

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST PAUL'S WAY COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND
ARTS COLLEGE**

London

LEA area: Tower Hamlets

Unique reference number: 100970

Headteacher: Mr. M. Coles

Reporting inspector: Mrs G. K. Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 14-18th February 2000

Inspection number: 186103

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Shelmerdine Close London
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. H. Uddin Abbas
Date of previous inspection:	17/11/95 – 21/11/95

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Gulshanbir Kayembe	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	Summary of the report The school's results and achievements How well are pupils or students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Husain Akhtar	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Andrew Blow	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Terry Chipp	Team inspector	Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
Michael Davidson	Team inspector	Science	
Harold Davies	Team inspector	Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Information technology	
Brian Frederick	Team inspector	History	
Wallis Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Celia Holland	Team inspector	Music	
Michael Pennington	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Sylvia Richardson	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Equal opportunities	How well is the school led and managed?
Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
Lesley Tumman	Team inspector	Geography	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed comprehensive for boys and girls aged between 11 and 16. The intake is drawn from the local area and the majority of pupils are of minority ethnic origins, the largest group being Bangladeshi. The majority of pupils also have English as an additional language although the proportion at the earliest stages of English language development is relatively small (36 pupils). However, many more are not yet fluent in English. Pupils' mobility is high, especially that of pupils newly arrived from abroad and with very limited knowledge of English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high and reflects the poor economic conditions locally. Attainment on entry is well below average, but showing some improvements in the current Year 7, owing to the implementation of national strategies in literacy and numeracy. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs is about average at 17 per cent of the number on roll.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective in enabling pupils to reach well above average GCSE results when compared with similar schools. This is as a result of pupils' increased positive attitudes to work by the time they get to the top of the school, the support provided by the ethnic minority achievement and special educational needs departments and revision classes after school. However, attainment remains below national averages by the end of Key Stage 4 and pupils do not do as well as other pupils in similar types of schools by the end of Key Stage 3. Whilst there is a strong commitment to improving the school and pupils' achievements, there are some weaknesses in leadership and management which hold back further progress. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- It enables pupils to do well at Key Stage 4 so that their performance in GCSE examinations is well above that of similar schools.
- Standards of work are improving at a good rate at Key Stage 4.
- Teaching is consistently good or very good in the arts and humanities subjects, and this helps to lift the overall standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 4.
- A warm and positive ethos is fostered which in turn promotes good relationships.
- Pupils are effectively taught to respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' social development.
- Parents are supportive of the school and view its provision positively.
- The visual arts provision is strong and this enables high standards of work.

What could be improved

- There is some underachievement at Key Stage 3, particularly in mathematics, modern foreign languages, information technology and design and technology.
- Those with management responsibilities do not keep a careful enough check on the work of the school.
- The school's systems for checking how money is spent and the procedures to ensure that the maximum use is made of all resources, including those of staffing, need to be improved in order for best value to be obtained;
- Curricular provision does not fully meet legal requirements. It is also narrow and not as relevant as it should be at Key Stage 4.
- Assessment information is not looked at carefully enough or used well enough to help pupils to do better.
- The school has yet to develop effective links with parents.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved its results at both Key Stages 3 and 4, more distinctly so at Key Stage 4, where the trend of improvement is faster than the national trend. At Key Stage 3, the improvements have been in line with improvements nationally, and are more marked in English and mathematics than in science. The successful bid to become an arts college has added further impetus to the school's programme for improvement and given it a more positive self-image. There has been satisfactory improvement in the overall quality of teaching. After a slow start, good progress has been made in improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the national Code of Practice is now fully in place. The literacy strategy is being effectively implemented and beginning to have a strong impact on pupils' learning. However, improvements to the use of information technology across the school, development of effective links with parents and the amount of teaching time have not gone far enough. Better use is made of assessment information now, but this area of the school's work is still not good enough and remains a key issue for action. Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress in improving itself since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools*
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	E	E	D	A

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

*Similar schools are identified on the basis of the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

The table above shows that although the school's performance in the 1999 GCSE examinations was below average, it was well above the average found in similar types of schools. Results in art and design and Bengali have been consistently above average for at least the last three or four years. Results in drama, geography and physical education are usually close to national averages, and sometimes above. In other subjects, results are below average, significantly so in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and history. The school comfortably exceeded its GCSE targets for 1999. Whilst pupils' performance at five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was well below average, the proportion who gained five or more grades at A* to G was average and at least one grade at A* to G was above average.

Pupils' results in the end of Key Stage 3 tests were well below average and below the average of similar schools, although there are signs of improvement. Results in English were significantly better than in mathematics or science, especially when compared with similar schools where they were above average. The school did not fully meet the targets it set for performance in the 1999 Key Stage 3 tests in science and mathematics.

Inspection evidence largely reflects the examination results, with continuing improvement is noted in several areas, especially in English at both key stages and science at Key Stage 4. However, pupils are underachieving in design and technology and information technology in both key stages and in mathematics and modern languages at Key Stage 3.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school and what it offers are satisfactory. They are better at Key Stage 4, where the majority of pupils are keen to do well and take their work more seriously than at Key Stage 3.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall in lessons and around the school. However, there are pockets of immature behaviour, most frequently seen amongst boys in Key Stage 3. This disrupts learning in lessons and when it is over boisterous around some parts of the school, such as the stairs, sometimes leads to minor mishaps and injuries.
Personal development and relationships	This is satisfactory overall. The majority of pupils establish good relationships with one another and their teachers.
Attendance	Below average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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 the teaching observed was satisfactory or better in 90 per cent of lessons. In 55 per cent of lessons, it was good or better and in 14 per cent, it was very good or excellent. The quality of learning usually matched the teaching. Teaching was better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, usually because teachers focused more sharply on what they wanted pupils to learn and managed behaviour better. Pupils at Key Stage 4 were also better motivated and focused better on their work at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3.

In the best lessons, questioning was well used to check pupils' understanding of a topic and to develop their knowledge and understanding further. Interesting methods and good use of stimulating resources helped to motivate pupils and enable them to make good progress. Insufficient rigour in marking pupils' work and the limited extent to which work was matched to individual pupils' needs were common weaknesses.

Literacy skills were effectively taught in most lessons, but opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills were often missed. Poor use of computers in lessons results in insufficient progress in information technology being made by pupils despite the frequently good teaching they receive when it is taught as a subject.

Teaching was best in art, drama, geography, history, music and physical education, where it was good overall. In the remaining subjects, it was satisfactory, although good teaching was seen frequently in English, Bengali, and religious education. However, in mathematics and French, a significant proportion was unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides satisfactory breadth and balance at Key Stage 3, but barely so at Key Stage 4. Legal requirements are not met in design and technology, geography and information technology. The lack of vocational provision at Key Stage 4 means that the needs of all pupils are not being well met. Often, planning in subjects does not focus clearly enough on what pupils are to learn, or how basic subject content can be adjusted to meet differing needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is sound overall, and the specialist support provided by the special needs department and in the hearing impaired unit is good. However, subject teachers are not making sufficient provision, especially in terms of matching teaching methods and resources to individual needs. Pupils make satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is sound overall, good in some areas such as English and that provided in the unit. Specialist support in lessons is often good. However, subject teachers are not making sufficient adjustment to their teaching methods or the resources being used in order to support these pupils. Pupils make satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is satisfactory overall, although provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The school does not take sufficient advantage of the spiritual dimension pupils bring from home. There is satisfactory provision for moral and cultural development and good provision for social.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring school where a high value is placed on pupils as individual. Staff know them well and take good care of most aspects of their pastoral needs. Child protection arrangements are unsatisfactory. Pupils' academic progress is not supported well enough and inconsistent use is made of the wide range of assessment data available.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	There is a generally clear direction focusing on improvement set by the headteacher. A strong commitment to this main aim has been generated as a result. However, this widely shared vision is not being translated effectively enough into the action which will make a big enough difference to the quality of work produced. Delegated responsibilities are not managed rigorously enough.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The chair and vice-chair provide good leadership but many governors are still relatively new. Whilst they are beginning to become actively involved and some contribute significant expertise in areas of the school's work, governors are still in the process of shaping and refining their roles. Statutory requirements are not being fully met in all aspects of the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school does not evaluate its performance rigorously enough. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in particular are too informal and do not contribute enough to the continuing improvement of the school. In some cases, not enough action is taken to resolve known weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	The considerable information technology resources are not well used. There is insufficient monitoring of the use of resources especially of staffing and the school has not yet implemented procedures for ensuring that principles of best value can be applied to all spending

	decisions. Specific funds for pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are effectively used.
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The provision for staffing, learning resources and accommodation is good.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has high expectations of their children. • The standards of behaviour. • Children like school. • The values and attitudes have a positive effect on their child(ren) and help them to become mature and responsible. • Most feel the quality of teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In their responses to the questionnaires, some parents felt they received insufficient information. • A minority of parents are not happy about the range of activities outside lessons.

Whilst the evidence of inspection supports parents’ positive views, the evidence also indicates that the school’s provision is not as good as it could be. For example, whilst much teaching is good, overall the quality is satisfactory rather than good. The school provides a satisfactory range of activities before and after school and at lunch times. However, inspection evidence does indicate that the school’s reports to parents on pupils’ progress are too general to be helpful. The statements generated from a computer bank of statements are difficult to interpret.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils' attainment is well below average when they start at the school. Literacy skills are particularly poor and compounded by the high proportion of pupils with English as an additional language, many of whom are not yet fluent in English.
2. In the previous report, standards of attainment in GCSE examinations were deemed to be below national standards in all but art and Bengali, where they were above average and in French where attainment was average. In physical education, drama, geography and music, the report concludes that GCSE results were approaching national averages, but were well below average in the remaining subjects. Poor literacy skills were seen as a major drawback to progress and attainment in other subjects, although the majority of pupils were said to be articulate, expressive and confident especially in Key Stage 4. Lack of sufficient use of information technology was a weakness which impacted on pupils' progress.
3. There has been good improvement in the overall GCSE examination results since the last inspection, when the overall results were very low. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C has increased from 18 per cent in 1995 to 29 per cent in 1999, and the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G has gone up from 68.5 per cent to 90 per cent. Particularly good improvement is seen in the proportion gaining at least one pass grade at GCSE which has improved from 82 per cent at the time of the last inspection to 99 per cent in 1999. The school's results compare very favourably with the results found in similar types of schools although comparisons against national norms are not so good. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was well below the national average although it was well above the average found in similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G matched national averages, but was again well above the proportion found in similar schools. Performance was best in relation to those gaining one or more GCSE at grades A* to G, where results were well above the average found nationally and in similar schools. The average GCSE points score for 1999 was 31.6 which was below average, but well above that of similar schools. The trend in improvement in the school's average points score is better than the trend nationally. The school not only met its targets for achievement in GCSE examinations in 1999 reasonably comfortably, it exceeded them.
4. GCSE results for 1999 were well below national averages in English, mathematics and science, but when compared with similar schools, were well above in mathematics, and above in English and science. Girls did better in English, following the national pattern, but performed much worse in mathematics. In other subjects at GCSE, the results in 1999 were well above average in Bengali, art and design and textiles as was the case in the previous inspection. Over the last three years, the number of subjects where results were close to national averages in terms of the percentage of pupils who gained a grade at A* to C have increased, especially between 1997 and 1998. Geography and drama results have been consistently similar to national averages over the last three years, with the percentage of A* to C grades obtained in physical education matching national averages in 1998 and 1999. Results in French have been similar to national

averages in some years but more recently have been below, reflecting staffing difficulties in the department. The core subjects of English, mathematics, and science along with music, English literature, Spanish and history have been consistently below or well below average. Comparisons of pupils' performance in different subjects show that between 1997 and 1999 pupils have been doing consistently better in art and design, drama and Bengali than in their other subjects at GCSE. Those taking physical education performed better in this than in their other subjects in 1998 and 1999. In all other subjects, pupils are doing less well.

5. The 1999 results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were above average in English, but below average in mathematics and well below average in science when compared with similar schools. When compared with all maintained schools, results were well below average in English and poor in mathematics and science. They were very poor in mathematics in terms of the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels, Level 6 or above, and in science in terms of the proportion reaching the expected level, Level 5. There has been some improvement in the English and mathematics test results over the last four years, but little in science largely owing to the use of a scheme which has proved to be unsuitable for pupils at the school. This has been recognised and the department is taking steps to put in place a scheme of work which better matches the needs of pupils. Overall, improvement in pupils' performance in Key Stage 3 tests has been in line with the trend nationally, and has been better in English and mathematics than in science. The school met the targets it set for achievement in the tests in 1999 for mathematics, but was slightly below its targets in English and significantly below the target in science.
6. There are some gender differences. Although at Key Stage 3, girls' and boys' performance was very low overall, there is a wider difference between the results of girls at the school and girls nationally than when boys are compared with boys nationally. Similarly at GCSE level, there is a wider gap between the achievements of girls at the school and girls nationally than between boys and boys nationally. A contributory factor to this is the presence of a number of single sex schools for girls to which, according to the school, some of the abler girls choose to go.
7. Teacher assessments in mathematics and science are higher than the test results. In science, it is due to weaknesses in pupils' recall of information, which is less evident when teachers undertake their own assessments at the end of a unit. In mathematics, teacher assessments are based on open-book tests which pupils can take at their own pace. In English, teacher assessments are lower because teachers are over-cautious in their evaluation of the levels pupils are working at.
8. Inspection evidence largely reflects the results of national tests and examinations at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, with some further improvements noted particularly in English and science at Key Stage 3, as a result of on-going changes to the scheme of work in the latter. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is well below average overall but their achievement is satisfactory given their low starting point. Attainment is below average in English and well below in mathematics and science.
9. In English, pupils achieve satisfactory standards of work relative to their prior attainment at Key Stage 3, but they often show good achievement at Key Stage 4. Whilst pupils gain confidence in speaking and write in a range of styles, a narrow vocabulary places a restraint on the achievements of many when speaking or

writing. Pupils often read accurately and by the end of Key Stage 4, most show satisfactory comprehension of the set texts for GCSE examinations, but most, and boys in particular, lack expression. Only the ablest pupils have developed some skills in analysis and interpretation of texts. The use of literacy skills in other subjects show improvement in relation to writing. The effective use of writing frames has made a good contribution to pupils' understanding of how to structure written work, for instance. However, overall, sentence structure is not well developed and punctuation is erratic although spelling is usually accurate. Most pupils are able to read adequately enough for the requirements of individual subjects. However, in many subjects, analytical skills and the skills necessary to interpret meaning beyond the immediately obvious is restricted to a small proportion of higher attainers. Pupils' oral skills are not as good as at the time of the previous inspection.

10. In mathematics, pupils' skills in mental arithmetic are below average and standards of work in mathematical investigation work are particularly weak in both key stages. However, there is a wide range of attainment, and whilst abler pupils cope well with complex algebraic problems, lower attainers have difficulty with long division and multiplication by the end of Key Stage 3. Levels of numeracy within other subjects are poor and, in all but geography, the use and teaching of number is limited.
11. The majority of pupils, particularly low and average attaining pupils, demonstrate better standards of work in their knowledge of science than in their depth of understanding at both key stages. Poor retention of factual knowledge at Key Stage 3 impacts negatively on pupils' success in national tests. Whilst higher attaining pupils often show a secure grasp of scientific ideas at both key stages, they do not achieve as well as they might because the work is not challenging enough for them.
12. In other subjects, pupils' standards of work are well below average in design and technology and information technology with considerable underachievement in both subjects by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. There has been little improvement in information technology since the previous inspection. Pupils are also not achieving as much as they should in French and Spanish at Key Stage 3. In art and Bengali, standards are above those expected and, given their prior attainment, pupils achieve well in these subjects at both key stages. Average standards were found in physical education at both key stages and standards of work were only marginally below average in geography, with good achievement noted in the latter at both key stages. In the remaining subjects, standards of work are below average, but pupils' achievements are largely satisfactory given their low prior attainment. Standards of achievement in music and religious education are good at Key Stage 4.
13. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, often good progress when they are given specialist support in lessons or when they are withdrawn for more intensive English language teaching. In a very good lesson where recent arrivals to the country were receiving induction training in English, rapid progress was being made by pupils in developing new vocabulary and understanding the grammatical structure of sentences to express actions, such as 'the tiger can jump'. Progress in English and geography lessons at Key Stage 4 is particularly good as work is well matched to pupils' needs and class teachers often provide good support when no specialist staff are in attendance. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in mathematics when ethnic minority

achievement staff supports them, but when this valuable support is not available, class teachers do not provide work that is effectively matched to their needs. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they could.

