

INSPECTION REPORT

Yardleys Secondary School

Warwick Road

Tyseley

LEA area: BIRMINGHAM

Unique reference number: 103520

Headteacher: Mrs Heather Jones

Reporting inspector: Mrs Ruth Snow
2765

Dates of inspection: 20 – 24 March 2000

Inspection number: 185697

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16 Years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Warwick Road
Tyseley
Birmingham

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Gareth Daniel

Date of previous inspection: November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Ruth Snow	Registered inspector		1. What sort of school is it?
			2.1 How high are standards?
			3. How well are pupils taught?
			7. How well is the school led and managed.
			8. What should the school do to improve further?
			9. School Data and Indicators.
Catherine Dumbleton	Lay inspector		2.2 How high are standards?
			5. How well does the school care for its pupils?
			6. How well does the school work in Partnership with Parents?
Bridget Armour	Team inspector	Geography (Support) Vocational Education: Leisure and Tourism	2. How high are standards?
John Wright	Team inspector	Art (Support)	4. How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		PSE (support)	7. How well is the School led and managed.
Adrian Booth	Team inspector	History (Support)	7. How well is the school led and managed.
Mike Torbe	Team inspector	English	
Eileen Leech	Team inspector	Mathematics	

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Kevin Lambert	Team inspector	Science	
		Vocational Education: Health & Social Care	
Alison Thornton-Clarke	Team inspector	Art	
		Physical Education	
David Pritchard	Team inspector	English as an Additional Language	4. How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Chris Hall	Team inspector	Information Technology	
Pauline Burton	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
Mike Bench	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
John Hayward	Team inspector	History	
		Geography	
		Religious Education	
Owen Dutton	Team inspector	Music	
Jim Muncey	Team inspector		SEN
			Equal Opportunities

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Yardleys is an 11-16 secondary school of average size, formed in 1975 by the amalgamation of the former Yardley Grammar School and Leys Secondary Modern School. Numbers have been fairly constant over the last four years. The school recruits pupils at around the level of its admission limit. There is a significantly higher proportion of boys than girls in the school in all year groups. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average for secondary schools. On entry to the school pupils' attainment is very low compared to the national averages. A very high percentage of pupils speak English as an additional language and almost one fifth of the pupils on entry are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is above the national average; seven pupils have statements and one pupil is under assessment. For most pupils at the higher stages of the Code of Practice the nature of their special needs is either emotional and behaviour difficulties or moderate learning difficulties.

The teaching is carried out in two sites half a mile apart and the canteen is situated on the third site. Because of specialist provision both staff and pupils have to move between sites. A new purpose built school is being planned with an expected opening date of Easter 2002. The school buildings are Victorian with very limited playground space.

The school serves a disadvantaged area of Birmingham with a community which is predominantly from minority ethnic groups. Most pupils come from the Small Heath, Sparkhill and Sparkbrook wards. Many pupils come from overcrowded homes where adults have no experience of higher education. Many parents do not speak English. The proportion of pupils coming from high social class households is low.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The educational achievements of pupils across the school are good given their level of attainment when they enter the school. Overall they are making at least the expected progress and some groups are making better than expected progress. Pupils' achievements are very good in Key Stage 4 in history, information technology, business studies, art and in leisure and tourism where they attain standards which are above the national average. Pupils' attitudes to school are positive and they develop well particularly in terms of their moral and social development. Respect for others is a hallmark of the school. Relationships between staff, pupils and staff and between pupils are very good and most pupils behave well. The quality of teaching is good. The leadership and management of the school are very good. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the school continues to strive for further improvement. The overall effectiveness of the school, given its context, is very good and it offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is committed to achieving the highest standards and to continuing improvement.
- The school's examination results show continuing improvement in the average grades the pupils achieve when they leave the school.
- Overall pupils make good progress from entry to Key Stage 3 and from Key Stage 3 to the end of Key Stage 4.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups, both boys and girls, make good progress.
- SEN and EAL pupils make good progress and enjoy equality of access to the curriculum.
- Teaching is good overall. It is very good or excellent in over a quarter of lessons, good or better in over half of the lessons and at least satisfactory in 94% of lessons.
- Relationships are very good across the school and most pupils behave well.
- The school promotes positive attitudes to learning and provides a constructive and secure learning environment.
- The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities.
- Staff work very hard and very effectively to provide high quality education within the limitations of poor accommodation.
- The school benefits from very good leadership and very effective management.
- The school demonstrates respect, care and commitment to its pupils.

What could be improved

- The attainment of white pupils, particularly boys, in Key Stage 4.
- The attendance and punctuality of some pupils.
- The standards of writing.
- Attainment in mathematics across the school particularly of the most able pupils.
- The teaching of modern foreign languages particularly at Key Stage 3.
- The use of the library to support independent learning and help raise attainment.
- Fully meeting statutory requirements including the elements of the National Curriculum which are not being delivered in information technology at Key Stage 3 and religious education at Key Stage 4. Risk assessment has not been carried out in physical education and there is not a collective act of worship for pupils every day.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan which will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection has been good or very good, with respect to all key issues with the exception of fully complying with the statutory requirements for collective worship. The level of improvement in the attainment of able pupils has been good in English, satisfactory in science but unsatisfactory in mathematics. Trends in performance show:

- improvement at Key Stage 3 above the national trends;
- improvement at Key Stage 4 in line with national trends;
- a decline in the percentage of pupils attaining 5 A* - C grades but improvement in the percentage attaining 5+ A* - G grades and 1 A* - G grade and in average grades;
- improvement in the attainment of pupils from minority ethnic groups;
- improvement in attendance and decline in the number of exclusions over the last three years.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
End of Key Stage 3 tests	E	E	E	C

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

Overall standards are low compared to national average standards at Key Stage 3 with the exception of history and business studies, where they are in line with national standards and art and physical education, where they are above the national. Pupils make good progress by the end of Key Stage 3 in English, reasonable progress in science and unsatisfactory progress in mathematics. Overall standards are at least in line with standards of pupils in similar schools.

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C

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

Overall standards are low compared to the national standards at GCSE/GNVQ except in information technology, history, art, physical education, business studies and leisure and tourism where standards are above the national average. Most pupils make above average progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, both boys and girls, make above average progress. White pupils, particularly boys, make below average progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress, particularly in information technology and history. Special Educational Need pupils make good progress particularly in information technology and English. Pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 4 is consistently poorer than their average performance in other subjects. Pupils' performance in history and business studies is consistently better than their average performance in other subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils generally have good attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall behaviour is good. Most pupils respect their teachers, school property and their peers. A small number of pupils behave badly.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good throughout the school. Pupils work well together and enjoy taking on responsibilities.
Attendance	Attendance has improved but is below the national average for secondary schools. Most pupils attend school regularly and punctually. A small number of families do not comply with the legal requirement to send their children to school regularly. This has a very detrimental impact on their attainment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in 94 percent of lessons and good, very good or excellent in 55 percent of lessons. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is a little better than at Key Stage 3 where the behaviour of some of pupils in the lower sets in Years 8 and 9 has a negative impact in some lessons. The unsatisfactory teaching is mainly in modern foreign languages where temporary and inexperienced teachers have difficulty managing behaviour. There is a very high percentage of very good teaching in history, geography and business studies and all the teaching in art is good or very good. Overall the teaching in mathematics and English is good and in science it is satisfactory.

The school has given the teaching of literacy a high profile which is beginning to have a positive impact on literacy standards. Numeracy has improved since the last inspection and is applied well across the curriculum. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is good. More able pupils are not making sufficient progress in mathematics, religious education or in modern foreign languages at both key stages.

The high quality of relationships with pupils has a very positive impact on learning and in most lessons behaviour management is good. The quality of classroom support is very good and this has a very positive effect on the learning of English as an additional language and special educational needs pupils. Staff have high expectations of their pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is relevant, broad and balanced at both key stages and It meets statutory requirements with the exception of information technology at Key Stage 3 and religious education at Key Stage 4. The curriculum prepares pupils well for leaving school. Extra curricular provision is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and pupils have access to all areas of the curriculum. They make good progress overall and very good progress in English and history.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good and they make good progress overall and particularly good progress in information technology, history, business studies and vocational education. Bilingual support is very effective.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This provision is good. Pupils' moral and social development are very strong features of the work of the school. Cultural development is good. Opportunities for spiritual development are limited and therefore provision is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The support for pupils and the quality of care provided are very good. Pupils are supported very well in their work and have ready access to personal help and support. Staff work tirelessly with pupils to identify areas for improvement which will help them succeed. Partnership with parents is satisfactory and the school provides good information to parents about the progress their child is making.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the school is strong and very effective. The school has clear and purposeful educational direction. Supportive monitoring and departmental review promote high quality planning and teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body satisfactorily fulfils its statutory responsibilities and is appropriately organised. Financial planning and monitoring are good. Governors have limited involvement in monitoring the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has an accurate and clear view of its strengths and weaknesses and has a well developed plan to secure its long term priorities.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use is made of resources including new technologies and specific grants. The school has proper regard for the principles of best value and provides good value for money.

There is a good match of staff to meet the needs of pupils and deliver the curriculum. Teachers and classroom support staff have clearly defined roles. Accommodation is poor. Despite the school's good management of the accommodation available, the split site and poor classroom provision impede learning. A new school is planned which will improve significantly the environment for teaching. Resources for learning are satisfactory except in modern foreign languages and aspects of music and science. The library is not used effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High expectations of pupils• The school helps pupils develop good attitudes and values• High quality of teaching• The school is well led and managed• Parents are well informed about their child's progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra-curricular activities• Setting of homework

The inspection findings support the positive views held by parents about the school. Teachers do have high expectations of pupils and are working hard to help pupils achieve their potential. Extra-curricular provision is extensive and pupils speak very positively about the opportunities the school provides. Generally homework is set systematically and is included in teachers' planning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Attainment on entry

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in 1999 is well below the attainment of pupils nationally at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. There is a similar picture over the last few years although the attainment of pupils on entry in 1999 is at the lowest level for three years.

Attainment of 14 year olds in national assessments in 1999

2. In 1999, pupils' results at the age of 14 in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, were well below the national average in English, mathematics and science for pupils reaching Level 5. The results for higher attaining pupils were in line with the national averages in English, below the national average in science and well below the national average in mathematics.
3. The attainment of boys and girls was similar at the end of Key Stage 3 in mathematics and science but in English the performance of boys lagged behind that of girls in attaining Level 5 and above, even allowing for the difference nationally in the performance of boys and girls in English. At the higher level 6 the attainment of boys and girls was similar; both were in line with national standards.

Attainment of 16 year olds in public examinations in 1999

4. In 1999, results in public examinations at the age of 16 were below the national average grade overall. They are below the average for the percentage of pupils attaining 5 A* - C grades but above the national average for pupils attaining one or more A* - G grade.
5. The performance of girls lagged behind that of boys when the difference between boys and girls nationally is taken into account.
6. In 1999, there were marked differences in the attainment of pupils from minority ethnic groups at 16. Indian pupils attained standards well above the average for pupils nationally. The attainment of Pakistani and white pupils was well below national averages and the attainment of the small number of Bangladeshi pupils was below national averages.

Trends in attainment of 14 year olds in national assessments

7. Over the last four years the school's overall performance in the core subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 has improved faster than the national rates of improvement. Although pupils' attainment is below the national average the rate of improvements in English and mathematics are greater than the national rates of improvement and in science the rate of improvement is the same as the national. There is no significant difference in the trends in the attainment of boys and girls.

Trends in attainment of 16 year olds in public examinations

8. At Key Stage 4 the pupils' results are well below the national average over the last few years. There is an improving trend in the proportion of pupils attaining 5 A* - G grades and a decline over the last three years in the proportion of pupils attaining 5 A* - C grades. The school has steadily improved its average grade over the period 1994-1999, in line with the national trend as an increasing percentage of pupils attain grades at GCSE/GNVQ.

9. Trends in the performance of boys are variable across the last five years. Boys performed particularly well in 1997 with results almost reaching the national average grade for boys. Overall boys' results are below the national average. Although there is some variation in the performance of girls, over time girls' results are much lower than boys and well below the national average points score for girls.
10. The performance of pupils from minority ethnic groups shows an upward trend for Pakistani pupils, a slight downward trend for Indian pupils and a very steep decline for white pupils.
11. Pupils' performance in history, business studies and leisure and tourism at Key Stage 4 is consistently better than the pupils' average performance in their other subjects. In mathematics, and to a lesser degree in English language and science, pupils have performed consistently less well than in their other subjects over the last three years.

Attainment in lessons and work seen during the inspection

12. Standards attained in lessons seen during the inspection confirm and substantiate the picture given by examination results. Overall standards are low in the school compared with national standards in Key Stage 3 except in history and business studies where they are satisfactory and in art and physical education where they are good. Standards of attainment are below the national average in English, design and technology, geography, religious education, information technology, modern foreign languages and music. They are well below national standards in mathematics and science.
13. At Key Stage 4 standards are above average in information technology, history, art, physical education, business studies, and leisure and tourism. In English, science, design and technology, modern foreign language, geography and religious education standards are below average and in mathematics standards are well below average.
14. Although standards overall are below the national average in English, pupils attain standards in line with national averages in speaking and listening at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and some pupils in Key Stage 4 achieve very good standards. These pupils engage their listeners and show a thorough understanding of complex topics which are well researched and very effectively presented. Standards of writing are the least advanced of the language abilities and by the end of Key Stage 3 are below average. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards in writing for middle and low ability groups are poor but the work of the best pupils is above average and often impressive.
15. The school has given literacy a very high profile and there is evidence that the school's policy is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. Pupils confidently read aloud in many subjects, and are keen to learn key words in several subjects, notably design and technology, history, geography and religious education. They use dictionaries effectively in mathematics as well as English, and they are provided with an appropriate emphasis on literacy in business studies. Pupils use a range of varied writing forms in history, and in various subjects they undertake activities relating to prepared texts. Within English, some teachers are careful to help lower ability classes attack words, and confirm word meanings. As yet, the attention given across the curriculum is not explicit or widespread enough to raise pupils' awareness fully of the best ways of solving their problems with reading and writing. The school's unsatisfactory provision for the development of the library skills of research and information retrieval limits the possibilities of pupils' independent learning.
16. Standards of numeracy have improved since the last inspection. Basic skills are taught well and then practised and rehearsed during the mental sessions at the start of each mathematics lesson. Pupils confidently solve problems using the four operations of number. They understand place value and apply this when multiplying and dividing decimal fractions. Many pupils can work out percentages, and the more able extend this understanding to establish ratio and proportion. There is good evidence that these skills are then applied across the curriculum in relevant tasks that enable pupils to consolidate their mathematical learning. Good examples were seen in information technology where pupils accurately undertake mental calculations and then present their findings on spreadsheets. In design and technology pupils

weigh ingredients accurately using a range of metric measures and in science pupils calculate velocity in support of their classwork.

