

INSPECTION REPORT

SACRED HEART HIGH SCHOOL

212 Hammersmith Road, LONDON, W6 7DG

LEA area: Hammersmith & Fulham

Unique reference number: 100363

Headteacher: Dr Christine Carpenter

Reporting inspector: Mr Calvin Pike
1565

Dates of inspection: 31 January – 3 February 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	212 Hammersmith Road LONDON
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Sr Elizabeth Smith
Date of previous inspection:	9 October 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided high school, founded by the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1893. It obtained 'Beacon' School status in 1999. The school caters for 11-16 year old girls, representing a broad and well-balanced range of prior attainment on entry. With 782 pupils, its roll is smaller than the average-sized secondary schools. Although in Brook Green Ward in Hammersmith and Fulham borough, the school draws its intake from a number of other wards. A good percentage of girls travel from other surrounding boroughs. Approximately two-thirds of its pupils come from areas that are socially disadvantaged and just over a third live in postal districts near to the school, typified by high-density council estates or trust housing schemes. The percentage of pupils in households with no residents in employment, or who are eligible for free school meals, is above the national average. Nearly ten per cent of pupils have special educational needs and less than one per cent have statements of special educational needs. These figures are below national averages. The proportion of girls from minority ethnic backgrounds is in line with the average for the local authority but high compared with national averages. Black African, British and Caribbean pupils account for well over a tenth of the intake. Just over a quarter of the school's pupils speak English as an additional language, but no girl is in the early stage of English language acquisition.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sacred Heart High is a school of excellence, with many outstanding features. Excellent leadership has created a positive and supportive ethos in which pupils show a thirst and enthusiasm for learning. High expectations lead to unusually high standards. Strengths far outweigh the school's weaknesses.

What the school does well

- Excellent leadership provides a shared educational direction to raise standards
- High standards result from high quality teaching which has an exceptionally positive impact on learning
- Excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the school's ethos
- A rigorous and well-managed system is used effectively to support, challenge and monitor the individual progress of pupils
- Pupils learn enthusiastically and their attitudes to work are very positive
- The school's long-term planning and financial management are very good
- Very good progress has been made since the last inspection

What could be improved

- The current curriculum provided for design technology does not meet statutory requirements for some pupils in Year 10
- Although English results are well above the national averages, some pupils could achieve even higher standards in this subject

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made significant progress since the last inspection in October 1995. Although average National Curriculum point scores at the end of KS3 have been broadly in line with national trends, results in mathematics and science have risen. There has been year on year improvement in GCSE results. The trend in the school's average total GCSE/GNVQ point score per pupil is above the national trend for the last six years, with particular improvements in modern foreign languages and mathematics. The quality of teaching is better. The areas for action identified in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully. Subsequent national changes in requirements for information technology have led to a current need to review provision in this area within the school. The learning resource centre has been improved with a mezzanine floor, an expanded fiction section and additional computer facilities including access to intranet and internet sites.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A+	Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D Well below average E

Standards in the national tests for 14 years olds have been consistently well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Results in 1999 are very high in comparison with similar schools in English and well above average in mathematics and science. The average point score of pupils at KS3 puts the school's performance in the highest five per cent nationally. GCSE results have risen steadily since 1994. Science and, particularly, mathematics results have improved substantially. Modern foreign language results have risen significantly with 93 per cent achieving a grade C or above in 1999. In art and history very high results have been maintained. Overall GCSE results for 15 year olds for 1999 for all subjects are significantly higher than average and well above standards in similar schools. The school is in the highest 5 per cent of schools nationally in terms of the percentage of its pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades overall, and grades A*-C in English and mathematics. It is in the highest 25 per cent of schools achieving these grades for science.

The trend in the school's average total GCSE/GNVQ point-score per pupil is above the national trend. Highest levels of success in 1999 were in history, modern foreign languages, art and design, mathematics, religious education and geography and lowest in terms of point scores in drama, combined science, English, English literature and design and technology. Particular improvements in GCSE results over the last three years are in science, mathematics, technology and geography. Pupils with special educational needs have also made considerable gains in learning and achievement in relation to their prior attainment.

