Although the department is characterised by good relationships amongst staff there is a need for greater rigour in many areas of management. For example, although the science curriculum meets statutory requirements, the coverage of the information technology component is poor. The departmental scheme of work, for example, covers all appropriate areas, but is insufficiently well co-ordinated to serve as a useful working document. There is a need for more systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and for the development of a wider range of teaching and learning styles, in order to cater more adequately for pupils of all levels of attainment. Recent changes in staffing within the department offer potential for improvement. There is insufficient technician support and insufficient computers available to the department which restricts pupils' learning opportunities and the department's ability to make an effective contribution to the development of pupils' information technology skills
75. Since the last inspection, the collection of assessment information has improved and opportunities for investigatory work have increased. The time allocation for science has been increased to meet the national average. However, there has been insufficient progress with regard to the development of strategies and materials to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and for pupils with English as an additional language. There has also been insufficient progress in the use of information technology in lessons and the use of assessment data to guide lesson planning. The need for greater pace and challenge in lessons remains as does the need to improve the quality of marking. As a consequence the overall progress of the department since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

ART

76. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in art are in line with national expectations. In 1999, the

majority of pupils were reported to be at or above the national expectations for their age. There was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. Attainment in lessons is mostly in line with expectations. Drawing is of a high standard but pupils do not exploit the expressive qualities of colour and paint. Year 7 use their sketchbooks effectively to select and record visual information and to develop ideas for class work. All pupils use and control a range of two and three-dimensional materials such as printmaking and work with clay to communicate ideas. They know about art from different times and cultures. Pupils can recognise styles such as Art Nouveau and Cubism but lack understanding about the purpose and relevance of art. Pupils' use of technical terms and phrases is satisfactory when they talk about art. Their numeracy skills are in line with national expectations when they measure and use methods to judge the relative size and proportion of everyday objects for their still-life drawing. There are no opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology as a part of their practical artwork.

77. Overall, pupils' attainment at Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average. Over the last three years, the number and prior attainment of pupils entered for the GCSE examination in art have fluctuated. This has had an effect on standards. Consequently, although the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in 1999 was below the national average it was above the average for the school. This was a significant fall compared with 1998 when almost three-quarters of pupils gained higher GCSE art grades. However, when considered over a number of years, standards in art have been maintained to be in line with or above national averages. In lessons at Key Stage 4, attainment is in line with national expectations. Sketchbooks are used to design ideas and produce preparatory studies, although lower attaining pupils use and explore a narrow range of ideas. All pupils create interesting paintings, collage and mixed media work based on their study of artists and observational studies of natural and made objects. Higher attaining pupils investigate different ways of using source material. Year 11 pupils produce accomplished coursework based on the study of African masks and the paintings of O'Keefe. This work combines the use of striking images and the careful control of media and techniques.
78. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. All pupils are motivated and enjoy the creative activities the subject provides and they are keen to succeed. Pupils ask questions about the tasks that they are set and what is expected of them. They listen carefully to learn about the progress that they are making and how to improve their work. At Key Stage 4, pupils cope confidently with the responsibility of planning and organising their own work but younger pupils are less confident and become restless when they have to wait for help.
79. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at both key stages. Teachers use their subject knowledge and expertise well. Pupils acquire skills and knowledge to become competent when they draw, to explore and develop ideas and to improve their control of tools and techniques. Lessons are planned to engage the interest of pupils but sometimes there is a lack of sufficient detail to take account of the varying rates of progress and prior attainment levels of pupils. Whole class discussion is good when it is used to introduce new ideas or to consolidate what has been learnt. Year 8 pupils were shown reproductions of European still-life paintings and could make comparisons between their own work and the techniques used by others. There are limited opportunities for pupils to learn about the meaning of art and to express their own views or opinions about other artists' work.
80. Questioning is well used to introduce practical activities but too much time is spent helping pupils on an individual basis. Pupils' effort was good when they were given opportunities to be creative with materials and techniques. Not enough emphasis is placed on helping pupils to plan, organise and develop their own work. Pupils' productivity and the pace of learning are better when they are able to do this. Classroom displays, artefacts and other resources are used effectively to support pupils' practical work and to provide a stimulating environment for learning. Teachers are well informed about pupils' strengths and weaknesses and careful records are kept about their progress and attainment. Pupils can evaluate the success of the techniques they use but are not always clear about the purpose of their work. Not enough use is made of examples of pupils' own work to help them to get a clearer understanding of the standards expected. Homework is set and marked regularly and it is used effectively to

support artwork in school.

81. The head of department provides clear leadership and direction and the art staff work well together as a team. Subject priorities for improvement are identified but they are not focused enough on raising standards. The scheme of work provides a good basis for developing the art curriculum to enable pupils to learn more about how the subject can enhance and influence their lives. Learning resources are good and provide a rich source of material to teach pupils about artists from different times and cultures. Visits to museums and galleries provide the opportunity to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of contemporary practice and of art from other times.
82. Overall, standards have been maintained since the last inspection to continue to be in line with or above national averages. Underlying teaching is a considered approach to planning and good use of resources. Learning activities cater for the cultural diversity of pupils and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Information and communication technology is not yet incorporated into pupils' practical activity. Effective assessment procedures have been maintained but the use of assessment information is less well developed. Leadership is satisfactory, but target setting, monitoring and evaluation is not being approached systematically. Art continues to make a significant contribution to the ethos of the school. Since the last inspection, this subject has made satisfactory progress.