Achievement and progress of pupils in Key Stage 3

17. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are below national standards. However, given pupils' low attainment on entry they make good progress. Between starting the school in 1996 and the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 pupils made above average rates of progress. Pupils with very low attainment on entry made very good progress, middle ability pupils made good progress but pupils with above average levels of attainment made insufficient progress except in English. Girls made better progress than boys. The progress made by minority ethnic groups was variable; Indian and white pupils and Pakistani girls made good progress and Pakistani boys made unsatisfactory progress. Overall in the three core subjects, pupils made good progress in English, satisfactory progress in science and unsatisfactory progress in mathematics. A comparison with similar schools confirms the picture given by the measure of progress based on prior attainment. At the age of 14 attainment is above average when compared with similar schools in English and science and barely average in mathematics
18. In the lessons and work seen in Key Stage 3 the achievements of pupils are satisfactory, given their starting point, in mathematics, science, information technology and religious education. Progress is good in English, design and technology, geography, art, music, physical education and business studies. Pupils make very good progress in history. The progress of pupils is unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages.
19. The good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language is confirmed by the lessons and work seen. Progress for these pupils is never less than satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in English and history and pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress in information technology and history. The progress of gifted and talented pupils is at least satisfactory, with the exception of mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education, where they make unsatisfactory progress. Pupils with statements make particularly good progress due to the excellent support they receive from education assistants.

Achievement and progress of pupils in Key Stage 4

20. From age 14 in 1997 to age 16 in 1999 pupils made progress which was at least in line with the progress of pupils nationally. Pupils with low levels of attainment at 14 made very good progress by the age of 16; those with average levels of attainment at 14 made good progress but those with high levels of attainment made unsatisfactory progress. The unsatisfactory progress was due to the underachievement of white boys, who did not build on the high standards they had attained at the age of 14. Indian and Bangladeshi pupils made very good progress; Pakistani pupils made good progress. Progress of pupils was in line with national rates of progress in English and science and slightly above average in mathematics, but pupils had consistently performed less well in these subjects than in their other subjects. Pupils made above average progress in history, information technology, art, business studies and leisure and tourism. A comparison with similar schools confirms that at the age of 16 overall standards were at least average and generally above average when their progress is measured against their prior attainment.
21. In the lessons and work seen at Key Stage 4 overall, pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Progress is good or very good in English, mathematics, design and technology, information technology, geography, art, history, business studies and leisure and tourism.
22. Pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress overall and very good progress in English, history, art and personal and social education. Pupils with English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress overall and very good progress in information technology, history, business studies, leisure and tourism and health and social care. Gifted and talented pupils make good or very good progress in design and technology, information technology, history, art, geography, physical education, business studies, leisure

and tourism and health and social care. They make unsatisfactory progress in mathematics, modern foreign languages and the core course of religious education in Key Stage 4.

Progress in relation to targets set

23. In 1999 the school exceeded its targets for the percentage of pupils attaining 1 A* - G grades at GCSE/GNVQ and was close to achieving its targets in terms of the overall average pupil point score. It did not achieve its target for the percentage of pupils attaining 5 A* - C grades by a significant degree. The target set for 2000 therefore looks very challenging. However, the end of Key Stage 3 outcomes in 1998 for this cohort were closer to the national average in English than for any other previous cohort and their performance in 1999 in the tests for a national project in which the school participates, is only slightly below national averages. Thus the school's target for 2000 of 30 percent attaining 5 or more A* -C grades, though challenging, is not unrealistic.
24. It will however be particularly challenging to sustain an improvement in 2001 as the performance of the current Year 10 group is much lower than the current Year 11 group in both the national assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the tests of the national project. The attainment of this cohort of pupils on entry in 1996 is the lowest of the last five years. In this context the target of 43 percent of pupils attaining 5 or more A* -C grades is unrealistic. The pupils entering the school in 1997 and 1998 in Year 7 have much higher standards of attainment and thus there is good potential to achieve a significant improvement in standards by age 16 in 2002 and 2003.

Overall improvement in pupil attainment since the last inspection.

25. Overall standards at Key Stage 3 are a little higher in 1999 than those found at the last inspection in English and mathematics and are lower in science for the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5+. The attainment of this group on entry was the lowest of all groups in the last four years, and overall these pupils have made better than average progress.
26. In relation to the percentage of pupils attaining Level 6+ there has been a significant improvement in English and a small increase in mathematics and science. The rate of improvement is greater than the national rate in English, and to a lesser degree in mathematics and science.
27. At Key Stage 4 standards are lower in terms of the percentage of pupils attaining 5+ A* - C grades but higher in terms of those attaining 5+ A* - G grades, 1 + A* - G grades and the percentage entered for examinations. There has been improvement in the average total point scores gained by pupils in line with the overall national trend.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

28. Overall, pupils' attitudes to school are good. Pupils come to school in a positive frame of mind. Some arrive early to meet with friends and play games. Some make use of the early morning canteen arrangements. Pupils greet adults and move around the site and buildings calmly. They are generally confident in talking to adults and willing to show them around. In the main, pupils show good levels of involvement in their lessons where almost all pupils are enthusiastic, attentive, willing to concentrate and remain engaged in set tasks. They make mature and serious contributions to discussion and in physical education lessons they have a sense of fair play whilst being competitive. They show an interest in school life and many are involved in the very good range of extra curricular activities which is available to them. However, the time taken by a small number of pupils to move between the school sites is unreasonable and on occasion this impacts on their own and other pupils' learning because up to fifteen minutes' time is lost.
29. Through its extensive efforts, the school has done much to improve levels of attendance throughout the school. Gradual and sustained improvement has been achieved. Although now closer to that found in most schools nationally, the overall level currently remains below the

national average. A significant number of pupils arrive late to school.

30. Behaviour is good. Pupils are generally well behaved in lessons and around the school. They are polite to adults and generally to one another. The pupils care for their own and other people's property. Equipment in and out of lessons is handled with care. The pupils are aware of and understand the school's expectations for good behaviour. They value the school's system of rewards. The number of pupils permanently excluded from the school during the last school year is around the national average. The pupils do not consider bullying to be a serious problem at the school. If they have concerns, they find staff approachable and are confident of their support. Instances of bullying are taken seriously by the school and are felt to be dealt with well. These are recorded and investigated and parents are informed. Parents consider their children to be happy at school and they are satisfied with standards of behaviour. Whilst the vast majority of pupils conduct themselves well, there is some over-boisterous behaviour from a small number of boys.
31. Relationships between all members of the school community are very good. The staff are very positive role models as they ensure and promote mutual respect. It is a harmonious community where pupils and staff respect the feelings, values, beliefs and cultural traditions of the different ethnic groups represented at the school. Pupils are willing to listen to other people's views and understand the impact of their behaviour on others. The school council is involved in decisions which impact on the school. Prefects take their responsibilities seriously and carry them out conscientiously. Through the University of the First Age, older pupils are trained to act as mentors to younger pupils. After seeking permission from the headteacher, a group of pupils involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme independently planned, prepared and resourced a highly polished and mature presentation for inspectors about their involvement in the scheme. Other pupils talked about their week long residential experience aboard a sailing ship in Devon last year. The opportunity had done much to broaden their experience and raise their self esteem. Pupils serve their community well through environmental projects and charitable giving.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. In the last report the quality of teaching was found to be a strength overall although teaching was unsatisfactory in 14 percent of lessons. Teaching was good or better in 54 percent of lessons. There has been an improvement in teaching across the school with 94 percent of teaching now satisfactory or better and 55 percent good or better. Over a quarter of all teaching is very good or excellent. In the previous inspection the teaching was better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. This is still the position although the difference in the quality of teaching between the key stages is not great. The school's performance in teaching compares well to the performance of secondary schools nationally.
33. Particular areas of critical comment in the last report were: a poor match between tasks set and the range of abilities of pupils; activities too prolonged in English and mathematics; lack of challenge for pupils, how support teachers were used and the restricted range of teaching techniques. These criticisms have largely been addressed. Most teachers carefully consider and plan to meet the needs of individual pupils but further differentiation is needed in English, religious education and geography. Pupils' progress is very carefully monitored in most subjects, support teachers are used well and most departments, within the limitations of the accommodation, employ a range of teaching styles and techniques. This is particularly evident in history and vocational education.
34. Teachers at Key Stages 3 and 4 have very secure subject knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. Where there is very good subject knowledge, such as in history, geography and business studies, the teachers have the confidence to extend and challenge the pupils and pupils excel. Technical vocabulary is very well developed in almost all subjects through the careful introduction of new words, the use of key words in the subject and their positive reinforcement by the teacher, particularly in design and technology, history, geography and religious education. The quality of teacher explanation is a positive feature of much of the teaching at the school. In the excellent and very good teaching the subject matter is explained with a clarity that enables the pupils to understand readily. When this is combined with effective

questioning and evaluation pupils make very good progress particularly in design and technology, history and geography.

35. Most lessons are very well prepared and planned in design and technology, history, geography, music, business studies and vocational education. In these lessons little time is wasted, as resources are readily to hand, the lessons have good structure and pace and pupils are never bored and therefore motivation and interest remain high. Most lessons have a good range of planned learning activities and in the most effective teaching these are linked to clear learning objectives which are shared with the pupils. This is particularly well developed in many lessons in mathematics, design and technology, and vocational education.
36. Most teachers have high expectations and most lessons have appropriate challenge. Teachers set very high expectations in history, art, physical education, business studies and vocational education. This is well developed for pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs. Sometimes the most able pupils in the sets, for example in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education, are not sufficiently challenged or the work is not adequately differentiated to pupils' abilities. In history, music and art differentiation is well planned.
37. In most lessons the teaching methods used are varied, matched to the needs of the pupils and maintain interest and motivation. Whole class teaching, some group work and working in pairs, individual research and practical work are used effectively to promote learning. Pupils' discussions are often skilfully managed, particularly in English and history, allowing opportunities for pupils to comment on social issues. Work in drama involves varied groupings of pupils and a high level of challenge. Extra curricular activities and visits often provide opportunities to reinforce or apply learning and pupils are welcome to use the school facilities after school and at lunchtime to extend their opportunities for learning.
38. The management of pupils in lessons is good overall. Pupils are particularly well managed in English, history, art, music and vocational education. Pupils know what is expected of them regarding good behaviour. The school works hard to promote a positive work ethic to which almost all pupils respond and they work hard. This means that in the best lessons little time is wasted on behaviour management. The behaviour of some of pupils in lower ability sets in Years 8 and 9 is poor and causes disruption to the learning of other pupils. Although most pupils show a pleasing degree of responsibility they have insufficient opportunities for more independent learning.
39. Overall, teaching time is used effectively throughout the school. However the movement of pupils between the sites causes a significant loss of teaching time. Most lessons sustain a good pace particularly in history, geography, vocational education and most lessons in design and technology. There is good practice in food technology and music when pupils are set time limits for particular activities. The pace of lessons is sometimes unsatisfactory in mathematics and science. Resources are used well to support teaching and the teaching staff seek out or make resources of high quality in many subject areas. Good use is made of high quality resources in personal and social education, art, music, history, geography, information technology and physical education. The range of writing tasks and opportunities for extended writing is limited. Classroom display is used well in many subjects to support teaching and in religious education real artefacts are used to good effect. Science resources are treated very carefully by the pupils. Overall the use of time and resources is good in the context of operating on a split site.
40. Teachers generally assess pupils' work thoroughly and constructively and assessments are used by many teachers to inform teaching. The quality and consistency of marking of pupils' work is a strength in English, history, geography, business studies, vocational education. Practice is not consistent in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. There is a good whole school assessment and marking policy, which provides clear guidance for the development of policies in departments. Teachers' comments on work both encourage and challenge pupils. Aspects which need correcting are sometimes identified but incorrect work is not always corrected by the pupils, particularly in modern foreign languages. The quality of the

marking and the feedback to pupils is not consistent across all teachers but where it is good it has a positive effect on pupils' learning.

41. Pupils are generally aware of the assessment objectives and understand how far they have been successful in achieving them. Practice is particularly well developed in design and technology, business studies and vocational education. The stating of learning objectives and sharing of success criteria are not consistently practised in all departments. More could be done in most subjects to summarise what pupils have learnt by the end of a lesson. This is particularly important in mathematics where plenary time is not well developed.
42. Self-assessment is developing. Some good practice occurs in art and drama where pupils review their work and are capable of making very realistic and insightful comments about their attainment. There is also good practice in target setting developing across the school. Meetings are held with Individual pupils during which targets set at the previous meeting are reviewed and new targets are agreed. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are well supported in building a record of their achievement.
43. Homework is set consistently across the school and enhances learning. It is marked conscientiously and is generally well integrated into subject and lesson planning.
44. Teaching is very good in English and drama at Key Stage 4 and sound at Key Stage 3. Teaching is good overall in mathematics at both key stages. In science teaching is satisfactory overall but objectives are not consistently shared with the pupils and some lessons lack pace.
45. The direct teaching of information technology is good. However, at Key Stage 3 pupils' development of skills in information technology relies on teaching within other subject areas. This is not sufficiently well planned and maintained to ensure pupils' progress. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory overall. It is sound at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4.
46. Teaching is never less than good in all lessons in art at both key stages and pupils are motivated to achieve high standards. The teaching of design and technology is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Pupils are very well motivated by the high quality teaching. Teaching in both music and physical education is good with pupils highly motivated through the expertise and positive attitudes of the teachers.
47. In geography the teaching is good at both key stages. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and the teaching promotes good progress. In history, the teaching is very good indeed across the key stages and is a strength of the school. The teaching of modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory overall. Teachers speak to pupils in the foreign languages being taught and in the good lessons there are opportunities for developing listening skills. The work of the language assistants is effective. There is some good teaching in the department but in a significant proportion of lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, behaviour management is poor and this impedes learning.
48. The quality of teaching in business studies is very good overall and very strong indeed at Key Stage 4. The teachers create a very purposeful environment in which good learning takes place. Teaching within the personal and social education programme and the careers programme is particularly strong. Almost all the teaching is good and pupils benefit from the carefully planned programme.
49. The teaching of literacy is having a positive impact on learning in English and across the curriculum. Literacy skills are being well developed and pupils are given extensive opportunities for reading in many subjects. Good use is made of subject specific language in teaching and learning in a range of subjects and key words are introduced and reinforced. Opportunities for extended writing are less well developed and the development of library skills is unsatisfactory.
50. Teachers are ensuring that numeracy skills are well developed and applied across the curriculum. Pupils are helped to measure accurately in design and technology, prepare

spreadsheets in information technology and use graphical presentations in geography, science and vocational education.

51. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and is well supported by the teachers' impressive knowledge of the particular needs of pupils. It is well planned to assist pupils to meet their targets. Subject teachers are aware of the needs of these pupils and take care to provide additional support or differentiated work. The special support provided by support teachers and classroom assistants is well planned, targeted and very effective. This enhances pupil progress, gives them confidence and helps them to take responsibility for their own learning. The teaching of pupils from minority ethnic groups is good; they make very good progress in the school.
52. Overall the quality of the teaching and the high level of commitment and hard work by the teachers are strengths of the school.

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

53. Since the last inspection much time and effort has been put into the development of the curriculum and it is now a strength of the school. The curriculum provides a very good range of learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities at both key stages.
54. The curriculum is now broad at both key stages. At Key Stage 3 it is extended to include drama, business education and personal and social education. At Key Stage 4 pupils are offered GCSE courses in all core and, with the exception of music, all foundation subjects as well as vocational and other subject options.
55. The balance of the curriculum is also much improved since the last inspection. The length of the school day has been increased and is now in line with most other schools. Time allocated to each subject at each key stage has been reviewed and all subjects now have sufficient time to deliver the required subject content, with the exception of information technology at Key Stage 3 and religious education at Key Stage 4 where aspects of the statutory curriculum for both subjects are not met.
56. The curriculum has also been made more relevant to meet the pupils' needs. The introduction to the Year 7 curriculum of a course based on materials and approaches from the University of the First Age is having a very beneficial effect on developing the pupils' strategies for learning in all subjects. This is especially true for the development of literacy and numeracy skills where its positive effect is helping the school to meet essential targets for pupils' attainment. The Key Stage 3 curriculum also includes a well developed personal and social education course which includes sex education, drugs awareness and health education. This course is effectively taught by form tutors.
57. At Key Stage 4 the relevance of the curriculum is well supported by a continuation of the personal and social education programme which is taught well by a dedicated team of teachers. The school provides a high quality careers education programme and work experience that is designed to give the pupils a real insight into employment and the vocations they may wish to follow.
58. Planning of the curriculum for individual subjects is generally well developed and supports teachers when preparing their own lessons. However, at Key Stage 3 especially, whilst the activities are often very well addressed in the schemes of work, the subject skills are not always clearly charted across a key stage to clearly identify progression and continuity. This is most evident in information technology where some of the requirements of the National Curriculum orders are delivered through other subjects and the lack of a key stage map makes it very difficult to identify exactly where essential subject skills are introduced, consolidated and applied.
59. The school has developed effective strategies for ensuring that the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught and applied across a range of subjects. Individual subjects are aware of

the need to reflect these strategies in their planning and for literacy most take full responsibility for developing subject specific reading, language and recording techniques. The basic skills of numeracy, including mental calculation, graphical representation and accurate measurement are consistently planned into the curriculum in, for example, information technology, design and technology and science.

60. The curriculum at both key stages is very well enhanced by a broad range of extra curricular opportunities. This is a strength of the school's curriculum provision. These opportunities cater for both pupil interest and academic need. They are scheduled before school, during lunchtimes and after school to enable pupils who have commitments outside of school to participate fully. The school makes good provision for competitive sport with a wide range of activities. Some subjects, for example, history and science, organise effective learning support sessions for pupils when undertaking homework, revision or individual research. There is also a choir and several subject based clubs. Pupils are appreciative of the wide range of opportunities on offer and many make good use of them to extend and consolidate their learning. The extra curricular provision is further extended through outdoor activities and residential experiences as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme and also through foreign visits organised for the Key Stage 4 pupils.
61. There are constructive curriculum links with local primary schools. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is also well supported by good relationships that the school has developed with local sixth form and FE colleges and this effectively prepares pupils for further education or employment.
62. There is good use of the community to support the curriculum. The police, the youth service, a local theatre in education and the Moseley Rotary Club have all provided opportunities for pupils that range from outdoor activities to sailing on tall ships. Coaches for sport, first aiders, artists in residence, elderly members of the community and a wide range of other people have been brought into school to provide additional and valuable support to the curriculum.
63. The school strives hard to ensure that all pupils are able to access the curriculum. In response to the last inspection report there have been improvements in the way in which pupils are grouped for their learning in order for them to progress at a rate which is appropriate to their ability. However, some teachers' lesson planning does not address the full range of pupil abilities present in the banded class they are teaching. Access to the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is well supported by the sensitive way in which teachers plan to meet the requirements of the individual education plans and undertake withdrawal work which focuses on the same activity as the main teaching group wherever possible. Pupils with statements are particularly well provided for through the excellent work of the educational assistants. Pupils with English as an additional language are also well supported through the effective use of the bilingual coordinator/home school liaison teacher and two classroom assistants.

Personal Development including Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

64. A key issue from the previous inspection was the maintenance of a strong ethos of respect and care throughout the school. The school has made good progress on this issue and improved its provision for moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual awareness remains less well developed and the school has not successfully addressed the issue of compliance with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Much of the progress made has been through the programme for personal and social education which is effective throughout the school. It is supported by updated and clear guidelines and policy. Practice is particularly good at Key Stage 4 where it is taught by a designated team. Good use is made of resources and links with outside agencies such as the 'One Stop Bus' which offers a resource to back up the themes in the programme.
65. The work carried out in the 'University of the First Age' is very successful and, with older pupils acting as mentors for Year 7 pupils, moral and social development have been encouraged. A number of extra curricular activities provide further opportunities for personal development. These include the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Environmental Enhancement Leaders

Scheme. The pupils who are taking the Duke of Edinburgh Award organise very popular and successful activities and clubs during the lunchtime break.

66. Spiritual development remains unsatisfactory. Some progress has been made by including a 'thought for the day' in tutor groups but there is insufficient time or opportunity for pupils to reflect on the spiritual aspects they raise. There is no daily act of worship to contribute to spiritual awareness.
67. Moral development is very good. School rules and expectations are given a high profile and are displayed on both school sites. Most pupils are aware of these rules, accept the need to work in an orderly community and demonstrate this through good behaviour and the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Moral issues are raised in study themes such as in history where slavery, racism and Nazi Germany are examined from a moral perspective. There is a strong moral code throughout the personal and social education programme and themes such as anti-racism are reinforced through effective wall displays.
68. Social development is very good and is demonstrated in the day to day relationships between staff and pupils. The personal and social education programme encourages greater personal and social awareness with an emphasis on respect for oneself, for others, for the school and for the wider community. This is achieved through a number of themes that are relevant to pupils' lives. Both the personal and social education programme and the Year 7 work on 'University of the First Age' focus on the process of learning itself and the emphasis on collaborative group work makes a significant contribution to the development of social skills.
69. Cultural development is good. The school has a very positive view about the impact of cultural diversity on its work. Visual images around the school celebrate cultural diversity. In religious education lessons pupils gain valuable insights into their own traditions and religious beliefs and into those of others though insufficient opportunities are taken to draw on pupils' different life experiences.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

70. The school provides very good support for pupils' personal needs. Teachers know the pupils very well. They respect and value cultural differences. Form tutors are very effectively supported by year co-ordinators in monitoring and supporting personal problems, which from time to time affect individual pupils and impact on their learning. Pupils find staff approachable if they have concerns. In order to meet individual pupils' needs, the year co-ordinators and home-school liaison teacher make extensive efforts to build relationships with the home. Much of the home school liaison teacher's time is dedicated to home visits. Other staff, including the headteacher, also make visits. The pupils have access to additional support provided by the trained teacher counsellor, youth workers and the "drop in" sessions provided by the school nurses. Other external agencies are involved as appropriate. The school is sensitive to financial hardship and provides access to resources and opportunities which otherwise would be unattainable.
71. Educational support and guidance are also very good. The pupils' progress is regularly monitored and recorded. Individual targets for improvement are set and reviewed. There are good arrangements for identifying and supporting individual pupils who have special educational needs. Pupils feel able to ask teachers for additional explanation or help. They understand the marking system, and in particular, find constructive comments made by teachers helpful. Where appropriate, the year co-ordinators and the home school liaison teacher encourage parents to support targets set for individual pupils at home. A very good range of extra curricular activities supports the pupils' learning and personal development. The homework club, additional lessons and revision sessions are particularly helpful. The good programme of personal and social education promotes knowledge, independence, healthy living and self confidence. As part of the programme, older pupils are able to undertake a two week work experience placement which is well used to broaden pupils' experience and understanding of some of the world of work. Very good careers education and guidance informs and supports pupils in reaching decisions about the routes open to them at the end of their formal education.

72. Overall the school has satisfactory arrangements for ensuring the physical well-being of pupils at school and on out of school visits. The school's security arrangements are appropriately monitored and reviewed. The school provides its lunchtime supervisors with suitable information and training. Regular review meetings are held with staff and there is staff involvement with the health and safety policy group which includes a link governor who is also the site services officer. He makes a very good contribution to the smooth running of the school by, for example, ensuring suitable conditions for the safe transport of resources between the two sites. The school council is involved in raising pupil awareness to health and safety issues. Neither school building has a suitable medical room and present arrangements make the assurance of confidentiality difficult. Ball games in the restricted playgrounds are hazardous for people and property. There has been no whole school in-service training on risk assessment. To provide this would be in line with good practice and assist the school and its staff to ensure that their responsibilities are properly met. A senior member of staff is the designated person responsible for matters relating to child protection. Related issues are dealt with very well.
73. Overall, there are good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. The school makes extensive efforts to maintain and improve the pupils' daily attendance. Registration procedures are efficiently dealt with by form tutors. There is early contact with the home when concerns arise. Ongoing concerns are well monitored by year co-ordinators who liaise closely with the home-school liaison teacher and the school's education social worker. The school has made very good efforts to impress the importance of regular attendance on parents. The governors make their stance on extended holidays clear and these messages focus on the detrimental effect non-attendance has on the individual pupils' learning. The school's electronic system of recording attendance is well used in providing data for parents to see when it is necessary to discuss their child's attendance. Individual "print-outs" also accompany progress reports to parents. The school uses a range of strategies to support pupils' re-integration following extended absence. The school's reward system encourages regular attendance. A project run in conjunction with the police works effectively to engage and encourage disaffected pupils. Although, through its extensive efforts, the school has done much to improve the overall level of attendance, its procedures for addressing lateness to school still need to impact on the significant number of pupils who arrive late in the mornings. The school does not have effective formal measures to ensure that all pupils move purposefully between the school sites.
74. There are good effective strategies for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The school introduced a new behavioural management system in September. The system aims to provide a range of strategies which will ensure that wherever possible, difficult pupils remain in school and are provided with the necessary assistance to help them modify their behaviour and continue their studies. Training sessions have been provided for staff. Early signs are that this is a positive development and staff support the philosophy. Potentially difficult pupils are usually skilfully managed by teachers. Expectations for good behaviour are re-inforced through well placed published rules and responsibilities, assemblies, the personal and social education programme and day-to-day reminders. Expectations are supported by the well organised and committed prefect system. Rewards are used appropriately and valued by the pupils. Exclusions in the last academic year were reasonable in number and appropriate. The school's management of instances of oppressive behaviour is very good. Instances of bullying are taken seriously by the school, investigated and recorded. Pupils do not consider bullying to be a serious issue. They find staff easy to speak to and are confident of action if concerns arise. Parents indicate that their children are happy at school. Some expressed the view that bullying was dealt with well.
75. The school's systems for assessing pupils' academic attainment are good in English, science, history, geography, design and technology, business studies and the vocational courses: leisure and tourism and health and social care. They are satisfactory in mathematics and unsatisfactory in art, music and religious education. In the subjects in which there is good practice, teachers regularly use a range of tests and assignments to assess pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject. These tests and assignments are marked in relation to standards in the National Curriculum and public examinations and teachers have a secure understanding of national standards. In the subjects where practice is unsatisfactory, the assessments are not related to the National Curriculum.

76. The Code of Practice for special educational needs is operated effectively. There are consistent procedures in the identification and review of the special educational needs of pupils. Provision outlined in statements is implemented rigorously. External support staff and parents are involved appropriately. New education plans are robust, up to date and provide helpful advice to teachers. They contain personal as well as academic targets, although progress is not consistently monitored and data from standardised reading tests is not effectively used. This is partly because the tests used are not the most appropriate available. Good support for the teaching of basic skills is provided by withdrawing pupils for work in small groups. This work also boosts pupils' confidence and self esteem. In addition, it allows some effective work to be done on personal and social education, where an understanding of the needs of others is fostered.
77. Use of assessment information to guide planning on pupils' entry to the school is weak. Assessment information on entry is used to establish teaching groups, but is under-used to plan for pupils' learning in each subject and thus teaching is not sufficiently well targeted to enable pupils to build on their previous attainment. There is good practice in mathematics, where pupils who have not reached the expected standard on entry are taught appropriately to enable them to reach the standard within a year. Some good curriculum links with primary schools are developing but curriculum "bridging" units developed by the local authority and nationally are not used to support continuity in learning.
78. The school has effective practices in place for monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils. Results in public examinations are thoroughly analysed and monitored by gender, ethnicity, and teaching group; and action is taken to address weaknesses. Such action has been effective in raising standards in mathematics but is not yet effective in addressing the underachievement of white boys.
79. The school's process for monitoring pupils' progress has many good features. Twice-yearly assessments in each subject provide parents with a summary of current attainment, progress since the last report and targets to be achieved by the next report. Year heads use these assessments to monitor progress of pupils and to take action where there is under-performance. Currently the grades for attainment do not relate to national standards, which is a weakness; appropriately the school is planning to move to grading pupils' attainment in relation to the National Curriculum levels from next September.
80. This system of whole school monitoring of attainment and progress is complemented by a good process of termly reviews by tutors with individual pupils or small groups of pupils. Reviews are helpfully informed by a process of teacher assessment, recorded in pupils' planners, which forms the basis for setting targets. These targets are generally well-focused with clear statements on how to achieve them. Although this process is at too early a stage of development to judge its impact on attainment, pupils' attitudes are very positive and they feel supported in identifying what they need to do to improve. Parents are informed of the targets set and encouraged to provide support.
81. Annual reports to parents are generally good. Strengths and weaknesses are identified in each subject although sometimes comments focus solely on attitudes and behaviour. Every pupil leaves school with a record of achievement which meets the requirements for a school leaver's report. The standard of these records is excellent and they have helpfully been prepared in time for pupils in Year 11 to take to interview.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

82. Parents' views of the school are good. Although there was a relatively low level of response to the questionnaire, those who did respond were positive about the work of the school. In particular, parents find the school approachable if they have concerns and are satisfied with the school's expectations of their children. Some parents, although not significant in number, were less supportive about arrangements for homework and activities outside lessons. The inspection found homework to be used well to support class learning and the range of extra curricular activities to be very good.