- 14 Pupils with special educational needs, from observation of their work in class and examination of their books, achieve standards which are well below the national expectation for their ages, but these standards represent an improvement upon prior attainment which is carefully recorded and used for evaluation of progress. For many pupils who may have multiple needs, for example, they may have English as an additional language, limited primary education and a poor level of literacy, the progress they make enhances their achievements and gives them a sense of pride in what they can do.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 15 Pupils' attitudes to the school and their behaviour are satisfactory, and similar standards to those found at the time of the previous inspection have been sustained.
- 16 Pupils are confident in their environment and enjoy good relationships with one another and staff. They are listened to and cared for, and this helps to maintain their satisfactory attitudes to the school. Their interest in education beyond the school is also satisfactory as indicated by the staying-rate in post-16 education. This is broadly average. Pupils have a satisfactory liking for subjects with examples of good attitudes to some, like art and music. Pupils with special educational and English language needs value the support that they receive and show trust in staff. The majority of pupils apply themselves well when given opportunities to take responsibility and to show initiative. For example, younger pupils take attendance logs to lessons. Pupils enjoy practising for art exhibitions. Extra-curricular sports activities are well taken up and pupils help in organising assemblies. Those who go on residential trips cope well with living away from home.
- 17 Pupils' attitudes to coming to school are generally satisfactory, but there are factors which adversely affect their attendance. Whilst pupils' attendance has improved slightly since the last inspection, it remains unsatisfactory overall and is below the 90 per cent threshold in many registration groups, particularly in Years 9 and 10. It was below this threshold in the last reporting year, although this year's attendance figures are better. The attendance figure for the Autumn term was 91.9 per cent. The key factors contributing to authorised absence are pupils observing religious days, some extended holidays during the term time and illness. Unauthorised absence is well above the national average and is mostly because parents have not offered a reason for absence or the reasons given are not good enough.
- 18 Pupils with special educational needs or hearing impairment respond well to skilful specialist teaching, and this enhances their progress and their attitudes to school. Many are eager to come to the specialist bases and do so during lunchtimes and in break times, just to chat or read. They enjoy their withdrawal sessions and cooperate well with teachers and other adults during these sessions. There is less enthusiasm for pupils with English as an additional language to use the specialist base out of school hours, and the ethnic minority achievement department needs to tackle this issue.
- 19 Pupils are friendly and helpful. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most pupils

behave well both in and out of the classroom and respond well to the school's rules. Most cooperate with their teachers in upholding an orderly learning environment which helps to achieve satisfactory progress in lessons. However, a significant minority of pupils, including several with specific behaviour difficulties present challenging behaviour in lessons, especially where teaching is weak. Their inappropriate and sometimes silly behaviour slows down the pace of lessons and in turn impacts negatively on the attainment and progress of other pupils. This was the case in some mathematics, modern foreign language and religious education lessons. At break times, most pupils conduct themselves in an orderly manner but many indulge in boisterous behaviour, particularly in the common areas where there is significant immaturity and roughness. Pupils generally move sensibly around the school, although some of the staircases and corridors are narrow and at lesson changes there is some overcrowding. On the stairwells, some poor behaviour, including roughness and pushing and shoving, sometimes leads to minor injuries. The school needs to review the policy for moving around the school and to monitor its effectiveness. Pupils generally treat the school's property with care and displays and equipment are in good condition, but there is some graffiti and the site is not litter-free. Inspectors saw no incidents of oppressive behaviour and none were reported to them by pupils. The school has found it necessary to exclude pupils. The number of exclusions has increased since the last inspection and is well above average for the size of the school, but they are mostly for a fixed period not exceeding one day, and the reasons for exclusion are valid. These include verbal or physical abuse. Correct procedures for exclusions are followed.

- 20 Most pupils work well in small groups and many examples of good collaborative work were seen, particularly in art and drama lessons. Pupils respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. For example, in discussions they respect the response of others, as was the case in some personal and social education and drama lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 21 The overall quality of teaching observed was satisfactory. There has been an appropriate improvement in the quality of teaching. About 90 per cent was satisfactory or better, 55 per cent was good or better and 14 per cent was very good or excellent. About 10 per cent of teaching was less than satisfactory, including some which was poor. The quality of learning matches very closely these overall figures.
- 22 Teaching was better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Slightly fewer lessons were less than satisfactory at Key Stage 4 than 3, but also there was significantly less teaching that was good or better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Variations within subjects are quite significant in some cases. In the arts subjects, teaching was good, consistently so in art, drama, music and physical education. Teaching was also good overall in geography. In most of these subjects, very good teaching was often seen. The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall in the remaining subjects. However in English, Bengali, history, information technology and religious education, it was often good. In contrast, a significant proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory in mathematics and French. Again, the quality of learning was largely consistent with the quality of teaching. For example, good teaching led to good progress and the gains pupils made in their learning. In information technology, teachers are not confident in using computers and do not incorporate the use of information technology into their teaching plans. As a result,

pupils underachieve, in spite of good teaching provided by members of the information technology department in the specialist lessons. Weaknesses in teaching were also evident in design and technology from a variety of sources of evidence.

- 23 Good features of teaching commonly observed include good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding. Good use of probing questions in science, English, art, geography and music served to clarify ideas and develop understanding and knowledge further, thus, enabling learners to gain deeper insights into relevant ideas. Subject knowledge is generally a strength and was usually well used to structure subject content coherently. It was also well used to develop pupils' skills in the subject area. This was particularly evident in art and design and technology. In Bengali, French and Spanish, the foreign language was well used by teachers to encourage pupils' use of it and enable good progress to be made in their listening skills. Brisk pace and economical use of time were also features of good and very good teaching. Many teachers infused enthusiasm and energy into their teaching and this secured good levels of motivation, commitment and engagement from pupils. Skilful selection and use of resources, such as in English, geography and religious education, hit a familiar note with pupils and grabbed their attention. For example, the use of films such as 'Bhaji on the Beach' in English to learn about media or a video clip of a news report in Bengali with English sub-titles in geography demonstrated a sensitivity and respect for pupils' ethnic origins which they greatly appreciated. The use of writing frames is common practice in many areas and makes a significant contribution to the teaching of basic skills in literacy, especially writing. Overall, the teaching of basic skills in literacy is good, but unsatisfactory in mathematics and information technology. Many teachers have yet to develop effective skills in their own use of computers.
- 24 Methods of teaching are good where group work is a regular feature of teaching and learning. This was the case in modern foreign languages and music and greatly enhanced pupils' involvement in their own learning. In many lessons, the passivity of pupils and their reluctance at times to make contributions to whole class discussion is a weakness. For example, in mathematics, limited opportunity for pupils to engage in constructive discussions about mathematical solutions to problems restricts the development of their problem solving skills and ability to explain in words complex mathematical ideas. In a number of subjects, including mathematics, teachers recap effectively what has been learned at the end of lessons, and this usefully involves pupils in assessing for themselves how much further they have gone. However, a general weakness in learning is that pupils are not secure enough about their strengths and weaknesses and how they need to improve. This is a result of insufficient detail and guidance contained in assessment remarks made on what needs to be improved and how weaknesses could be tackled. Targets for improvement set by teachers are imprecise and are often too general to be helpful.
- 25 Good features of learning include good listening skills, pupils' support for one another especially for new arrivals and a diligent and methodical approach to their work. In some lessons in art and design and technology, pupils put creative effort and energy into their work, however, there is scope for this feature of learning to be extended and more widely encouraged. Whilst most pupils concentrate and try hard, the extent to which intellectual effort is used is frequently limited to the ablest. For example, in many subjects, it is only the highest attaining pupils who are able to apply the skills of analysis, deduction and interpretation to their work, whether it is

analysing textual information for layers of hidden meaning or interpreting graphical representations of data.

- 26 Whilst expectations of teachers are generally high, planning for mixed ability classes does not take sufficient account of the needs of different groups of pupils. Often it is those at the higher attaining end of the spectrum who are not challenged enough, but sometimes average attainers, lower attainers or those with English as an additional language are not provided with suitable work and, therefore, do not make the progress they are capable of.
- 27 In the majority of lessons, management of pupils is at least sound, often good. However, in lessons that were less than satisfactory, control of pupils was a key weakness. Poor use of time, slow pace and ineffective teaching methods were often also a factor in weaker teaching.
- 28 Teaching is at least satisfactory within both the Learning Support Departments and the Hearing impaired Unit. It is more frequently good. In class, although many pupils benefit from teachers' enhanced awareness of their needs, there are some situations in which this is not so. In many classes, teaching is insufficiently matched to needs to ensure that hearing impaired pupils, or those with special educational needs have access to the work in hand. However, during in-class support from specialist teachers or assistants, there is sensitive management of individual pupils' special educational needs. Pupils are encouraged to debate and acquire, use and read new vocabulary. For hearing impaired pupils, an effective combination of sign, sound and lip reading improves communication skills and sustains pupils' interest in the lesson. Occasionally, teachers or assistants supporting pupils in class do too much for the pupils with whom they work, with the result that pupils become quickly dependent upon the presence of this support.
- 29 In lessons designed for individual pupils or small groups, for example in literacy support, there is good use of question and answer to enable pupils to explore texts and deepen their understanding. For those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who join the Curriculum Support option group, many opportunities are created for them to practise and correct their work, and although the level of challenge is high, pupils respond well to it.
- 30 The quality of teaching for pupils with English as an additional language is usually good and sometimes very good when pupils are taught by specialist staff. For example, a well-structured English lesson for pupils in Key Stage 4 following a certificate course, as opposed to a GCSE course, enabled them to make good progress in understanding how a the format and layout of a leaflet. They also made good progress in learning about how to extract specific pieces of information form a leaflet. Some very good teaching was seen in an induction support class for those pupils with very little knowledge of the English language. A very brisk pace and a range of imaginative activities rapidly promoted pupils' language learning. However, occasionally, induction support lessons focus on too limited a range of language activities and do not move at a fast enough pace. In mainstream classes, where available, the quality of support provided by specialist staff is often good. It is consistently good in English, mathematics and science. In English, for example, specialist staff mark books and prepare useful materials which help pupils to access the curriculum well. Occasionally, as in a history lesson, materials used by the whole class are not adapted for the specific needs of pupils with English as an additional language and in these lessons, pupils make slower progress. When

specialist support staff are not available, the picture is more mixed, although satisfactory overall. Mainstream teachers in some cases provide good support, but at other times, subject staff do not make sufficient provision for those with English language learning needs. Many teachers do make good use of others in the class who speak the same language as a pupil with limited English to provide them with effective language support. This also helps to develop all pupils' skills in collaborative learning.

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

- 31 The curriculum provides satisfactory breadth and balance at both key stages, but only just so at Key Stage 4. There is non-compliance with legal requirements in design and technology and geography at Key Stage 4 and at both key stages in the provision for information technology. The length of the taught week meets recommendations at Key Stage 3, but is still below the average at Key Stage 4. As was stated very clearly in the last report, it is contradictory to the school's aims that pupils should receive a shorter school week than their peers in most other schools locally and nationally. A school curriculum statement has now been written and has been approved by the governors who are becoming suitably involved in curriculum matters.
- 32 The Key Stage 3 curriculum complies with the National Curriculum and religious education is in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus, with the exception of inadequate coverage in information technology. Its content overall is relevant to the needs of pupils. Timetabling over a ten day period does not take sufficient account of the need to maintain continuity in pupils' learning in some subjects. For example, lessons for some teaching groups are too far apart, with the result that too much lesson time has to be used going over earlier learning. This is a particular problem in science in Year 7, where pupils go six days without a lesson and then have two double lessons within a day of each other. Timetabling double lessons in science is also an issue, as these are too long and time is not used to the best effect in these cases. There is no provision for computer control to be taught and also inadequate assessment of information technology skills. The allocation of arts college status has increased curriculum time for art, which was low at the time of the last report, but there is still no timetabled dance.
- 33 The Key Stage 4 curriculum is only just satisfactory overall. It is generally balanced but lacks breadth. As was commented on in the last report, there are no vocational courses. For many pupils, the more traditional GCSE courses are not the most suitable for their needs. There is potential for vocational provision to not only make a significant contribution towards meeting the very varied needs of individual pupils but also to make a strong contribution towards achieving four of the school's key areas for improvement as expressed in the school development plan: literacy; numeracy; use of information technology and development of pupils' independence as learners. There are, however, a wider range of arts courses now in place. These include media studies, photography, textiles and sculpture. A short GCSE course in religious education was introduced in September 1998, to enable the school to meet statutory requirements at this key stage. The school however fails to meet statutory

requirement to teach both information technology and design and technology to all pupils. As in Key Stage 3, the contribution of most subjects to the teaching of information technology skills remains poor. The requirements for field trips in geography are also not met.

- 34 The weaknesses with the programme for personal, social and health education noted at the time of the previous inspection have been dealt with effectively. All pupils now follow a satisfactory course in personal, social and health education, and statutory requirements for sex and health education are met. There is a governor's policy on sex education. The course now has a scheme of work and is co-ordinated satisfactorily, as was suggested in the last report. Curriculum planning is largely satisfactory in many subjects, but weaknesses still exist in incorporating information technology into schemes of work and in planning for the delivery of information technology skills across the curriculum. Planning is also very underdeveloped in design and technology. In many subjects, planning does not focus with sufficient rigour on what the desired outcomes for learning might be. There is a tendency to focus on the subject content. In addition, there is insufficient guidance in schemes of work on how content and methods can be adjusted to meet a range of different learning needs. The lack of this guidance impacts on the quality of lesson planning and results in an often unsatisfactory match of work to pupils' individual needs in lessons, which in turn slows pupils' progress. This is an important shortcoming since setting by ability is not widely used and most classes are taught in groups of mixed ability pupils. A weakness in the match of curriculum planning to pupils' needs has been a significant drawback to achievement in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3. The school has recognised this and is already in the process of altering its curricular provision.
- 35 There is satisfactory provision for careers education, although the time allocated in Year 9 is too limited. There are good links with the local Careers Service and the Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership, both of which provide useful input into careers guidance, the provision of mentoring, mock interviews, advice on college and job applications and details of further education opportunities.
- 36 The whole school literacy strategy is addressing needs and is having a positive impact in most departments. The school has not formulated a cross-curricular numeracy policy. The current effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills is therefore unsatisfactory.
- 37 The school provides in a satisfactory manner for equality of opportunity and access. The weak areas are in information technology and design and technology, where not all pupils are receiving their statutory entitlement. In modern foreign languages, curriculum provision creates an equality of access problem. Many pupils do not have the opportunity to take the language for which they are most suited. Baseline assessment data for pupils with English as an additional language is not used to match pupils to the most appropriate language.
- 38 Curriculum provision for pupils with special needs and for those with hearing impairment is good. The Code of Practice is now fully in place. There is, however, considerable overlap between provision for these pupils and for those with English as an additional language. Many subject teachers are still not making sufficient provision to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs in particular through well-matched teaching resources and methods. There is good identification of needs and reviews are effectively and regularly carried out. The provision for

pupils with English as an additional language is sound overall, and good provision is made by the Ethnic Minority Achievement department. For example, science lessons for small groups of pupils taken by specialist staff on a short-term basis enable pupils to gain sufficient subject vocabulary and confidence to make their return to mainstream science lessons much more successful. The certificate course in English at Key Stage 4 is well developed and provides vital English language development. Planning by the department to meet the needs of pupils with English as an additional language is generally good. The targets set for pupils are clear though they sometimes need to be sharper.

