

INSPECTION REPORT

CATFORD GIRLS' SCHOOL

Catford

LEA area: L B Lewisham

Unique reference number: 100742

Headteacher: Ms Susan E O'Neill

Reporting inspector: Michael Buckley
30517

Dates of inspection: 14 – 17 February 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Girls
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A A Hawkins
Date of previous inspection:	20 November 1995

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			The school's results and pupils' achievements.
			How well is the school led and managed?
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			Welfare, support and guidance.
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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		Personal, social and health education	
		Equality of opportunity	
Peter Gossage	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	
Peter Harle	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
Mary Henderson	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
		Careers education and guidance	
Derek Hewett	Team inspector	Modern languages	Assessment.
Michael Holohan	Team inspector	History	How well are pupils taught?
Graham Jackson	Team inspector	Geography	
Gillian Keevill	Team inspector	Physical education	
John Manning	Team inspector	English and drama	

Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
		English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Catford is a comprehensive school for girls aged from eleven to eighteen, situated in Lewisham, south London. It is in the Downham and Bellingham Education Action Zone and is part of the local 'Excellence in Cities' initiative. There are 912 pupils in all, including a sixth form of 39 students, only six of whom are in Year 13. Five students in Year 12 are boys from neighbouring schools. The school is about the average size for schools of its kind and the number on roll has been rising steadily over the past few years. Almost half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average, and nearly half come from single-parent families. The population of the school is very mixed racially. Under forty per cent are white British, most of the other pupils are from Black Caribbean or Black African heritage and fifty are refugees, mainly from Somalia. Just over a quarter are from families where English is not the first language, which is very high nationally, and almost forty languages are spoken overall. The school has a very high and rising rate of casual admissions. The average attainment of pupils who enter the school in Year 7 has begun to rise slightly in the last two years but it is still below the national and the local averages. There are 248 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, including eight in the sixth form, and this is above the national average. Twenty-two of these have statements - about the average for a school of this size. The most common needs concern behavioural difficulties or moderate learning difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective overall. Compared with national averages, standards are low at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and very low in the sixth form. However, when compared with schools with a similar percentage of free school meals, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average and the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C is in line with the average. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and often show real enthusiasm, responding well to their teachers. Relationships are good and girls of all ages show respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. There is an almost complete absence of oppressive behaviour of any kind. However, attendance is unsatisfactory. The majority of the teaching seen was good or better and, in eighteen per cent of lessons, teaching was very good or excellent. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced but the programme of study for information and communications technology is not fully implemented in Key Stage 4. Provision for careers education is good, as is the range of extra-curricular activities. Music and art are real strengths of the school and the provision for the moral development of the pupils is very good. There are very good arrangements for the support and guidance of pupils. The school provides good information to parents although few choose to become involved. The leadership and management of the school are good. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and it provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Very high standards in music.
- Good attitudes and relationships at all levels in the school's community.
- There is an absence of oppressive behaviour.
- Good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; personal development; personal, social and health education; careers education and extra-curricular activities.
- Good arrangements for the educational and personal support of pupils.
- Good arrangements for monitoring pupils' development and progress.
- Good management and financial planning.
- The governors play a strong part in managing and supporting the school.

What could be improved

- Standards of achievement in the core subjects.
- Attendance and punctuality.
- Provision for information and communications technology at Key Stage 4.
- Provision for students post sixteen.
- Parents' involvement with the life of the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has energetically addressed all the key issues identified by the last inspection in November 1995. It has raised expectations of attainment, established better assessment and targeting arrangements, holiday revision and literacy schools, homework clubs, support for numeracy and literacy, setting and 'fast track' groups. The taught week has been increased to make better allowance for art, information and communications technology and music at Key Stage 3 and science at Key Stage 4. Posts have been created for learning mentors and behaviour support staff. Considerable time and resources have been directed towards improving attendance and a special appointment has been made to support these efforts. However, despite all these initiatives, standards of achievement and attendance have remained low. The staffing structure has been reviewed and staff development is carefully directed towards priority areas. The senior management team and middle managers are closely involved with monitoring teaching and the curriculum. Legal requirements have been met for religious education in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form but the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship. There have been significant improvements in resources for technology and in the school's specialist accommodation. There have been good improvements in many subjects and aspects of the school's work.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year-olds, based on average point scores in the National Curriculum tests and the GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
End of Key Stage 3 tests (average points)	E	E	E	B	well above average A above average B average C
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	D	below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	E*	E*	n/a	n/a	

At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in English and science was well above the average for similar schools but below the national average. Standards in mathematics have been rising slightly but they are still well below national averages and below the average for similar schools. There have been marked improvements over the past three years in information and communications technology, history and geography. The average GCSE points scores are well below national averages overall and below those for similar schools. However, the proportions of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C and A* to G grades are in line with those for similar schools. The most successful subjects in 1999 were art, design technology, music and geography and the least successful were mathematics, single science, French and business studies. Careful target-setting is beginning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils and appropriate action is being taken. Results in A-level examinations are in the lowest five per cent nationally. To some extent, this reflects the very low numbers entered and the intake. The results for intermediate-level GNVQ courses are more encouraging. Inspection evidence generally reflects similar patterns across the school but pupils often do better in lessons where they are well supported than they do working by themselves or in test or examination situations. Pupils' attainment should be seen in the context of their often very low standards on entry to the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Generally good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Often good but there is off-task behaviour in some classes.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Pupils respond well to opportunities for taking responsibility and their personal development is satisfactory.
Attendance	Poor.