BUSINESS STUDIES

83. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE A* - C grades in 1999 was just below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-G grades was just above the national average. These results show an improvement on those obtained in both 1997 and 1998, although from a smaller entry. The reduction in the number of pupils entered for the examination is the result of a change in the Key Stage 4 option choice system and not a decline in the popularity of the business studies course. There are no consistent differences in the standards attained by boys and girls or by pupils from different groups. Pupils with special educational needs attain standards that are consistent with their prior levels of attainment.
84. Inspection evidence confirms the overall standards of pupils presently in Year 10 and Year 11 to be just below expectations and consistent with the results obtained in the GCSE examination, with no significant differences in the standards of girls and boys or pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils display an increasing knowledge of business as they proceed through the key stage. This was evident in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were able to draw on their previous work to express informed opinions on the environmental factors that need to be taken into account in choosing a business location. The highest attaining pupils were able to produce very well structured work with very good diagrams showing the interrelationships between the various factors. The ability to apply new knowledge and the use of technical language develop well; as in a Year 10 lesson where pupils were able to construct sentences which demonstrated an understanding of concepts such as hierarchy, authority, delegation and span of control. Pupils have good information technology skills and these are well used for word processing, inserting graphics into text and for working with spreadsheets.
85. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They behave very well, support each other's learning and co-operate fully with their teachers. Most boys and girls are very well motivated to succeed. Pupils enjoy their work. They listen very attentively and concentrate fully on the lesson tasks. The majority of pupils pay a great deal of attention to the presentation of their work. A few, however, do not and because their work is not re-drafted it contains a number of uncorrected errors. A number of business linked projects provide pupils with good opportunities for personal development and to exercise responsibility.
86. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and at times good or very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject that is underpinned by both external examining experience and extensive experience in business environments. This adds significantly to quality of teaching and makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers have appropriate expectations of both attainment and behaviour and are able,

through focused question and answer techniques, to improve pupils' skills of critical thinking. Key features of business studies lessons are the good quality of the relationships and the calm atmosphere in which lessons are conducted. Teachers obviously care for the pupils and this provides good support for all pupils and in particular those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Time and resources are generally used well and the best lessons are conducted at a good pace. Work in lessons is well supported by the use of homework which is marked regularly. However, the quality of feedback given to pupils and students through marking is inconsistent. There are some examples of good practice with detailed advice being given on exactly what has to be done in order to improve the quality of a piece of work. But not all marking is of this quality and some is simply ticks with brief comments.

87. Business studies courses are well organised as an option within design and technology. This arrangement works well and provides the business studies teachers with good support from the design and technology co-ordinator. The business studies teachers work well together and form a committed and mutually supportive team. Development planning is satisfactory and this provides a clear sense of direction for the subject. The accommodation for teaching is good. Specialist rooms have been developed which are well equipped with computers and provide very good support for pupils' learning. Business studies was not included in the previous inspection. However, satisfactory progress is being made in the development of the subject. The subject is popular and pupils' results in the GCSE examination make a positive contribution to the standards being achieved in the school as a whole. The subject is capable of further improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

88. The A*-C grade results obtained in food technology in the GCSE have been above the national average for the last two years. However, the GCSE results in graphic products, although showing a slight improvement in 1999 over the 1998 remain well below the national average. The GCSE results in resistant materials over the last two years have been poor with only five per cent of pupils entered achieving A*-C grades.
89. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is in line with national expectations in food and textiles but below in resistant materials. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in food is generally in line with, and sometimes above national expectations. Pupil's attainment in graphic products is unsatisfactory and is suffering because of the lack of expertise in the department. In resistant materials at Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is poor. The best work is seen in food where pupils display a secure knowledge and understanding of the products they are making in both key stages.
90. Overall pupils understanding of the design process is satisfactory. However, pupils evaluations are not always sufficiently related to the design specification. Many pupils in food take pride in their work. They demonstrate very effective project management and some good, and at times very good, design folios are produced. Pupils' practical skills in resistant materials are unsatisfactory in both key stages. Whilst some pupils demonstrate the ability to generate and develop some imaginative ideas, many find this difficult and often drawings do not show functional and technical detail. Pupils' skills with technical graphics are relatively weak. Pupils' work in resistant materials shows a limited range of skills and weak design initiative. The opportunity to work with materials other than wood and to create technological products is limited by the facilities available. Pupils' limited technical knowledge and their understanding of resistant materials technology and tools are also a weakness. Intellectual understanding particularly with activities related to industrial practices and the applications of systems, electronics and control, and pneumatics in the resistant materials area, is unsatisfactory. Also, pupils' facility to enhance their design and technology capability and progress through activities in resistant materials, in which they investigate, disassemble and evaluate familiar products, is below expectations. A few pupils demonstrate the effective use of information technology, as in GCSE food technology, but generally there is very little evidence of the use of information technology in pupils' work at either key stage. Some Key Stage 3 pupils demonstrate imaginative computer aided design skills as, for example, in the design of a house in a bubble.