The school sets very good and appropriate objectives, informed well by its monitoring and evaluation process. These are identified for separate departments and, most impressively, as individual targets for pupils. Such targets are refined regularly through consistent monitoring and well-developed approaches to assessment. Pupils' achievements are high because teachers' expectations are high and planning most often meets individual pupils' needs. In practice, teaching is often inspirational and pupils show an infectious interest in learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	In both key stages, pupils are eager to learn and respond with interest and enthusiasm in lessons and extra-curricular work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are exemplary in and out of lessons. Pupils respect and celebrate each other's achievements. Relationships among pupils and between teachers, other adults and pupils are excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils work co-operatively and well together in lessons and other school activities.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average for secondary schools. Rates of unauthorised absence are broadly in line with average.

The school encourages all pupils to recognise, appreciate and respect their own and others' individual talents, skills and unique strengths. Pupils' attitudes to the school community and to learning in

particular are positive. They expect to be involved in refining their own academic and personal challenges, and show pride in their achievements and those of the school as a whole. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers and other adults are mutually respectful, built on trust and the Christian principles which embrace the school's ethos. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. These characteristics underpin the school's continued improvements, including its examination results, and its above national average attendance rates.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teachers provide appropriate challenges for pupils at all levels of prior attainment, although some of the highest attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged in English. Good lesson planning, refined by regular and rigorous monitoring of achievement, high expectations, and an enthusiasm for teaching, triggers pupils' interests in and commitment to learning.

In the best lessons, teachers' perceptive and varied questioning encourages an enquiring approach to learning, cements skills and knowledge and enhances pupils' understanding. Some excellent teaching in science and mathematics develops pupils' high order thinking skills by developing a critical and enquiring approach and encouraging pupils to reflect carefully on their learning. By contrast, although much teaching is good in English, higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the tasks set or the quality of interactions in class, especially in relation to reading.

Across the sample of lessons observed, including those in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, the quality of teaching was never unsatisfactory. Teaching was most often at least good and frequently very good. In nearly a tenth of lessons seen, it was excellent. Over a third of lessons seen was good, nearly a half was very good, and a tenth was excellent. As well as in mathematics, numeracy skills are developed well across the curriculum, particularly in geography and science. Pupils have many good opportunities to write for different audiences and purposes and to improve their speaking and listening skills for example in history, French and in music.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Pupils have a broad and balanced programme of study overall. Lessons and other activities are demanding and challenge pupils to develop independent thinking and confidence in learning. There is a very good range of out of school activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school identifies pupils' needs effectively and provides for them well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Although there is a high percentage of pupils with English as an additional language, no girl is at an early stage of English language acquisition. Good assessment procedures and provision cater well for pupils who speak English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enhanced by the school's ethos. Pupils have very good opportunities to take responsibility in and outside lessons. Teachers, other adults and older pupils are very good role models for pupils of the school as a whole.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides excellent care for its pupils. The personal and social education programme is a strength within the school's supportive community. Rigorous monitoring of pupils' academic and social development supports individual progress and ensures the well-being of its pupils.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum overall, although statutory requirements to provide design and technology in KS4 are not being met. This is because the subject is not taught to all Y10 pupils as a result of staffing difficulties.

The quality of provision is enhanced through distinctive and enriching experiences in many subjects. In mathematics and science, for example, excellent initiatives help pupils to develop thinking skills. In art, dance and music high achievements result from the encouragement of pupils' constructive criticism to improve the skills and understanding necessary to refine personal compositions and performances. There are also particular strengths in provision for modern foreign languages. Different syllabuses cater for the needs of girls across the ability range with a clear emphasis on the use of the target language in all lessons. Whilst there have been some improvements in the provision for information technology since the last inspection, the control and measurement elements of the curriculum are limited.

Outside the usual time-tabled subject lessons, provision is enriched through courses to encourage leadership skills, outward bound activities and work-related learning - such as those focussing on key skills through trips to France or to develop understanding of science through work at Kew Gardens. The school's personal and social education programme offers good opportunities to develop understanding of issues of citizenship which are most pertinent in today's society.