- 39 There are satisfactory links with the local community, particularly in the fields of business, the arts and sport. These contacts provide opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills. Access to the internet means that pupils now have enriching opportunities to link with the worldwide community. There is satisfactory liaison with the main partner feeder schools and with further education providers at the end of Key Stage 4.
- 40 The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall though there are evident strengths particularly in the social aspect which reflect two of the school's four stated aims regarding respect for others and partnership with the wider community.
- 41 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory in that the school does not take full advantage of the spiritual dimensions which pupils bring from home. Some good spiritual learning was seen to take place in religious education lessons, where Year 11 pupils discussed Muslim teachings on wealth and poverty, and in English where pupils in Year 10 produced examples of very thoughtful and reflective writing. Elsewhere in the curriculum, however, the spiritual element is under developed. The school does not comply with the statutory regulations for a daily act of collective worship though it has a policy on collective worship that places good emphasis on the development of moral and spiritual values. There is a prayer room and regular links have been developed with the local Mosque. The Imam is a daily visitor to the school. There are also good links with the local Anglican and Baptist churches.
- 42 The school's provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. It has a clear code of conduct which was drawn up with the involvement of pupils, parents and staff, and there are opportunities to explore issues of crime and punishment and environmental matters through personal, social and health education lessons. Parents feel that the school promotes good teaching about right and wrong. Clearly outlined expectations of behaviour were noted in religious education with an emphasis on listening and respecting the rights of others. There are some useful opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to focus on moral issues. In religious education, pupils have regular opportunities to consider moral as well as spiritual values. In geography, pupils examine the questions around the exploitation of the environment and in history the exploitation of people, for example, child workers in factories of the early fifties. Further useful opportunities for debating what is morally right or wrong are provided through the programme for personal and social education.
- 43 Opportunities for pupils' social development are good in most subject areas and reinforced in assemblies which emphasise the value of relationships and respect for others. The school provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, but not

extensive. They are particularly strong in sport and make a good contribution to pupils' social development, their sense of teamwork and fair play. Whilst attendance at the clubs held after school is limited, those held before school and at lunchtime are well supported by large and enthusiastic groups of pupils. There is an outdoor pursuits trip to South Wales for Year 8 pupils and this promotes well their social skills. The English, drama, music and geography departments also provide extra curricular activities. These include musical and drama productions, competitions, theatre visits and other trips. Most departments offer extra classes, mostly for GCSE pupils, outside school hours and take-up of these is satisfactory. The view expressed by some parents that extra-curricular provision is less than satisfactory, cannot be substantiated, in the light of inspection evidence, although there is certainly scope for it to be extended. The achievement of art college status has brought wider involvement with the community through workshops and evening classes, and links with primary schools and colleges of further education.

- 44 Partnerships with businesses in the locality, established through sponsorship in the bid for art college status, provide reading partners, business mentors and careers advisers extending pupils horizons beyond the school years.
- 45 Pupils' cultural development is enhanced by many activities in the arts including gallery visits and artists' residencies, theatre visits, drama workshops and successful involvement in music festivals. In English the multicultural dimension is regularly featured through the texts studied and the media studies course uses material from cultures with which pupils are familiar (for example the film 'Bhaji on the Beach') to good effect. Outside these areas of the curriculum however, cultural opportunities are largely underdeveloped.
- 46 The school does not have a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and has not undertaken an audit of provision across the curriculum to identify and learn from areas of good practice. Art college status and involvement in the DfEE's Excellence in Cities programme have raised the school's profile in the community. There is a growing ethos of success around the arts and physical education though this has not yet permeated through the whole school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 47 There is an atmosphere of care in the school and most staff take a genuine interest in the happiness and well being of individual pupils. However, the school is not well organised with regards to the welfare of pupils in relation to monitoring of attendance, the rigour of its child protection procedures, recording and monitoring of accidents and the support, advice and guidance to them in relation to their personal and academic development. This was the case at the time of the previous inspection, although the school has improved its approach to religious holidays for Muslims. Wherever possible, the dates set for school holidays try to incorporate these special days into the holiday periods in order to encourage better attendance.
- 48 Tutors move with their forms and know pupils well. This provides continuity of relationships. There are also other adults to whom pupils can turn if they have worries or personal concerns. A good indication of this is that pupils new to the school settle in quickly and most pupils like coming to the school. Whilst the care that the individual members of staff provide contributes significantly towards pupils' welfare and support, the whole school arrangements are less secure. The treatment provided by the trained first-aiders is good but it is not recorded and more

minor accidents are not reported to the appropriate authorities. Child protection procedures are unsatisfactory in that the school has not formalised the procedures and there is little guidance for staff on related matters. Risk assessment does not cover all areas, for example pupils' movement in corridors and stairs and supervision is inadequate. Pupils are well supported by visiting specialists but a multi-agency approach is not an established practice. Curriculum activities, including personal and social education, are helpful in raising pupils' awareness of issues related to their well being like bullying and drugs.

- 49 The measures to ensure that pupils behave appropriately are satisfactory. The code of conduct is regularly updated but it is not consistently applied. Pupils know the system of sanctions and rewards though not all respond positively to school rules. Incidents of negative behaviour including bullying are firmly dealt with. No oppressive behaviour was seen and none was reported to inspectors during the inspection, but there were pockets of immature and inappropriate behaviour in lessons and public areas. Procedures for recording and reporting attendance meet the statutory requirements. The school follows up absences and where needed, the education welfare service is involved. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are not effective enough in obtaining satisfactory levels of attendance. The lack of a computerised system for recording attendance hampers effective monitoring. Procedures for checking pupils' punctuality to school are in place and most pupils are punctual.
- 50 The pupils' planners, progress reports and target setting through PEPI (Personal Effectiveness Programme Initiative) are helpful in monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development. Pupils' needs so identified are generally well provided for through the support structures including provision for special educational needs, ethnic minority achievement, provision for the more able, mentoring for Year 11 pupils and extra support classes. The support however lacks overall coordination within the school, with the result that it is not always sharply focused to benefit those who need it most.
- 51 There is a very high level of care and targeted support provided by the learning support department and the hearing impaired unit. The atmosphere in both is welcoming and purposeful. Both groups of teachers and assistants focus their work on the clear target of improving pupils' ability to integrate and cope with the work in their subject classes, whilst supporting the individual pupil's personal development. Good communication between these departments and pastoral leaders in the school ensures that information about the needs of individual pupils and their progress is well shared, with beneficial effects for the pupils.
- 52 The school's procedures for assessing pupils' performance are sound. It uses a suitably broad range of strategies for collecting information on attainment through the use of standardised tests, examinations and end of unit or key stage tests. There have been improvements since the last report information on pupils in Years 7 and 9 is now more comprehensive; Key Stage 3 assessments are more secure, most schemes of work show opportunities and strategies for assessment, and many subjects now keep samples of assessed work at Key Stage 3. The recently amended school policy provides a good structure for assessment and good guidance to departments on marking, correcting work and recording attainment. However, there is still some inconsistency in implementing procedures. The relating of assessments to National Curriculum levels is not yet uniform across the curriculum, and in some subjects the statements of attainment and personal

development contained in the school's PROST (Progress Reporting on Student Targets) system are still too general.

- 53 The statutory requirements for the assessment and review of the progress made by pupils with statements of special educational need are fully met, and regular assessments are made of the many pupils with English as an additional language to help staff promote effective progress in literacy.
- 54 Nevertheless, despite these improvements to assessment systems, weaknesses in monitoring and the use of information which were identified at the time of the last inspection have still not been fully addressed. In English, where procedures are sound, termly assessments are graded inconsistently so that staff cannot easily measure the progress of individual pupils. In mathematics, there is little evidence of the data collected on attainment being used effectively to assess the quality of learning and make necessary amendments to the curriculum, or to track pupils' progress through targets. In science, good individual pupil records show attainment at Key Stages 2 and 3, but this information is not collated or used enough to judge pupils' progress, or to set expectations. Key Stage 4 science test results and predicted grades can show individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses, but the information is not used enough at either key stage to amend teaching programmes appropriately.
- 55 Across the curriculum, the analysis and use of assessment information are inadequate, especially at Key Stage 3. Regular, rigorous checks on pupils' progress, pupil self-assessment and target-setting are still not in place in all subjects, so that pupils are still not sufficiently aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and do not know what to do to improve. Information collected is not analysed or interpreted well enough. Provision for modern languages, for instance, is unsatisfactory because pupils are sometimes allocated a language which is unsuitable for their needs. In general, many staff do not understand what the data means and so do not provide appropriate support in their teaching. For example, Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments provide raw scores and predicted grades for GCSE, and GCSE results are listed by gender, but the school does not yet have any system by which it can measure the value it adds to pupils' attainment over the key stages. Consequently, teachers' knowledge of pupils' attainment and expected progress during Key Stage 4 is incomplete. One result is that reports to parents in all years are too general and impersonal.
- 56 The central management of the school does not check adequately that procedures are consistently implemented across all subjects or that data is being used correctly to support the diverse needs of pupils. There are no secure systems in place to ensure that, for example, gifted and talented pupils, those with English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and those who underachieve are receiving the most appropriate provision for their needs or to measure the success of such support where it is provided.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 57 Parents are generally well satisfied with the school's work. Most of the parents who responded to the opportunity to express their views believe that the school helps their children well in developing their personality and expects good standards of behaviour and work. They are pleased with the quality of teaching. Some parents expressed concerns, through the pre-inspection process, about bullying, homework,

extra-curricular provision, information about their children's progress and working closely with parents. Most of these have been specifically dealt with elsewhere in this report but, in short, bullying is dealt with firmly, homework is set regularly and provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. The school needs to clearly explain to parents the nature and extent of these provisions. It also needs to seek out their views to inform its work. For example, parents' concerns about progress reports are justified. The body of reports is computer generated with brief sentences about aspects of pupils' performance. There is the reference to National Curriculum levels, although the practice differs from subject to subject, and targets for improvement are too general. The main sections of the reports are not translated into Bengali. Considering the parental community of the school is predominantly Bangladeshi and the vast majority of parents, including those who are not Bangladeshi, are not from professional backgrounds, the contents and quality of the reports are not suitable. Overall, the information is not helpful enough for parents to have effective influence over their children's attainment and progress.

- 58 Parents are made to feel welcome to the school. The school prospectus and the annual governors' report are a helpful introduction to the life of the school and include the required information. Other strategies to reach out to, and involve, parents include a very recently formed parent-teacher association, increased involvement of parent governors and a Bengali speaking home-school liaison teacher who, on referral from teachers, contacts parents in cases which cause concern and demands action. The quality and rigour of these measures are not adequate to achieve effective links with parents. Therefore, the school has limited success in addressing the key issue for action from the last report, which urged the school to increase the involvement of parents in the school and achieve their support in improving the attendance of all pupils. Parents' involvement in their children's education and in the work of the school is still low. The governors, quite rightly, want to explore more effective strategies for parental involvement. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their progress and they participate well in the special needs reviews.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 59 The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, but there are some significant weaknesses. The headteacher provides sound leadership which has a clear focus on raising achievement and expanding the opportunities for the personal development of pupils. These overall aims are shared by staff and governors and result in a strong commitment to improving standards of work and pupils' performance in public examinations. Working relationships are good and a high value is placed on fostering a positive ethos within which pupils feel secure and safe. The senior management team is willing and supportive of the headteacher but senior managers are not always effective in tackling weaknesses, especially those evident in the subject areas they line manage. There is a need for further training to further improve management skills in order for senior managers to fulfil their roles to a high enough standard. There is a clear and useful line-management structure. However, this is not used effectively to monitor or develop the roles of those in management positions throughout the school, especially at middle management level. Much is appropriately expected of middle managers, particularly in relation to their role in raising achievement. However, management of their delegated responsibilities is weak. Whilst some heads of department provide strong leadership and are able to pursue successfully a clear educational direction for their

subjects, others lack the leadership and management skills to do so with equal success. Whilst the school's results are well above those of similar schools at Key Stage 4, the weaknesses in management do not allow the school to capitalise on existing pockets of good practice leaving some areas weak or insufficiently coordinated, so that the overall provision is less good than results suggest.

60 The governing body is well served by the chairman and vice-chairman. They provide informed and clear sighted leadership, and the chairman brings with him a strong understanding of the local context and the views and needs of the local community. Governors are supportive of the school and main governing body meetings are well attended. However, many governors, including the chairman and vice-chairman, are relatively new to the responsibility and a number have been in position only for a very short time. As a result, governors are still evolving and shaping their role. There is an appropriate range of committees and all governors are members of one or more, but these are not as well attended as the main meetings. Some individual governors are beginning to have a significant impact on aspects of the school's work, such as finance and human resource management, contributing valuable expertise to the benefit of the school. There is every indication that the governing body's involvement and contribution to the development of the school will become stronger as it finds its feet. Overall, governors fulfil satisfactorily their duties in helping to shape the direction of the school and maintaining an overview of its main functions and achievements. However, there is a need for the school, governors and parents to jointly review the future direction of the school with respect to the curriculum and to consider if the move towards a visual and performing arts college is in the best interest of the pupils and the local community. They receive some useful information from the school, but this is not really enough for them to have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school or to play a more significant role as critical friends. Not all legal requirements are fully met, and the following list identifies the areas where this is so:

- National Curriculum requirements for information technology, design and technology and geography are not being fully met;
- The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not being fully met;
- Health and safety risk assessments are not completed for all areas of the school.

61 The school's procedures for monitoring its strengths and weaknesses, including monitoring of teaching and learning, are too informal. The overall roles of heads of department in monitoring and improving the quality of the work in their departments are underdeveloped. The school is broadly aware of its strengths and weaknesses, and the school development plan focuses reasonably well on key priorities which will help the school to improve further. However, lack of rigour in monitoring results in insufficient information being collected to inform future planning fully enough or to identify how effectively weaknesses are being tackled. There are no mechanisms for collating monitoring information in order to make use of it to guide strategic thinking or sharing good practice. Development planning at departmental level is a weakness, and, with the exception of art, no area within the school has an action plan which shows exactly how the weaknesses in provision are going to be tackled and standards raised further.

62 Whilst the school, under the leadership of the headteacher, has done well to improve standards of attainment, particularly at GCSE, and the quality of teaching since the last inspection, the standards of work at Key Stage 3 are not good enough

and there is a measure of underachievement in key areas such as mathematics and information technology. In addition, some of the key issues from the previous inspection have not been tackled effectively and continue to require attention as do a number of the minor weaknesses identified in the body of the previous report. Weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation and departmental planning are a block to the systematic and rigorous elimination of issues which impact on pupils' learning and attainment.

- 63 The leadership of the learning support and special educational needs departments is good. After a slow start in implementing the changes required by the last inspection, the arrival of a new co-ordinator for special educational needs two years ago has provided the necessary impetus for change. He has shifted the focus onto the question of how to improve pupils' attainment and sense of achievement and has organised the department in ways which promote achievement. Of particular note is the success of the literacy withdrawal groups, the introduction of a mentor reading scheme supported by a major city financial institution, and the curriculum support groups. The ethnic minority achievement department is also well led with a clear focus on enabling pupils to achieve high standards of work.
- 64 The school's budget currently provides for expenditure per pupil well above the national average, and above that of the best-funded similar schools, locally and nationally. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection. This high level of funding has enabled the school to be well staffed and resourced. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation particularly to the accommodation and resources for art as a result of the successful bid to become an arts college. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good, although the school has had a reduction in the number of support teachers for pupils with English as an additional language. This reduction in support is being well managed by the co-ordinator for ethnic minority achievement, although many mainstream teachers have yet to make an adjustment to their teaching in order to take better account of the needs of ethnic minority pupils in their classes when support is not available. Staff turnover in modern foreign languages and science have taken their toll on the effectiveness of these areas and the progress they have made since the previous inspection. A good number of the staff are from ethnic minority backgrounds but are not represented in senior posts. The senior management remains dominated by men. There is very good provision of information technology resources, but these are not yet being used effectively and currently add little value to pupils' achievements. In other respects, the school makes good use of available resources to raise standards of attainment, improve the quality of learning support and capture the interest of pupils. The library is a good resource and well used by staff and pupils.
- 65 Teaching staff are well supported by well-qualified and hard working technicians. The administrative staff ensure the smooth running of the school's administration and make visitors to the school feel very welcome. Good quality induction procedures for student teachers and newly qualified teachers are in place and new teachers are very appreciative of the professional support they have received.
- 66 There have been recent changes in the workings of the school's finance committee, which is now ably led and is becoming more involved in taking a strategic overview of the needs of the school. The links between budget planning and school development planning priorities are now better understood than they have been, even in the recent past. Other recently introduced changes should ensure that

governors are well supported by the provision of appropriate and timely management information. Minutes of meetings of the finance committee show significant recent improvements in using data made available to hold the school to account. However, governors - and in some contexts such as line management meetings, senior managers - are still reluctant to question school staff closely about spending priorities and the outcomes of agreed expenditure on the effectiveness of their departments. For example, governors have not been in a position to conduct a review of the cross-curricular use, location and contribution to learning of expensive computer equipment.