91. Overall, pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject, particularly in food. They co-operate well together and this is often a strength in lessons. They respond well to instructions and are generally fully engaged in their work. However, in resistant materials the behaviour of some pupils is unsatisfactory. They are noisy and their behaviour becomes disruptive. In some classes, unrestrained friendship-group chatting reaches an unacceptable level and this is not always managed effectively by the teacher.
92. Teaching in food overall is good, and in textiles it is satisfactory. In resistant materials, it is unsatisfactory and sometimes poor. Effective use is made of resources and stimulus materials. Planning is generally good in food and a particular strong feature is the writing of the lesson objectives on the board. The teaching in resistant materials has many shortcomings. Expectations are too low and a lack of authority and presence makes classroom management skills weak. The identification of National Curriculum levels in all material areas is inconsistent. Three of the teachers in the department are teaching outside their specialist areas and this is having an adverse effect on standards. There is a lack of teaching expertise in graphics and control systems, particularly at Key Stage 4.
93. Whilst pupils' quality of learning is generally satisfactory at Key Stage 3, it is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 4. Teaching is unsatisfactory because the levels of productivity and pace of working are too low. Also, the level of challenge presented to Year 10 pupils in resistant materials is too low with the work that they are required to do at a level similar to that normally seen in Year 7 and Year 8 in Key Stage 3. Pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding in food is overall satisfactory and sometimes good in Key Stage 4. They demonstrate that they are able to use tools and equipment confidently. The quality of learning in textiles is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language cope well with the making aspects of the work and progress is satisfactory in this aspect of the subject. Pupils do not always have a clear understanding of their learning targets, particularly in resistant materials, which affects progress. Year 11 pupils' output and physical effort in resistant materials is poor. Also, the learning demands and content presented to Key Stage 4 pupils following the graphics products course lacks intellectual challenge.
94. The head of faculty, who monitors teacher performance and provides positive guidance and support, sets a good example and clearly demonstrates how pupils' attainment and their learning can be improved. The faculty documentation is very well organised and the support material generated for pupils' use confirms staff commitment. Schemes of work are good in food and satisfactory in textiles. There are weaknesses in the suitability and content in Key Stage 4 graphics products scheme of work and in resistant materials the range of materials and technological experiences is very limited in both key stages. Aspects of the Key Stage 3 scheme of work requires revision to ensure a much stronger technical graphics element and to allow pupils more opportunities to work with a range of resistant materials. The assessment of pupils' performance in food is a strength but requires further attention in other material areas. Some of the material reports to parents, are vague and do not relate sufficiently to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and to the progress pupils are making. Some marking of pupils' work is very good, but overall, there is inconsistency across the faculty with some pupils' work having not been marked for several weeks and a lack of comments to aid pupils' progress. Resource provision for technological work such as computer control technology is unsatisfactory. Some health and safety matters were raised during the inspection in resistant materials and there are some hygiene issues related to the food area cleaning programme. Some group sizes are above the recommended maximum 20 pupils.
95. Whilst there has been some progress for instance, in relation to Key Stage 3 pupils' achievement in food and textiles and in the GCSE food technology results, overall, there is a downward trend in design and technology, largely because of the weaknesses in resistant materials.

GEOGRAPHY

96. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national expectation but above that found in

similar schools. Attainment in the GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 was well below the national average but above average for similar schools. Results in the GCSE examination have been improving over the last three years but are below those gained at the time of the last inspection. In 1999 just over one-third of pupils gained GCSE A*-C grades and almost nine out of ten pupils gained grades in the A*-G range.

97. At both key stages pupils' knowledge and understanding of social and economic issues are better developed than their skills in the use of maps and the presentation of data. These differences reflect weaknesses in numeracy. The attainment of boys and girls at Key Stage 3 is similar, but by Year 11 that of the girls falls behind and their performance in the GCSE is significantly weaker. While carrying out a study based on a survey of land use, nearly every Year 7 pupil was able to identify the building materials and the majority were able to record the information correctly on large scale maps. Year 9 pupils display a good grasp of reasons for protecting the tropical rain forests and higher attaining pupils understand some of the results of uncontrolled forest clearance. Some Year 9 pupils confuse the names of countries and continents. The majority of Year 11 pupils can interpret rainfall patterns from sets of bar graphs and make the link between these and fluctuations in river discharge illustrated by a line graph.
98. The pace of learning is satisfactory throughout both key stages. Following careful teacher guidance nearly all pupils in a Year 7 class were able to correctly relate their maps to the features being studied and by the end of the lesson higher attaining pupils could match buildings of a similar period. In a study of land form through clear but simple contour images on the board, nearly all pupils made the link between the spacing of contour lines and the degree of slope and the higher attaining pupils could identify simple land forms. Year 9 pupils used map scales to make comparisons between distances in England and in Brazil, which gave them a clear grasp of the size of the equatorial rain forest. In a study of land use maps of cities from wealthy and poor countries, nearly all pupils in a Year 10 GCSE class made the link between wealth and the effectiveness of planning controls. The higher attaining pupils started to make reasoned judgements on stages in growth of cities. Most pupils with special educational needs make progress that is in line with that of other pupils. The progress of pupils for whom English is a second language depends largely on the availability and use of support teachers. Where additional support is available, as in a Year 9 lesson, then pupils make very good progress. They quickly extend their understanding of key words for the topic being studied and this allows them to complete most of the tasks set for the class.
99. The attitudes and effort of pupils are good in Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 all but a very small number of boys, both in Year 10 and Year 11, listen attentively and sustain good concentration during lessons. Many pupils in Year 7 lack sustained concentration and a small but significant number of pupils in Year 9, though willing to contribute to class discussion, are slow to settle to written work and are easily distracted. Opportunities to manage their learning in small groups in lessons are limited as are opportunities to exercise responsibility.
100. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good as is the quality of lesson planning. Learning objectives, information and tasks are mostly communicated clearly. A satisfactory range of teaching and learning strategies is used and most work is appropriate for the age and attainment levels of pupils. Time is mostly used well but in the one unsatisfactory lesson observed there was a lack of pace with the consequence that pupils' interest was lost. Only limited use is made of different teaching materials to support the learning of pupils of varying levels of attainment. The management of pupils is largely effective and a caring and patient approach is adopted at all times. Support for the development of language is good, for the development of numeracy it is satisfactory but for the application information technology it is unsatisfactory.
101. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is satisfactory, as are arrangements for the assessment of pupils' learning. The objectives of the subject development plan are well matched to the school plan but the process lacks rigour, in particular the detail of how its objectives are to be met have yet to be worked out.
102. Overall satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. There are more field

work opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 3. There are more audio-visual resources and this has helped the development of a wider range of teaching and learning styles with the consequence that pupils' efforts and attitudes to work have improved. There have been some refinements to the schemes of work but these are still incomplete. There has been little progress in the structured application of information technology in support of pupils' learning.