The values of the mission statement underscore the aims and excellent policies of the school. Within this context, the school ensures very good levels of care for its pupils. There is a very wide range of opportunity for girls to take responsibility, in terms of their own learning in the classroom and in roles, such as school prefects and School Council members. The school's monitoring of pupils' personal development is very good and is integral to academic development. Procedures for Child Protection are clear, well-known and sensitively managed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Outstanding leadership by the headteacher supported by key staff has an enormously positive impact on the quality of education, pupils' academic and social development and the quality of human interactions provided by the school. These underpin this excellent school's successes.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors play an invaluable role in the school's development. They are knowledgeable, skilled and effective in being constructively critical and reflective, fulfilling their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance rigorously and perceptively. It uses its findings to direct resources, and to engage staff and pupil energies to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Human and financial resources are planned and used efficiently. Given its continuing improvements, high standards and the very good quality of education provided, the school is extremely effective and provides very good value for money.

The exceptional leadership of the school, especially from the headteacher, ensures its clear educational direction. The headteacher's vision is communicated effectively, reflected in the school's mission statement, and unifies the work of governors, staff, pupils and parents alike. This shared vision informs long and short term planning, as well as sensitive but rigorous monitoring of the school's work, promoting high standards throughout. The school is a self-evaluating organisation. It is clear about its strengths as well as weaknesses and is aware of its capacity to secure improvements. The same principles, practices and levels of determination to succeed are encouraged in pupils, engendering self-confidence along with respect for others. Good use is most often made of the school's resources, including grants and other funding. Financial decisions are inextricably linked to clearly defined educational priorities. These are implemented effectively, following a process of

comparing its outcomes with those of other schools, ensuring the fair use of resources and consulting widely before implementing change.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress the pupils make • High expectations of the pupils • Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development • The quality of teaching • Continued improvements in examination results and standards, particularly in mathematics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to subject teachers at parent teacher meetings • The amount of homework pupils are set • Greater flexibility in agreeing authorised absences from school

Parents are mostly very pleased with the education provided by the school. The inspectors agree with this view. Parents' views on homework are mixed. Some feel there is too much homework or that it is unevenly spread across the week. Others feel that it is not sufficiently challenging. The inspection team found that appropriate homework is most often set, although demands for higher attaining pupils are not always sufficient. Whilst recognising the perceptions of some parents concerning access to subject teachers at Parent Meetings, the inspectors noted that the change from meeting subject teachers to form tutors had come about after a process of consultation with parents. Moreover, the excellent system of Individual Pupil Monitoring (IPM) adopted by the school, provides form tutors with a very good overview of individual pupil strengths and weaknesses for parents. The school has made clear its procedures for agreeing authorised absence from school. These are followed consistently by staff involved at all levels. Considering the completed questionnaires from parents, inspectors found the quality of information from the school to be good and improving, for example with the recent introduction of a 'Newsletter'. Although nearly a quarter of parents tended to disagree that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons, the inspection findings did not support this view.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Excellent leadership provides a shared educational direction to raise standards

1. The excellent leadership of governors, staff with management responsibilities and, especially, the headteacher is the main reason for the level of successes at Sacred Heart High School. The headteacher brings a very clear vision of what the school should be. This is shared by governors, staff and pupils. It is expressed in the school's mission statement which permeates all practice. The School Development Plan details agreed objectives comprehensively and charts intentions, responsibilities, and time-scales for action well. Pupils achieve their best co-operatively and with pride. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and how to teach it. Both teachers and pupils have high expectations. The continued improvement in standards is evidence of one element of the school's success in fulfilling its aims very well.
2. The governing body operates effectively through its committees to set targets and help monitor the school's work. The headteacher provides governors with regular and full information about all aspects of the school, which they use effectively to make decisions. Governors contribute considerable expertise to their roles and offer valuable constructive criticism of the work of the school where appropriate. As well as gaining an understanding of the work of the school through the headteacher's information and regular reports from key staff, governors play an active part in the school including taking annual responsibility for monitoring implementation of elements of the mission statement.
3. Staff with management responsibilities play a full and significant part in the successful management of the school. Planning at all levels reflects the overall aims of the school. Heads of departments and years actively monitor the extent to which objectives are being met, and are supportive in helping to enhance the quality of work of all teachers as well as pupils. The school is very successful in achieving what it sets out to do. Staff and governors are aware of this success and what currently needs to be done. They are also highly motivated to refine current practice or seek new ways to improve even further.