The absence of oppressive behaviour of any kind and the quality of relationships in such a culturally mixed community are real strengths of the school. Pupils generally have positive attitudes to their lessons and to the school and behaviour is often good. However, attendance is well below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
181 lessons seen - satisfactory overall	Satisfactory	Good	Good

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

Overall, teaching was satisfactory or better in 92 per cent of the lessons seen. It was good or better in 57 per cent and very good or excellent in 19 per cent. In Key Stage 3, teaching was very good in music, good in history, religious education and personal and social education. It was satisfactory in all the other subjects except for science, art, modern foreign languages and mathematics, where it was unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching was excellent in music, very good in English, mathematics and art and generally good in science. Overall, almost two thirds of the unsatisfactory lessons were taught by supply teachers or students. Pupils with special educational needs receive good help from support assistants but the support they receive from subject teachers varies from very good to, occasionally, unsatisfactory. Pupils learning English as an additional language receive satisfactory support. Literacy is generally well taught across the school. Skills in numeracy are emphasised in mathematics in Key Stage 3 but less well supported in other subjects or in Key Stage 4. Strengths in pupils' learning include the development of independent learning in music and of research and field-work skills in the humanities. Pupils are well aware of the progress they are making. The principal weakness is that ineffective behaviour management in a few lessons leads to a lack of productivity.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils in most respects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Curricular provision is good. Teachers are aware of individual education plans and generally adapt their lessons accordingly.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory provision is made for those pupils who are supported under the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Project.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL continued

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is good provision overall. The programme of personal, social and health education is good and generally well taught and provision for moral development is very good. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Arrangements are satisfactory with some significant strengths.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements in all respects except for information and communications technology in Key Stage 4. There is a very limited curriculum in the sixth form. The school provides very good support and guidance to pupils and it has very good procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour. There is good information provided to parents through regular newsletters and through the contact books which go home daily. However, the level of parental involvement is unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Overall, leadership and management are good. The head teacher has a very clear view of how the school should develop and she is well supported by the senior management team and by the school's middle management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very well informed and rigorous in their work, providing good support and guidance to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. A very good battery of measures to assess performance but action to follow up this information is not fully implemented.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall. Resources are appropriately allocated. Learning support staff are generally effective but their deployment is not strategically managed.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory and there have been some recent significant improvements. Strengths of management include the leadership of the head teacher, the quality of guidance and support provided by the governors and the effectiveness of financial planning. Weaknesses are in the overall use of new technology and in the management of the support for pupils with special educational needs and for those learning English as an additional language. The school is rigorous in applying the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • They make good progress. • The school has high expectations. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • A good level of support and guidance is provided. • The home contact book works well. • Strong emphasis on behaviour and attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are not well enough informed about the progress made by their children. • There is not enough homework. • The school does not work closely enough with parents. • Not enough extra-curricular activities. • The quality of supply teaching and fewer supply teachers.

Inspectors agree with many of the parents' views. Pupils are happy at the school and have positive attitudes towards it and they make at least satisfactory progress. There is very good provision for support and guidance

and good arrangements for assessing pupils' progress. Overall, the school has good policies for behaviour and attendance, there are good home-school agreements and the home contact books work well. However, inspectors also judged that homework is generally well used, the quality of information provided to parents is good and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities for a school of this type. The level of parental involvement is unsatisfactory, largely because most parents are unresponsive to the efforts made by the school. This is illustrated by the poor response to the parents' questionnaire before the inspection and the poor attendances at parents' meetings. There is a high proportion of supply teachers and most of the unsatisfactory teaching seen was in their lessons but the school is making strenuous efforts to remedy the situation.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In the 1999 standard tests and assessments for fourteen year-olds, the proportions of pupils who reached the levels expected for their age were below the national average in English and well below the national averages in science and mathematics. The proportions obtaining higher levels were well below the national averages in English and mathematics but almost in line with the average in science. Teachers' assessments tended to be lower than the test results, except in science. The average points scores indicate that pupils were nearly two terms behind the nationally expected levels in English and science and five terms behind in mathematics. Overall, pupils entered Year 10 in September 1999 almost a year behind the nationally expected level. Over the last four years, the trends have been erratic with some falling off in English and science but results in mathematics slowly improving from a very low base. Results in English showed some improvement in 1999 against a slight drop in the national figures. However, when compared with the results of schools with similar percentages of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, Catford's results in 1999 were well above the averages in English and science but just below the average in mathematics.
2. The school's official returns show that, in 1999, teachers' assessments of standards in the foundation subjects were low. The highest percentages of grades at the nationally expected levels were in art, geography and history. The least successful subjects were information and communications technology, design technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. These figures put the school above the national average for girls in art and well above the national average for boys and girls together, and just below the national average for girls in geography and history and in line overall with the results for boys and girls together. The pattern over the last three years shows significant improvements in information and communications technology, history and geography. There is no real trend in the other subjects but results are mostly well below the national averages.
3. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils who gained five or more passes at grades A* to C was well below the national average and the percentage gaining five or more passes at grades A* to G was below the national average. However, when compared with the results of schools with similar intakes of pupils, the results were in line with the average and above the average, respectively. The consolidated results for the past three years show that the percentages of pupils obtaining A* to C and A* to G grades and the average points scores have all been well below the national averages. The trend over the last six years shows a slight decline in standards against the national picture. The average points score is below the average for similar schools, indicating that comparatively fewer pupils at Catford gained higher grades.
4. In 1999, English literature was the only subject where the school's percentages of A* to C and A* to G grades and the average points score were significantly above the national figures for girls. Even so, the points per pupil were still below the national figure and the number of pupils concerned was very small. In all other subjects, except geography and food technology, the percentage of A* to C grades was below the national figures by a significant margin. Mathematics was the only other subject where the school's percentage of A* to G grades was higher than the national figure. This is extraordinary,