HISTORY

103. Standards attained by pupils at both the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 have improved since the time of the last inspection but are still below the national expectation. At Key Stage 3 in Year 7, pupils are performing about one level below the national average. By the end of the key stage they have improved slightly better than the national trend but are still below the national average. At Key Stage 4, standards are more in line with national expectations with about half the pupils attaining the national average or better. Overall the performance of boys and girls is in line with their ability and there is no significant difference in their attainment. Pupils with special educational needs attain standards that are broadly in line with their abilities.
104. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils can understand and use time-scale, gain information from a number of sources and represent it appropriately. Their ability to apply their skills to investigative work is more limited. Higher attaining pupils can appreciate the need to question the reliability of evidence and most pupils are aware that sources can show bias. At Key Stage 4, performance in the GCSE examination has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection. Pupils have a good understanding of cause and effect and are able to appreciate the complexities of events. In structuring their work, most pupils can select appropriate information from a variety of sources covering a span of time and are aware that events are rarely isolated occurrences. They also demonstrate confidence when speaking and an ability to discuss their interpretations of events with other pupils.
105. Most pupils, including those with special education needs and English as an additional language, make generally satisfactory progress. However, pupils' learning at Key Stage 3, can be restricted because of a lack of rigour in lesson planning and insufficient collaborative planning with support teachers. The progress of middle attaining and lower attaining pupils can be restricted by too few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
106. Pupils' attitudes are generally very positive in both key stages. Relationships both with the teacher and other pupils are good and most lessons have a genuine feeling of shared endeavour. Behaviour is usually good and even when some pupils start to be disruptive, they generally respond quickly to the teachers' interventions. However, pupils tend to drift off task when lessons do not arouse their interest and they are not actively involved in lesson activities.

107. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 4, but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3. Unsatisfactory teaching is associated with lessons in which learning objectives are unclear and little reference is made to previous learning in order to establish a firm base for new learning. Inadequate lesson planning and use of classroom support teachers also had a negative effect upon pupils learning in these lessons. Nevertheless, there are examples of good teaching at both key stages. In Year 7, for example, the effective use of group work enabled pupils gain a greater understanding of the life of Julius Caesar as they shared the roles of learner and teacher. Similarly in Year 8, resources and group discussion were used effectively as pupils argued the case as to whether King John was a good or a bad King. In Year 9 pupils were actively involved in collaborative work deciding why certain groups of people chose to settle in the countries of the British Empire. At Key Stage 4 good teaching was seen in the effective analysis of the Cold War using video clips in which pupils traced some causes back to the First World War. The teaching of the subject benefits from a specialist teacher whose commitment brings the opportunity for a greater variety and range to the work. Teaching is particularly effective when pupils become engaged in the lesson through the effective use of questioning. In these lessons, pupils' learning benefits from the building up of a clear framework on the board which is then used to structure the lesson activities. Using this framework the teacher was able to manage the pace of the lesson effectively and provide appropriate challenges for pupils which helped to reinforce and extend their learning. A general weakness in the work of the department is that assessment is not sufficiently related to subject skills. Pupils do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes good quality work in terms of National Curriculum levels. The ability of pupils to take responsibility for their own learning is restricted as a consequence of this lack of understanding.
108. The leadership given by the co-ordinator creates a positive ethos for the subject which is further enhanced by the quality of classroom display. Despite a firm commitment to improvement, the subject development plan lacks detail and is insufficiently focused on the raising of standards. Other major omissions are strategies to increase the use of information technology, a lack of focus on the assessment of key skills and insufficient involvement of pupils in the assessment process.
109. Since the time of the previous inspection there have been significant improvements in the work of the department and the standards achieved by pupils. The under-performance of the subject was one of the main issues raised in the previous inspection report and satisfactory progress has been made in attending to these issues. The department is capable of further improvement.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

110. Attainment overall, is in line with the national average by the end of both key stages in those information technology fields being addressed. Statutory requirements are not being met because pupils' controlling and data logging and use sensory devices experiences, are unsatisfactory due to the lack of availability of software and suitable equipment. There are no GCSE entries in information technology. However, the school has introduced a nationally accredited information technology Certificate of Competence, covering word processing and spreadsheets. In a recent test, all Year 11 pupils managed to secure a pass in both areas.
111. By the end of Key Stage 3, the work of many pupils exhibits some good features such as when using a program to produce an electronic circuit in design and technology or in the production of newsletters. Pupils' use of the Internet is developing strongly as demonstrated through a display of their geographical research work. Inspection evidence confirms pupils' competence in the manipulation of text and graphics, techniques of data storage and retrieval and the use of software. However, pupils at both key stages, do not have a clear understanding of the aspect of the curriculum relating to the impact of new technologies in social, economic, ethical and moral matters. Several pupils are approaching levels where they feel confident with word processing and spreadsheet work. Some good computer generated work folios are produced, for example, in food technology. However, there is little evidence within pupils' workbooks and project folios of information technology being used routinely. Pupils' opportunities and knowledge and use of CD-ROMS are developing well, but use of electronic mail currently,

does not feature as part of their learning.