High standards result from high quality teaching which has an exceptionally positive impact on learning

4. The standards of work seen in lessons mirror the school's results overall. This is particularly because teaching most often challenges pupils effectively and they learn well. Governors and staff are committed to ensuring a positive learning environment within and outside lessons. They have promoted continued improvements in examination results over the last three years.
5. Pupils' literacy skills are good because they are developed effectively by teachers across the curriculum. Most pupils read well and can retrieve information from texts in lessons or using computer software and the school's intranet. In a Year 11 English lesson, groups of pupils discussed sections of 'To Kill a Mocking Bird', supported their ideas using suitable vocabulary and style, and recorded group responses in good note form. Similarly pupils learning about child workers during the period of early industrialisation in history were keen to produce TV scripts for an investigation on allegations of cruelty in the mills. The teaching approach engaged pupils effectively in handling historical evidence well, using a wide range of historical

vocabulary and writing at length. However, when texts are less challenging or the organisation of the classroom does not enable higher-attaining pupils to work closely together, learning is restricted. Pupils speak clearly, are fluent and can articulate their ideas well. In an inspirational science investigation concerning solids, liquids and gases, challenging questioning helped Year 8 pupils draw out differences in their understanding between description and explanation and enabled them to write up their investigations appropriately.

6. Pupils also develop good understanding and use of number. Numeracy skills are effectively targeted in mathematics and extended across the curriculum. In design and technology, for example, pupils in Year 9 used measurements well in designing and constructing models. At a more advanced level, Year 11 pupils analysing variations in employment between the north and south of England used number skills well, triggered by activities which matched their age and previous levels of attainment.
7. Teaching is characterised by mostly good and often exceptional planning which has a direct impact on learning. In the mathematics department, where results have risen well in national tests and at GCSE level, teachers prepare excellent plans which are specific not only to the age and prior-attainment level of each class but also to the individual pupils. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. These are shared with pupils directly through the school's individual pupil monitoring system but also implicitly in the work of the classroom. As a result, pupils have high expectations of themselves. In a sparkling Spanish lesson, for example, pupils responded with enthusiasm to well thought-out challenges using the target language. Because each stage of the lesson built carefully on the last, the pace of learning was vigorous and learning was made fun. Pupils were expected to reflect critically to the contents of audio-tapes in paired conversations but also laughed spontaneously in response to jokes in Spanish.
8. Most classes are well organised and pupils are managed sensitively. In response, pupils accept responsibility and work co-operatively to meet clearly defined lesson objectives. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent, underpinned by mutual respect. Pupils in a Year 10 drama were enthusiastic whilst working as individuals, pairs or in small groups at their compositions. They performed confidently, knowing that positive and supportive criticism from others would be given and welcoming this as part of their own development. A Year 9 group of high-attaining girls was keen to record their work and answered fully when required in response to focused questions and exercises concerning Pythagoras' theorem.
9. Teachers use discussion effectively to extend pupils' skills and understanding. A well-planned science lesson excited Year 7 pupils to talk about their understanding of the structure and function of cells. Pupils were keen to act out the function of the cell as they understood it and then responded very well to sharp questioning which encouraged pupils to ask 'why' when they undertake investigations. Older higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 and 11 attending a lecture given by a university lecturer, and supported by science teachers, were equally responsive to questions related to the extraction of DNA. They offered good examples of ways in which the experiment could be applied to real life situations in forensic science or in dealing with inherited medical conditions. When lessons are more directed by the teacher with fewer opportunities for discussion or research by pupils, such as in a poetry writing lesson in Year 7, learning is less effective as pupils are not as actively involved.
10. Pupils learn quickly and with interest at Sacred Heart. They develop their understanding and learn new skills in most lessons because teachers provide