- 67 The financial systems of the school are in a state of transition, with some unsatisfactory aspects of control currently under review. The recommendations of the last local audit have been put in place. Nonetheless some anomalies in procedures continued to exist until very recently. Financial administration is efficient, but financial reports to governors and senior staff, are currently insufficiently detailed to inform spending decisions adequately. This is being improved as a result of analysis by the headteacher and chair of finance, working closely with the newly appointed finance officer. Full consultation is taking place to review the cost-effectiveness of services which the school buys, for example in catering, to ensure that, in the future, the school will get best value for money. The school pays due attention to the need for competition to increase value for money by inviting interest from a number of potential suppliers when major expenditure is being discussed.
- 68 At the time of the last inspection, the school was said to be providing sound value for money, with good value for money in some aspects. Value for money is now satisfactory overall for the following reasons:
- Examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 compare very well with similar schools and this is the main benefit from the unusually high expenditure.
 - Teaching is consistently good in the arts and humanities subjects, and pupils generally achieve well in these.
 - The visual arts area is strong and this draws in a significant amount of money owing to the successful bid to become an arts college;
 - Specialist support for special educational needs and EMA is largely good and considerable funds are spent in these areas;
 - Some valuable resources, for example a high number of computers, are not fully exploited to the benefit of standards.
 - There is insufficient monitoring of how the generous non-contact time for teachers is deployed. A significant tranche of time is available in the staffing budget, particularly designated to provide for after-school activities and clubs, and there is a loss of benefit to pupils in that this is not fully utilised.
 - Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a minority which is unsatisfactory and sometimes poor. This has not always been identified by the school
 - Those in management posts at senior and middle management levels do not systematically monitor outcomes to check whether teaching and learning are as good as they could be. Although the school is in possession of much good quality information about pupils' starting points and progress, it is not systematically analysed to inform planning at classroom level.
- 69 Putting these judgements together leads to the conclusion that senior managers and governors have not given as strong a steer as they might wish to ensure that there is good value for money in all aspects of the life of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the educational provision of the school and raise further the standards of achievement and attainment of pupils, the headteacher, governors and senior managers should:

1. Ensure that pupils do not underachieve in mathematics, modern foreign languages, information technology, and design and technology by:

- Addressing the weaknesses in teaching in these subjects identified in the body of the report;
- Developing schemes of work so that there is appropriate inclusion of information technology;
- Ensuring that computers are used in all areas of the curriculum and that legal requirements are fully met;
- Tackling the curricular issues identified in the modern foreign languages report, including matching pupils effectively to a particular language, reducing the extent to which pupils are allowed to change languages mid way through the course and the quality of schemes of work;
- Establishing relevant curriculum planning is fully in place for mathematics and design and technology and that this covers all aspects of both subjects;
- Developing a whole school numeracy policy and effectively implementing it.

(Paragraph numbers: 4,5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 23, 34, 36, 37, 62, 76, 78, 86-101, 108, 121-127, 140-146, 153-159, 163, 180)

2. Strengthen the management of the school by:

- Adopting a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation;
- Using the line management structures effectively to develop and further improve the quality of leadership and management at departmental level and the monitoring and management of delegated responsibilities;
- Improving the effectiveness of senior managers in relation to managing and monitoring delegated responsibilities and providing any necessary training and professional development to help them carry out their roles effectively;
- Improving the quality of departmental development plans so that they are more sharply focused on areas needing improvement;
- Putting in place suitable measures for co-ordination of information technology across the curriculum;
- Improving the co-ordination of design and technology so that it is effective;
- Making job descriptions reflect more explicitly the roles of managers in raising attainment.

(Paragraph numbers: 59-62, 77, 97, 99, 108, 134, 158, 180)

3. Improve the financial management of the school, the use of resources and successfully applying the principles of best value by:

- Ensuring there are suitable methods in place for monitoring spending;
- Improving the mechanisms for allocating funds to departments so that they are closely linked to the priorities identified in subject development plans;
- Improving the monitoring of the use of non-directed time;
- Ensuring that the valuable resources of information technology are well used;

- Devising effective methods for measuring value for money and the impact of spending decisions on the outcomes achieved by pupils;
- Securing better involvement of governors in financial matters through improved financial reports and better attendance at finance committee meetings.

(Paragraph numbers: 64, 66, 67, 68)

4. Tackle the weaknesses in curricular provision by:

- Ensuring that legal requirements are fully met in design and technology, geography and information technology;
- Developing vocational provision and exploring further expansion of current GCSE provision, for example, business education;
- Improving the quality of schemes of work;
- Developing a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with the aim of improving the opportunities for spiritual development in particular.

(Paragraph numbers: 31-35, 41, 45, 46, 60, 96, 107, 108, 126, 134, 141, 153, 159)

5. Improve the use of assessment information by:

- Analysing data more rigorously and making the findings from analyses available to all staff and governors;
- Using data to set clear, specific and achievable targets for pupils;
- Making use of assessment information to plan effectively for the needs of all pupils;
- Improving the accuracy of teacher assessments in Key Stage 3;
- Ensuring that all heads of department develop the skills to analyse and make use of test and examination data in order to inform their work;
- Improving the quality of marking so that pupils know exactly what they need to do in order to improve.

(Paragraph numbers: 24, 37, 38, 52, 54-56, 76, 78, 98, 99, 106, 124, 126, 134, 140, 157, 159, 170, 180)

6. Develop effective links with parents by:

- Improving the quality of reports;
- Providing parents with better quality information so that they are more aware of the school's provision;
- Actively seeking the parents' views in order to establish an effective partnership with them.

(Paragraph numbers: 57, 58)

In addition to the main key issues above the school should also tackle the more minor weaknesses below:

1. Develop stronger co-ordination between the special educational needs and the ethnic minority achievement departments in order to ensure that pupils with learning needs or English language needs or a combination of both, they are provided with the most appropriate and effective support necessary to meet their individual needs; (Paragraph numbers: 38)
2. Ensure that effective child protection procedures are rigorously followed; (Paragraph numbers: 47, 48)
3. Improve the systems for monitoring and raising attendance; (Paragraph numbers: 17, 47, 49)
4. Improve the monitoring of pupils' behaviour in order to ensure that there are consistently high expectations from all staff across the school; (Paragraph numbers: 19, 27, 49, 157, 162, 179)

5. Ensure that risk assessments are carried out for all areas of the school and that accidents are correctly recorded and reported: (Paragraph numbers: 47, 48, 60, 84).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	163
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	12	41	35	9	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1015	N/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	833	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11	Sixth form

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	49	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	172	N/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	908

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	131
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	154

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	134	91

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	50	25
	Girls	46	21	14
	Total	96	71	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	44 (23)	32 (15)	17 (18)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (9)	11 (7)	5 (9)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	62	38
	Girls	39	37	32
	Total	74	99	70
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	33 (14)	45 (26)	31 (14)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (4)	20 (9)	7 (3)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	106	68	174

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	29	91	104
	Girls	19	65	69
	Total	48	156	173
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	28 (27.2)	90 (86.3)	99(96)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.1)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31.3 (28.5)
	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	12
Black – African heritage	23
Black – other	4
Indian	5
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	861
Chinese	5
White	68
Any other minority ethnic group	36

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	9	0
Black – African heritage	3	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	127	0
Chinese	0	0
White	19	0
Other minority ethnic groups	2	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)	73.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

Total number of education support staff	16.8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	455

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	65
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	21.4
Key Stage 4	21.3

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	3,043,525
Total expenditure	3,193,813
Expenditure per pupil	3,227
Balance brought forward from previous year	285,225
Balance carried forward to next year	134,937

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1015
Number of questionnaires returned	74

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	34	4	1	3
My child is making good progress in school.	42	51	5	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	30	4	3	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	41	5	5	3
The teaching is good.	45	46	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	32	14	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	32	7	1	8
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	23	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	41	38	9	1	11
The school is well led and managed.	47	34	7	1	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	35	4	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	34	12	7	16

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

ENGLISH

- 70 Results in tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were well below the national average, but above average when compared with those of similar schools. In GCSE English the same is true, that is: while results at grades A* to C have been well below the national average, they are above average in relation to similar schools. Results across the full range of grades, A* to G, are in line with the national average, and increasing numbers of the cohort take the examination. The results in GCSE English literature follow a similar pattern. While girls generally do better than boys in both examinations – as is the case nationally – their results are much farther below the average for their sex than are boys'. Test and examination results have improved considerably since the last inspection.
- 71 A media studies course is offered within the English department at Key Stage 4 as a GCSE course. It is a popular option, and in 1999 over a third of those entered gained grades A* to C. According to the evidence of inspection at the end of both key stages attainment is below standards expected nationally, but in relation to their prior attainment pupils achieve satisfactorily in Key Stage 3 and often well in Key Stage 4. Pupils with special educational needs who receive support in class make satisfactory progress. Many of those who are in the early stages of acquiring English as an additional language make good progress in both key stages.
- 72 As they move up the school pupils gain confidence as speakers. In Key Stage 4, all but the lowest attaining pupils explain processes clearly and contribute purposefully to whole-class or group discussion. However, the majority at all levels of attainment have only a limited command of standard English, where its use would be appropriate. A generally narrow vocabulary hampers average and lower attaining pupils from expressing fully their often sound understanding of a topic. Listening skills develop well and by the end of Key Stage 4 many pupils have become attentive and constructive listeners.
- 73 The department encourages pupils, particularly in Years 7 and 8, to read for pleasure. This practice and the support given by the learning support department to weaker readers and to those with special educational needs helps pupils to gain confidence, fluency and accuracy in their reading. Thus, by the end of Key Stage 3, most cope satisfactorily with texts read in class. Reading aloud, though generally reasonably accurate, frequently lacks expression. This is particularly the case among boys. In Key Stage 4, most pupils know the texts set for examination well. They understand the sequence of events and ideas and can write, albeit sometimes at a simple level, about character and motivation. Higher attaining pupils have acquired some skills in analysis and interpretation.
- 74 Standards of writing improve from a low base in Year 7. By the end of the key stage, most pupils write in a range of styles. The best work is extended and often reflective. Pupils are learning by Year 9 to adapt their writing to a variety of readerships. In Key Stage 4, there is some fluent and well-structured writing from the highest attaining pupils. Media assignments in English and in media studies

show good understanding of ideas and an ability to use technical terms. In both key stages, there are significant weaknesses in syntax. The use of tenses, for example, is problematic for many pupils for whom English is an additional language. Punctuation is sometimes poor. Spelling, however, is often sound. As in speech, narrow vocabulary and lack of complexity in sentence structure prevent some pupils from conveying nuances of meaning.

- 75 Virtually all teaching is satisfactory or better, and in about four lessons in ten it is good or, more often, very good. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is better than in Key Stage 3. The correlation with the quality of pupils' learning is close. Teachers know the subject well and can often motivate pupils and hold their attention with clear and lively presentation, and by deploying a range of interesting and effective approaches, supported by well-chosen materials. Most manage their classes well, seeking to create a calm atmosphere in which learning can take place. Occasionally, teachers are a little too tolerant of noise, gossip and interruptions which distract the class and prevent others from concentrating. Prolonged inattentiveness is rare, however, and is associated, when it occurs, with unchallenging tasks which don't stimulate the pupils to think or with unclear explanations which leave them unsure about what they are expected to do. Lessons are generally well planned and are most successful when learning objectives are made explicit. Then pupils focus better on the work and make swifter progress because they understand the purpose of the activities in the lesson. In the mixed-ability classes which are the norm in English, there is a wide range of attainment and of competence in the language. Particularly, but not only, when English as an additional language support staff are present, work is often carefully matched to individual needs so that all pupils have access to the topic of the lesson and can make progress. This good practice could with advantage be even more widely spread. Teachers monitor pupils' work in class well and, in most cases, their marking is constructive, helping pupils to improve their work. Writing often improves in response to this helpful guidance.
- 76 The English curriculum is generally comprehensive and well balanced, though there is limited study in Key Stage 3 of texts written before the twentieth century. Since the last inspection there has been much greater use of information technology and there are good examples of such work, but computers are still not used enough for drafting and re-drafting. The language study element in schemes of work has been considerably and usefully extended since that time. Regular liaison with the drama department would be helpful in developing and co-ordinating approaches to oral work and especially to the use of standard spoken English. Media work in English and in media studies, a separate subject at Key Stage 4, is a strength of the curriculum. Assessment procedures remain sound and, in line with school policy. Targets are set for individual pupils. Analyses of test and examination results are beginning to be used well to influence curriculum planning. However, the wealth of material gathered in the course of assessment tasks in Key Stage 3 is not used to measure progress overall or to set targets for groups and classes.
- 77 The department is effectively managed by two joint heads of department in a job share arrangement. They collaborate closely and lead a well-qualified and cohesive team well. Priorities for the future are well chosen but the department's development plan is not structured so that the success or otherwise of objectives can be properly evaluated. Informal and largely effective monitoring of some aspects of the department's work takes place. It does not yet extend to the regular sampling of pupils' work.

- 78 Much has been done to address the issues raised in the last inspection report and the department is committed to raising attainment even further. Work still remains to be done on formalising systems of monitoring and evaluation, increasing the use of information technology and making better use of assessment data.

LITERACY

- 79 The school's literacy strategy is having a positive impact in the majority of subject departments, particularly on the teaching of writing. The use of writing frames, the emphasis on specialist terms and opportunities to write in a range of styles and sometimes at length all help pupils to make progress. There are examples of good work in response to these approaches in art, drama, English, geography, history, and religious education. Overall, sentence structure is not well developed and punctuation is erratic but spelling is generally sound. Improvement in writing is more marked in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Most pupils read well enough to meet the demands of subject textbooks and other material used in class. Those who enter the school as weak readers are helped to make good progress by the learning support department. In religious education, there are frequent opportunities to read in class. In English, history, physical education and religious education reading for research is competently undertaken. In science, there is little use of textbooks. Reading for pleasure is successfully fostered in English at Key Stage 3. Standards of oracy are not generally high. Although many pupils contribute willingly in class, few are very articulate and few are at ease in the use of standard English in more formal situations. Listening skills are quite well developed. In several subjects, for example, history, geography, science and religious education, the use of subject-specific language is emphasised and key words are displayed in classrooms. In religious education, there are opportunities to take part in discussion and to prepare and deliver group presentations. In music, pupils offer short answers to teachers' questions and extended responses are rare.

DRAMA

- 80 Drama is taught as a separate subject to all pupils in Key Stage 3 and is available as an optional GCSE course in Key Stage 4. The course is popular and the numbers in classes are very large, up to 30. Results at grades A* to C have improved steadily over the last three years and in 1999 were at the national average. For many pupils, their grade in drama has been their best in an English-based examination.
- 81 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations but approaches these more closely in Key Stage 4. Especially in Key Stage 3, girls' work is more mature than boys' and in most cases girls reach higher standards. However, good progress is made by both. In Key Stage 3, pupils acquire a range of basic skills and techniques and they learn how to use preparation and rehearsal time productively in groups. Creativity in devising situations and concentration in role are more variable. The use of language and the development of characters are more highly developed among girls. In Key Stage 4, pupils build well on what they have learned in previous years. They gain confidence, acquire greater control and respond more imaginatively. In most aspects of performance, girls are more assured and versatile than boys. The language repertoire of both develops but continues to be quite limited. In both key stages, pupils know how to behave as an audience and by Year 11 many are learning how to evaluate performance constructively. This is also

evident in their written work, which shows that they understand and can use specialist terms and that they can reflect thoughtfully on issues such as racism, the futility of war and the experience of bereavement.