112. When using information technology pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. They are motivated by the opportunity to take responsibility for organising and presenting their work. There is very good collaboration amongst pupils who are very keen to help each other. This is very evident when large numbers of pupils attend the computer clubs both during the lunchtimes and the evenings every week.
113. The overall quality of teaching within the specialist information technology lessons is good. Teachers make effective use of time and resources and they demonstrate very good subject knowledge. They encourage pupils to become independent and to support each other, and there is equal opportunity and access for all to participate. Class management is often very good. Lesson objectives and instructions are clear but day-to-day planning requires further attention in order to ensure that the content clearly relates to the National Curriculum Programme of Study and that regular assessment in terms of National Curriculum levels are carried out. The use of information technology across all subjects is inhibited by the lack of confidence of some teachers in the use of information technology. The school has recognised this weakness and a planned training programme is about to be implemented to improve the level of teachers' skills.
114. The specialist information technology lessons ensure that the quality of learning is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Many pupils are gaining confidence in their use of keyboard skills and when using the software programs. Several pupils show good progress in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding of information, as in the production of desktop published newsletters in Key Stage 3. Creativity is evident, for example, in Year 8 design and technology where pupils made good use of computer aided design in a pupils 'converted windmill' house design. Many pupils particularly at Key Stage 3, demonstrate an impressive pace of working and work output. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language enjoy working with computers and make satisfactory progress overall. Recall from previous lessons is generally positive. However, some pupils at all levels of attainment are unable to identify targets for improvement.
115. The school and the newly appointed co-ordinator and staff responsible for teaching and supervising information technology are taking positive action to enhance and improve provision for information technology. This provision now includes two networked rooms, a video conferencing unit and a link to the Local Education Authority 'Intranet'. However, resources both within the information technology rooms and across the school are not used to maximum efficiency. For instance, one of the information technology rooms is not always being used for the teaching of information technology. Also, at times one of the information technology rooms is overcrowded because of size of the teaching groups and access to computers is restricted. Curriculum planning for the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 information technology programmes is well established. However, there is no overall plan in which the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are allocated to the other subjects. As a consequence, planning for the teaching of information technology in other subjects is mostly ineffective and several subjects lack computers. A revised information technology policy has been produced and a working group of teachers meets regularly to discuss information technology matters. Assessment through a Key Stage 3 pupils' information technology skills analysis booklet, is helping teachers to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. The amount of time allocated to the Key Stage 3 information technology taught programme is below the national average. There are weaknesses in the marking of pupils' work with not enough guidance provided on what pupils must do in order to make further progress and not enough information is provided to parents in written report. The monitoring of pupils' information technology attainment across the curriculum is inadequate. Displays of pupils' work are well used to support teaching and pupils' learning.

116. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, when standards were below expectations and there were serious short shortcomings in the teaching of information technology. Both standards of attainment and the quality of teaching and learning have been improved through the provision of a discrete timetable for the teaching of information technology at both key stages. The department is well set to make further progress.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

117. Standards achieved by pupils by the end of Key Stage 3, as reported in teacher assessments, are well below the national expectation. However, inspection evidence indicates that there has been considerable improvement over the last three years to now be more in line with national expectations. Girls do better than boys. In most lessons standards are in line with expectations with reading and listening the best developed skills. Pupils acquire vocabulary and grammar rules systematically as they learn to talk about themselves, their family and their interests. They make particularly good progress in understanding what they hear and read in the foreign language. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is enhanced by the use of a reading scheme and the consistent use of French or Spanish by teachers. Though pupils in Year 7 enjoy participating in oral games and role-plays, they do not extend their range in speaking; by the end of the key stage there remains considerable reticence, and pronunciation is often weak. Pupils have very few opportunities to express themselves in writing and this skill is poorly developed. In Year 8 they write briefly about themselves, and in Year 9 higher attaining pupils write fairly accurate descriptions of other people. Pupils in lower sets struggle to retain knowledge and find it difficult to construct sentences. Written work usually consists of routine exercises to practise structures.
118. GCSE results at the higher grades A*-C were well below the national average in 1999 in both French and Spanish, though in Spanish a trend of improvement was maintained. In both languages boys did better than girls. White United Kingdom heritage pupils achieved the best results, and there was some good performance at the highest A*-A grade levels. The decline in French results compared to 1998 was largely due to a sharp deterioration in the performance of girls. Reading was the best developed skill, with writing the weakest. Pupils' performance in languages was broadly in line with the average performance across all school subjects. GCSE results reflected closely the teacher assessments for these pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, indicating satisfactory progress over Key Stage 4. All candidates gained a grade within the full GCSE A*-G grade range. Pupils in lower sets entered for the GCSE short course or a certificate of achievement gained satisfactory results for their level of ability. Evidence from lessons and other work seen during the inspection suggests that standards are improving. Though oral opportunities increase, especially in classes where foreign language assistantes are deployed, many pupils continue to lack confidence in their speaking. They do not volunteer answers readily and rarely use French or Spanish in routine classroom situations. They cope with role-play but there is a lack of extension into genuine conversation. The decision to do the written coursework option at GCSE means that there is much more focus on writing in Key Stage 4. Higher and average attaining pupils apply their knowledge of tenses well in describing holiday experiences or discussing health matters, though there is a good deal of inaccuracy in their writing. Pupils in lower sets need considerable help with their writing. They attempt simple tasks and usually manage to convey some elements of the intended message. Standards of work seen in coursework already assessed, and the overall standard of work seen in top sets in both languages in Year 10 and Year 11 indicate a steady improvement.
119. Pupils' attitudes and values are satisfactory. Many pupils say they like studying a foreign language and see a purpose for it. A good number of pupils in Years 8 and 9 give up their free time after school to enable them to start learning a second language, Spanish, and the take-up for this in Key Stage 4 is pleasing. Involvement in other extra-curricular activities, especially trips and exchanges abroad, is also good. In class, pupils generally behave well. They are attentive and compliant, and get on with their work, collaborating well with other pupils when required to. In a minority of lessons, in mixed ability Year 7 groups, and in some lower sets further up the school, pupils find it difficult to sustain concentration and occasionally behaviour is disruptive and even confrontational. Where this occurs it affects the progress of the whole

class. Pupils show some initiative, for instance in using Internet and Encarta to research their Year 7 project work and in the best written coursework, but they do not make the best of opportunities to take home reading and listening resources which are made available to them