stimulating work backed by appropriate resources and the lesson objectives are clear from the outset. Year 9 pupils gained understanding in writing a newspaper article in a persuasive style, using a word-processor, about the effects of earthquakes, after watching a video of the Turkish earthquake. Year 11 pupils were fast in recognising chord changes which needed to be refined in order to achieve the musical style they were seeking in their own compositions. A small group of Year 8 pupils, working to improve their reading skills, were eager to correct mistakes or improve the way they showed their understanding of the meaning of basic texts as a result of the teacher's well-structured approach and sensitive guidance.

11. A significant element of pupils' learning which helps them to progress well and achieve high standards is the extent to which they are involved in reflecting on how much they have learned and what it is that they need to do next to improve. Teachers keep detailed records of each pupil's successes in learning. Marking is most often helpful and supportive in identifying where and how pupils can make improvements. The school's Individual Pupil Monitoring system includes subject specific targets for achievement which are fully linked with and dependent upon teachers' assessments. Each pupil records these in their books and works to them with clear understanding. The targets are regularly and effectively used to improve the planning of learning for pupils.

Excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the school's ethos

12. The school has excellent provision to support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. Its policy is clear and supports the school's mission statement which is monitored by governors annually. In practice, pupils respond well to opportunities to know more and gain insights into others' values and beliefs as well as to reflect on their own experiences in a way which develops their spiritual awareness.
13. The school succeeds very well in integrating the curriculum and worship. Formal worship is rooted in personal experience. The school's chapel is effectively used to celebrate pupils' achievements and to highlight the individual and collective talents of all pupils. An adjacent prayer room is used regularly by pupils both to pray and to meditate on issues to be celebrated as well as of concern. The school's values are threaded through celebration of pupils' successes: every opportunity is taken to share values of a Christian nature and reflect on people's experiences, their lives and on their beliefs in contributing to spiritual development. Imaginative teaching encourages pupils to value and wonder on issues of creation, such as in English when they wrote about their own and others' faults and virtues, or in science when they described the birth and death of a star.
14. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is excellent. Individuals are trusted, whether in formal roles - such as school prefects - or in being able to use classrooms, the learning resource centre or open cloisters without direct supervision. They are expected to consider moral and social issues and often apply their discussions, for example, in making decisions about choices of charities to support. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are considerate of each other and sensitive to each others' needs. Relationships with teachers and other adults are excellent. Teachers are highly respected and offer very good role models to their pupils. From this solid basis, pupils are confident to express their concerns and opinions, in lessons concerning their own learning and through form representatives and the school council related to the development of the school as a whole.

15. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and they show initiative in taking advantage of these. Girls show leadership skills through interdependent group work in and outside lessons. Head girls and Y9 pupils are offered well-prepared courses to enhance their roles, and all girls gain through regular retreats. There are additional classes in science (for example, a DNA/genetics workshop in the inspection week led by a university department) and work experiences organised by the modern language department. In addition, links with the Sacred Heart society enable pupils to develop socially through visits to other schools and countries. As a result, pupils are confident, sensitive and socially very aware. They have very good levels of self-discipline and positive attitudes to each other and their school.
16. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop culturally. The formal curriculum provides pupils with good, direct experiences which enhance their appreciation of literature, science, mathematics and art. Through music and dance, pupils gain good understanding of art forms and styles of different cultures. There are regular visits to museums, galleries and concert halls. Through personal and social education, pupils develop excellent understanding of and respect for other cultures, often building effectively on and celebrating fully the personal experiences of the members of the school's own multicultural society. For example, the personal education programme for Year 8 helped pupils to explore, record and celebrate a range of multicultural activities which reflect the school's population. This included music, dance, poetry and drama presentations which pupils were excited to perform; exhibitions of historical data and family trees which celebrated pupils' heritage; a range of descriptive and discursive writing which explored pupils' relationships and shared details of families in parts of the world outside Britain; and, celebration of differences in the preparation and description of foods of various nations.