83. The quality and range of information provided for parents are good. Although written communications are not provided in minority languages, there are suitable translation arrangements. To meet the needs of parents, the school appointed a home-school liaison teacher two years ago. His training, personal skills and background make him a valuable resource for the school as a whole but in particular as a link for parents whose first language is not English. A positive development this year has been the introduction of curriculum booklets for each year group. Information for parents of children who have special educational needs is good. Parents' evenings address issues appropriate to particular stages of their child's education. There are suitable induction arrangements for parents prior to their child starting at the school. All parents receive a progress report each term, two interim reports and one full report. There are opportunities for follow up. The annual progress report is satisfactory. Teachers' comments often emphasise attitudes and behaviour rather than strengths and weaknesses in learning and targets for improvement are not always sufficiently focused.
84. The parents' involvement in and contribution to their children's learning are satisfactory. The school values parents and makes good efforts to involve them in their child's education and the life of the school. The home school liaison teacher arranges suitable consultation with parents in respect of the home school agreements. No parent has refused to sign. Where appropriate, home visits are made by the most appropriate member of staff to involve parents in setting individual targets to help and support their child. Most parents are supportive. Almost all parents have co-operated with the school in ensuring that their children attend school regularly. All pupils take a full and active part in the curriculum.
85. Parents and carers of pupils with statements of special need are supportive of the school. They are fully involved in the annual review. A number of parents also attend the school for review of their child's individual education plan. Parents and pupils are consulted before a programme of withdrawal from lessons for basic skills teaching is implemented. There is a helpful section in the special needs policy about parental involvement.
86. The number of parents attending parents' evenings has improved this year to between 65 to 75 percent. From time to time, parents of pupils involved in environmental projects give good practical support. Language classes are run by a parent outside school hours. This enables pupils to study for GCSE courses in their own community language. In response to parents' canvassed views, the school provided a course for parents to assist them in supporting their child's work at home. This elicited poor response but the school continues to find ways and means to involve and provide for parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership by the Headteacher and other Key Staff

87. The last inspection found leadership of the school to be strong, stable and caring and impacting positively on the school. One weakness identified was the need to ensure that longer term development planning highlighted priorities, projected staffing needs and was supported by an appropriate financial plan. This has been very well addressed. The work of the school is now strong in almost all areas of development planning including financial planning. There is a clear three year improvement plan.
88. The school is very effectively led and managed. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have set clear and challenging targets for the school for further improvement in attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 examinations for the year 2000 and 2001 although the targets set for Key Stage 4 in 2001 are unrealistic. Other appropriate areas for school improvement have been identified and this provides very clear direction for the future work of the school.
89. The headteacher provides very strong leadership which is both purposeful and professionally supportive to staff. She sets a climate which is positive, forward looking and collegiate; she is very approachable, makes sound judgements and promotes excellent team work. The staff and governors have great confidence in the headteacher, who is very ably supported by the deputy

headteacher. The effect of this leadership is to be seen throughout the school. Pupils respond well to her care for them and most work hard, enjoy their learning and develop positive personal and social skills and moral values. The headteacher is very clear that standards need to further improve if the pupils of Yardleys are to fulfil their potential.

90. Tasks are clearly delegated to senior staff, heads of department and year heads who provide good leadership and direction for the work of teachers in their teams. They are well supported and monitored in carrying out their responsibilities. Policies and schemes of work generally provide good guidance. The effective organisation and management of departments and year teams helps to ensure that the work of the school runs smoothly. The quality of professional support for the work of teachers is good and helps create a positive ethos for learning and pupil support across the school. There are consistently high expectations of behaviour and attainment and action taken to secure this. There is comprehensive, detailed guidance for all staff about a wide range of aspects of their day-to-day work both in terms of school policy and detailed procedures to be followed. This leads to consistency of practice.

Governing Body

91. The governing body is appropriately organised to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. Governors are very supportive of the work of the school and are extremely well informed by the headteacher. Relationships between the governors and the headteacher are positive and provide a good context for decision-making. Appropriate performance targets are set for the headteacher by the governing body. The governors have regularly monitored the action plan of the school since the last inspection and have acted on the recommendation to develop longer term planning. The financial planning and monitoring of the governing body are very good and governors have a clear understanding about the financial implications of moving to a new building on a single site where, as a result of the public private finance initiative, site management arrangements and costs are as yet unclear.
92. Not all governors are actively involved in the life of the school and the governing body's contribution to monitoring its work is variable. Some governors are regular visitors and have a good knowledge of the school's key priorities and strengths and weaknesses. The chair of governors is particularly active in supporting the school and the headteacher. The skills of other governors could be better used to contribute more fully to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and to sharing the governors' workload more equitably. This is particularly the case with respect to the governors' responsibilities for the curriculum, where although well informed about developments, governors are not using their curriculum committee to good effect to monitor or evaluate progress. The governing body would benefit from undertaking an analysis of its role and effectiveness with a view to identifying training and development needs.
93. Educational developments at Yardleys are supported through good financial planning. The three-year plan is developed in consultation with governors and is appropriately costed. Through this planning clear educational priorities are developed and costed. The large carry forward is well planned for future expenditure incurred through moving to a new school.
94. The school has been successful in attracting additional income such as the "Excellence in Cities" initiative and uses these resources to raise standards. The effort expended by school management in researching and preparing bids for additional funding represents a very good investment of time. It has provided the funding, particularly in relation to information technology developments, which has enabled educational intentions to be achieved at a faster rate than otherwise would be the case. Pupils and adults from the community are benefiting considerably from this funding.
95. The finance committee of the governing body is active in overseeing planning and expenditure and has recently considered a three-year forecast in relation to the move to a new site building. The governors are forward planning effectively to meet the financial challenges involved in moving to a single site with some unknown costs. The finance committee receives excellent support from the school's finance officer, a service bought from the local education authority. The finance officer provides good financial management information to support the governors in planning and monitoring expenditure.

96. Financial control is rigorous and managed by the finance officer who is based in the school one day a week. The last audit report (April 1998) indicated compliance with legal requirements with reporting structures and control systems in place. The recommendations arising from that report have been acted upon. All budgetary transactions are enacted according to documented financial standards and budget holders receive regular information to monitor spending.

Monitoring and Evaluation

97. A very clear and published cycle of whole school review and departmental/area reviews has been planned over a three year period. This is part of a three year management plan which includes maintenance and improvement plans. Following the reviews detailed action plans are produced and costed. These action plans contain all the essential features including both success criteria and monitoring strategies. Success criteria are sometimes expressed as the completion of action rather than stating the desired impact on pupils. They also lack quantitative targets where this would be appropriate.
98. Each department is expected to engage in self-review annually against agreed key areas and produce improvement plans and action plans which include departmental and personal targets. This approach to systematic review has had a good impact in focusing the work of the departments and the school.
99. Members of the school management team effectively lead the departmental reviews on a three year cycle. They can be 'in depth' or 'light touch'. Planning for these reviews is good. The expectations of departments are very clear. 'Light touch' reviews confirm the self-review outcomes. The process to be used in 'in depth' reviews is well planned, published and comprehensive, including lesson observation, pupil work scrutiny, evaluation of reports, departmental documentation and the sampling of pupil perceptions. Clear reports of the evaluations are prepared including areas of improvement. In 'light touch' reviews a range of activities is undertaken including review of pupil attainment in the department, progress in meeting development targets, scrutiny of pupils' work, course provision and an analysis of the departmental handbook. This work has led to departments having a clear view of strengths and weaknesses and how they are expected to improve.
100. The headteacher also holds interviews with heads of departments annually to review departmental performance including the review of expected and actual pupil grades in public examinations. Performance review is now an established part of the departmental self-review cycle.
101. Appropriate targets have been set for the headteacher and deputy headteacher by the governing body. The appraisal of individual teachers is in place and complements the work of department reviews. Individual teachers have targets agreed within departmental action plans and for their teaching through personal appraisal. The deputy headteacher has a specific role in relation to the development of classroom practice, following the outcomes of reviews or appraisal. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching.
102. Pupil progress is tracked including a base-line profile on entry and regular testing in Years 7 and 8 to check progress. More use should now be made of national assessment outcomes for pupils on entry to the school. Targets for individual pupil performance in Key Stage 3 statutory tests and GCSE/GNVQ are in place and there is some evaluation of outcomes. The school's practice in the use of performance data with individual pupils is very good indeed. Extensive analysis is undertaken of the performance of boys and girls and of minority ethnic groups at Key Stage 4 but at Key Stage 3 it is confined to a gender analysis. Performance data are analysed and the outcomes reported to governors.
103. Induction of new staff is well organised and managed. Staff are very well supported by a mentor and a series of fortnightly meetings deals with a range of appropriate topics. The school's involvement in initial teacher training, in association with Birmingham University, is well planned and managed, and supported by a well considered guide for the students' mentors in school.

104. The school has a very strong commitment to improvement and equality of opportunity. Areas of weakness have been correctly identified in mathematics, English and science and the standards achieved by able pupils. A range of strategies is being used well to address these priorities. These include the use of performance data to monitor trends in attainment; systematic review of key subject areas, and subsequent action planning to address weaknesses; providing practical classroom support to improve teaching techniques; and professional training for staff in areas which need to be improved. This work is of high quality and is having a positive impact on improving the performance of the school.

Strategic Use of Resources

105. The school makes good use of its new technologies. The level of resource is above the national average and the school has been successful in attracting additional grant to support its plans. The University of The First Age and the National Grid for Learning have funded a new computer room and upgraded and improved existing facilities. Most computers have access to the Internet and there is an internal intranet being developed for the use of departments. Pupils, staff and parents are making effective use of the information technology facilities before and after school and during school holidays.
106. The school makes effective use of specific grants with resources clearly directed at the stated intentions. The Standards Fund grants for social inclusion have a particularly good impact on standards of attainment and behaviour respectively. The latter grant has enabled the school to build on its new behaviour policy by appointing a school counsellor. This role will enable positive intervention strategies to impact on the behaviour of those pupils who need particular support.
107. The school has proper regard for best value principles in its management and use of resources. Performance data is used to good effect to compare the school's progress and attainment with similar schools and then to set appropriate targets for improvement. This data analysis, coupled with the school's own developing self-evaluation work, provides a good basis for the effective targeting of resources and for satisfying itself that spending decisions are based on thorough evaluation. Parents have been consulted about school developments and pupils' views are sought via their school council. The school council was recently successful in persuading the governors to change the uniform policy following a presentation to them by some of their members. Consultation by the senior management team with staff has recently led to the deputy head being deployed to and based in lower school. As a result of this staff feel better supported.

Best Value

108. The finance committee has, from time to time, undertaken reviews of aspects of the school's expenditure. This has led to appropriate savings being made against staffing costs in relation to training and sickness. Best value principles are further supported by the school's adherence to the LEA's LMS financial regulations and standing orders. The school has sought to obtain value for money in this respect by the purchase of services from the LEA.
109. The school manages its resource well. Although the accommodation is poor the site is well managed and maintained and effective use is made of the space. Staff are appropriately deployed and there is very effective use made of non-teaching staff in supporting pupils' learning. Teaching makes a positive impact on the quality of education provided. Value for money considerations are carefully examined before the school commits to use resources and there are good systems in place to monitor spending and its effectiveness.
110. The attainment on entry and socio-economic circumstances of pupils are well below average. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is still below average but the pupils have made good progress. During their time at Yardleys the pupils are helped to develop very good attitudes and values and behaviour is good. The school is very effectively led and managed. Considering the good quality of education offered and with regard for the high unit costs of expenditure the school gives good value for money.

Staffing

111. There is a good match of staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. The school places great value on the benefits of staff development and staff are well supported by very good professional development opportunities, including appraisal, which ensure that this good match is maintained and further improved.
112. All staff have an annual professional development interview which acknowledges their successes, identifies their professional development needs and sets manageable targets for the future. The school makes very good use of external opportunities for professional development and this is reflected in the fact that 50 percent of the teaching staff have undertaken work placements in support of their role in school. There is a very well developed induction programme which is designed for newly qualified teachers but is also available to any staff member.
113. In response to the last inspection report, classroom support staff and technicians now have clearly defined roles, are well deployed and are fully involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of lessons. The work of the administrative staff is very good indeed and impacts positively on the efficiency of the school.

Accommodation

114. The accommodation on all three school sites is poor. Despite the very best efforts of the governors and staff to maintain and use the accommodation effectively, the Warwick and Reddings blocks put severe limitations on teaching and learning. This is typified by the following:
- pupils may lose up to a third of a lesson's teaching and learning time whilst the class wait for the stragglers as they move from one site to another;
 - many teachers are working in cramped conditions which limit their flexibility of approach to teaching and learning;
 - the lighting and acoustics in many classrooms and central spaces are poor;
 - the buildings are difficult to supervise at breaks and lesson changeovers;
 - resources have to be duplicated to support teaching and learning on both sites.
115. Although the school is scheduled to be rebuilt for Easter 2002 the current buildings are still maintained and cleaned very well. The bleak sites are enhanced by, for example, the well developed garden in memory of a past pupil and the decoration of the main hall on the Warwick site. Staff make good use of trips and visits to a wide range of locations to ensure pupils experience teaching and learning in different environments.