- 82 Teaching and learning are good overall. There are no significant weaknesses. Confidence in their subject expertise and long experience enable teachers to create an atmosphere in which pupils understand that in drama they are expected to learn and to work, not only to enjoy themselves – though most certainly do enjoy the subject. Lessons are well planned and organised, so that pupils' time is not wasted and so that they have the chance to develop skills as well as understanding. Teachers use language well. They make sure that explanations and specialist terms are understood by all. In Key Stage 4, the guidance teachers give is valuable in helping pupils to structure their writing clearly and logically.
- 83 The department makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development through the exploration of themes relevant to young people's lives such as family and peer relationships, bullying and the use of drugs, and through visits to see productions and through visiting practitioners and companies.
- 84 The department, which is well managed, has adequate resources and good working space. However, one studio still suffers from poor soundproofing and the checks on the safety of stage lighting are not carried out annually.
- 85 Most of the issues raised in the last inspection report have been addressed. There is now a greater emphasis in schemes of work on the development of skills. Some topics related to Britain as a multi-cultural society are now regularly explored. An assessment framework for Key Stage 3 is now in place, and written work in Key Stage 4 has improved in quality. Little progress, however, has been made in establishing formal links with the English department with the aim of co-ordinating work on extending pupils' range of language.

MATHEMATICS

- 86 In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils is well below national standards but in line with those for similar schools in relation to the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level or higher. However, when average point scores are compared, the school's attainment is very low in comparison with all schools and below that of similar schools. This indicates that whereas the proportion of pupils who attain at the nationally expected levels is in line with similar schools, there is a greater proportion of pupils who attain at lower levels and very few who attain the higher levels. Teacher assessments are above the level of attainment in tests.
- 87 At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in relation to all schools is very low and in relation to similar schools is very high. As in Key Stage 3, attainment in mathematics is better than in science but not as good as in English. In 1999 the school results dipped slightly against the upward trend of the previous three years while the national trend remained upwards. However, the results show improvement from the time of the last inspection.
- 88 As in previous years, boys are attaining significantly better than girls at both key stages and the gap increases from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4, by which time the boys attain half as well again as the girls at the A*-C level. At Key Stage 3, the

difference between the boys' and girls' results is greater in the test results than in the teacher assessments.

- 89 Attainment observed in lessons reflected the results at the end of both key stages. In Key Stage 3, the pupils are taught in mixed-ability classes and the range of attainment in each class is very wide and increases during the key stage. For example in a Year 9 class, the highest attaining pupils were solving equations like $3(x + 1) = 2x + 7$ and using Pythagoras's Theorem to solve triangles. The average attaining pupils were able to find the area of a trapezium, work with grouped frequency and work out simple relations from sequences, and low attaining pupils were able to calculate $50/12$ leaving the answer with a remainder. This represents an attainment range of National Curriculum levels 3 to level 7.
- 90 In one third of the lessons, attainment was below the national expectations for the end of Key Stage 3 and in the remainder, although the attainment of the whole group was judged to be around the national average, there were significant numbers of pupils working below that level. For example in Year 7, more pupils were working on identifying the co-ordinate points on a grid, compared to others in the same class who were transforming shapes and describing the transformation in terms of column vectors. Similarly in the same class some pupils could calculate effectively using metric units while others were insecure in knowing that there are 100cm in 1 metre. In Key Stage 3 pupils with higher prior attainment achieve better than those with average or below average prior attainment.
- 91 In Key Stage 4, there is a wide variation in attainment. The attainment in top sets is at or just above the national average, and in other sets it was below or well below the national average. For example in a top set in Year 11, pupils can use the sine rule and were learning about rational and irrational numbers, and in a below average attainment set in Year 10 a pupil was multiplying 4×10 by grouping the numbers in pairs and in pairs again before adding the result. In Key Stage 4, pupils in above average attaining sets achieve well in comparison to pupils in lower attaining sets who achieve less well.
- 92 Pupils who need support for English as an additional language and those with special educational needs achieve well against prior attainment when supported in mathematics lessons. Where support is not provided, these pupils make less progress because the work is not sufficiently matched to their needs.
- 93 The teachers of mathematics are committed to their work. The overall quality of teaching was satisfactory, but with a significant minority where it was less than satisfactory. In approximately three-quarters of the lessons over both key stages, the teaching was satisfactory or better, and in just over one quarter the teaching was good. This is a decline in teaching quality since the previous inspection. There was slightly more good teaching seen in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4, and in Key Stage 4 the better teaching was seen in the higher attaining sets. The quality of learning matches that of teaching. Where teaching is good, teachers have good knowledge of the pupils, planning meets the needs of individual pupils, and good use is made of review at the end of the lesson. The use of review is less good where the focus is on what pupils have done in the lesson as opposed to what pupils have learned. A strength of the teaching in Key Stage 4 is the focused preparation for examinations at the end of the key stage, particularly in upper attaining sets. Teachers are generally well organised and have good relationships with the pupils. As a result of the good features of teaching, pupils organise

themselves well in the lessons in Key Stage 3 and support each other in Key Stage 4. Many pupils concentrate for the full lesson as independent workers in Key Stage 3 and most only move as necessary to collect or return resources.

- 94 Where teaching was less good, and occasionally poor, it failed to take account of prior learning, for example in a numeracy lesson on fractions in Year 7 and in a lesson on volume with the lowest attaining set in Year 10, or did not meet the needs of pupils of different attainment in the class. For example, where the teacher was class teaching division by a whole number at Level 3 of the National Curriculum at a slow pace to a mixed ability class in Year 9. Teaching was also unsatisfactory where the subject knowledge was limited, for example in understanding the complexity of the concept of fractions. Most teachers keep good records in Key Stage 3, but these are less consistent in Key Stage 4, and the marking of books in both key stages is not consistent and does not give pupils sufficient information on how they can improve their attainment.
- 95 The school has chosen to use a curriculum in Key Stage 3 in which the pupils in the mixed ability classes work independently from cards and booklets, and teachers move around the classroom supporting individuals and very occasionally groups. Many of the teachers' comments in books and to pupils relate to the cards or booklets they should do next or repeat and not to pupils' learning. The teachers do very little whole-class interactive teaching and most of the pupils are working on different cards from their neighbours. There are therefore few opportunities for pupils to engage in constructive and informative discussion of mathematical ideas with each other or with their teacher, and the opportunities for teachers to challenge and develop pupils' learning and understanding are restricted. In Year 9, the department is piloting two alternative approaches to teaching which are resulting in more direct teaching and more sustained work on specific aspects of mathematics. This approach is providing more challenge to the pupils. These are producing higher standards in these classrooms. The challenge for the school is to evaluate and extend these improvements to all pupils. In Key Stage 4, pupils are taught in sets based on attainment in Key Stage 3 on a textbook based curriculum. Information technology is effectively used both to teach mathematics and for applying mathematics in both key stages.
- 96 The department has a scheme of work which is under revision. It has useful references to resources and cross-curricular links, but the content is given in terms of activities rather than learning outcomes for pupils in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are well established, but the use to which these are put in tracking and advising pupils about how they can improve and in establishing targets for improvement in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding need to be further developed. Teacher assessments for Key Stage 3 are in line with the performance indicated by the end of unit tests taken during the key stage, and this suggests that the scores obtained in the unit tests are not a good indicator of the final level of attainment in tests at the end of the key stage.
- 97 The departmental development plan identifies appropriate priorities, but the plan is not costed, nor are there target dates and individual accountabilities. The job descriptions within the department are insufficient in their current form to ensure that quality assurance can be delivered at all stages in the management of teaching and learning.

- 98 Since the last inspection, the department has improved results at the end of Key Stage 4, but there has been insufficient progress on the other issues of securing the judgement of pupils' attainment against national standards at Key Stage 3, and ensuring that cross-curricular links are effective.
- 99 The acting head of department is providing sound educational direction, but the department needs to focus upon monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning within a broader range of teaching styles aimed at providing greater challenge to pupils and the retention of mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding particularly at Key Stage 3. This focus should also include improving the quality of marking and feedback to pupils, and to ensure that teachers provide good role models for pupils in recording their mathematical thinking and ideas including through the use of diagrams. The development plan and job descriptions should be reviewed to make them effective tools in helping to deliver this improvement.

NUMERACY

- 100 The school has invested significant amounts of money in a local authority numeracy programme last year and intends to invest more this year. A cohort of pupils currently in Year 8 has shown improvements in numeracy against a local authority test as a result of this programme. The degree to which mathematics teachers have capitalised upon this initiative and the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools has not been evaluated in the school. Nor has the impact of the improved standard of numeracy of this cohort on the rest of the curriculum been determined. Levels of numeracy in the school in general match those in other areas of mathematics, and across the curriculum, the use and teaching of number is limited. The exception is geography, where numeracy is well used and supportively taught. The school does not have a policy for numeracy across the curriculum, and the current numeracy policy does not take account of recent national developments. The school intends to develop both these documents in the near future.
- 101 The school should review its policy and practice in the teaching of numeracy both within mathematics lessons and across the curriculum as a matter of urgency.

SCIENCE

- 102 In 1999, attainment in the end of Key Stage 3 tests was very low compared with all schools nationally and was below the average for similar schools. As shown by teacher assessments, attainment was almost twice that found in the tests and was close to the school's target of 39 per cent at level 5 or above. During the years since the previous inspection, attainment in tests has been very low compared with the national picture. Both boys and girls performed significantly worse in science than in their other subjects. Boys' attainment was not as far below national averages as was girls'. The trend in results since 1996 has been similar to the national, though well below it. The 1999 GCSE results were just under half the national average for grades A* to C and about 7 per cent below the average for grades A* to G. Since 1997, the proportion of pupils gaining the top three grades has remained similar year by year. Attainment for grades A* to G has improved – from 87.5 per cent in 1997 to 90.7 per cent in 1999, peaking at 94.9 per cent in 1998. In the latter year, the school's performance was just 2.7 per cent below the national average. However, as at Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in science was below their other subjects, that of girls more so than that of boys. Despite this, the

school is making headway in increasing the overall GCSE pass rate from a low starting point at the beginning of the key stage. This is in the context of a marked increase in the proportion of pupils who are entered for GCSE – from 78 per cent of Year 11 in 1997 to 99 per cent in 1999. In the latter year, the GCSE results were above the national average for similar schools in terms of the average point score.

- 103 In the work seen during the inspection, both during lessons and from analysis of pupils' work, overall achievement in Year 9 is closer to the 1999 teacher assessments than to the tests. During lessons and homework, pupils, many of whom are not yet fluent readers, though they have satisfactory short term recall of key scientific facts, have more time to complete tasks than is the case in the National Curriculum tests. This helps to explain the difference between test and teacher assessments. In a Key Stage 3 lesson on light, for example, the match of the work to pupils' abilities and other features of good teaching, enabled most pupils to progress well. The most able pupils showed secure understanding of angles of incidence and reflection, while others understood how rough reflective surfaces scatter light. But achievement such as this is not translated into test success. The department has recognised the need to give pupils better preparation at dealing with written questions within limited time. This is one of the strategies recently introduced to raise test performance. Similarly at Key Stage 4, pupils generally achieve satisfactory standards in lessons, when taking account of their various starting points. Most pupils in a Year 10 class, when learning how to calculate speed, showed sound numeracy skills and satisfactory grasp of the formula being used. However, in this lesson, as in many others, the highest attaining pupils could have progressed further with more challenging work.
- 104 The achievement of pupils with special educational needs varies, though it is satisfactory overall. When additional teaching or support is provided, or when the lesson explicitly addresses their needs, pupils make good progress and achieve well. But on other occasions, not enough is done to match work to learning needs, with the result that progress is slower. Pupils who are at early stages of speaking English achieve well when given specialist teaching or support. They often get help from other pupils and this enables them to make satisfactory progress. Boys, who in general are more willing to discuss work, achieve better than do girls in some lessons. Pupils are generally hard working, interested in science and co-operative, but they are mainly passive learners. They often wait to be told what to do, and rarely ask questions to ask for further explanations if they do not understand. Not many girls try to answer questions and even fewer ask questions. This slows down their progress.
- 105 Pupils' learning is satisfactory overall, though gains in knowledge are better than in skills and understanding. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection varied from satisfactory to good, and was satisfactory overall, and this is the reason why pupils generally learn satisfactorily. There were no significant differences in the quality of teaching between the key stages. Strengths in teaching which are found in good teaching, and to a lesser extent in that which is satisfactory, include secure knowledge of science and mainly effective class management, leading to good use of time in busy and safe laboratories. In many lessons, planning includes objective for what pupils should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson and these are sometimes helpfully written on the board for pupils. Where teaching is at least sound or better, work is matched to some extent to the range of ability in the class so that pupils make satisfactory progress and know what to do next, and there is a good variety of activities which keep pupils' interest at a high level. Good

use of resources helps pupils to learn and this is where the experienced team of technicians makes their contribution so that practical lessons can get off to a prompt start. Where teaching is good, questioning finds out what pupils know and understand and makes them think and develop their understanding further, and gives teachers information on which to base the next stage of learning. The most effective homework is that which follows from the lesson and gives pupils opportunities to carry on learning between lessons. When teaching has all or most of these features, pupils learn at a satisfactory rate, enjoy what they are doing, concentrate well and make a good effort with all the tasks they are given to do.

- 106 But there are weaknesses in teaching which prevent pupils from learning as quickly as they could in each lesson. The main weaknesses, which need to be remedied if standards are to rise more quickly, especially at Key Stage 3, include work for classes which does not consistently challenge all pupils appropriately. Either it is too hard or too easy, so that some pupils become confused or have to wait for further work to do. Questioning to find out what all pupils know and understand is often too brief or not widespread enough around the class to test pupils sufficiently to give teachers a clear enough basis from which to move forward, to keep pupils on their toes thinking or to help both boys and girls to use scientific language confidently orally as well as in writing. Homework is not always explained carefully enough to give all pupils the best chance to do it well. Pupils' concentration is not always successfully managed through the predominantly two hour lessons, so that some time for learning is lost. In lessons which show these features, not all pupils progress as well as they could and some become bored and restless, but not badly behaved. Some marking of pupils' work clearly tells pupils how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, much marking does not give pupils sufficient guidance on how they can produce better work.
- 107 Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. While the department has had only limited success so far in raising Key Stage 3 test standards, the GCSE passes present a much stronger picture. The rate of improvement at Key Stage 3 over the past four year has not been fast enough due, at least in part, to the difficulty in recruiting teachers. The department is not fully staffed with science specialists at present, and has not been for some time. However, several potentially useful initiatives recently have been put in place to raise standards, such as additional classes after school and increased attention to reading and writing in science, but their impact has yet to be clearly seen. Other changes are needed, particularly the opportunity for the head of department regularly to monitor, evaluate and support teaching and learning through firsthand observation. It is a major weakness in school organisation that these key head of department management tasks cannot be undertaken without him leaving his own classes. The timetable was mentioned in the previous report as needing further consideration to make better use of science teachers' time. There has been insufficient response to this.
- 108 Teaching of pupils in mixed ability classes is not as successful as it needs to be if standards are to rise significantly at Key Stage 3, and GCSE grades A*-C are to increase. Consideration should be given to arranging classes with a narrower spread of ability so that pupils can benefit from more focused teaching. The scheme of work, presently in an incomplete draft, needs to be finished as soon as possible, particularly for Key Stage 3. Attention needs to be given throughout the scheme to planning for pupils across the whole ability range and for the use of information technology. The commercial scheme presently in use at Key Stage 3

should be used as a resource to support the pupil-centred scheme of work, rather than be the scheme itself. Robust action to bring about these improvements needs to be included in a costed departmental development plan, with precise success indicators related to pupils' learning. The department does not have such a plan. This is a weakness. Implementation of the development plan needs to be monitored, evaluated and supported systematically by the deputy headteacher who is the department's line manager so that Key Stage 4 work can begin from higher standards at the end Key Stage 3.