A rigorous and well-managed system is used effectively to support, challenge and monitor the individual progress of pupils

17. The school has developed an excellent Individual Pupil Monitoring (IPM) system for monitoring progress, for challenging and for supporting its pupils individually. It involves all subject teachers in making a formal assessment of the progress of each pupil at approximately nine-week intervals. Assessments relate both to the attainments and achievements of girls individually. Attainments are assessed in line with National Curriculum-linked levels in Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 and 9) and with GCSE criteria in KS4 (Years 10 and 11). Achievements are judged against each pupil's potential or proven ability, at an early stage being referenced to initial information about each pupil on entry to the school in Y7. A clear coding system is used to record whether each pupil is working at, below or beyond a level appropriate to expectation. Highest-attaining pupils are also identified. As a result of the assessments, each subject teacher gives specific targets for individual pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are given one key skills target rather than a range of subject specific ones. This helps the pupils concentrate attention and increases motivation through success. All pupils record these in full in all cycles.
18. The IPM system is inextricably linked with the school's mission statement as it underscores a concern that the strengths and talents of all pupils should be recognised and developed individually. In practice it is managed well. Planning to ensure it is implemented efficiently and effectively is clearly identified in the school calendar. Staff and pupils understand the value of the system and follow it consistently. Information is collected using a specifically designed data-base. Staff

are given suitable training to enable them to input and assess necessary data. Good support is given to staff in order to ensure that the system is used appropriately.

19. The data-base is used by staff to record the individual and collective progress of girls in the school. Of the three cycles of assessment in KS3, the first two provide an overview of the units of work studied whilst the third cycle judges progress made overall to the date of the assessment. This information contributes to each girl's yearly summary report: it is time-tabled to provide up-to-date comprehensive information through form tutors at annual parents' evenings. In KS4, the assessment cycle ensures that the progress pupils make is regularly reviewed and that they are helped to realise their potential.
20. The school's IPM system galvanises the work and effectiveness of staff who are responsible for pupils' progress whether in individual subjects or across the curriculum. Subject teachers and heads of department share a common and regular approach to assessing pupils across departments. Within departments, the IPM system helps to sharpen criteria for making judgements. In subjects for which there are no National Curriculum levels, departments have developed very good level descriptors for the school's use. Whilst all departments apply National Curriculum or GCSE related criteria and levels consistently, some departments have spent more time than others in refining the criteria to be applied. In mathematics, science, and modern languages, criteria are continuously reviewed to match the needs of individual year or ability groups. By contrast, such initiatives are less well developed in English. As a result, targets are not as well defined and do not challenge individual pupils as effectively. From the assessments, form tutors and heads of year gain a full and regular picture of the progress individual pupils make, enabling them to compare and contrast rates of progress in different subjects.
21. Pupils value the IPM system and are motivated by it. They understand the system well, take target-setting seriously, and feel confident to argue the need to refine targets and raise their achievements even further in the future. From results, completed work and from lessons observed, the IPM system has a significant impact in ensuring pupils progress well and in continuing to raise standards overall.

Pupils learn enthusiastically and their attitudes to work are very positive

22. Pupils are proud of their school, have very positive attitudes toward their work, and celebrate the successes of others spontaneously. They are keen to participate in lessons and in the life of the school as a whole.
23. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and teachers and other adults are very good. Pupils listen carefully to each other as well as their teacher in class. They respond critically but constructively to each other's ideas and views. Where there is opportunity to do so they share humour and react joyfully to others' successes.
24. Behaviour in and outside lesson is exemplary. Pupils learn to value their own efforts and show respect for others and their school. They are polite, courteous and helpful. Younger pupils trust older girls, Form leaders and School Council members are eager to continue to improve the school community. High levels of attendance and the pupils' enthusiasm for learning enhance the standards achieved in the school as a whole.
25. Pupils aspire to do well because staff expect them to do so. Staff stimulate the interests of their pupils in academic, sporting and artistic achievements because the governors and headteacher expect teachers to be able to do so and provide

structures and procedures which enable all to succeed. The vast majority of parents recognise the commitment of staff to the girls of the school and the excellent outcomes which result.