Learning Resources

116. The school has recently allocated considerable funds to support the purchasing of new resources in support of targeted curriculum development. Most subjects make good use of the resources they have, even when they are in short supply and of variable quality. Levels and quality of resources are generally satisfactory in most subjects except for physical education where they are very good. In French, German and aspects of music they are unsatisfactory.
117. The two libraries are an issue from the last inspection that has not been adequately resolved. The stock is mostly outdated and does not adequately address pupil interest or promote independent learning in support of the school's current curriculum. Although there has been a recent high spend on new books for the library, they are not as yet classified and accessioned into the loan or reference system. The school is aware of the problem and is making appropriate arrangements.
118. The two teacher librarians are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and have clear ideas about how the libraries might be amalgamated and developed in the new school building. They give freely of their time to manage the libraries but they do not have sufficient non-contact time to undertake

essential library maintenance. It is also a very expensive use of their time to give them sole responsibility for undertaking the accessioning of new books in order to ensure they are available to the staff and pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

119. In order to raise standards and improve provision, the school should:

- Implement the plans to build the new school on one site to further improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve attendance and punctuality by:
 - continuing to seek stronger links with those families who do not send their children to school regularly or on time;
 - continuing to provide and to increase the level of monitoring of pupils between sites until the new school is built.
- Improve the standards of attainment by:
 - further identifying and developing strategies to motivate white pupils, particularly boys, in Key Stage 4;
 - ensuring that tasks and activities are well differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils and particularly the most able pupils;
 - applying the new behaviour policy with rigour and to support staff who have difficulty managing the behaviour of a minority of disruptive pupils in some classes;
 - improving the range and standards of writing and providing more opportunities for extended writing;
 - developing the use of the library to support independent learning.
- Raise standards in mathematics across the school by:
 - developing the pace of mental and oral work;
 - developing the plenary session to consolidate learning and to help pupils recognise their achievements;
 - improving the quality of marking to include comments that clearly identify for pupils how their work can be improved;
 - improve the quality of departmental development planning.
- Improve the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages by:
 - monitoring and supporting the work of the teachers who are experiencing difficulty;
 - seeking to resolve the staffing difficulties in the department;
 - improving the range and quality of textbooks;
 - improving the quality of marking at Key Stage 3;
 - improving classroom behaviour management in the small number of classes where the behaviour of a few pupils impedes learning.
- Meet all statutory requirements by:
 - adding the necessary additional elements to the curriculum for religious education at Key Stage 4;
 - ensuring that pupils have their full entitlement to information technology at Key Stage 3;
 - understanding and implementing necessary risk assessment in physical education;
 - providing a daily act of collective worship.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	198
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	81

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	23	28	39	6	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	879
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	418

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	159

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	515

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	43

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	10.5
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.6
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	111	70	181

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	42	41	38
	Girls	42	29	26
	Total	84	70	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	46 (58)	39 (40)	35 (42)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (24)	14 (12)	13 (13)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	38	50	40
	Girls	48	39	31
	Total	86	89	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	48 (41)	49 (44)	39 (29)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (16)	17 (12)	18 (5)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	97	75	172

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	20	86	95
	Girls	21	62	70
	Total	41	148	165
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	24 (26.5)	86 (71.6)	96 (89.0)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	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	28 (27.4)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	37
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	-
Indian	157
Pakistani	281
Bangladeshi	35
Chinese	-
White	278
Any other minority ethnic group	88

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	7	1
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	1	-
Pakistani	9	2
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	7	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	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)	56.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	362

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	20.9
Key Stage 4	18.8

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2,220,753
Total expenditure	2,183,883
Expenditure per pupil	2468
Balance brought forward from previous year	241,675
Balance carried forward to next year	278,545

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	879
Number of questionnaires returned	61

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	34	0	5	2
My child is making good progress in school.	54	37	3	5	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	39	3	7	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	36	8	8	2
The teaching is good.	50	43	2	5	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	33	2	7	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	22	0	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	16	0	5	0
The school works closely with parents.	43	47	2	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	57	33	2	5	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	36	2	5	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	33	5	7	10

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

ENGLISH

120. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is very low, and attainment in the English tests at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average compared to national standards, although the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels is at the national average. This represents good progress. Compared to similar schools, attainment is above average, and achievement at the higher levels is very high. Over three years, trends at Key Stage 3 and 4 are improving. Attainment in GCSE in 1999 was well below national figures, but compared with similar schools, English is in line with average performance. Attainment in English literature, an optional course with a high entry, is better, with pupils attaining 37 percent A*-C, compared with the national figure of 60 percent. Trends in English literature are variable: in 1997, results were well above national averages, but they have declined as more pupils with special educational needs are offered the opportunity to take the course. There are fewer girls than boys in all classes and courses, and they do better than boys in all assessments.
121. Given their low attainment on entry, pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3, but slower progress in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, pupils with higher levels of attainment and those with English as an additional language make good progress and those with special educational needs make very good progress. The learning and progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are strengthened by the good use of support staff. All pupils settle quickly to work, and enjoy being challenged, but in most cases are not challenged enough. They work best when the pace is brisk, but their commitment and energy flag when the pace is slow and the teacher talks too much. There are few opportunities for pupils to show independence or initiative. They read aloud with a fair degree of accuracy and expression, and speak and listen appropriately. But they are often reluctant to write, and the quality of writing in both key stages lags behind pupils' other language skills and depressed pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3. Pupils' spoken responses in Key Stage 4 show clear evidence that they understand and have personal responses to literature, and can remember and quote relevant parts of the text. Reading aloud in the lower ability forms in Key Stage 4 can be halting and less accurate, but good teaching enables them to demonstrate their understanding of literature.
122. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. In Key Stage 3, pupils are prepared to work hard when the organisation and expectations require it; they are keen to be involved and active, are generally attentive and remain well behaved and engaged when they are working. Behaviour is generally good, and when they are working well all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, demonstrate satisfaction and pleasure at working in a business-like way. They make good lively contributions to class discussion when they have the opportunity, and react very positively to teaching and support which is organised and purposeful. In the less successful lessons, pupils are not clear about the purposes of the lesson, or about what they are to learn, are aware of their inadequacies with reading and writing, and disabled by them. In some groups, especially in Year 9, disruptive behaviour interferes with the learning. Pupils become uninterested in the lesson, lose concentration and avoid work. In the best lessons in Key Stage 4, pupils are very committed, demonstrating enthusiasm for topics. They pay close attention to each other in class discussion, and are prepared to be involved in discussions about the detail and quality of texts. Middle ability groups are sometimes reluctant to be involved, and have to be constantly supported or cajoled into learning.
123. Teaching in the department is good, although it is better at Key Stage 4, where 60 percent is very good, and the remainder is good. In Key Stage 3, 40 percent is very good, and the remainder is satisfactory, except for one unsatisfactory lesson. At all times relationships are relaxed and easy, class and behaviour management are calm, firm, authoritative, and

unobtrusive, and homework is well used. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of individual pupils and their needs, and are sensitive in dealing with sensitive issues. There is a commitment to the effective use of information technology, which is used as much as possible. Teachers know pupils extremely well, are familiar with their individual strengths and weaknesses, and use their knowledge effectively in the classroom to support pupils at all times. The relaxed relationships, and the detailed assessments kept of pupils, mean that pupils' academic performance is carefully tracked. In the best teaching, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning; there is a good brisk pace from beginning to end of lesson, good precise organisational use of time, and the creation of a calm, business-like atmosphere in the room. The teachers deal with behavioural issues before they arise, and the marking of books is engaging and responsive, pointing out strengths and weaknesses. In the less successful teaching, all at Key Stage 3, the pace is slower, the teacher talks too much, and planning is sometimes superficial. Learning objectives do not describe what is to be learned as an outcome but are about what is to be done during the lesson. Differentiation is limited, and there is insufficient evidence of the setting or use of class, group or individual targets, on-the-spot assessment beyond praise for individuals, or a range of activities, including extension work, within the lesson: all classes tend to do the same work. Marking does not always point out strengths and weaknesses, but offers over-general comments, which do not lead to improvement. The regular programme for monitoring teaching in the department which is in place supports its intention to continue to improve both teaching and learning.

124. The school has given literacy a very high profile, and there is evidence that the school's policy is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching and learning throughout the curriculum. There is extensive reading aloud in many subjects, and examples seen of flash card work in Year 7 science, and attention to key words in several subjects, notably design and technology, history, geography and religious education. Dictionaries are used in maths as well as English, and there is a general focus on literacy in business studies. Pupils meet a range of varied writing forms in history, and various subjects plan activities relating to prepared texts. Within English, some teachers are careful to remind lower ability classes about how to attack words, and involve the pupils in confirming word meanings. As yet, the attention given across the curriculum is not explicit or widespread enough to raise pupils' awareness fully of the best ways of solving their problems with reading and writing. At present, the units of work in Key Stage 3 do not have the clear rationale for the progress and development of knowledge, skills and understanding which would lead to better progress and attainment. The school's unsatisfactory provision for the development of the library skills of research and information retrieval limits the possibilities of pupils' independent learning.
125. The department has addressed several of the issues raised in the previous inspection; but the challenging of more able readers, the setting of undemanding tasks, and the poor timing and pace in some lessons are still issues, although the wider picture has improved since 1995. Of the issues for action, the auditing of the library stock and improving access to learning resources have not been addressed by the school. The department is committed to a steady programme of self-review, improvement and development and is in a very good position to improve further.

Drama

126. Drama is a relatively new course in the school, with blocks of ten weeks for pupils in Key Stage 3 as part of a joint course, and an option course in Key Stage 4, which attracts as many boys as girls. Attainment in GCSE in 1999 was 40 percent A*-C, and many pupils achieved their highest grade in drama. The demands that coursework makes for extended writing, consistent attendance and meeting deadlines depress scores for the pupils, especially those whose prior ability is low. The drama curriculum at both key stages is about performance, and effectively uses themes of significance to pupils as the basis of improvisation and performance. This is very effective at Key Stage 4, but less so in the limited block of time available to a group in Key Stage 3.
127. It is difficult to determine standards in Key Stage 3, because only one lesson was seen. The learning of Year 9 pupils in the lesson was poor: although some wanted to work, a group of disruptive boys found it difficult to respond to the invitation to take responsibility for their own

learning, and without firm structure the lesson drifted into unacceptably high levels of noise and disruption. Standards in Key Stage 4 are higher than expected. The course is performance based, with little work on scripts and a minimum of writing. Pupils demonstrate high commitment and engagement in their work, which has many very good features. They show independence and initiative, and have very good work habits. They have a clear commitment to their own work, which shows in both good performance and good quality planning talk, and make enthusiastic and informed comment on the work of others.

128. Learning in Key Stage 4 is excellent. Pupils respond very positively to the high expectations, settling immediately into working groups without instruction. They show very good work habits and organise themselves with high levels of skill, welcoming the opportunity for independence and initiative. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teacher, are mutually respectful. Pupils plan, organise and execute complex performances, and show impressive commitment and energy. They describe the purposes of the lesson in sophisticated terms, explain processes they have been and are going through, and how they could be improved. They are confident and able to offer constructive criticism to each other about each others' performances. Excellent social skills are displayed in Key Stage 4 drama. Pupils who might otherwise be difficult flourish in the climate offered by drama, and welcome the opportunity to be creative.
129. The subject makes good contributions to the pupils' personal development. There are moments during some performances when the pupils who are watching experience a sense of awe and wonder. The pupils' performances often deal sensitively and effectively with very significant moral issues, such as the impact that being diagnosed with AIDS has on a sufferer and his relationships. The ethos of the department's work is socially inclusive, and pupils of all abilities are supported into effective achievement. The work pays considerable and effective attention to group work, gender equality, and positive relationships within the group, using group work to improve pupils' social skills. Culturally, the Key Stage 3 drama club draws on Asian myths and legends as the basis for some of its performances, fulfilling the department's intention to 'develop a sensitive understanding of and respect for the various traditions and cultures represented in the school'.
130. Teaching is good in drama. The one lesson seen in Key Stage 3, with a difficult low ability set, was unsatisfactory because the behaviour interfered with the learning, but the Key Stage 4 lessons were very good. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and a strong commitment to promoting drama. Questioning and planning are very good and support learning, with very clear and pertinent objectives defined and shared with pupils, and excellent opportunities for pupils to show independence and initiative. The work is challenging, expectations are very high, and teaching methods encourage all to participate. The content and organisation of the units of work in Key Stage 3 do not provide a structured introduction to drama. Aims are often over ambitious and not supported by the identification of the smaller steps needed to map the progress expected. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are well supported by the teacher. The management of behaviour is generally very good: relationships are business-like, and characterised by high expectations and mutual trust and respect. Interventions are unobtrusive, measured and insightful and always very effective. Resources, especially information technology, are well used. Assessment is thorough and positive: pupils' performance is carefully monitored using the school's procedures. The teacher knows pupils extremely well, is familiar with their individual strengths and weaknesses, and uses the knowledge effectively in the classroom to support pupils. The limited accommodation is well used, and resources are also well deployed.

MATHEMATICS

131. Standards of attainment in mathematics are well below the average standards attained by pupils in other schools nationally. In the 1999 national curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils did not reach the expected levels and made unsatisfactory progress from the beginning of the key stage. There is some improvement since the last inspection in the average levels attained and the trend is upwards. The results of public examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below the standards achieved by pupils nationally. No pupils attained A grades and both boys and girls attained lower standards than in other subjects.

There was an improvement in the trends from 1998 to 1999 and the progress made across the key stage is a little above the average for similar schools. This represents good achievement by the majority of pupils compared with their starting points at the beginning of Year 10.