considering the poor results in mathematics at Key Stage 3, but there were very few higher grades in this subject or in single science, French or business studies. Overall, the most successful GCSE subjects in the school were art, design technology in textiles, English literature, geography, music and food technology. Over the past three years, the school's results in art, geography and English literature have tended to be better than in the other subjects and results in modern foreign languages and business studies have tended to be worse.

5. In two of the last three years, about three-quarters of fifteen year-olds went on to further education and almost none took up training or employment. The numbers in the school's Year 12 are low and, although just over half of sixteen year-olds go on to further education, very few stay on for Year 13 in the sixth form. In 1999, there were five students in Year 13 and, in the current year, there are six. The school is able to offer only a very limited range of options to students of sixteen or older and very few enter for A or AS-level examinations or for the advanced GNVQ. Results in these examinations are generally poor and, in 1999, they were in the bottom five per cent nationally. However, nine out of the eleven candidates entered for intermediate-level GNVQ courses gained qualifications in health and social care, leisure and tourism or business studies.
6. The school's results at the end of both key stages and post-sixteen need to be put in context. Firstly, the school's own records and the statistics provided by the local education authority show that the ability of pupils who enter the school in Year 7 is significantly lower than the national average and also lower than local averages. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils entering Catford Girls' School who were placed in the highest band following testing in Year 6 at their primary schools has been consistently lower than in the other local girls' schools. There is evidence to show that this proportion fell from 1995 to 1998, helping to explain why results have not improved during this period. The results of cognitive ability tests show that only one in three of the current Year 8 and fewer than one in five of the current Year 11 scored the expected number of points. An analysis of pupils' reading ages shows that fewer than one pupil in three in Key Stage 3 had a reading age on entry to the school which was equivalent to or higher than her chronological age and the results for Key Stage 4 were well below national averages and, in the case of this year's Year 11, below the local average for mixed schools. The standards of attainment in the top sets are just in line with national expectations.
7. The degree of mobility among the pupils also affects the school's results. The rate of casual admissions at all ages is very high and rising. These include pupils who have been excluded by other schools, as well as girls who are new to Britain, many of whom are having to deal with radical emotional and cultural adjustments. Records are not always available for these pupils and their abilities and achievements are not clear. The school is beginning to compile records showing that pupils who enter the school at the end of Key Stages 3 or 4 generally obtain low grades in the tests or examinations at the end of the year. Finally, erratic attendance and frequent absence also lower standards across the school. The school's senior management is very aware of these factors and has established detailed systems of assessment which are beginning to help teachers to set targets for individuals and for year groups. These are set in most subjects and are based on the pupils' scores through qualitative analysis and cognitive ability tests. The school's targets for each year group are set at higher levels each year, where this is realistic, although they are still below the national averages. Targets are now being met. Learning mentors and support staff have been appointed to help pupils reach the targets set. Work has been done to raise teaching standards and, in those departments which have been the main focus of this initiative, standards of pupils' attainment have risen.
8. In English, the standards of work observed in Key Stage 3 were close to the levels expected nationally. Many pupils enter the school with very low reading levels but the school is successfully raising standards and, although the quality of writing varies, the accelerated group in Year 9 is consistently producing work of reasonable quality. Speaking skills are often good and pupils communicate clearly although not always in Standard English. The biggest impediment to their learning is the inability of many to listen carefully or to concentrate for reasonable periods of time. In Key Stage 4, pupils listen more carefully. Standards in English are lower than expected nationally but most pupils make good progress and drama is having a very positive effect on speaking for those pupils who study it for GCSE. Reading continues to improve and, although writing is sometimes stilted, a small number of

pupils have made very good progress. The structured teaching in Key Stage 4 has helped pupils to gain confidence in their creative writing which is better than reported in the last inspection.