The school's long-term planning and financial management are very good

26. The school has very clear and well-expressed long-term planning which directs its current work towards even higher achievements. Planning is valued as being necessary to move the school onwards. Senior staff and those in other management positions in the school are proud of the clarity of planning which enables the values and priorities of the school to be shared. The development plan sets out realistic targets as well as the process by which they will be achieved. Responsibilities are well defined throughout. Progress is monitored very effectively and comprehensively. The results of monitoring are used immediately to refine and improve subsequent plans at all levels. Governors are exceptionally well informed through this process and are fully involved in the school's developments.
27. Financial planning and administration are excellent. The latest auditor's report is very positive with no major weaknesses. In addition to bringing about a number of improvements in the building and its resources since the last inspection, the school has identified funding to support additional refinement in the building in the near future. Departmental planning includes thorough details of financial plans. Governors have regular information concerning the school's budget in order to support their policy decision making.

Very good progress has been made since the last inspection

28. The school has made very good progress since its last inspection in October 1995. Results at KS3 have been well above national average and very high in comparison with similar schools over the last three years. GCSE results have continued to improve year by year with the trend in the school's average total GCSE point score per pupil being above the national trend. The school continues to grow in popularity and its roll has increased from 689 to 782. Teaching has improved. The issues of the last inspection have been tackled effectively. Subsequent national developments have triggered the need for further work to clarify the way forward for information technology. In addition, there is a need to review provision for those pupils who do not currently study design technology in Year 10 and for higher attaining pupils in English through the school.
29. There is now excellent planning at all levels of the school. The School Development Plan is clear and effective as a tool for improvement. It is reflected in departmental development plans and is used well by governors and senior staff to guide the school's direction. Monitoring arrangements are comprehensive, thorough, consistently implemented and very well followed up. There is a rigorous system of termly lesson observations by heads of department and senior team line managers. This is enhanced by a cycle of departmental reviews, with all departments having been reviewed since the last inspection.
30. All departments are now involved in a self-evaluation process. Each prepares a context statement to inform those involved in departmental reviews. A full debrief is given to departments verbally, followed by a written record of each review. Strengths are noted and shared between departments. Areas of weaknesses form future targets against which individual departments are measured. Data made available nationally and from the local authority's Research and Statistics Department is now used by the school to analyse and compare its results with others locally and

nationally and to inform future planning. Additionally the school has achieved considerable success in developing its IPM system. This supports the monitoring and target setting process and ensures individual targets are refined for all pupils regularly. Pupils know of and are actively engaged in the target-setting process.

31. The school has successfully reviewed its use and deployment of staff who provide extra in-class support for pupils. In most cases additional support is now provided by specialist subject staff who have considerable expertise and know what is required by individual pupils in particular subjects. Specialist support and the use of the IPM system have improved teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs. They are taught well and learn well.
32. The curriculum areas of physical education, music, art and drama have been effectively brought together with dance to work as a faculty. As a result, there have been additional challenges for pupils to perform. The co-operative working of the departments has also led to their drawing up a set of subject levels, reflecting National Curriculum requirements. They are used to provide targets for pupils in these areas, more focused assessment, clearer curriculum planning and more helpful information for parents.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The current curriculum provided for design and technology does not meet statutory requirements for some pupils in Year 10

33. Although considerable efforts have been made to ensure appropriate provision for design and technology, the current curriculum does not meet statutory requirements as some Year 10 pupils are not taught this subject. The school is aware of this issue, having recorded it in its own self-evaluation audit process. Staff shortages have led to this omission of design and technology from the curriculum for the current first year of KS4.
34. Notwithstanding the situation which has led to some Year 10 pupils not studying design technology, standards in the areas of the design curriculum which are studied are above average for design and construction skills. The quality of teaching observed was good because pupils were enabled to build on previous learning effectively. When considering techniques for joining materials, for example, the teacher's clear explanations and good organisation helped give pupils confidence and develop their skills in handling a range of glues suitable for working with different materials. They used these effectively with well cut, shaped and finished joints of wood and acrylic to make objects from their imaginative designs. Results in GCSE examinations are above national averages.