120. Teaching is satisfactory, with some good teaching, especially in Key Stage 4, and notably in Spanish, where pupils are very committed. There is some non-specialist teaching, which is less effective in promoting pupils' use of French. The two full time teachers are native speakers of French and use their subject knowledge well to provide appropriate models. All specialist teachers raise expectations by their consistent use of French or Spanish, and pupils' performance in Key Stage 4 is enhanced by their good knowledge of GCSE requirements and techniques, and by the level of support they give them in terms of reference materials. On the other hand teachers do not plan systematically for pupils themselves to use the foreign language as the routine in lessons, and many pupils remain reserved about speaking in front of others. Planning is satisfactory for most lessons. In the best lessons pupils have opportunities to consolidate previous knowledge and to learn something new via a series of brisk activities, involving different skills. In a Year 7 French lesson pupils revised giving their name and where they live and this led naturally to learning the alphabet in French so that they could spell accurately. In a Year 11 Spanish lesson a text was used for first reading then oral work before being exploited for focus on comparatives and superlatives. In such lessons pupils are challenged and learning is effective. In some lessons, even for top sets, the challenge of the work is pitched at too low a level. Pupils enjoy the activities but do not make adequate progress. There is too much emphasis on comprehension work so that pupils are not given adequate opportunities to express themselves orally and in writing. This narrows the range of their learning, especially in Key Stage 3. Also, there is no obvious attempt to match the work to the abilities of individual pupils within groups, so that, although the least able and the most able make satisfactory progress, they could be doing better. Teachers make good use of the resources available to them. Pupils' learning experiences are varied where teachers make use of reading schemes, video and computers. However, these resources are not used consistently across the department. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good, though teachers lack strategies for dealing effectively with challenging behaviour when it arises, to the extent that learning is adversely affected, sometimes for all pupils in the group. Teachers use some effective teaching methods. For example the practice of expecting a piece of French as the answer when the register is being taken provides immediate revision and sets the tone for the lesson. Satisfactory use is made of the time available. In marking pupils' work teachers do not provide sufficient guidance on how the work might be improved. Homework usually consolidates classwork, but the range is restricted by the fact that textbooks cannot be taken home. This limits pupils who want to exceed the minimum requirement, and the opportunities for parents to become involved.
121. Curricular provision is good and the subject is enthusiastically led with a clear commitment to improving standards. However there are some key areas where improvement is needed. Strategies to cope with unacceptable behaviour are inadequate. Though a start has been made to collecting assessment data, this information is not being shared with pupils to promote learning and set targets for improvement. Opportunities to tell pupils how they can improve are missed, for instance in marking; and in reports, where comments are bland. The clear message from GCSE results that writing is the least developed skill has not so far led to amendments in schemes of work to address this weakness. Work is not sufficiently matched to the abilities of individual pupils. Indeed the subject development plan, which is cumbersome and lacks procedures for monitoring its action points, fails to take into account any of these points which are central to continuation or acceleration of the current improvement in standards. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in outside classrooms. Noise travels between rooms, affecting concentration. Where classes are large, pupils are cramped. Those with their backs to the teacher and the board have to contort themselves to listen and copy.
122. Although there have been improvements since the last inspection, for instance in the level of use of the foreign language by teachers, in the time allocated for modern languages, and in the overall quality of teaching, the fact remains that most of the weaknesses indicated in this report persist from the last inspection. Reference was made then, amongst other things, to inadequate provision for writing, hesitancy in speaking, the lack of more demanding tasks, the lack of differentiated materials, and the poor use of marking.