132. The pupils currently in Year 9 in the higher ability sets attain at average levels in lessons. Their achievement is enhanced by some very good teaching, particularly in aspects of algebra. The standards reached in mathematical investigations are above average and are enhanced through the use of information technology. The most able pupils in these sets are very secure in these mathematical concepts and are not always challenged sufficiently to take this learning forward. The most able pupils in both Years 10 and 11 have the potential to reach higher standards although this is not always recognised by some teachers. This affects standards of performance at the higher levels. Standards in lessons with the lower ability sets are well below average with pupils still only at the early stages of understanding the patterns of number. In a significant number of other lessons standards are at average levels in all aspects of mathematics. The tasks set for pupils are at appropriate levels and pupils solve some complex algebraic equations. They also apply their understanding of place value to solve problems involving decimal fractions, rounding up and down to three decimal places or significant figures. They have a good understanding of rotational symmetry and can recognise and describe polyhedra.
133. The standards attained by pupils in the lower ability sets at Key Stage 3 are below average and their computational skills limited. Standards in data handling are above average with pupils producing line graphs of good quality, interpreting the information accurately. Good progress is made in work on angle and shape, with the most of pupils in the higher ability sets working out both complex bearings and the volume of some complex prisms. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress overall. The targets set for these pupils are appropriate, and pupils receive good support to achieve them in mathematics lessons.
134. Standards of numeracy have improved since the last inspection and numerical skills are applied well in other subjects. Pupils measure accurately in design technology, they prepare spreadsheets in information technology using financial information and record the results of science experiments graphically. The quality of teaching of numeracy is good across the subjects and impacts on standards generally and on pupils' achievements in lessons. Although standards are still too low, these are encouraging signs, and should enable the school to make progress towards the realistic targets they have set for pupils at both key stages. Very good links are made to work in other curriculum areas, for example science, with Year 10 pupils asked to draw a graph to show the effect of pressure on the volume of a gas.
135. The teaching of mathematics in the school is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and their explanations enable pupils to understand the context of the work introduced. Good questions are asked and time is given for the pupils to share the strategies they use to solve algebraic formulae and calculations relating to angles and shape. Where practical tasks are introduced pupils are motivated in their learning. They concentrate well, complete the set tasks and this has a positive effect on achievement in lessons. In some lessons the work set is not sufficiently differentiated and this limits the opportunities for the more able pupils to reach higher standards. Plenary sessions are not always well developed and the opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning are limited. In the small number of lessons where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, the tasks are set at a low level and lack challenge. The pace of mental and oral work at the start of lessons is too slow. The behaviour of some pupils then deteriorates and the range of strategies used by these teachers to deal with this is limited. Where the quality of teaching is good, pupils are well supported and are making progress. In a small number of lessons the poor behaviour of some pupils affects both the learning and the standards attained overall.
136. The head of the mathematics department has been absent for some time and this has slowed the implementation of the actions identified to raise standards. The school's response to this situation has been effective. The teachers who were asked to take over the responsibility for co-ordinating the delivery of the mathematics curriculum give good leadership. There is a sense of vision and recognition of the need to improve development planning.

137. The monitoring of pupils' attainment in mathematics is developing well. Groups of pupils in Year 7 who were underachieving on entry to the school have been targeted and their performance carefully monitored. Teacher assessment indicates that good progress has been made. The department has plans to develop and extend this work to other groups of pupils, including the most able and pupils from minority ethnic groups. The marking of pupils' work is variable and marking does not include comments that enable pupils to identify how to improve.

SCIENCE

138. Overall standards of attainment in science are well below the national averages. At Key Stage 3 pupils' performance in the national tests is well below the national average but above average for similar schools. Most pupils are entered for double science at GCSE and the results are well below the national average. Similarly the results of the small number of pupils entered for single science GCSE are well below the national average. At both key stages boys have been performing better than girls but in 1999 the boys' results dropped and boys and girls produced similar results.
139. By the end of both key stages attainment is well below average. Practical skills are limited, reflecting the inadequacy of laboratory provision in the lower school. Lower school groups rush into practical work and whilst they enjoy it they do not always grasp the purpose of the activity. This attitude carries on in upper school lessons. A Year 10 group, working well in an otherwise good lesson on the detection of halide ions, hurried the practical activity so that some contaminated the samples by using the same pipette (unwashed) for different halides. Pupils' general understanding of scientific facts and concepts across the biological, chemical and physical topics of the National Curriculum is often of a low standard. A Year 9 group in a lesson on pollution showed little understanding of the previous Key Stage 3 work. Listening skills are poorly developed although standards of oracy are usually satisfactory. The department is very aware of the literacy needs of many pupils and a good range of strategies is used with these pupils such as worksheets prepared for pupils of different abilities and the help of support staff. In some lower ability Year 7 groups there is good use of flashcards. A lower ability Year 7 group working on electrical circuits had all the key words available as flashcards and the pupil recording involved a worksheet with missing words with a set of small cards containing all the words required to complete the worksheet. There are good examples of the use of numeracy across the science curriculum particularly in calculations and in line and bar graphs. Key Stage 4 pupils had produced good pie charts using computers, but Key Stage 3 pupils often needed support in the use of calculators and found selecting scales for graphs a difficult activity. Currently there is limited use of datalogging equipment and other laboratory-based computers by pupils. However some lessons are held in an information technology room where good facilities are available. In a Year 10 lesson pupils used a computer program to extract information about alkali metals. The Year 7 curriculum includes a short course on science thinking skills. In one lesson, pupils investigated the current in different lengths of a wire and attempted to identify a relationship between length of wire and the current in the wire.
140. Overall, pupils make slightly better progress, given their starting points, than the national average. They generally make sound progress in science as their initial low level of practical and literacy skills develop. A number of pupils in a Year 10 group, working on an experiment to measure acceleration of an object falling under gravity, were able to discuss the practical limitations of the equipment and hypothesise on the reasons for unexpected data. However some groups or individuals make limited progress as a result of their attitude to learning. In the same lesson one group made no attempt to understand the purpose of the experiment and were more interested in off-task chatter. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and pupils with English as an additional language and gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress in science. Attitudes and behaviour are generally of a good standard. In many lessons, this provides a good learning atmosphere in the laboratory, and pupils are often interested in the content of the work. However there is low level disruption and a poor attitude to learning from small groups in a number of lessons. Pupils work well in a variety of groupings. They show respect for school and each other's equipment and are usually sensitive to the needs of other pupils.

141. Teaching is almost always sound and good in some lessons. All staff are well qualified for their teaching role. Lessons are well planned and aims of lessons are usually shared with pupils. However, expectations are variable: if the teacher ensures a good pace to the lesson pupils normally respond accordingly. In a few lessons achievement is limited by lack of pace or of clear direction. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Most lessons are very teacher directed, although there is a range of teaching styles within this general approach. More pupil centred approaches are rarely used except in investigations where the pupils have some limited control of their own learning. Where pupils are given more responsibility for their own learning, they can be very successful. In many lessons support is available for pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language. The quality of the support is often good and can be of a very high standard when support is available from a student teacher or another science teacher. In a Year 7 lesson on electromagnetism with a low ability group, after an introduction by the teacher, pupils were split into three groups and each small group then had a science specialist to lead the activity. Few lessons provide opportunities to extend more able pupils except through investigations. Teaching of special educational needs groups is generally good.
142. The science staff, including the laboratory technicians, work well together as a team in spite of the split-site arrangements. The head of department provides positive and clear leadership and the programme of staff development for teaching and technical staff is good. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. A project on thinking skills in science has been a major item of recent staff in-service training. Technical support for the department is exceptionally good. With two sites and scattered laboratories the task of servicing science lessons is extremely difficult. Accommodation for science is very poor, particularly at the lower school site. Resources for science teaching are generally adequate but very old and well used. Information technology facilities in science are poor but there is access to good well equipped information technology rooms. There is no systematic monitoring of marking and lesson observation across the department.

ART

143. At Key Stage 3 attainment is above national expectation. All pupils have sketchbooks and art history notebooks which indicate a good level of knowledge, understanding, investigating and making in art and design. Coursework shows some good examples of the integration of these requirements. There is a strong focus on and an effective use of still life observation and work of professional artists as starting points for drawing and painting, sculpture and graphic design. Pupils in Year 7 understand and demonstrate work on Pointillism effectively demonstrating the use of primary, secondary and tertiary colours and this intensive work is well sustained. In Year 8, pupils produce effective Louise Nevelson type monochrome relief assemblages of machines with supportive paintings. Displays show good examples of Year 8 poster work, Art Nouveau style. Year 9 landscape displays indicate a variety of ink trailing and blowing techniques. These are well developed and show more exploratory ways of working. Year 9 pupils are able to discuss Surrealism and the impact of Dada and artists such as Bosch and Magritte. Sketchbooks mostly contain completed pieces of work but are lacking research ideas, collections of ideas and experiential work. Art history notebooks are of a high standard and indicate a positive use of subject terminology and links with literacy.
144. GCSE results in art are above the national average. Girls and boys achieve good grades and there are no significant differences in the achievement of ethnic groups. Attainment in Key Stage 4 is above the national average. Most pupils develop their ideas through structured tasks and the work of artists. Year 10 and 11 pupils work in a range of media developing good coursework; pupils developing graded tonal studies were able to discuss their work, its inspiration and the techniques they had utilised, naming Morandi and Nicolson as artists they had researched. Gifted and talented pupils achieve standards beyond expectation as evidenced in studies developed from Escher which demonstrate an effective combination of painting skills and techniques.
145. A high percentage of work seen indicated Eurocentric study; schemes of work and displays showed good examples of Islamic art, Indian scrolls and Aboriginal art. There is not enough 3-

dimensional study, nor consideration of printmaking and the work of craftspeople and designers.

146. The progress of all pupils in art is good and pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They listen carefully to instruction, work safely and are well motivated. Pupils enjoy art and greatly respect the teaching staff. Art books, sketchbooks and notebooks are handled carefully and materials are cleared away efficiently.
147. The quality of teaching is good and has a positive impact on learning. Both teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and high expectations of all pupils; planning is competent and all lessons have clear learning objectives, appropriate activities well matched to pupils' abilities and suitable pace to balance practical tasks and opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and that of others. Worksheets are used to support learning and are differentiated for pupils with special needs. Pupils are well managed and there are good opportunities for pupils to decide what they will do and to direct their work. Pupils work independently and in small groups and homework is regularly set linked to targets in lessons.
148. The department is well led, managed effectively and the two art teachers work collaboratively in strategic and curriculum planning. Responsibilities and the teaching of the examinations groups are shared. The art curriculum complies with statutory orders and policies effectively reflect the school's aims. There is a fully inclusive art curriculum with equal access to all activities, developed through a planned series of structured tasks and practical application of knowledge and understanding. This effective management has a positive effect on pupils' progress and standards.
149. The department has made good progress since the last inspection; standards in teaching and learning have been maintained, displays are good and the use of sketchbooks and notebooks effective in developing learning in art and design. The accommodation for art is satisfactory but storage is poor and the art rooms would benefit from some reorganisation. There are currently no opportunities for visiting artists, exhibitions or visits to galleries and the development and use of new technologies in art is a weakness.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

150. Attainment in the National Curriculum at the end of Key Stage 3 is below the national average for level 5 and above. There was an improvement in the number of pupils gaining higher levels in 1999. Girls' performance is better than boys and this is in line with national trends.
151. In Key Stage 4 the number of pupils who gained A*-C grades in the GCSE examination in 1999 was lower than the national average. The number of pupils gaining A*-G grades in 1999 was in line with the national average. More girls than boys attained A*-C grades which is in line with national trends. More boys attained the higher grades A and B. There was a higher proportion of A*-C grades in 1998 than in 1999. In 1998 the numbers of pupils gaining A*-G grades was higher than the national average.
152. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and gifted and talented pupils, make good progress. Particularly good progress is made in Key Stage 4. Learning in lessons is at least satisfactory and often good or very good. Pupils understand what they need to do and most work hard to improve. They respond well to challenging tasks. There are examples of high levels of attainment in designing and making from the most able pupils.
153. In Key Stage 3 pupils develop their knowledge of materials and tools and learn skills and techniques that they can apply to their designing and making activities. In Key Stage 4 knowledge and understanding improves significantly. Pupils can explain what they have learnt through the processes of product design. The work of the most able pupils shows that they are able to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills when developing their final ideas and making their products.

154. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Some refurbishment has taken place to improve the accommodation. Contributing subjects work together to provide a coherent approach. Monitoring of attainment takes place and strategies for improvement are identified. The curriculum is regularly reviewed.
155. The quality of teaching makes a significant contribution to the progress that pupils make. In Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 92 percent of lessons. It is good or very good in 50 percent of these. In Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons. It is good or very good in 54 percent of these. All departments contribute to the good and very good teaching. All teaching in child development is good or very good. Good and very good teaching were seen in both key stages. The work of the two technicians makes a significant contribution to the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
156. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their specialist subjects. The enthusiasm of teachers motivates pupils and sustains their interest. Particular features that have a positive influence on the learning that takes place include:
- clear objectives and instructions supported by checklists. Pupils understand what they have to do and what they are expected to achieve;
 - good planning. Lessons have a clear structure supported by effective resources. The content, activities and a combination of teaching methods support pupils who work hard;
 - positive relationships create a purposeful working atmosphere. Teachers know pupils well and sensitive support for individual pupils encourages them to work to the best of their ability. This has a significant impact on the progress pupils make;
 - the detailed advice provided to individual pupils in Key Stage 4. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their performance and reach a higher standard of attainment. The most able pupils use this information to manage their work and produce action plans. The genuine pleasure teachers show in the achievements of pupils encourages them to do even better;
 - skilful management of behaviour which enables all pupils to learn.
157. Effective procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' attainment are in place and this means that teachers can monitor the progress that individual pupils make.
158. Pupils enjoy their design and technology lessons and are eager to learn. Most pupils, especially in Key Stage 4, are committed, determined and want to do well. Behaviour overall is good and often very good. Most pupils respond well to the routines and standards that are set. Pupils work responsibly and safely in workshops.
159. The statutory requirements for National Curriculum design and technology are in place. There is a wide range of activities across food, graphics, resistant materials and textiles and in child development that motivates pupils. The use of information technology to support and extend the learning of pupils is developing. Where it has been established in schemes of work it is effective and has a positive impact on the standards that pupils attain. Pupils are using information technology to extend their research, analyse data, help with elements of their designs and to enhance the presentation of their work.
160. The design and technology curriculum is enriched by the cultural diversity of the pupils in the school. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are encouraged and confident to bring cultural influences to their designing and making activities and this can be seen in their choice of materials and techniques and in the finished products that they make. There are particularly good examples of a rich mix of creative products particularly in textiles.
161. Arrangements for the leadership and management of the subject are effective. Each subject is well led by a specialist co-ordinator. The work of subject co-ordinators is managed by a cluster co-ordinator and this brings coherence to the work of the departments. Common policies and practices are agreed, there are shared objectives and a commitment to raising standards.