Although English results are well above the national averages, some pupils could achieve even higher standards in English

35. Although national tests at the end of Y9 are very high compared to similar schools, and GCSE results are significantly above national averages, some higher attaining pupils do not do as well as they could in English. Additionally, there has been a slight dip in the national test result at the end of KS3 over the last three years. This is due only in part to the department's decision not to enter pupils for the extension test which would enable higher attaining pupils to achieve the highest levels. The relative underachievement is due, in part, to the way the English curriculum has been planned and, consequently, to the extent to which teaching promotes the highest standards possible.

36. Pupils are taught in form groups reflecting a broad range of prior attainment. Lesson plans show that teachers recognise the need to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding of all pupils based on each individual's prior attainments. But, in practice, work set does not always enable higher attaining pupils to develop their skills fully. Whilst higher attaining pupils explore and develop their skills fully in writing for a range of audiences and purposes, the same opportunities to shine in reading and in developing their skills of listening and speaking are not as well planned.
37. Until recently the range of reading material used by the department has not been sufficiently challenging, especially but not exclusively for more able pupils. This is reflected in pupils' reading logs as well as through the school's valuable internal review system. Consequently, the department has taken steps to provide a more extensive and demanding range of reading. In particular, the fiction section in the school's learning resource centre has been greatly improved and greater use is being made of the intra and internet. In addition within lessons, some teaching of reading now includes working with higher-attaining pupils to improve still further their understanding and interpretation of text, but this is reliant on teachers working with individual pupils.
38. Much of the teaching of English has strengths found in other subjects. During the inspection no teaching was unsatisfactory and some teaching was good. However, the current organisation of classes reduces chances for teachers to work at different levels with different groups. The pace of some lessons was slower than was necessary for higher-attaining girls as some teachers spent more time explaining tasks than these pupils needed. In others, the sub-grouping of pupils with a range of abilities does not always give higher-attaining girls sufficient opportunities to discuss, debate and stimulate ideas and reactions for and from each other.
39. The school's well-organised system for monitoring the work of individual pupils is also followed by the English department. As in other subjects, girls are motivated by and respond enthusiastically to these targets. However, subject targets are not as well developed or specific in English as they are in many other subjects. Whilst in science, mathematics and modern languages, for example, targets have been developed for different age and ability groups, those in English are more generalised and are not as challenging for pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40. The school should now:
 - (1) reconsider the provision for design and technology to ensure the statutory curriculum is addressed in the light of requirements for design and technology nationally;
 - (2) review the quality of provision for English and strategies for its implementation to provide more appropriate challenges, especially for higher attaining pupils, in reading and in speaking and listening.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

34

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	42.5	36.5	12	0	0	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	782	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	160	N/A

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	83	N/A

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	238

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	93
National comparative data	91

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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	N/A	158	158

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	145	100	112
	Total	145	100	112
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	93 (87)	78 (71.3)	73 (71)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	56 (61.5)	52 (46.7)	31 (37)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	133	119	118
	Total	133	119	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (90)	76 (85.2)	75 (77)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	47 (65.7)	53 (57.7)	41 (55.2)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	N/A	144	144

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	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	115	142	142
	Total	115	142	142
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	80 (79.9)	99 (98.6)	99
	National	46.3 (46.3)	90.7 (90.7)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	55 (55.2)
	National	37.8 (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	0	0
	National		N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	58
Black – African heritage	41
Black – other	20
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	517
Any other minority ethnic group	131

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	12	
Other minority ethnic groups	2	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	40
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	3

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	24.7

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	1898639
Total expenditure	1945378
Expenditure per pupil	2519.92
Balance brought forward from previous year	774100
Balance carried forward to next year	727361

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	782
Number of questionnaires returned	183

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	31	4	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	75	23	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	73	25	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49	39	10	2	0
The teaching is good.	64	34	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	42	18	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	33	7	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	91	8	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	42	45	8	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	68	28	2	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	23	2	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	35	19	3	6