MUSIC

123. Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate that two thirds of pupils reached or exceeded the standard expected nationally. It is difficult to substantiate this, however, since the scheme of work for music does not define expected standards very clearly and the assessment system, whilst carefully applied, is not well enough linked to national expectations in terms of National Curriculum levels. Inspection evidence indicates that the standards of pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 are generally in line with expectations, but the majority of pupils in Year 9 are not achieving the expected level. Pupils' use of musical terms remains simple, keyboard skills are often limited in accuracy and subtlety and there are few instances of pupils describing or responding to music in any depth. Across the key stage, keyboard playing and technical understanding of music are learnt satisfactorily. Pupils can describe and identify simple musical features and relate sounds to scores and other symbols. On the other hand, less consistent attention is given to vocal music and computers are used only intermittently so that skills in these areas are limited. It was not possible to observe ensemble playing or composition during the inspection.
124. During Key Stage 4, the small numbers taking GCSE in recent years have made good progress and all have achieved A*-C grades. Work seen and heard in Year 11 is at a similarly good standard with some compositions being particularly well made and stylistically effective. Good use is made of computer based sequencing programs. A larger number of pupils have begun the GCSE course in Year 10, reflecting a new popularity for the subject and work observed here is satisfactory. Pupils apply their varying musical skills to their composing and performing tasks. They are less good at rehearsing together; whilst they work enthusiastically, they lack rehearsal skills such as listening to each other's ideas and defining exactly what they are trying to achieve in the time available.
125. A relatively high proportion of pupils, approximately 11 per cent, receive instrumental lessons and these are well supported by both school and visiting staff in forming vocal and instrumental groups. There are occasional musical events in the school and local workshops which small numbers attend but there are not permanent choirs or ensembles designed to offer musical experiences to larger numbers of pupils who may not receive instrumental tuition. 'Radio Fairfield' is based in the department and broadcasts to the school daily. Whilst this enhances the life of the school, only a small number of pupils are involved in its operation and the musical demands and opportunities for pupils are limited.
126. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the department and equipment is generally treated with respect. Occasional inconsiderate behaviour is dealt with positively by the class teacher. Pupils are attentive and they are open to new musical experiences, for example, listening with interest to the music of China and the Baroque period. The department is open at breaks and lunchtimes and a significant number of pupils routinely drop in to use the resources.
127. Teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good, both in class and in instrumental lessons. The teachers are competent musicians who can enthuse about their subject and convey ideas and skills clearly. Careful attention is given to pupils for whom English is an additional language. The teachers establish good relationships with pupils and motivate them to learn. They involve the pupils in assessing their own achievement. Pupils are encouraged to discuss the music they hear and they are given clear, manageable tasks to carry out practically. Sometimes, however, these tasks are not sufficiently demanding for some pupils and there are too few opportunities to discuss and develop ideas and responses to music in any depth. In the one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, too much time was given to writing and the testing of existing knowledge and too little to the teaching of new concepts and skills. Lessons are orderly and well managed but planning overall is a weakness. Although the range of music covered is good, the skills and understanding, which are to be learnt within each unit of work, and individual lesson are not made clear. As a consequence, lessons sometimes include irrelevant material and it is not clear to pupils what standard of refinement or knowledge they

should be reaching. Homework is not always set and when set the range of activities is limited. Marking is not always helpful to pupils in showing how their work could be improved.

128. The accommodation for music is cramped and there are too few spaces for pupils to do practical work without being disturbed by other players and singers. This makes it difficult for pupils to hear what they are playing and to play well together and it severely restricts the standards that pupils may be expected to achieve.
129. There were no recommendations for specific action in music in the last inspection report but the department has shared in the developments which the school as a whole has undertaken.
130. In order to raise standards, the department needs to ensure that its development plans identify clear priorities and provide opportunities for the single class teacher to interact with other professionals to refine aspects of both teaching and assessment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

131. The teachers' assessment of pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicated that the proportion of girls who reached expected standards was similar to that found in most schools but the proportion of boys who did so was below average. The inspection evidence indicates that there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls and that the attainment of pupils who are near the end of Key Stage 3 is average for their age. In Year 9, boys maintain close control in practicing dribbling skills in football and higher attainers are able to do so whilst running at pace. In extra-curricular netball, Year 9 girls make long passes with accuracy and move into space well, showing good tactical awareness. In football, Year 9 girls try hard to improve but basic skills are weak and only a minority maintain close control successfully in games. Pupils know how to warm up for, and cool down after strenuous physical activity and have a good understanding of the short-term effects of exercise on the body.
132. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in the 1999 GCSE examination was similar to that found nationally. Results have improved year on year since 1997 when only 13% of pupils achieved A*-C grades. In each of these years, all pupils entered for the examination have achieved at least a "G" grade, which is better than the national picture. Over time, there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls or between pupils of different ethnic origin. Attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 4. In the optional examination course, pupils' attainment in the practical elements is better than in theory, where there are also weaknesses in spelling and grammar. In basketball, boys and girls have average levels of attainment in skills and team play, and organise themselves effectively for practical assessment showing a good understanding of the relevant criteria. In compulsory physical education, where step aerobics is included in a health related fitness unit of study, pupils have a sound understanding of the link between exercise and cardiovascular activity, and of the value of exercise in maintaining health. Most pupils can identify and measure pulse rate correctly and understand the concept of the 'working zone'. Lower attaining pupils in basketball lack refinement and consistency in passing and shooting and are restricted to simple man to man defensive strategies.
133. Pupils enjoy physical education and participation rates are high in spite of the difficulties caused by the lack of on site accommodation. A significant number of boys and girls take part in a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activity and a higher proportion of pupils than is found nationally choose to take the optional examination course. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers, concentrate on work, which is often physically demanding, and most collaborate well in pair and group activities. Older pupils work effectively in groups in GCSE classes because they have been given a clear idea of what is expected. Girls in year 7 respond well to enthusiastic teaching by spontaneously preparing for physical activity and taking the initiative in group organisation. Attitudes and behaviour are better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 where a small number of boys are easily distracted, and do not have the same positive attitudes to the concept of fair play as girls.