9. Standards are low in mathematics in both key stages. Pupils in the fast track groups are on line to achieve the levels expected nationally but, in all other classes, they are performing at levels which are below or well below national expectations. In science, pupils in Key Stage 3 attain standards in lessons that are in line with national expectations. In most classes, pupils achieve at levels appropriate for their prior attainment. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 have a good understanding of parallel circuits while middle and lower-attaining pupils can draw appropriate symbols to illustrate electrical circuits. Pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactory added value from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 4, there are fewer pupils who undertake higher-level work and standards are below the nationally expected levels.
10. Standards in art broadly match the national expectations for fourteen and sixteen year-olds. Girls work in a range of media and, by Year 9, they produce imaginative ceramic work of a good standard. Pupils come to the school with limited knowledge and skills in design technology but they make satisfactory progress, gaining skills in working with a variety of materials including wood, metal, plastics, food and textiles, although the standards they reach are generally below national expectations. Pupils' attainment in geography is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. The majority are likely to gain a pass in the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 and standards are improving across the school. In history, the use of carefully structured teaching materials combined with an emphasis on the improvement of literacy skills has been effective in raising standards which are now in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. Lesson observations show that standards in design technology and information and communications technology are below national expectations throughout the school.
11. In Key Stage 3, standards of classroom work in modern foreign languages were in line with national expectations in the majority of the lessons observed, despite the low results of teachers' assessments. This is partly due to the positive response made by pupils to the support and reference materials made available to them by their teachers and partly because a limited range of the programmes of study was being taught during the inspection. In Key Stage 4, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress against their own prior attainment although standards are generally below national expectations. In music, the low performing skills of many pupils when they enter the school have a significant impact on their potential for higher grades but standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are above those expected nationally. In physical education, standards across the school are in line with national expectations. Standards in religious education are broadly in line with those outlined in the locally agreed syllabus for the end of Key Stage 3 and with those required by the new GCSE short course in Key Stage 4.
12. All pupils are taught personal and social education. Their attitudes to the subject are generally good and levels of attainment are at least satisfactory. From the few lessons observed in these subjects, most pupils are on line to obtain passes in the GCSE business studies and child development courses and in the GNVQ health and social care course. However, standards on the foundation and intermediate-level GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism are below those expected. Very few students follow A-level courses and where students do gain passes in English and science, they are usually at the lower grades. However, students' performance in art has been at least at the national average. Standards in art in the present Year 13 are higher than those required for a good pass. In English, sixth form students can write fluently but in lessons they are often reluctant to answer questions. In biology, the standards of work are in line with expectations but, in chemistry, they are below this level.
13. Pupils' skills in reading and writing are below average when they enter the school but most make satisfactory improvement over time. This is particularly true in reading, where weekly reading lessons and an improved range of books are helping. Literacy is supported in music, history and geography by a good emphasis on reading and writing skills. The good use of technical language in physical education and science extends pupils' vocabulary and key words are emphasised in religious education, art, mathematics and dance. Note-taking skills are taught in Year 7 English lessons and are used effectively in art when pupils watch video programmes. There are some weaknesses in

GNVQ courses in Year 12 and teachers do not always mark the work of pupils who have special educational needs with sufficient rigour. In Key Stage 3, teachers emphasise numeracy and many mathematics lessons start with mental arithmetic sessions. Although not all pupils know their tables, their understanding of number is improving. The encouragement of numeracy across the curriculum is at an early stage but a teacher with responsibility for this will start work next term. Information and communications technology is still not put to good use in all subjects although there were some good examples of it in GNVQ courses.

14. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form and good progress in Key Stage 4, reflecting the quality of the teaching and additional support that they receive. The school has a large number of pupils learning English as an additional language but the school focuses its efforts on the group of just under forty pupils who have had less than eighteen months exposure to the language. These pupils receive either in-class support, individually or in small groups, or they are withdrawn from lessons for concentrated help and they make satisfactory progress, often reaching standards comparable with those of their peers.
15. Strengths of the school are in musical composition and performance and the use of mixed media and ceramics and the quality of the use of colour in art. Also noteworthy are the high pass rates in English literature and geography in the GCSE examinations, the development of research skills in history and the progress made by pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 4. The principal weaknesses are in mathematics, modern languages, design technology, information and communications technology and science. The quality of pupils' writing is often stilted and the results of the GCSE examinations in physical education are below the national average.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good at all key stages. In the majority of classes, pupils behave well, stay on task and show a positive attitude to their work. Their response was satisfactory or better in over ninety per cent of lessons and they are eager to ask and answer questions. Pupils are proud of their achievements and keen to point out their work which is frequently displayed around the school. Pupils respond well to the merit system and show pleasure in receiving their awards which are presented in the weekly house assemblies. The majority of pupils wear the school uniform. They participate in making school rules, and in the school council.
17. Behaviour throughout the school is satisfactory overall. Behaviour in classrooms is generally of a good standard. Where pupils' behaviour is less good, it is often associated with poor classroom management. Most pupils are able to remain on task although some have difficulty in settling down at the beginning of a lesson and in sustaining concentration towards the end of lessons. Pupils treat their school and the property of others well. There is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti although litter is sometimes noticeable. Most pupils are polite to staff and courteous and friendly to visitors. Pupils come from a very wide mixture of cultural and ethnic backgrounds but there is no evidence of racial disharmony or discrimination. Relationships throughout the school are good and parents are satisfied with the school's approach to behaviour and discipline.
18. The personal development of pupils is good. Where opportunities for taking responsibility are presented, they are seized by pupils. For example, there are opportunities for senior pupils to serve as prefects and the school council offers scope for pupils to develop representative and presentational skills. Other pupils act as monitors or sing in the school's excellent gospel choir.
19. The attendance rate is under ninety per cent and this is lower than the national average. Unauthorised absence is higher than the national average. The school addresses these problems with considerable resources and has various strategies aimed at improvement. Since the last inspection, concerted efforts have been made to emphasise the need for prompt and regular attendance if academic performance is to be improved. These efforts have yet to bear fruit and attendance levels are similar