ART

- 109 The art department is a hard working, very well organised and successful department. The percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades at GCSE in 1999 was 89.2 per cent, which is well above the national average of 61.2 per cent. This reflects a continuing high standard of results over recent years, which peaked in 1998 with 97.5 per cent of pupils gaining A* - C grades. Pupils taking art and design at GCSE over the past three years have, on average, achieved results two grades higher than their average results in other subjects. During this time the number of pupils taking Art and Design GCSE has increased significantly with new art courses being introduced in photography and three-dimensional work alongside a successful course in textiles.
- 110 By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above average and pupils are achieving well, taking into consideration their prior attainment. The majority are developing a clear sense of design and an appreciation of the qualities of collage and mixed media. Some pupils attain very high standards for their age in composition, colour, tone and incorporating ideas from the work of artists into their own work. A clear strength at Key Stage 3 is the growing understanding of how to develop an observed image into a decorative abstract design and on into three dimensions. Lower and average attaining pupils can be seen to have made satisfactory progress while the higher attaining pupils have made good progress, since entry in Year 7, in the maturity and complexity of their designs.
- 111 In the lessons seen in Key Stage 3, pupils' achievement was good overall. Some very good, thoughtful work was taking place in a Year 8 lesson, where pupils were becoming aware of deeper environmental aspects and appreciating the qualities of natural materials in creating three-dimensional structures similar to those of Andy Goldsworthy.
- 112 In the lessons seen in Key Stage 4, pupils' achievement was again good overall with some excellent work seen in Year 11 textiles. Pupils were creating very imaginative head-dresses using fabrics, that they had printed and decorated themselves, stretched over complex frameworks which they had built onto a skull cap base.
- 113 While work on display throughout the department is of a high standard much of it has a uniformity of character that results from the tightly structured scheme. Consideration should be given to developing areas that allow scope for more individuality and personal response particularly with regard to pupils preparing for the AS level course.

- 114 Pupils make good use of artists' images and styles in their work, and research tasks are frequently set, often making good use of the internet. However, pupils' retention of knowledge about artists is weak in both key stages. Year 11 pupils on the photography GCSE course produce some very good image manipulation work using digital cameras and computer software.
- 115 The quality of teaching across the key stages is good. In Key Stage 3 teaching was satisfactory overall but it was good or very good in almost half of the lessons seen. In Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching was good or better in all but one of the lessons seen. Common features of successful lessons in both key stages included good introductions that settled pupils and prepared them for their work, good relationships between teachers and pupils and good use of questioning to clarify pupils' ideas. Teaching was most effective where there was a good balance of whole class and individual teaching with the teacher circulating amongst the class keeping the group focused on their work. This was used to very good effect in the Goldsworthy lesson where the teacher gave value to pupils' ideas and comments by sharing them with the rest of the class. In the textile headdresses lesson, the teaching skills of the teacher were combined with the expert knowledge of a theatrical designer, in residency at the school, to produce some excellent teaching, which totally engaged the Year 11 pupils. Teaching was less successful where learning objectives were not made clear to pupils, resulting in processes being taught in a mechanical fashion. On the few occasions when teachers became involved in lengthy periods of individual support the concentration and behaviour of the rest of the class declined noticeably and pupils' progress was limited. The teachers in the department have a very good knowledge and understanding of the art curriculum and have high expectations of their pupils. The effectiveness of long and medium term planning is very good though the internal structure of some lessons is less clear.
- 116 Project worksheets, often used for homework, are clear, well produced and modified to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language, which makes a satisfactory contribution to the teaching of literacy.
- 117 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in art lessons are mostly good and sometimes very good, particularly in Key Stage 4. They relate well to their teachers and are usually polite and attentive. The majority of pupils settle quickly to their work and concentrate well, but a small number of pupils, mainly boys, are boisterous, talkative and reluctant to settle. Relationships between pupils are generally amicable, good-natured and mutually supportive.
- 118 The art curriculum offers a broad and well-balanced range of experiences in materials and processes in two and three dimensions carefully structured across the two key stages. A programme of artists' residencies with workshops, weekend and residential courses and visits to galleries and museums enhances these experiences. The GCSE options plan permits pupils to take up to three art based GCSEs and pupils identified as being gifted and talented in art are able to enter the Art and Design GCSE in Year 10 followed by AS level Art and Design in Year 11. The curriculum makes good provision for pupils' social and cultural development through the good relationship it fosters in lessons and through its work about and with artists. Opportunities for moral and spiritual development are less apparent. Themes developed around World War One, in conjunction with the English and

history departments for the annual Arts Week, explored the moral and spiritual aspects very effectively, but there are few opportunities in art lessons for reflection and exploring personal responses to subjects and themes.

- 119 A very strong leadership, which establishes high standards and a unified approach to teaching, guides the department well. The successful bid for art college status has clarified the planning and direction for the department, with a very thorough development plan in place. The six teachers are very well qualified for their posts including some with experience as practicing artists in their particular fields of expertise. Satisfactory systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching are in place but the outcomes are not effectively recorded and their benefit to the department is diminished. Accommodation for art is very good with a newly refurbished suite of spacious, well lit and well equipped studios including a dark room, kiln room and an information technology room with 14 computers and internet access. The art rooms feature stimulating displays of pupils work combined with other related images and artefacts. Good use is made of information technology with artwork of high quality being achieved using digital technology, which forms the basis of the course in Years 8 and 9.
- 120 Achieving art college status in 1998 has significantly improved the stature of the department with a broadening of the range of courses offered and an increased number of candidates for GCSE. Links with organisations outside the school have widened to include training arrangements with primary schools, colleges of further and higher education, businesses and galleries. The college and business links have been instrumental in clarifying career paths for pupils seeking to work in the arts. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made overall, particularly in improving the time allocation for art, developing assessment criteria and the use of specialist language. Weaknesses remain, however, in pupils' knowledge and understanding of artists and their work and there is still a tendency to over emphasise the teaching of processes allowing insufficient opportunities for personal responses to themes.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 121 Last year GCSE results in design technology subjects were well below the national standard. There was a slight improvement between 1998 and 1999 in terms of the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades. However, the design technology examination scores have failed to keep up with the school's overall improved academic performance with the consequence that, compared with most other subjects, its contribution is unsatisfactory. Last year there were no A* and A grades and performance was too low across the whole range of ability. Girls perform better in food technology whilst the boys' performance has been better with resistant materials. There was some improvement between 1998 and 1999 in the number of B grades in graphics but the results overall have been consistently poor since the last inspection report in 1995.
- 122 Inspection evidence indicates that attainment, by the end of Key Stage 4, remains well below average although a minority of Year 11 pupils are reaching the national standard in a limited range of skills. In Year 10 there are examples of good work being produced indicating good progress being made by a minority of pupils. In the lessons seen, Year 11 pupils were beginning to take into account at the design stage the need to balance conflicting requirements. For instance, they appropriately described user preferences for a healthy snack. Samples of work analysed during

the inspection, show that the girls have used tools effectively to make good quality shelf units and jewellery boxes. They were proud of their products and described accurately the procedures used and the modifications needed. These girls knew exactly where and when their products would be used. Similarly, in Year 10, a minority of confident girls showed that they were making good progress and presented work which matched some of the criteria for an average GCSE grade. For example, they had researched source material to provide a good range of shapes inspired by nature to be used in designing and making jewellery. They illustrated the process of manufacture with good quality sketches. They also had an adequate record of the design and make process to which they were making suitable reference. The products in silver had a good appearance. However, in spite of such examples of good work, high grades are not being achieved because the plans pupils produce do not include sufficiently wide technical vocabulary nor details such as the time allowed for each step in the process, the maintenance of the product or reasons why one design option is chosen in preference to another. The majority of the work seen was of a lower standard than that described above although most pupils had mastered basic skills such as marking out and cutting out materials such as a copper sheet.

123 By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of pupils' work are also well below the national expectation but they are also very low when pupils start in Year 7. One example of higher attainment was observed when Year 9 pupils effectively applied skills from art to produce good 'Safety' posters for the "Construction Challenge", an off-site activity arranged by the senior management team. However, in the lessons seen in school the plans pupils produce, though attractive, are not sufficiently useful as working drawings and pupils are not able to work from them or use drawings to anticipate problems that might be encountered when making a product. This results in insufficient development of pupils' problem solving skills and depresses attainment. Sometimes, pupils are not clear about the design specification or the preferences of likely users. For example, what the needs of likely users of mechanical toys will be, although the toys themselves are well made. As a result pupils followed the same basic model for construction. The variations made to this model were mostly limited to changes in décor, which could have been quite easily achieved by younger pupils. However, Year 8 pupils were seen to make good progress when designing and making photo holders because they were thinking carefully about how good their products would be for the purpose intended and were taking steps themselves to improve the overall quality.

124 The opportunities to observe the teaching of design and technology courses were limited by the limited provision of design and technology courses and by staff absence. However, in the lessons seen at Key Stage 4, the teaching was either satisfactory or good because it successfully produced good practical skills training or moved pupils towards a better understanding of the examination requirements but the pupils starting point in all of the lessons seen was relatively low. Overall, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. Teachers used their good subject knowledge effectively, communicating their expectations clearly and setting deadlines for completion of tasks. Sound subject understanding was also shown by the teachers' emphasis upon key factors to consider when designing a product. The pupils responded well to this clear guidance as they attempted to improve their coursework folders. Teaching also had a good effect upon the quality of the written work when the pupils were required to improve literacy skills and to do more thinking for themselves. The books are regularly marked in accordance with school policy but the marking sometimes gives an inaccurate assessment of how well the pupils are

doing. The teachers' use of level descriptions in assessment and moderation procedures is unsatisfactory. Recommendations about what the pupil should do next are too often unsatisfactory because they are imprecise. A satisfactory challenge from teachers sometimes obliged the pupils to do more for themselves, for example when hand polishing to improve the appearance of a bull's head decoration made from copper sheet. When the group size was small or when technical support was available most pupils made good progress. However, the range of attainment in classes is wider than it need be because of irregularities and deficiencies in the Key Stage 3 course. The teachers have too limited a range of teaching approaches to stretch all pupils.

- 125 The teaching was satisfactory in most but not all of the Key Stage 3 lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge which is used effectively to demonstrate techniques, question pupils and explain how to use both hand and power tools. Pupils also benefit from good resources and a good learning environment though this is currently underused. Teachers set a good example of patience, tolerance and respect so that in many lessons the atmosphere is pleasant and purposeful. However, the range of activities provided is unsatisfactory. In the minority of lessons where unsatisfactory teaching was seen, it was characterised by pupils' slow progress. For example, in Year 7, the boys chattered persistently for most of the lesson which resulted in less than satisfactory progress for all, despite the interesting topic and the teacher's good resources. Pupils were being asked to work in a way for which they had not been adequately prepared in previous lessons and the boys were unable to accept the challenge. Lesson planning is sometimes poor resulting in a lack of pace and there is no assessment or review at the end of the lesson. The monitoring of pupils' progress is sometimes unsatisfactory when pupils are allowed to go on to the next task without having completed earlier work.
- 126 Since the last inspection in 1995, progress has been made on some of the issues raised but many others have hardly developed any further. The quality of the teaching is better now, however, not all staff could be seen teaching. Teachers do move fast and effectively and pupils are more self-reliant than they were at the time of the last inspection but current approaches when teaching mixed ability groups are unsatisfactory. The teaching of literacy has improved. The books are regularly marked and achievement is rewarded. Pupils are beginning to do some research for themselves and are more active as learners than they were. However, progress in the long term is unsatisfactory because the sequence of tasks and activities has not been carefully thought through to enable pupils to build upon prior knowledge and to build confidence. Poor planning provides unsatisfactory access to the subject as required by the National Curriculum and the range of activities provided is too narrow. Overall, the requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met in both key stages and the department' knowledge of these requirements is poor. The provision for information technology along with other key aspects of the subject such as electronics is very poor. Arrangements across all aspects of the subject to ensure that assessment criteria are consistently applied remain unsatisfactory. There is still no external monitoring of the health and safety procedures although pupils were not at risk in the lessons seen. Assessment data is neither carefully collected nor usefully analysed to enable the courses to be improved.
- 127 The management of the department is poor and pupils' learning is adversely affected because the teachers are unclear about what pupils already know, what they are supposed to know and how to deal effectively with the wide range of prior attainments of the pupils. Pupils even in Key Stage 4, having been in the school for

three years, too often arrive at lessons with skills and knowledge well below what is expected. Links with business and commerce, to enhance the provision are beginning to emerge but the current overall provision is unsatisfactory. The image of design technology is poor. The department lacks a clear and coherent structure so that teachers do not share their expertise. The subject has low status in the school and the subject development strategies are unsatisfactory. There are pockets of good practice but they do not have sufficient impact on pupils' long-term progress because of the weaknesses in planning, assessment and management previously described.

GEOGRAPHY

- 128 The GCSE results overall in geography have improved significantly since the previous inspection. In 1999, the proportion attaining grades A* to C was below the national average but very much closer than at the time of the last inspection. Boys achieve well. Last year their attainment was in line with national average for boys, and has been consistently high for the past three years. In 1997, it was significantly above the average for boys nationally. Against the national trend, the performance of girls is lower. Their attainment at grades A* to C in 1999 is well below that for girls nationally and has been so over the past three years. The proportion of all pupils gaining a grade A* to G is close to the national average, and is also better for boys than for girls. Very few pupils attained the highest grades in 1999 although the proportion doing so in 1997 was above the national average. Overall, pupils do better in geography than in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- 129 The standards of attainment observed in lessons and in pupils' current work indicate that, in general, towards the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are working close to but just below the national expectation. In some aspects of the work, for example the understanding of environmental issues, attainment is in line with the national expectation. Most pupils know where the places they are studying are located, and how location affects aspects of physical and human geography. For example, in Year 9, in the study of Brazil and the exploitation of its natural vegetation regions, they understand that natural vegetation depends upon climate, soils and altitude. In this work, they also found, by interpreting a range of geographical data, what some of the main natural resources of Brazil are.
- 130 Towards the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are close to the national average. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of terminology, especially that associated with human geography. They can interpret simple census data and match it to different residential areas within a city. They understand why processes in human geography occur, for example, the range of reasons that cause people to migrate from one country to another and the conflicts that may arise as a result. The higher attaining pupils have an understanding of the complexity of some geographical problems and recognise that people will have different viewpoints on environmental issues.
- 131 Despite the significant overall improvements in standards since the last inspection, the development of pupils' independent investigative skills remains relatively weak throughout both key stages. The department has introduced a number of very useful coursework assignments that give higher attaining pupils some scope for individual investigation. However, there is room for increasing this type of work and extending the current model to give pupils a greater range of personal choice in data collection, analysis and presentation of findings. This could involve the use of

fieldwork and information technology, both of which are still underdeveloped skills, although they are statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils still have a better grasp of human than physical geography, and their knowledge of the nature of countries in the more economically developed world is limited.