134. The overall quality of teaching is good and is never less than satisfactory. Occasionally teaching is very good. One of the major strengths of the teaching is the quality of relationships which exist between teachers and pupils, which helps create a positive learning environment while maintaining an underlying discipline. Teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' performance in lessons and involve them in the process of deciding how they can improve. Most lessons have to take place off site and teachers work hard to ensure that the minimum amount of lesson time is lost in travelling to playing fields and sports centres. Planning is good, ensuring that learning activities are matched to pupils' attainment and have appropriate challenge. Many lessons conclude with opportunities for pupils to evaluate the progress they have made. Teachers use demonstrations and questioning effectively. Subject knowledge is good for the most part but weaknesses in specialist expertise in football and dance have been recognised and appropriate in service training is being provided. GCSE theory lessons lack variety and marking is inconsistent. All specialist teachers are generous with their time in providing extra-curricular sport and are supported by a small number of non-specialist colleagues.
135. The quality of learning is good in both key stages. Good teaching is supported by generally positive pupil attitudes, particularly in Key Stage 4. Rates of progress are appropriate and the development of skills is progressive through the key stages, complemented by gains in understanding of technique and knowledge and understanding of what is needed to improve. For example, complex skills such as the 'Cryuff turn' are practised by boys in Year 8 who are able to build on sound basic skills gained in Year 7. Most lessons are characterised by pace. Pupils listen carefully to teachers, concentrate, and work hard both physically and mentally. Lesson summaries actively involve pupils in reinforcement of their learning. Teachers are prepared to adapt their schemes of work to make sure that learning activities are well matched to pupils' levels of attainment. Pupils are progressively able to assume responsibility for their learning. In Year 7, they follow the teacher in performing appropriate warm up activities and in Year 8, girls are confidently selecting them for themselves and leading others. Teachers know pupils well and are aware of individual requirements so that pupils who have special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language, make the same progress as other pupils. In some lessons, inattentiveness or challenging behaviour, particularly from boys, slows the rates of progress which are made. Some pupils in GCSE classes lack a clear understanding of their progress in relation to course criteria and teachers' marking of pupils' written work does not always show them how to improve.
136. Subject leadership is good although constrained by having other significant responsibilities in the school. There is a positive culture for curriculum development and professional relationships are strong. Day-to-day routines are managed very efficiently so that the minimum amount of time for learning is lost in travelling to the off site facilities which the school is compelled to use for a high proportion of lessons. Good use has been made of external sources of funding to enhance the curriculum. A good range of extra-curricular activities which contribute to the standards achieved also enhances the curriculum. Reports to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 lack precision in describing pupils' attainment in relation to the expected standards. Insufficient use is being made of the information gained by monitoring the quality of teaching and through the analysis of assessment data.
137. The standards described at the time of the previous inspection have been largely maintained although standards in the GCSE examination have fluctuated. More time has been provided for physical education in Key Stage 4 which has resulted in greater breadth and balance in the curriculum and improvements in overall quality. The quality of accommodation for the subject on the school site remains poor.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

138. Attainment in GCSE religious education in 1999, as in the previous year, was slightly below the national average, although less than a dozen pupils are entered for the full GCSE in any year. Since last year, all pupils in Key Stage 4 study for the GCSE short course, a large percentage of whom are entered for the examination, although the first year of results indicates that attainment is low in comparison with national standards. On the basis of work seen during the inspection, standards are currently in line with national expectations in most lessons and in

much of the written work, at both key stages. Not enough time, however, is available for the subject at Key Stage 4, making it impossible to cover the syllabuses adequately and thus depressing the standards. Pupils taking the full GCSE voluntarily attend extra lessons after school in order to cover some of the extra work, but higher attainment in examinations depends on pupils doing much work in their own time.

139. Progress during Key Stage 3 is good, with pupils increasing their knowledge and understanding of the major world faiths: Muslim pupils in a Year 7 class showed surprise at finding, for instance, that the Creation story in the Bible was similar to the Islamic version. Pupils in other classes were observed learning about rites of passage in Jewish and Hindu cultures. Pupils also progress well in Key Stage 4, given the limited time they have available for learning. New learning is mostly confined to Islam, but they are able to consider the beliefs in considerable detail, and contrast them with Christian beliefs in particular areas. No particular help is given to pupils with special educational needs; some of these are less successful at completing notes, and a few pupils with behavioural difficulties receive insufficient support in this subject. Some pupils for whom English is an additional language also make less progress than others due to a lack of effective support in lessons.
140. Pupils have a very positive attitude to religious education, however, and usually behave well in lessons. They respect the beliefs and values of others, and relate well to their teachers. The presence of a significant minority of Muslim pupils is a positive feature in this respect; their background and experience contribute to the learning process and help foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance. In Year 10 classes, for example, this allows discussions on blasphemy and divine judgement to take place in an honest and open way, with no attempt at hiding genuine differences between Muslims and Christians or non-believers.
141. Teaching, at both key stages is always satisfactory and usually good. All but one class is taught by a specialist teacher, and pupils benefit from the teacher's detailed knowledge and understanding of the subject. The teacher's own religious and cultural background are put to good use in lessons, which are lively and stimulating for pupils, even when they are merely listening. But they have ample opportunity to read, discuss and make notes; lessons have a strong emphasis on acquiring a suitable vocabulary for the subject. Pupils ask perceptive questions, which indicate a genuine interest in the subject, but also betraying a lack of prior knowledge about some aspects of religion. A surprising number of Year 8 pupils, for example, had not handled a Bible before - and this was apart from those from other religious backgrounds.
142. The shortage of time allocated to the subject, especially at Key Stage 4, restricts learning opportunities, although in other respects the subject is well resourced and follows an appropriate syllabus based on the Agreed Syllabus for Bristol. The introduction of an accredited course at Key Stage 4 was a helpful move, raising the status of the subject, although the fact that the short course GCSE focuses on just one religion, Islam, means that technically the school is in breach of its statutory obligation to follow the Local Agreed Syllabus. Boys and girls are taught separately at Key Stage 4, largely because of the timetabling of other subjects, but this has no adverse effect on pupil learning - possibly the reverse, in that sensitive aspects of the syllabus can be discussed more frankly.
143. Although the time allocation has improved little since the last inspection, there have been some other improvements, notably the appointment of a specialist subject co-ordinator who is already addressing the need for adjustments to the syllabus. The production of detailed schemes of work and worksheets that sharpen the focus of notemaking as an activity should help to counter some of the disadvantages that arise from the lack of time.