to those recorded during the last inspection.

20. Registers are taken at the beginning and end of each school day and procedures comply with legal requirements. Registration was moved to the end of the day in order to provide a check on truancy and to apply sanctions to pupils who are late in arriving at school. However punctuality to school, and to some lessons is unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. Overall, teaching was satisfactory in ninety-two per cent of the lessons observed and it was good or better in fifty-seven per cent of lessons. Very good and excellent teaching was seen in nineteen per cent of lessons. The most successful teaching was in art, English, geography, history, music, personal and social education, religious education and in the GNVQ courses. The least successful teaching was in science and mathematics at Key Stage 3 and modern languages. There is a wide variation between subjects, with significant elements of good and very good teaching in some, but similarly significant elements of unsatisfactory teaching in others. Almost two-thirds of the unsatisfactory teaching occurred in subjects which were having to rely upon temporary or supply teachers or students.
22. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is good. This quality of understanding is effective in generating interest amongst pupils, as in modern foreign languages, where there is consistent use of the relevant language and Key Stage 4 pupils engage closely in the lessons, and in music, where the teacher's knowledge is such that pupils achieve well in developing listening and performing skills. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy forms a significant part of the teaching in all subjects. The use of word lists and the development of both general and subject-specific vocabularies are common to all lessons and are particularly strong in English. For those pupils who require additional teaching and support through withdrawal groups, the teaching is generally good. When their learning is broken down into small steps, these pupils show interest and achieve well.
23. The quality of teachers' planning is satisfactory overall. When it is good, as in English in Key Stage 4, this produces a very stimulating learning environment in which pupils are suitably challenged and achieve well. The quality of learning in music is linked to the teachers' very detailed and effective planning and preparation. Where the planning identifies clear aims and objectives, as in the humanities, pupils' efforts are focused and they achieve well by developing research skills which enable them to achieve an increasing independence in their learning. Similarly, the effective planning for practical activities in science maintains pupils' attention and provides them with opportunities for experimental activities, such as the use of balloons to measure forces, to reach conclusions for themselves.
24. Teachers generally have appropriate expectations of pupils' attainment and behaviour. However, there are lessons in a range of subjects where the teachers' planning lacks a clear focus and fails to challenge all the pupils. In an English lesson in Key Stage 3, for example, planning lacked sufficient structure to ensure that higher-attaining pupils were appropriately challenged by the set work. Consequently, they lost heart and the quality of their learning suffered. Similarly, in science, teachers' planning did not always secure appropriate levels of achievement in some classes with large numbers of pupils with special educational needs.
25. Good teaching methods are used in all subjects. Teachers have a commitment to raising standards and to setting targets which the pupils find stimulating and interesting. In English, the effective presentation of poetry and the reinforcement of vocabulary in Key Stage 3, together with good use of the pupils' ideas in Key Stage 4 not only improve their written work but also ensure that pupils enjoy the subject. The stringent demands placed on pupils in music further their knowledge and their self-esteem and thus encourage the development of independent learning. Activities are made to be enjoyable and meaningful to the pupils, thus ensuring their concentration and commitment. The enthusiasm of teachers, combined with their effective use of questioning and discussion, ensure the participation and interest of the pupils. However, when work becomes repetitive, for example, when similar exercises follow one another in mathematics, pupils lose interest. The consequent low

achievement in the lessons where this occurs can be exacerbated by the teachers' untidy work which sets poor examples.