- 132 The overall quality of teaching is good. In over half the lessons seen it was very good. Most of the teaching is effective and pupils, including those with special educational needs and limited English language skills, learn quickly and make good progress. There are significant strengths in both key stages, although overall, the teaching at Key Stage 4 is stronger than that at Key Stage 3. In those lessons where teaching is most effective, lessons are very well structured and the purpose of lessons is clearly identified to the pupils, sometimes on an overhead projector slide and sometimes on the white board. Work starts promptly and the pace is suitably brisk. Pupils understand what they have to do and work quickly and with concentration on each activity. They are often given clear time guidelines for each activity, and they complete tasks purposefully without wasting time. Most teaching is based on very good subject knowledge, reflected in carefully planned content and purposeful activities. As a result, pupils build on previous learning and develop their understanding of the subject. Demanding questioning by the teacher, either to recap on previous work or to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topic being studied, is usually rigorous. Through such questioning, in a lesson on Brazil, pupils had to think carefully about what they knew of the country's location, climate and relief, and explain in detail the reasons for the different natural vegetation zones. Teachers manage pupils well and have high expectations of their behaviour and commitment to work. Pupils respond well to this and are attentive, enthusiastic and have a very positive attitude to learning. Teachers sometimes use imaginative methods and carefully chosen, stimulating resources to introduce new topics. For example, in a sequence of videotape used in a lesson on flooding in Bangladesh, the language spoken was Bengali, with English sub-titles. Pupils were immediately attentive, highly motivated and they tuned into every word spoken. Everyone, especially those Bengali speakers with limited English, watched the rest of the extract with added interest and enjoyment and improved their understanding of the problems people faced under such circumstances. Teachers make a conscious effort to develop pupils' literacy skills. In lessons, they emphasise the use of appropriate terminology and use a variety of strategies to help pupils to understand and use these words in appropriate geographical contexts. They have developed writing frames to encourage those pupils who lack the confidence or language skill to write independently. This is effective as pupils' work shows a growing competence in writing and an increasing knowledge and understanding of the topics studied.
- 133 Teaching is less effective when the teacher's subject knowledge is not secure. In a Key Stage 3 lesson about processes acting on river meanders the pupils were well managed and motivated by some of the activities. However, because of the limited subject expertise not enough content was covered at sufficient depth. As a result pupils did not cover enough ground and the higher attaining pupils made insufficient progress.
- 134 There is a strong commitment to the achievement of high standards. The management of the department has been very effective in improving the quality of teaching and significantly raising the standards of attainment in public examinations since the previous inspection. Pupils speak highly of the subject and the number choosing to study geography at GCSE level has increased markedly. Instrumental

in this has been the department's work on teaching methods and its emphasis on improving literacy, which has been successful in developing the writing skills of many pupils. Also significant is the extra support given to many pupils after school. However, the following areas of management remain underdeveloped:

- The regular and formal monitoring of teaching and pupils' work to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and equality of entitlement to all aspects of geography for all pupils.
- Compliance with the statutory requirements for fieldwork and the use of information technology in geography at Key Stage 3
- Planning for the development of mapping skills throughout the programmes of study and of numeracy, especially the use of graphs and statistics
- More frequent assessment of pupils' attainment throughout the year, especially at Key Stage 3, so that pupils know how well they are performing.
- Marking supported by regular comments which tell pupils more specifically how to improve their work
- Systematic analysis of all available assessment data and its use to monitor the progress of groups of pupils and individuals so as to identify, account for and rectify significant variations in performance; for example, low attainment of girls.
- The Linking of predicted costings for new and ongoing initiatives more formally to subject development planning, so that necessary funding can be agreed with senior management and finances more efficiently managed.

HISTORY

135 At both key stages, evidence from lesson observations and samples of work shows that overall attainment is below the national average. Recent National Curriculum teacher assessments at Key Stage 3 and GCSE examination results are well below the national average with pupils obtaining lower grades in history than they do in other subjects. In relation to their prior attainment, standards of achievement are generally satisfactory, which supports teacher predictions that the overall level of attainment will improve. A feature of the work in history is the way in which pupils develop their enquiry skills and can seek sources of information which are useful for a particular task. At the end of Key Stage 3 in Year 9 they can use these skills to examine sources of information on the living conditions of working people and on the standard of public health in Britain during the last century. Most pupils are able to give some description of events but only the high attainers can interpret evidence in reaching conclusions. The higher and average attainers produce structured writing combining information from various sources such as a report to the Board of Health on the likely causes of the outbreak of cholera. Pupils with special needs and other with language needs are only able to write short sentences, but show competence in following the course with the support of appropriately designed worksheets and help from learning support assistants. Pupils generally show imagination and creative thinking when giving their own interpretation of history such as eyewitness accounts in Year 7 on a survey of the doomsday system, Year 8 pupils producing a newspaper report on Guy Fawkes' role in the Gunpowder Plot and Year 9 pupils interviewing a child worker in the early factories.

136 At Key Stage 4, skills gained in history at Key Stage 3 are evident in some of the essays written by the higher attainers who are able to present a balanced argument and are clear about bias in sources of evidence. Middle attainers demonstrate good analysis of source materials when writing about the role of women and young people in Nazi Germany, but lack the skills to use evidence effectively to reinforce

their conclusions. Low attainers rely heavily on support from learning support assistants and find difficulty in interpreting key factors from source material such as the Nazi motive for the persecution of the Jews. Little use of numeracy is made in history including statistical information to support comparisons. Use of information technology is in its early stages and pupils' skills are not yet well developed to enhance written and graphical content. Where they have computers at home, a small number of pupils wordprocess their independent coursework on the effect of television presenting their findings with well-balanced arguments.

- 137 Since the last inspection more rigour and coherence have been put into the scheme of work and much more attention paid to the evaluation of historical sources. The development of the literacy strategy has been achieved by the use of writing frames to develop extended writing. It is intended that this will be further enhanced by planned developments in the use of information technology. The department has targetted exam questions and is using the literacy strategy to help pupils to communicate appropriately in examination conditions at Key Stage 4. The use of National Curriculum teacher assessment levels at Key Stage 3 is not yet sufficiently developed to target teaching and pupil performances.
- 138 The quality of teaching is good overall. It is at least satisfactory and most often good at both key stages. Features of good teaching are found in all lessons. In most lessons teachers skilfully question pupils to probe their understanding, which helps them to consolidate and build on their skills. Teachers are knowledgeable and this combined with a range of structured worksheets challenge pupils on how to use historical evidence and present information in a balanced form. Teachers are aware of different abilities and provide different materials for lower attainers and for those with special needs, which results in them making satisfactory progress with the help of support teachers. A bilingual approach is often effective for those pupils requiring English as an additional language as they become more confident in following instructions. When conducting investigations, pupils work well together in groups and lapses in concentration only occur where temporary teachers are covering staff absence. Pupils of all abilities made good progress in Year 8 in identifying relevant information from primary and secondary source material on the good and bad characteristics of Oliver Cromwell as ruler. In Year 9, most pupils successfully completed a survey of why men would want to join up for the First World War - because of the influence of government propaganda. Low attainers or pupils with a low understanding of English do find difficulty in giving written interpretations of sources such as political cartoons because of their literacy level. There is the potential for more able pupils to be extended by expressing opinions using a wider range of media such as graphic illustrations and poetry.
- 139 At Key Stage 4, the teaching places much emphasis on techniques required by pupils for selecting the relevant facts and interpretations of historical sources in preparation for examination. Pupils show competence in recalling and building on previous work. This was seen in Year 11, where pupils of high and average attainment showed good evaluation and observation skills in examining historical photographs and written sources on the Nazi doctrine for the extermination of the Jews. Pupils showed a keen interest in the subject and worked co-operatively in groups. The support teacher targeted a third of the class requiring language reinforcement by providing background information to ensure that they kept up with the pace of the lesson.

- 140 The head of department fosters a good team approach with the two specialist teachers and the learning support assistants. They are pressed for time to plan the curriculum because the head of department holds a part-time appointment and the other specialist teachers have other responsibilities as heads of year. One strength of history is the scheme of work, which is well integrated with the literacy strategy and the documentation is helpful. There are good resources and accommodation for present purposes and they are used effectively to assist learning apart from the under use of computers. Key areas for development remain the use of information technology and the more secure use of data for assessment and curriculum planning. The number opting for history at Key Stage 4 has declined recently and an issue for review is the development of independent project work taking further advantage of the resources at the school as an Arts College. This will raise the profile of history and help to stimulate more interest in local history and community resources.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 141 Standards are well below expectations by the end of both key stages. Despite the frequently good teaching in information technology as a specialist subject and the effective grounding pupils are now beginning to receive in these specialist lessons in Key Stage 3, planning the overall delivery of the curriculum through other subjects is poor. There are no clear mechanisms for co-ordinating the cross-curricular use of information technology. Statutory requirements are not met and there is insufficient use of information technology in subjects of the curriculum. Until very recently, pupils had not received consistent specialist input into developing their skills at Key Stage 3. As a result, pupils make unsatisfactory progress and their achievement is below that expected by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The vast majority of those taking information technology as a subject are starting the course with very little prior learning in the subject.
- 142 At the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999, teachers' assessments show that about a quarter of pupils have reached the expected level or exceeded it. This is very low and shows no significant change from previous years, nor do boys' and girls' results much differ. Much the same is true with 1999 GCSE results where not many more than a third of the candidates gained a grade A* to C. There have been no consistent trends over recent years and no significant differences between the results of girls and boys. However, the school enters only a minority of Year 11 learners for this assessment, about a quarter were entered in 1999.
- 143 The standards of pupils' work seen during the inspection reflect the results of teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 and the GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4. In addition, the majority of pupils at Key Stage 4 who do not opt to study information technology as a GCSE subject have very limited skills and understanding in this area. Only a few become fluent users of word processing by the time they finish at the school. Even fewer gain a clear understanding of the use of computers and modern communications in the wider world, and almost none have a practical knowledge of how to use computers or processors to control systems. The results show that pupils are not only attaining poor standards when compared to national norms, but also that they are underachieving.
- 144 The quality of teaching and learning in the specialist lessons seen, again supported by talking with the learners and studying their work, is generally satisfactory, and at times it is good. In half the Key Stage 3 lessons and nearly all at Key Stage 4,

pupils make at least satisfactory gains in their knowledge and skills with computers. In about half the lessons at Key Stage 4, learning is good and pupils are developing well their basic skills with using computers, and also quickly building up their grasp of the value of such skills in the world of work. They are also enthusiastic about computer use. Similarly, in most Key Stage 3 lessons seen and nearly all at Key Stage 4, teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers know what they are doing and have reasonably good skills with information technology which they use effectively to set appropriate activities for pupils. They begin and end lessons with well-paced whole-class discussions and make good use of the available teaching resources. However, in spite of the progress pupils make in these lessons, their learning is not effectively reinforced and extended as there are insufficient opportunities for applying what they are learning within other subject areas. This is mostly related to many teachers' own lack of confidence and skills in this area.

- 145 Where teaching in the specialist subjects is not as effective, there is insufficient focus in lessons and homework tasks on the needs of individuals or particular groups of pupils. Sometimes, teachers' knowledge of those needs is inadequate because of the widespread lack of quick tests and other kinds of informal assessment. However, learners with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make good progress where specialist support is available, and, even where there is no such support, the teachers often understand their needs and try to focus on them.
- 146 This is the first year for all Key Stage 3 learners to be provided with a regular weekly session in information technology and this signals an important advance. In previous years, pupils have been allocated information technology lessons on a rotational basis through the year, so that their experience has been for a limited period of time during the year rather than throughout the year. However, the school has yet to ensure that in these lessons each individual has a properly working computer; that each individual's work is accurately assessed; that all four aspects of the National Curriculum receive full attention; and that there is plenty of opportunity for all learners to develop their skills and understanding outside of these formal lessons.
- 147 Some of the points mentioned above also apply to the school's provision at Key Stage 4. While a small number of learners each year do meet the National Curriculum requirements satisfactorily, most do not, and again none has much opportunity to develop skills and understanding in or out of lesson time.
- 148 Whilst the computer provision is very good, the deployment and use of computers is underdeveloped and access to the computer rooms for whole class teaching by subject teachers is not always easy. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to make use of the school's computer resources in out of school hours. The school does not have an effective strategy to provide staff with long-term, short-term or day-to-day guidance and help in order to develop their skills and confidence.
- 149 The previous inspection, at the end of 1995, highlighted many such concerns and issues. The school's main areas of improvement have involved providing enough hardware and software and specific lessons for all learners at Key Stage 3, and in making sure all the teachers have a basic knowledge of how to use these tools for teaching and learning in their work. In other respects, little progress has been made and overall, the school has not sufficiently improved this area of its work.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Bengali

- 150 High attainment in Bengali continues to be a strength of the school. Standards in GCSE are consistently above the national average for all schools and in 1999 were well above, with almost 90 per cent of candidates at grades A* to C. This result is similar to that for 1995, but is an improvement of nearly 20 per cent over 1998. In addition, many pupils have taken the examination successfully in Years 9. Most pupils of Bengali enter the school with either Bengali or the dialect form as a mother tongue. They build on this prior experience successfully. In class, standards in all four skills are high, and strongest in speaking and listening. Pupils initially knowing only the dialect form achieve well, and the highest attainers become fluent readers and writers of the language by the end of Key Stage 4.
- 151 Pupils learn well in both key stages because the language is important to them and their attitudes are positive. The learning environment is usually appropriate for language study, although sometimes there is a lack of self-discipline when pupils engage in conversation which distracts their attention away from their work. Progress is better in speaking and listening, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Pupils reinforce their skills effectively with regular practice. Progress is now better in writing because pupils in all years have regular access to computers on which they develop their word-processing skills using the Bengali script. The quality of learning has improved overall. Schemes of work are now based securely on National Curriculum requirements, and very good monitoring sheets help pupils know how well they are progressing through the Key Stage 3 levels of attainment.
- 152 Teaching is at least satisfactory and half of it is good. At its best, objectives are clear, expectations are high, question and answer practice is challenging, and cultural references are particularly motivating. Teachers know their pupils well and share assessment information with them helpfully. They use their linguistic competence effectively to ensure good continuity and consolidation of learning through consistent use of the spoken language. In some lessons, the management of behaviour is too lax, allowing some pupils to lose concentration and work less productively. On these occasions, too, there is insufficient planning and provision for individual pupils' needs.
- 153 Although standards are high, they could be higher, and progress better, especially at Key Stage 3. Curriculum arrangements for Bengali, as for all modern languages, are unsatisfactory. Arrangements do not ensure equal opportunities in each language and do not enable each pupil to reach their full potential. Firstly, they do not provide equally for five years' uninterrupted study. Currently, attainment in Bengali in Key Stage 3 is limited because it is not introduced until Year 8. Secondly, in deciding which language is most appropriate for each pupil, the school does not make adequate use of available information on pupils' aptitudes and needs. For example, some pupils whose greatest need is reinforcement of basic skills in Bengali are allowed to take French or Spanish. In addition, too many pupils are allowed to change languages during the course. Since pupils are not placed in sets according to prior attainment, classes often contain an unrealistically broad range of attainment and aptitude. It is in these classes especially where the lack of planning for individual pupils' needs is most serious.

French and Spanish

- 154 Standards at Key Stage 3 in 1999 were assessed to be around National Curriculum Level 3, one level below that expected nationally. This assessment represents standards of attainment more accurately than the more optimistic and misleading assessments of previous years. At Key Stage 4, with 39 per cent of candidates at grades A*-C, GCSE standards in French in 1999 were below the average for all maintained schools, but close to the average for comprehensive schools. Although standards in French have fallen slightly since 1995, in contrast to the national improvement, they have improved significantly since 1998. Boys generally do as well as girls. In comparison with national and local figures, girls do not achieve well enough. Spanish results for 1999 show a very low A*-C success rate of 13 per cent, and very few pupils were entered. Numbers so far entered for Spanish are too small for valid judgements on the relative performance of boys and girls.
- 155 Standards in class and in the work seen at Key Stage 3 are similarly below average and overall pupils are underachieving. Pupils progress well in listening comprehension but other skills are relatively undeveloped. The most talented underachieve because they progress too slowly through National Curriculum levels. Their understanding of detail and broader meaning in both speech and text is above average, but they do not learn to use sufficient tenses and other structures in their written paragraphs. Typically, average-attaining pupils, with English as an additional language, achieve well in performing brief, prepared role-play situations with a partner, and saying set phrases with the support of text. They do not, however, memorise what they learn to say, or learn to extend short phrases into sentences. In their writing they do not link sentences into short paragraphs. Progress in general, and especially for pupils with special educational needs, is unsatisfactory principally because aspects of provision are unsuitable. Classes contain the full range of prior attainment. Planning for the individual needs of both higher and lower attainers is inadequate, and pupils with special needs receive insufficient additional support. The French textbook is unsuitable for all but the most gifted. Density of text is a barrier particularly to pupils with basic literacy needs.
- 156 Standards at Key Stage 4 remain below average, matching those of recent GCSE results. A few higher attainers are above average. They can use past and future tenses and, although their speaking and writing lack adventure, they are confident in Higher Level GCSE exercises. Other higher attainers are at the C/D borderline, not yet secure in the past tenses and using only a limited range of structure in speaking and writing. These pupils do not achieve as well as they should because the pace of learning does not challenge them enough and they receive insufficient opportunities for extension activities. Overall, however, progress improves during the key stage. The literacy skills of pupils with English as an additional language improve. The use of writing frames and redrafting helps their spelling and presentation and they are better equipped to revise from their previous learning. Listening remains the strongest skill and is average overall. Most pupils learn and recognise basic vocabulary and phrases, can extract detail and make reasoned deductions from extended recording, often at a natural pace. Boys and girls reach similar standards overall, but boys are better at speaking. Many girls remain inhibited, preferring to say only what they have written down or is in the text. Boys, on the other hand, communicate more willingly, if usually only in single words or phrases. Pupils in general do not memorise and reproduce extended language often enough. Where they are making progress, although still not secure in making the correct forms, they are becoming more independent in their use of the language. As in Key Stage 3, the lowest attainers and pupils with special

educational needs do not progress well, because they are not supported well enough.