GEOGRAPHY

162. The geography department has made very good progress since the last inspection. The very effective teaching is based on a number of key strengths. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the subject. Lessons are well organised and pupils are consistently expected to work at a good pace. There is an emphasis on thought provoking and varied investigations and pupils' work is carefully assessed.
163. Pupils make good progress in geography in Key Stages 3 and 4 and attainment was typical of national standards in the sample of lessons that were observed. However, overall standards, taking into account national assessments and examination results, are judged to be below national expectations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The most recent GCSE results were significantly better than those in similar schools and were just below the national average.
164. More able pupils have a good understanding of geographical processes and can draw carefully annotated sketch maps and diagrams. This is illustrated by pupils in Years 8 and 10 who have produced some excellent diagrams of the way that rivers shape the landscape. Pupils develop a good knowledge of environmental issues through a series of interesting case studies, such as the use of National Parks and the changes around the Aral Sea. They learn important investigative skills, as is shown by the work on local land use in Year 7 and on migration in Year 9. GCSE pupils are taught to organise and present their notes well. Different groups of pupils make good progress although the attainment of some of the Key Stage 3 classes is significantly below average, as is demonstrated by their poor knowledge about places.
165. Teaching is good in both key stages. It was good or better in over 60 per cent of the lessons observed, with over 40 per cent being very good or excellent. Teachers have established a very effective working environment. Pupils are well behaved and concentrate on their work. Ideas are introduced in a very clear manner, for example in the way that overhead projectors are used to introduce maps and diagrams. Teachers ask perceptive questions that help pupils to develop their thinking. There is good explanation of key terms, for example in Year 7 lessons about land use and a Year 8 topic on rainfall. There is a well organised assessment system, supported by an excellent portfolio of pupils' work that covers the important areas of the subject. In a minority of Key Stage 3 lessons teachers misjudge the level of challenge that is needed.
166. The department is very well managed by an experienced co-ordinator who has a good vision of the subject. Lessons are very thoroughly planned, as is illustrated by the comprehensive and creative materials for the Year 8 topic about weather and climate. There is above average use of the different aspects of information technology and an impressive fieldwork programme. Classroom displays are of a high standard. The curriculum is continually reviewed and there is a commitment to implementing new ideas. Forward planning and monitoring are very effective.

HISTORY

167. The history department has made very good progress since the last inspection. There is outstanding teaching that inspires significant numbers of pupils to choose and succeed in the subject at GCSE. Teachers have great enthusiasm for history and pupils clearly enjoy lessons.
168. Pupils of all abilities make very good progress in the subject. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are typical of those expected nationally. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils obtain above average GCSE results which are very significantly better than standards in similar schools.
169. By Year 11 pupils have a good grasp of the key elements of history, for example they have a balanced view of the strengths and weaknesses of different sources. They can analyse the reasons for historical changes, as is shown by their work on the Chartists. More able pupils in Key Stage 3 communicate effectively and make good notes using tables, charts and diagrams, as is demonstrated by the regular creation of 'factfiles' about significant historical characters. They make excellent use of sources to investigate issues, as is shown by Year 9 work on the Blitz and Dunkirk. Pupils write fluently and extensively which makes a significant contribution to the development of their literacy skills. A minority of pupils demonstrate lower levels of

attainment, as is illustrated by their poor grasp of key events and their difficulty in sequencing historical periods.

170. Teaching is very good in both Key Stages 3 and 4. It was very good or excellent in 85 per cent of the lessons seen, which is an exceptionally high figure. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and their love of history is clearly conveyed to the pupils. Activities are very thoroughly and creatively planned and meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. This is well illustrated by the very high quality of the wide range of resources that are used in the 'Medieval Realms' topic in Year 7. Complex historical events are clearly explained using imaginative exercises and analogies, for example the 'Europa House' exercise that is used to introduce the origins of World War One. Teachers consistently ask challenging and perceptive questions in order to develop pupils' understanding of important concepts. There is careful explanation of key terms.
171. The department is exceptionally well managed by a thoughtful co-ordinator who has an excellent understanding of the subject. There is regular and effective monitoring of history teaching and excellent planning of new developments. There is outstanding support for GCSE pupils who are encouraged to carefully organise their work. Teaching is based around a sharp focus on the examination requirements from the start of the course, for example in the work on Nazi propaganda. The department's revision guides are very clear and comprehensive as is shown in the lessons on the Chartists. There is an impressive range of work on display in the history rooms and good use of timelines. Teachers' marking and assessment ensure that pupils are very clear about their progress. There is a regular programme of history visits and above average use of information technology.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

172. Overall standards of attainment in information technology are satisfactory, but there are gaps in teaching some statutory aspects of the subject in Key Stage 3. Pupils taking the full information studies GCSE option achieved above average results. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in communicating, modelling with spreadsheets, and exploring information sources. Pupils studying GNVQ courses are working to achieve key skills level 1 or 2 in information technology within their vocational study.
173. In Key Stage 3, pupils' standard of attainment is unsatisfactory. Pupils demonstrate a satisfactory level of attainment in communicating, handling information, and the more able explore the effect of changing variables and values in a spreadsheet, mainly at level 5 and below. They are not taught or assessed in using IT to measure, record and control variables. The school is not fully meeting its statutory requirements in Key Stage 3. Teacher assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 showed attainment to be just below the national average in 1999.
174. By the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils have developed confidence and competence in using a range of software tools for communicating and handling information, altering formulae within models and finding information using CD-ROMs and the Internet. They create good presentations for visitors to show their plans and ideas and use information technology to enhance the quality of their work. They are independent and use computers to support their work in other areas of study. GCSE pupils have a good understanding of applications, systems, data types and other essential elements of the course. They make good progress. Pupils are not assessed or monitored in their use of information technology in other subjects of the curriculum if they do not take GCSE or GNVQ in information technology.
175. Pupils with special needs make good progress and pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress. The support provided through information technology for pupils with literacy and numeracy needs is good. They use interactive learning software, and other resources, to practice phonics, sentence building, and practice number skills e.g. identifying number factors in mathematics. This has developed since the previous inspection and support teachers prepare and plan teaching to support specific needs well. Good progress is made in lessons in reading questions, interpreting information, and using technical language.

176. Behaviour and attitudes to work, concentration and pace are generally good. Pupils work independently with enthusiasm, take pride in their work, take responsibility for their own learning, and are keen to support each other. They enjoy using information technology within subjects, and sometimes suggest opportunities for its application, for example in geography, producing a slide-show presentation about the week's weather. In Key Stage 3 minor behaviour difficulties are due to a few pupils experiencing difficulties with their work. In Key Stage 4 pupils take note of deadlines, are aware of their own progress, and are prepared to work at lunch-times and after school to complete work.
177. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is secure and is good for GCSE courses. As a result, pupils demonstrate good attitudes to their work and pace themselves well in their learning. They work independently through tasks that are generally well matched to their ability. Teachers' expectations of pupils are high. Pupils then take pride in their work and respond well to the support they are given by adults. All teachers carry out appropriate marking and set homework, although in some lessons there is insufficient use of assessment to inform the planning of appropriate objectives for future learning. The quality of teaching of information technology in other curriculum areas is more varied. Good examples are evident in careers education and in business studies.
178. Information technology within curriculum areas is varied, with some good examples taught and displayed in most subjects to support teaching and learning. The quality of learning has unsatisfactory features at Key Stage 3. Exercises are taught covering most of the programmes of study but the scheme of work does not contain detailed learning objectives. Pupils do not learn how to communicate their knowledge and experience of information technology, assess its use, or control events. There is a range of opportunities outside lessons and in holidays and at weekends to use the school facilities. They are keenly used by pupils.
179. Leadership is good and this has an impact on standards achieved. The roles of co-ordinator, systems manager, and cross-curriculum co-ordinator have been clearly defined following an in-depth review. This structure is in its early stage of implementation. There is a good approach to team-work. There has been successful staff training in using the Internet and the Birmingham Grid for Learning.
180. The system manager and technician work effectively to maintain and upgrade the sophisticated school-wide curriculum and administration network, and support on-going development.
181. The provision of learning resources is good, with an above average pupil:computer ratio of 7:1. Internet access is available from a fast communications link to the Birmingham Grid For Learning, with fibre-optic link between the two sites, and an efficiently managed network to support curriculum areas. The school has made appropriate plans to undertake New Opportunities Funded ICT training for teaching staff in the near future.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

182. Standards in modern foreign languages are below national averages overall. At Key Stage 3 teacher assessment results were above the national average in 1998 and below in 1999. At Key Stage 4 results in French in 1999 were well below the national average for grades A*-C. They were better in German for grades A*-C but below the national average for comprehensive schools.
183. The school enters between 70 percent and 90 percent of its Year 11 pupils for the GCSE exam. This is well above the national average and therefore includes pupils from a wider ability range than in many schools. Results in both French and German have declined since 1997 when they were near the national average at grades A*-C. Since the revision of the GCSE syllabuses in 1997 pupils have done less well in GCSE exams. In 1999 girls' results in French improved slightly and their results in German improved considerably. Boys' results have continued to decline.
184. Staffing difficulties at the time of the inspection had an impact on standards in some lessons. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 where in nearly one third of lessons many

pupils are inattentive and disrupt the lesson. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 with the exception of the most able pupils.

185. In the satisfactory or better lessons in Key Stage 3 higher attaining pupils are able to use different tenses in their speech and written work. The level of achievement in writing is appropriate for pupils of all abilities with especially good work produced by lower ability pupils. All pupils will speak in French and German when asked directly but are reluctant to take the initiative in using these languages to the teacher or each other.
186. In Key Stage 4 pupils have good listening skills and can identify key words and write them accurately. Higher ability pupils have satisfactory pronunciation in French and German. Most pupils are reluctant to volunteer information and boys particularly offer only the minimum when answering. In writing pupils in Years 10 and 11 use appropriate levels of grammar and vocabulary for GCSE requirements. Some pupils in both key stages use computers to present written work. Pupils of all abilities present written work well.
187. Teaching is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In both key stages a number of lessons are spoiled by pupils' misbehaviour. Inexperienced and temporary teachers fail to check minor instances of inattention and potentially good lessons are disrupted. Another weakness of the teaching, particularly in Key Stage 4, is low expectations of boys. Their short responses in the target language are rarely challenged by the teachers and in this aspect of learning they performed noticeably less well than girls.
188. In other lessons there are examples of satisfactory and good teaching. In the satisfactory lessons teachers use French or German as the language of the lesson. They use it for all phases of the lesson and will rephrase or mime to ensure pupils understand quite complicated instructions for exercises. They plan lessons well with clear objectives which follow a common format in all language lessons. There is close co-operation between teachers and support staff and foreign language assistants and the level of teamwork is exemplary. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and there are instances where they draw lengthy answers in French or German from the pupils. They require high standards of behaviour from pupils and the majority of teachers are able to do this still using French and German. The tone of most lessons is characterised by good-humoured relationships.
189. Teachers use a range of methods to gain pupils' attention and capture their interests. They make especially effective use of the overhead projector to provide prompts for a role-play and to analyse the structure of sentences. Simple games with flashcards capture the attention of younger pupils and build an atmosphere of enjoyment and positive learning. The department does not have enough textbooks for all pupils and this restricts the homework tasks that are set.
190. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are generally positive. They support the lunchtime language club and the visits to France and Germany. The pupils relate well to each other in most lessons and there are examples in both key stages of a purposeful learning atmosphere in lessons.
191. The department monitors pupils' progress by a good system of records of academic performance. Teachers encourage their pupils' progress through a marking system which tells them the National Curriculum level they have achieved in their exercises. However marking is inconsistent with only some marking indicating pupils level of attainment at Key Stage 3. They have analysed pupils' performance and have used the information to set targets for individuals and groups. The department has a record of standardised work for Key Stage 3 in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
192. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department is energetic, proactive and leads by example. She sets high standards and has a team which is attempting to follow her lead. There are posts of responsibility filled by colleagues who show ability and willingness to promote these same high standards by their own personal support. Teachers' work is monitored through regular observations of lessons by all languages teachers. The school has conducted a departmental review and the department has implemented its latest recommendations for teaching support and appropriate resources for use at the start of lessons. There is ongoing work on the use of ICT to motivate pupils.

193. To restore standards the departmental staff now needs to prepare a scheme of work for Key Stage 4 which will provide strategies to teach specific exam skills, to raise the standard of spoken French and German and to raise the achievement of boys.

MUSIC

194. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards overall in music are below national expectations. In half of the lessons seen standards were satisfactory. The work of the most able pupils in all years is approaching standards expected nationally in performance and composition. Skills in these areas are generally lacking and reflect a significant absence of prior learning in all years. Music has not been taught at Key Stage 4 in recent years.
195. Relationships between teacher and pupils are generally positive. Most pupils behave well but a minority do not share the same level of respect for the subject and the teacher. Occasional poor behaviour impacts on the quality of the learning, disrupting the usually lively pace of lessons. Pupils co-operate and work constructively to compose in pairs and small groups. They work together successfully on shared keyboards.
196. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good. Lessons are well planned and delivered with appropriate use of technical vocabulary. Good planning aids learning which ranges between satisfactory and very good in pace and standard. Learning objectives are written up clearly on the wall-display and this helps pupils to focus on usually successful independent learning. The teacher's expectations are generally appropriate and offer challenge to the majority of the groups. Management of pupils is very good overall and a range of teaching techniques is used effectively. The curriculum reflects a broad understanding of the requirements for Key Stage 3 although the use of technology is currently undeveloped.
197. The music co-ordinator has had a very positive impact upon the profile and nature of the subject in the school. There is a positive atmosphere in the department and extra-curricular activities are beginning to develop. Visiting instrumental colleagues praise the organisation and general support of their work. The activities and areas of study contained in the music curriculum contribute to the cultural and social development of pupils. Free instrumental lessons are in place and this is seen as a positive development by parents. The sustained development of this important area of opportunity for pupils will begin to impact upon the profile of the department in future years. Monitoring and assessment of pupil progress and attainment are not following the school policy and expectations. The co-ordinator has good ideas for the future and requires support to prepare a plan for the future development of music as a vibrant cornerstone of the provision for performing arts in the school and community.
198. Although the school has made distinct improvements in the accommodation and resources as recommended in the previous inspection, pupils' activities are hampered by the absence of additional small spaces for group work. Instrumental tuition is handicapped by the absence of a small teaching room with a keyboard. The present area is unsatisfactory for the purpose. There is potential for the much needed development of music technology activities in the department but a suitable secure space to set up the computer and midi keyboard is currently unavailable to the department. Security for the block is not good. Library resources for music are poor.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

199. At Key Stage 3 attainment is above the national expectation; pupils' knowledge and understanding of games, gymnastics and dance are good and most pupils meet the national expectation in planning, performing and evaluating physical activities. Pupils understand the effects of exercise on the body and how to warm up appropriately for different activities. In gymnastics, Year 7 pupils are able to build sequences performing a range of skills, linking them with various travelling movements and evaluating the quality of their own work and that of others. In basketball, Year 9 pupils demonstrate very good skills in dribbling, shooting and

tactical play. In football and rugby, most pupils know and apply the rules, whilst developing a sound level of tactical play using various attacking and defending skills.

200. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is above the national average. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of anatomy and physiology and the impact of a healthy lifestyle are sound. In badminton, most pupils can perform basic shots - short serves, smash, clear and drop shots - and apply them with reasonable accuracy in the doubles game. Year 10 and 11 pupils enjoy a range of health related activities and achieve standards in line with expectation; for example in aerobics and weights training most pupils are able to sustain activity through a planned programme of exercise to improve general fitness and stamina. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress and gifted and talented pupils' make very good progress, at both key stages.
201. Many pupils respond to physical education with very good attitudes and behaviour. Most are punctual, given the movement between school sites, and are both responsible and sensible with equipment and kit, adhering to the school rules well. They usually listen attentively to instructions and are able to work co-operatively with each other in team situations. There is a sporting ethos and many pupils admire the sporting excellence of others.
202. The quality of teaching and learning in physical education is good overall and is very good in a third of lessons. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Planning is effective with sound learning objectives, a very good range of teaching strategies and high expectations of all pupils. The staff are a very skilled team who deliver lively, energetic lessons, making good use of demonstration with effective question and answer sessions. Activities are usually appropriately matched to pupils' experience and needs. There is a strong focus on the sequential acquisition of skills and techniques with good links to prior learning and extension activities. Schemes of work for dance are not as well developed as those in gymnastics and games and no swimming is taught.
203. The department is well led and managed effectively. The curriculum complies with the statutory orders for physical education and meets the National Curriculum requirements through a good range of activities taught by a very experienced team with a positive ethos of sporting achievement and high quality curriculum planning.
204. GCSE sports and physical education studies have been taught since 1991 and results are consistently good with a trend close to the national average in A*-C passes and 100 percent A-G passes over the last three years. There is no significant variation between boys' and girls' attainment although more boys than girls take a GCSE course.
205. The department has made good progress since the last inspection; the numbers of pupils not participating in lessons are low and this is a significant improvement. Standards within the department are good and pupils are achieving in line with national expectations. There is a positive sporting ethos evidenced both in lessons and in the range of extra curricular activities. Pupils representing the school in the basketball and netball teams were excellent ambassadors for the school. Many of the teams compete to a high standard in the Birmingham leagues and links with local clubs are well established.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

206. The religious education department has made good progress since the last inspection. Pupils are very supportive of the subject and consistently make positive comments about the value of studying different religions. The department has ensured that pupils following the GCSE course have obtained successful results. A core team of teachers now teaches religious education. However the subject is still not provided for a reasonable period of time for all pupils in Key Stage 4.
207. Pupils make satisfactory progress in religious education in Key Stages 3 and 4. Overall standards of attainment are below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. The standards attained by pupils following the core course are below average by the end of Key Stage 4 and their work lacks depth because of the low time allocation for the religious education

units. This should be contrasted with the very positive results for the GCSE option group in 1999. These were above the national average and considerably better than those for similar schools.

208. Progress in both key stages is better when pupils are learning about the key features of religions. They build up a sound framework of understanding about Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism in Key Stage 3. This is illustrated by the Year 7 classes studying Eid and the Year 9 classes studying the Parables. GCSE pupils acquire a detailed knowledge of Christianity and Islam and can, for example, explain the different branches of these religions. Pupils also make reasonable progress in their understanding of religious questions, for example in the interesting Year 9 work that links religious questions to recent newspaper articles. Pupils in both key stages make good progress in their notemaking skills as is illustrated by their use of lists, tables, bullet points and spider diagrams. There is less progress in their ability to consider the implications of their own and other people's beliefs. Key Stage 3 pupils find it difficult to talk about the religious symbolism arising in their studies, for example in the Year 8 lessons about Ganesh.
209. The quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory and was good in 40 per cent of the lessons observed. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject as is indicated, for example, in the lessons about Eid in Years 7 and 10. Lesson objectives are clearly explained and pupils routinely write them in their notebooks. Activities are crisply paced and time is well managed, as in the Year 11 lesson about the Hajj. Teachers have secure relationships with pupils and lessons are purposeful. Pupils respond well and work in an orderly way, although there is inattentive behaviour in a minority of Key Stage 3 lessons. Important terms are carefully explained and artefacts and videos are used to illustrate key points, for example in the Year 8 lessons about Hinduism.
210. The department is making good progress under the direction of a thoughtful co-ordinator who is rightly developing more confidence in her role. The recent changes have been managed in a very sensitive way and the department is continuing to raise the profile of the subject. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and there is a consistent focus on the exploration of moral issues, as is illustrated by the pupil who responded that the subject 'makes you think'. A significant number of Year 7 pupils perceive that there is too much overlap with their previous Key Stage 2 work and are capable of more challenging activities. Topic planning, assessment and monitoring are at an early stage of development and the Key Stage 4 marking policy is inappropriate.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

211. In 1999, 16 year old pupils were entered for Part One General National Vocational courses at intermediate level in health and social care and leisure and tourism. Pupils attaining a pass in these courses are awarded the equivalent of two GCSEs at Grades A* - C grade. The results in leisure and tourism are very good in 1999 and well above the national average for pupils entered for GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism. The results in health and social care are below the national average. Taking both courses together standards are above the national average for GNVQ Part 1 courses. There is a rapidly improving trend in attainment in leisure and tourism and a slight decline in health and social care. In the absence of foundation course provision in 1999, some pupils were inappropriately following an Intermediate course resulting in a high proportion of pupils failing to complete the full course, though many of these pupils attained unit accreditation.
212. Standards of attainment in lessons reflect the grouping of pupils into higher level intermediate groups and the lower level foundation groups. Standards are above national averages in the intermediate level groups and well below national averages in the foundation level groups. Pupils in the intermediate groups generally attain above average standard, though there are very few pupils attaining the highest standards. Pupils attaining the highest standards write fluently, providing extended interpretations, for example, in describing and giving reasons for the types of land use in the city centre. Most pupils write very brief explanations. With focused support to help pupils reflect in their written work the understanding they demonstrate orally, more pupils would attain higher standards. Standards of attainment in key skills are good

overall. Many pupils, mostly boys, use information technology with confidence, particularly in presenting information, and most pupils have satisfactory and some have good skills of oral communication for their age. Good skills of oral presentation were evident when the Year 11 intermediate level leisure and tourism group made a presentation to visitors on how best to promote the Ramblers Association. Standards of attainment in the small groups of pupils doing the foundation level courses are very low overall, due to poor literacy skills. In these groups a small number of pupils find difficulty in both reading leaflets to extract information and in writing. The standard of these pupils' work is below the required standard of the course.

213. Pupils make very good progress overall, and in Year 11 are attaining standards well above those expected given their starting points. Most pupils show clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of the vocational area. They speak with confidence about the objectives of their assignments and what they have learned; and the most able pupils are sharper in their analysis and evaluation of information in Year 11 than earlier in the course. Pupils make very good progress in the key skills of information technology, communication, particularly oral communication, and application of number. Their skills in evaluating their work are progressing well due to good teaching, but only a minority of pupils have developed good action planning skills by Year 11. A small number of able pupils, particularly white boys in Year 10, are making only average progress because they are satisfied with less than the best work they are capable of producing. There is also a small minority of pupils, some of whose overall standard of work is good, who are making unsatisfactory progress because they fail to address weaknesses in their marked assignments. Most pupils in the foundation groups are making good progress due to good teaching but a few make below average progress due to poor reading and writing skills. The progress of pupils with English as an additional language is good overall and would be better if all pupils corrected marked work.
214. The quality of teaching is the main strength in the department. It is at least satisfactory in all lessons, 75 percent is good and there is some excellent teaching. The course is very well planned to address the requirements of the examining body through an excellent series of assignments based on case studies which draw on first hand information. There is a rich variety of first hand experience provided through visits locally and abroad. These include many visits within Birmingham as well as visits to Stratford-on-Avon, London, Paris and New York. In addition a range of visitors come to school, for example health visitors. Teachers skilfully draw on these real experiences to develop pupils' understanding of the vocational area in its local, national and international contexts. There is an appropriate emphasis on standards and not just completion of the vocational content and on the direct teaching of concepts. Through good questioning and explanations which are amplified by reference to real examples familiar to pupils, teachers help pupils to analyse information, for example, the reasons for the location of leisure or tourist facilities. However, this beneficial emphasis placed on explaining patterns does not extend to ensuring that pupils' written work contains sufficient evaluative and analytical writing. This is a weaknesses in the teaching given that it is the pupils' ability to convey their understanding in written work which largely determines their qualification.
215. Good emphasis is placed on the teaching of the process skills of information seeking and handling, and of evaluation, but insufficient focus is given to action planning. Action plans are limited to a sequence of activities with no dates for completion or revisions. Some very good opportunities are provided through assignments which develop pupils' initiative in the collection of information, the conduct of surveys and the selection and use of a range of appropriate sources of information. Such assignments enhance the motivation of pupils and develops their process and key skills as well as their knowledge and understanding of the vocational content. It represents the best of practice. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their skills in application of number as an integral part of the leisure and tourism course, for example through estimating the distances and costs of travelling from Birmingham to Nice. A helpful series of supplementary activities ensures that pupils cover the required range where opportunities do not arise naturally in the vocational units.
216. There is a good match between the work set and the ability of the pupils. A good balance of open-ended tasks to challenge the most able, and structured tasks to support low achievers, are set, but there are a few pupils for whom even the structured tasks are too difficult and insufficient support is provided to enable them to access the material and to make satisfactory

progress. The quality of teaching which otherwise is very good, is hampered at the beginning of one lesson by the late arrival over a period of 15 minutes by some pupils, and in this and other lessons by pupils who were absent from the previous lesson. It is particularly challenging in these circumstances for teachers to ensure that pupils understand the missed work and catch up with current work and therefore make adequate progress. Some of these pupils do not make satisfactory progress.

217. Overall, pupils are very interested in their vocational courses. They maintain their portfolios well and are keen to attain the highest grades. Most pupils, when given the opportunity to use their initiative, work hard and do their best to achieve the highest standards. Relationships between pupils are good; they work well collaboratively and show respect for each other. Many pupils use the classroom for study during lunch-time and at the end of the day and some attend additional vocationally-related courses. Some pupils do not work hard enough. Some of these are boys who have attained good standards by the age of 14. They produce work of average standard and they do not correct marked work.
218. Teachers mark pupils' assessed work and provide constructive written feedback to pupils on how to improve their work for the award of a pass grade. Pupils are clear on what they have to do to improve but their response is uneven even with a range of support from teachers. Even more needs to be done to ensure that there are fewer exceptions to the completion of work than at present. The systems for ensuring consistency of standards in both vocational courses are very good and were justifiably commented on very favourably in a recent external verifier's report. Good records of pupils' assessment are maintained and are displayed for pupils to see their progress. Overall the systems for assessing pupils are very good.
219. The department is very efficiently managed. Documentation is excellent, with procedures clearly described. Analysis of examination results is thorough, areas for improvement are identified and action is taken. Teachers work hard and are available to support pupils during lunch hour and after school and there is an excellent relationship between pupils and teachers.
220. Since the last inspection the department has addressed the issue of a lack of involvement of industry; links are now excellent. Opportunities for independent learning and self-responsibility for learning are now good. Vocational courses, which at the last inspection were predominantly for low-ability pupils, are now a major option in the school, open to and attractive to all abilities. Standards of attainment have improved overall and are very good in leisure and tourism.

BUSINESS STUDIES

221. The number of pupils who gained A*-C and A*-G grades in their General Certificate of Education (GCSE) examinations in 1999 was higher than the national average. These good results have been consistent over the last three years and were significant in 1998 when 35 percent of pupils gained A* and A grades. Pupils do better in business studies than in the other subjects that they enter by more than half a grade and better than pupils taking business studies in similar schools.
222. Most pupils who opt for business studies enter for the double award of GCSE Business Studies and GCSE Information studies. A significant number gained two C grades or better in 1999. These pupils spend considerable time out of school hours completing the work that is required for both courses, to a high standard.
223. The quality of teaching is a strength that has a positive influence on the progress that pupils make and the standards that they achieve. The teaching in all lessons is at least satisfactory and in 50 percent of these it is very good or excellent.
224. Teachers' planning is thorough. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm motivates pupils who are eager to learn. They manage pupils well and are skilful in dealing with potentially difficult behaviour. They are successful in creating a purposeful working environment in which learning can take place.

225. Teachers have clear learning objectives and pupils know what they are meant to learn and be able to do. Careful questioning by teachers checks and extends pupils' knowledge and understanding. Support for individual pupils enables them all to do the best that they can and has a significant impact on the good progress that they make.
226. An effective system for assessment is in place. Attainment is assessed on a regular basis and the information is used, in Key Stage 4, to provide detailed advice to individual pupils. Pupils know what they need to do to improve. The most able pupils take responsibility for managing their work and plan to take account of the advice they receive.
227. Relationships are good. Pupils show respect for each other and for their teachers, they are co-operative, support each other and are pleased with the achievements of other members of the group. Attitudes are positive, pupils enjoy their business education lessons and work hard to complete the tasks that are set.
228. The curriculum at both key stages provides a range of effective activities that motivate pupils. The units of work in Key Stage 3 provide opportunities for pupils to begin to develop their understanding of business concepts and practices. They are a good preparation for Key Stage 4 when pupils apply their knowledge and understanding to business contexts. The curriculum in business studies makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' information and communications technology (ICT) capability as well as their numeracy and literacy skills. There is a range of opportunities for pupils to work and seek advice out of school hours.
229. The department is well led and the teachers work closely together to review and develop the curriculum and monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the progress that pupils make. Business studies makes a positive contribution to the overall standards in the school. The curriculum would be enriched by opportunities for pupils to meet with people from the business world. The department should continue to pursue the development of contacts in the local community that provide pupils with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and understanding to real business situations.