26. Where teaching is good or better, pupils are well managed, good relationships are established and the enthusiasm shown by the teachers keeps pupils motivated and involved. In music, pupils who lack motivation are encouraged to learn by clear learning targets and highly focused reviews of their achievements. A significant factor in the learning of older pupils is that teachers in some subjects, such as history, treat them in a manner appropriate to their age and require them to make suitably mature responses. However, there are occasions when classes, especially those taught by supply staff or new teachers, suffer from weaknesses in classroom management which adversely affect the pupils' learning. The school's policy for managing pupils gives insufficient attention to the teaching strategies required in the classroom. This leads to inconsistency and means that inexperienced teachers have no formal guidance in the approaches to adopt.
27. Teachers make satisfactory use of support staff and of the learning resources available. However, whilst lessons in some subjects, such as English and the humanities, begin promptly and move at a brisk pace, there are other lessons, such as mathematics and information and communications technology, where pupils can arrive up to ten minutes late. In these lessons, the pace is often slowed by pupils' lack of concentration and by the teacher's lack of appropriate strategies for managing their behaviour.
28. Teachers generally mark work carefully and give effective oral feedback, ensuring that pupils are aware of their levels of achievement and their progress. Constructive comments and clear criteria for success help pupils to develop and improve their work. In history and geography, teachers encourage pupils to become involved in the setting and review of their own learning targets. In a few cases, the inconsistent marking of basic literacy and communication skills has a negative effect on the progress of pupils with special educational needs. However, in Key Stage 4, pupils with special educational needs are enabled to reflect on aspects of their work and behaviour and, consequently, they make good progress. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning. Tasks are closely linked to the work done in class and homework is an integral part of the pupils' learning in most subjects, such as art and the humanities.
29. The previous inspection judged that teaching in eighty per cent of lessons was satisfactory or better and that thirty per cent was good. The results of this inspection show that there has been a significant improvement overall, not only in the proportion of satisfactory teaching but also in the proportions of teaching that were judged to be good, very good and excellent.

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

30. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum in both key stages which fully meets statutory requirements, apart for the coverage of information and communications technology at Key Stage 4 and its applications in some subjects, such as art. Only about seventy per cent of the pupils in Key Stage 4 cover all the strands of the programme of study in this subject but there are good plans to rectify the position. There is now a twenty-five-hour teaching week at both key stages and the curriculum is fully accessible to all pupils.
31. Collective worship does not fully satisfy statutory requirements, although all pupils have three assemblies a week which contain an act of worship. Provision for religious education is adequate in Key Stages 3 and 4 but, in the sixth form, it needs some additional development. Three foreign languages are studied but there is no provision for any pupils to study two. When this option was offered, there was a very poor take-up and the school now takes the view that there are so many pupils learning English as an additional language that a further new language would be inappropriate and an inefficient use of resources. Pupils whose first language is not English are given the opportunity to take GCSE examinations in their home language. Drama is studied in Key Stage 4 and there are good plans to offer it in Key Stage 3. Dance is an important part of the physical education curriculum.

32. There is good provision for careers education. Study support is provided through after-school clubs, half-term and Easter revision sessions for Year 11 in a range of subjects, targeted homework clubs and summer schools in literacy. Provision for literacy across the curriculum is good. The development of numeracy across the curriculum is at an early stage but a co-ordinator for this will take up her post next term. Another new initiative has been to appoint a member of staff to identify gifted and talented pupils and provide support and extension work for them.
33. The issues concerning the curriculum raised after the last inspection have been appropriately resolved, apart from some aspects of information and communications technology and some additional provision of religious education for the sixth form. The option pattern for Key Stage 4 is under constant review to maintain its relevance.
34. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There has been distinct progress in some aspects of this since the last inspection and provision for pupils' spiritual development is now satisfactory. Several assembly themes give the pupils opportunity to reflect on such topics as love, peace and vision, and prayers and music during some assemblies encourage the pupils to be quiet and contemplative. The religious education department has many units of work which develop the pupils' knowledge and insight into the values and beliefs of many world religions. Music makes an important contribution to this provision as pupils face and reflect on their own creativity. The 'Singerz' choir provides an important spiritual dimension in the school. Some displays also contribute, for instance where the complexity of the universe is presented in chart form in science laboratories. However, more could be done to develop this aspect in a more organised way by encouraging each department to make a specific contribution to this aspect of the pupils' development and by incorporating elements in some registration periods.
35. Provision for moral development is very good. The pupils are expected to behave well and have a clear sense of right and wrong. The code of conduct indicates that high standards of behaviour are expected both inside and outside school. This is reinforced by the 'Bill of Rights' which indicates how pupils are expected to treat others and also how they can expect to be treated themselves. Several assembly themes cover moral issues, such as behaviour and bullying, and themes in the personal and social education programme also cover moral issues. These include smoking, vandalism and drugs. Outside speakers, too, develop moral themes. These speakers include representatives from the police, the Lewisham Youth and Community Section and the Samaritans. Moral issues are included in the work of subject departments. For example, work in English includes the discussion of drugs and other real-life situations and work in geography considers the moral aspects of international trade. Religious education involves the study of various moral codes in different religious traditions. Overall, subject departments generally expect good moral standards and the standards set by staff reinforce this.
36. Provision for social development is good. Positive relationships are encouraged through the many clubs and extra-curricular activities in the school. These clubs offer activities in languages, music, art and sports. Pupils are able to take responsibility by being a prefect or by becoming involved in the school council. There is also a house system through which pupils are expected to take responsibility. Participation in the school community is encouraged by charity work, such as collecting money for World Aids Day and for meningitis support. The pupils can also involve themselves in school assemblies, open days and parents' evenings. Several assembly themes include social development with topics on behaviour, learning, knowing what matters and creating an impression. The programme of personal and social education contributes to this aspect of the school's provision as there are significant units of work on friendship, health education, sex education, marriage, relationships, drugs and citizenship. Most subject departments encourage collaborative and group work and this itself has a very positive effect on the development of social skills.
37. Provision for cultural development is good. There are good opportunities inside and outside the formal curriculum for music and art and pupils can participate in the choir. There are many impressive displays of art and pottery around the school and theatre groups come into the school to perform. School visits include trips to Spain and France, as well as to more immediate locations such as Hever Castle, Sheringham and West Runcton. The multi-cultural aspect of the provision is