- 157 Teaching is satisfactory, with strengths and weaknesses. It is sound or better in over eight out of ten lessons, good in nearly a third, and slightly more effective in Key Stage 4. Teachers' main strength is their command of the spoken language and their use of it to set high expectations and develop listening skills effectively. They use a variety of methods and use time successfully, and often imaginatively, stressing the need for urgency with timed tasks, and providing many opportunities for pupils to use the language actively. In many French lessons, for instance, pairs of pupils in turn perform their own interpretation of a given role-play situation while the rest of the class, as a listening exercise, note the details of what they say. As a result of motivating tasks and lively presentation, pupils are interested and concentrate. Some disaffection with French in Years 9 and 10, and with Spanish in Year 11, stems more from frequent changes of teacher over the past year than from present teaching, although in these classes strategies for managing misbehaviour are weak. The poor attitudes and behaviour in these classes are not typical. Most pupils listen and behave well because teachers establish and maintain the right conditions for learning. Relationships are good and pupils collaborate well in paired and group tasks. They respond most sensibly to opportunities to work independently, recording or using computers unsupervised in adjacent rooms. In these respects teaching is starting to address past weaknesses. For example, pupils in Key Stage 4 have previously not learnt sufficiently through memorising what they hear and learn to say. As a result, many have become too reliant on dictionaries and misuse them. There is now much more emphasis on structured speaking practice. In Spanish, learning is improving because of higher expectations, firmer discipline and suitably structured tasks. Where teaching is sometimes unsatisfactory and not as effective as it should be, planning is too superficial and too general. Teachers do not use routine assessment well enough to inform either their own planning for individual pupil need or the pupils themselves. Key Stage 3 pupils have insufficient knowledge of their learning. Marking is frequent but the grades used are not linked early enough to National Curriculum criteria in Key Stage 3 or frequently enough to GCSE grades in Key Stage 4.
- 158 There are other reasons for slow progress. Firstly, subject leadership has been unsatisfactory since the last inspection, failing to deal adequately with issues raised then. The curriculum is now planned adequately to match statutory requirements, but there has been little progress in correcting underachievement in Key Stage 3 or in planning for the needs of individual pupils. Departmental development planning is minimal. Secondly, the motivation and continuity of learning of many pupils in both key stages have been affected by many staff changes over the past two terms. Thirdly, and importantly, curriculum provision for all languages is unsatisfactory. In allocating pupils to a modern language the school does not make adequate use of available information on their aptitudes and needs. In addition, too many pupils are allowed to change languages during the course. Since pupils are not setted according to prior attainment, classes often contain an unrealistically broad range of need. Here the lack of planning for individual pupils most seriously affects their opportunities for achieving their full potential. The acting subject leader has worked hard and successfully to bring some stability to the department, and has written a useful handbook and improved some schemes of work.
- 159 Under new leadership, and with more flexible staffing, the department has the capacity to meet its important agenda for improvement. In order to raise standards

further, the following actions are needed: improve curriculum provision to enable all pupils to achieve appropriately; improve schemes of work to ensure faster progress, better planning for different needs, and clearly identified assessment and information technology opportunities; use assessment data more effectively to check the progress of pupils and help them improve further and improve the monitoring of teaching through the sharing of best practice.

MUSIC

- 160 At Key Stage 4, pupils follow GCSE courses in expressive arts and in music although not all pupils enter both examinations. Standards overall are higher than those of similar schools but are below national average standards. Despite this, pupils' achievement is good when prior attainment is taken into account. In expressive arts, standards have been maintained since the last inspection and in music they have improved. In music, solo and ensemble performing skills for some are in line with national standards and satisfactory keyboard, solo vocal and drumming performances were heard during the inspection. In composing, most pupils are able to work with melody, harmony and rhythm in line with national standards but there are weaknesses in their control of structure and many compositions are overly repetitive and below the standard. Less able pupils also lack control of harmony. Most compositions are realised through music technology and some pupils demonstrate good skill and understanding of this. There were few opportunities to assess listening and appraising skills during the inspection but the head of department identifies this as a weaker area for most and, certainly, pupils had difficulty in identifying key changes in a group performance/composition task based on the music of Bach. In expressive arts, approximately half the cohort demonstrates satisfactory understanding of the planning processes involved, and pupils' work is effectively supported with music, dance, art and creative writing skills. Some of the work in these media is imaginative. Higher standards are achieved in the practical work than in the written appraisal of the tasks and pupils also score more highly in group tasks than in individual work.
- 161 Standards at Key Stage 3 are just below national expectations but, again, are above those in similar schools. Overall, girls achieve better results than boys in line with national trends. In performing, some pupils in Year 9 achieve the national expectation in solo work and in rock band and steel band performances, and they perform regularly in school concerts and local festivals. Others do not always maintain a steady pulse in their ensemble performances and ensemble singing is a weakness. Pupils in Year 7 sing rhythmically and enthusiastically but pitching is weak. The department has identified this as an area for development. Composing skills are just below the standard for most. Pupils demonstrate some understanding of timbre, texture and structure and they construct melodies and work with chords. Compositions are usually short and development of ideas is a weakness. Pupils can appraise peer compositions and explain the processes involved. Across the key stage, they recognise features of different styles of music and some are able to use musical terminology correctly in their appraisals. Skills in music technology are developing but are limited by lack of resources.
- 162 Most teaching is at least satisfactory, and some good and very good teaching was seen which is contributing to the improving standards. The overall quality is good. In good lessons, teachers use questions well to probe and extend knowledge which allows pupils of all abilities to develop their understanding. Particularly effective use

was seen in a Year 8 lesson, where pupils could identify variations, simple and complex melodies and changes in sound by the end of the lesson. Pupils' responses are valued and teachers establish good relationships. As a result, pupils develop confidence in their performing and composing skills. Teachers have good subject skills, their explanations are clear and peripatetic support staff are deployed appropriately to enable both gifted pupils and those with special educational needs to make progress. Small groups often receive extra support at both key stages. Well-planned lessons with subject material relevant to the curriculum and with good integration of attainment targets enhance pupils' overall musical understanding. In lessons on Indonesian music and variation form, performing, composing and appraisal tasks are often well linked. Very good teaching with a lively pace and high expectations in a lesson on Indian music enabled pupils to develop performing and understanding skills through work on cross rhythms and also to explore the relationship between western European and Indian rhythmic patterns. Pupils usually enjoy the lessons, levels of concentration are often good and pupils co-operate well with each other in paired work, when they often have to share keyboards, and in larger ensemble work. It is noticeable, however that the younger pupils take more time to settle to the practical tasks. Where there are weaknesses, it is when pupils are not always given opportunities to be involved in appraisal of their own work or time is limited to check pupil understanding. In one lesson, where accommodation was unsuitable for the tasks and pupil behaviour was very challenging, more strategies were needed to control the behaviour and the learning gains of the lesson were unsatisfactory.

- 163 The head of department has a clear sense of direction for the department. Standards at both key stages have improved since the previous inspection and criticisms of the Key Stage 3 curriculum in the previous report have been addressed. A wide variety of historical and world styles is now studied through well-linked attainment targets. There is a system of monitoring and evaluation newly in place. Attainment targets for each module of work are assessed and assessments are linked to National Curriculum descriptors. The head of department is aware that more work is needed on tracking and comparing pupil progress. Two further issues must be addressed if the department is to move forward. One of the rooms used for music teaching is not suitable for group work in performing and composing as pupils cannot hear their own work, and this adversely affects the progress in the subject for those pupils who use this room. Secondly, the resources for music technology need to be increased as the development of these skills at both key stages is limited by lack of equipment. The existing keyboards also need updating. The music department makes a positive contribution to school life and to the wider community. Performances are celebrated in lessons, at assemblies, in concerts, in primary schools and local festivals and the department is committed to the arts college ethos.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 164 In July 1999, the school entered 34 pupils for the GCSE in physical education and 100 per cent gained A* to G grades and 54 per cent gained A* to C grades. This is a better pass rate than the average for a similar school and a significant improvement on the 25 per cent A* to C grades at the time of the last inspection. The pupils currently involved in the course are making satisfactory progress, and are producing course work folders that are generally well presented and detailed. In spite of the efforts of the department's staff, the number of girls taking the course is

still small.

- 165 Although the department has had to contend with major accommodation and staffing problems during the last two years, the overall level of attainment has improved with most pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 now in line with national expectations, although there are some girls in Year 7 who are not reaching this level. The standard of swimming is at least satisfactory with only a few pupils unable to swim at least 25 metres by the end of the key stage, and with many pupils able to demonstrate good levels of competency in a variety of strokes. In games activities pupils are generally confident performers and as pupils progress through Years 7 to 9 they are developing greater proficiency, fluency and confidence.
- 166 The levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are also in line with national expectations, with some pupils, particularly those in the examinations groups, doing even better. Good levels of skill development are clearly evident in a range of activities, with some very good performances in gymnastics and cricket. The standard of swimming is good, with pupils becoming proficient in personal survival and life saving techniques.
- 167 Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are well integrated, are given much support by both teaching staff and fellow pupils, and reach a very satisfactory level of attainment. There is no evidence of pupils with special educational needs being disadvantaged by the curriculum that is on offer. Many school teams take part in inter-school matches and competitions and gain much success. The current Year 11 cricket team is the current runner up in an all London cricket competition. Many pupils have represented Tower Hamlets in a variety of sports and some have gone on to represent Middlesex. A few pupils have gained international honours.
- 168 The overall quality of teaching has continued to be at least satisfactory with the majority of lessons observed being good or very good. All lessons begin in an orderly manner and objectives are clearly stated and understood by the pupils. Teachers are enthusiastic and energetic and pupils react to this in a most positive and productive manner. The good choice of content ensures that pupils generally sustain interest and involvement for the whole lesson. Lessons are conducted at a brisk, demanding pace with high, but realistic, expectations. Teachers place much emphasis on the safety aspects of the activities with a result that pupils show a care and concern for their own safety, and the safety of others. Teachers are encouraging their pupils to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their work, and where this is happening it is having a positive effect on pupils' attainment. In order to meet National Curriculum requirements, this is an aspect that needs to be developed. Following comments in the last inspection report, teachers are now placing more emphasis on health and fitness issues, and pupils are attaining a more comprehensive understanding of this aspect of the subject. Pupils understand the need for warming up effectively and are putting this knowledge into practice at the beginning of each lesson.
- 169 In all aspects of their work pupils are highly motivated and have a positive attitude to the subject both in their lessons, and in the extra-curricular activities. The behaviour is of a good standard. The enjoyment of the activities of the subject is clearly evident.
- 170 Since the last inspection there has been a complete review of the curriculum. The

length of units of work has been extended and pupils have been grouped into ability sets, which has resulted in the overall level of the pupils attainment being improved. The procedures for assessing, recording, and monitoring the pupils' work has been reviewed, and is now meeting statutory requirements. The department is building up a comprehensive set of records of their pupils' achievements, but there is a need for this wealth of information to be used to influence the planning of the curriculum.

- 171 Staff give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Whilst attendance at the clubs held after school is limited, those held before school and at lunch time are well supported by large and enthusiastic groups of pupils. Pupils in Year 8 have the opportunity to take part in a variety of outdoor pursuits at a residential centre in Wales.
- 172 The accommodation for the subject, which is shared by members of the community, is of a good quality and has a positive effect on the attainment of the pupils. The capitation allowance for the subject is good, with the money being wisely spent, and there is no shortage of text books or equipment.
- 173 This is a well led, cohesive department with a very positive ethos. The high quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work and helps the delivery of the subject. The staff who teach physical education work well together, share good practice, support each other, and show a very strong commitment to the pupils.
- 174 Since the last inspection the overall standard of performance has improved, with a significant improvement in the A* to C grades in the GCSE examination. The review of the curriculum has meant that there is now a better balance in its content and it is meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The floor of one gymnasium has been replaced and the outdoor playing areas have much improved.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 175 In 1999, the first whole year group was entered for a short course GCSE and although results were below the national average for A* to C grades, they were much closer in relation to overall A* to G grades. Girls achieved at a higher level than most of the boys. In 1996 and 1997, the last years when pupils were entered for the full GCSE examination, overall A* to G grades were above the national average, although the percentage of higher grades was low compared with all pupils nationally.
- 176 By the end of Key Stage 3, overall attainment is below the level of expectation of the Agreed Syllabus. Higher attaining pupils display satisfactory and sometimes good knowledge of basic worship practices in both Islam and Christianity. Knowledge and understanding of the significance of symbolism in religion and the basic beliefs and practices of the major world faiths is generally satisfactory in the case of higher attaining pupils. Pupils are aware of the relevance of religion to modern day life in a multi faith society. This was observed in a Year 8 lesson on the varied uses of places of worship, in this particular case a mosque, for important activities, other than worship. The attainment of most pupils is adversely influenced by a combination of language, literacy and recall of information difficulties. Some passivity by a minority of pupils also influences attainment.
- 177 By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is below the national average for all

maintained schools, in relation to the higher grades at GCSE, but most pupils are attaining at a level above Grade G at GCSE. As in Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils have good knowledge and understanding of Muslim practices and beliefs, for example the significance of the Five Pillars. They also show understanding of issues relating to morality and current issues in modern day society, such as the sanctity of life and religious attitudes towards marriage and divorce. As in the previous key stage, pupils' level of attainment is affected by language difficulties and in a small number of cases by poor attitudes to learning.

- 178 Learning overall in lessons and over time is good in both key stages. This is often the result of careful and skilful teaching which engages pupils' interest and provides a range of tasks to enable them to understand and extend their thinking. Teaching is almost wholly satisfactory, with a significant proportion of good practice. Lessons are well planned and pupils are made aware of what is required. Attention is given to the development of basic literacy skills and teachers are aware of the individual needs of pupils and meet them with well thought out tasks and materials. Further attention needs to be given to the provision of particular work for the highest attainers. This is being planned under the 'Excellence in Cities' programme. Opportunities for pupils to use and develop information technology skills are far too limited. Pupils are given opportunities to write in a range of styles and to carry out some independent learning tasks. The use of group work helps develop information gathering, analytical and speaking skills. A good example was observed in Year 7, where pupils had researched practices, beliefs and symbolism in major world faiths. This information was then discussed in groups before being presented to the class most competently. Teachers use religious artefacts skilfully to enable pupils to understand aspects of worship. Learning is helped by the use of homework, which integrates with classwork and assists pupils to develop writing skills. Lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace and are interesting in content. In most lessons, good classroom management enables all pupils to learn. Learning is also enhanced by careful marking, appropriate expectations and by the setting of an effective range of learning objectives.
- 179 Most pupils are positive towards the subject and this also influences the quality of learning and the progress made. There are however a significant minority of pupils, in all years, who lack attention and concentration skills and some behave in a poor manner. Some attention needs to be given to ensuring that all pupils are involved in lessons as some pupils are quite happy to sit quietly in lessons without contributing by answering questions or joining in discussion. Pupils on the special education needs register make satisfactory progress with the support of class teachers. Most pupils with English as an additional language make good progress when supported. English language support is effective and the support assistant plays a significant part in ensuring that progress is made by pupils learning English as an additional language. The very small percentage of less than satisfactory teaching was the result of some appalling behaviour by a group, mainly but not exclusively, boys, who set out to obstruct teaching, and whose behaviour was not effectively managed.
- 180 The department is enthusiastically led and managed. The scheme of work is full and meets the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. It is currently being reviewed and the fuller development of learning objectives would improve its effectiveness. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Resources are well used to interest pupils and raise attainment. Monitoring of teaching and sharing good practice are underdeveloped. The use of assessment data to assist teachers in judging progress and in identifying

under achievement needs to be developed. The use of computers in pupils' learning is also in need of attention as too little is currently done.