stronger than was reported at the last inspection. The school celebrates Black History Month in October each year. Displays include South American masks and Mexican Art. Assembly themes include multi-cultural topics, such as the United Nations, World Food Day, Islam, Christmas, Easter and other religious festivals. Religious education makes a strong contribution to the multi-cultural aspects of school life with the study of world religions. Other subjects, too, contribute to this provision. These include work on Islamic patterns in mathematics, the study of Mali in geography and the multi-cultural aspects implicit in the study of modern foreign languages. More could be done, however, both in individual departments and across the school generally, to acknowledge and celebrate the cultural diversity represented within the school itself and its neighbouring community.

38. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the whole curriculum and the learning support department has increased the amount of in-class support and provided an appropriate range of teaching materials for most subjects. Many pupils have targets for their personal and social development and individual and group work on these is being extended. There are good opportunities for moral and social development, particularly through improved strategies for managing behaviour.
39. Extra-curricular provision is strong in music and physical education, where activities are generally designed to enrich and extend curricular provision. In music, some activities are designed to harness instrumental teaching work and the school's gospel choir - 'Singerz' - regularly gives popular public performances of high quality which are full of vitality. Other opportunities are provided in a wide range of subjects, such as residential fieldwork in geography and physical education, visits to First World War battlefields in history, a workshop with the Royal National Theatre which included a performance in the school of 'As You Like It' and a science club.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The support, guidance and welfare which pupils receive are satisfactory overall. The school is a caring community and it is seen by pupils and parents as providing effective support. The pastoral system is overseen by a deputy head and organised through houses and class tutors. The system works well. Records are kept of pupils' behaviour records and these are shared with parents. Tutors and heads of house know their pupils well and recognise their individual needs. Additional staff, a behaviour support teacher and four part-time learning mentors have been appointed recently to address behavioural issues, particularly where they risk leading to exclusion. These staff receive referrals through the pastoral system and work with pupils, mostly in Key Stage 3. Group work is also undertaken concentrating on issues such as self-esteem, anger management, and social skills. There is evidence that these strategies are making a positive impact.
41. Since September, there have been thirty-nine temporary exclusions but no permanent ones. This represents an improvement over previous years. Exclusions have mostly been for violent, abusive or disruptive behaviour. The monitoring of behaviour in the classroom, although generally effective, is not supported by a policy which sets out the principles and guidance for good practice in managing behaviour in the classroom. No bullying was observed during the inspection. Heads of house monitor attendance, supported by a specially appointed administrative assistant, and the school is participating in an initiative set up by the local education authority to monitor the attendance of students in the sixth-form.
42. Assessment practice in the school has improved since the last inspection. There is now a policy giving useful guidance to teaching departments on the principles of good assessment and setting out criteria for grading attainment and effort. All departments use this system and apply it to marking in pupils' books, which is done regularly and conscientiously. There is still inconsistency, however, in the way these grades are supplemented by useful, diagnostic comments informing pupils how they can improve their work. This is true within departments as well as across the areas of the curriculum. In the modern languages department, for example, one member of staff regularly annotates pupils' work with comments of support and encouragement and sets broad targets for improvement but not all teachers replicate this practice. In the same way, assessment information is used to guide planning in some subjects but not in others. The best examples are found in the humanities, mathematics, science, art and music.

43. All departments now assess and report on pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. These reports generally use the guidance on levels set out in the National Curriculum but the way the guidance is interpreted and used varies between subjects, producing some inconsistency. The best practice is found in history, geography and religious education. In these subjects, differentiated knowledge and skills are built into planning, assessment criteria are related to them and opportunities for assessment are built into the schemes of work. These arrangements are linked to the levels set out in the National Curriculum. Homework booklets, with tasks graded for each level of prior attainment, are used well and helpful comments in the marking provide pupils with strategies for improvement. Annotated examples of past course work for the GCSE examinations in history are put on display to give pupils further guidance. In geography, marking is consistent and supportive and pupils are shown how to improve their work. Scores in cognitive ability tests are used as a reference points and end-of-unit assessments with clear criteria provide information about pupils' attainment. A further example of good practice is the use made of assessment portfolios containing examples of fully moderated work.
44. The design technology and physical education departments use the school's marking scheme but do not link attainment to National Curriculum levels or to key stage criteria and so have no way of judging progress or of setting meaningful targets to enable pupils to raise their attainment. The same is true in information and communications technology and modern languages. In physical education, targets for lessons are often too focused on the tasks to be completed, rather than on the learning outcomes, making it difficult to identify strategies for improvement over the longer term. However, teachers do provide well-informed feedback in lessons to help pupils improve. Moderation of work is well established but evaluation overall is weak.
45. The school holds central records on pupils' achievements and the assessments made at the end of Key Stage 3 are used to track their progress. Assessment is used to inform planning. For example, an effective scheme of assessment has been developed in art. In music, pupils' skills in listening are assessed by using a pro-forma to identify strengths and weaknesses and areas for development in subsequent topics. A further good feature is the way in which pupils are taught to evaluate their own and each other's achievements in a positive way.
46. In the core subjects, assessment practice is satisfactory and sometimes good. The English department draws on a broad range of data on pupils and sets targets from an early stage. Clear targets are set in most class books and marking is helpful and detailed at both key stages although, as yet, it is having little effect in converting the high number of D grades to Cs at the end of Key Stage 4. Reliable records are used in mathematics which trace data through from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 and these include the assessment of pupils on entry. There is a thorough understanding of pupils' performance in the department and evidence that this informs planning. Day-to-day marking provides strategies for pupils to improve their work.
47. In science, assessment systems are satisfactory and still being improved. End-of-module tests at Key Stages 3 and 4, using common marking schemes, are moderated by the head of science. Marking is consistent and done regularly but does not always help pupils to improve. Assessments are used for setting pupils in groups by ability and they influence planning at Key Stage 4.
48. There is a lack of consistency in the marking of work done by pupils with special educational needs. In most subjects, marking in Key Stage 3 often fails to highlight spelling errors or the misuse of capital letters. Comments are fuller in Key Stage 4 and give better guidance to pupils on how to improve. Although assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs give a good overview, the variety of systems in use sometimes makes it difficult to monitor their progress. The targets set in individual education plans are generally acted upon in class although, in a few cases, teachers are not familiar with them. Subject-specific targets are added but these usually relate to behaviour or personal organisation. Reading tests are in regular use but progress is not fully monitored.

49. Systems for monitoring and evaluating pupils' achievement across the whole school are gradually being put in place. A member of the senior management team has responsibility for 'learning improvement' and leads on assessment. She has collated a range of information on pupils in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11, using scores in cognitive ability tests, the results of tests at the ends of Key Stages 2 and 3, when the former are available, as well as recording the reading ages of pupils in Years 7 and 10. During the last two years, staff have been trained in the use of baseline assessment and target-setting has been introduced at the same time, with an initial focus on Year 10. Progress is tracked through the form tutor, using a tracking sheet and interim reports based on the half-yearly examinations. Each year group now has its own action plan sheet with targets for improvement and strategies for achieving them.
50. The school monitors a curriculum area each term and assessment procedures are included in this exercise. Issues are identified and followed up through the line manager of that curriculum area. In Year 10, candidates judged to be on the borders of C and D grades are identified and interviewed by their head of house. After the examinations in Year 10, grades are predicted and the information is passed to heads of curriculum areas, who then link this information to mock examination results in Year 11. The next step planned is to build target-setting into departmental methodology.
51. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this system but, unless assessment and reporting are linked more consistently to National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 and to the criteria used for grading in the GCSE examinations at Key Stage 4 in all subjects, neither the targets set nor the strategies for achieving them will be sufficiently rigorous to help pupils raise their attainment. The monitoring of academic performance is satisfactory overall. There is good tracking in music and modern languages and good target-setting in history and geography. Pupils receive comprehensive and good quality support and advice on careers training.
52. Child protection policies are clear and effective. Staff are aware of the procedures and appropriate and secure records are held by heads of house. The school liaises well with other agencies, such as the social services department. However, the designated teacher has not received appropriate recent training and in-service training for all other staff has not yet been programmed. First aid is provided in a dedicated medical room by appropriately trained staff. Records of accidents and other incidents are maintained. The school has an effective health and safety policy which is properly monitored by appropriately trained staff and by the governing body. There are systems for regularly reporting and recording risks. Regular fire drills are held and formally recorded. The servicing of fire-fighting and other equipment is carried out regularly. Good health and safety practice is followed in classrooms and pupils are made aware of any risks. There are no health and safety matters that give rise to concern.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. The quality of information provided to parents is good and this is appreciated by them. The school's prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents contain the required information. Frequent newsletters are sent to parents and communications are made available in different languages if requested by parents. Regular meetings are held to inform parents about their daughter's progress and the annual reports on pupils' attainment and progress are good. Pupils' contact books are an effective conduit for daily communication between home and school and are well used.

Overall, the school has satisfactory working relationships with parents. It is welcoming and it works hard to increase the participation of parents. The parents of girls with special educational needs usually attend annual reviews and some make written contributions. They attend the parents' evening but are not sufficiently involved in drawing up their daughters' individual education plans. However, few other parents are involved in school life. A very small number of parents support the parents and teachers association and attendance at events and meetings held in school is usually poor. The school runs a course introducing the Internet to parents and this has attracted some interest. Parents sign home-school agreements and are involved if these are breached. They have been

consulted on the discipline policy and the end-of-year reports and school meals have been changed following consultation. Most contact with parents is for pastoral reasons, usually concerning attendance or behavioural issues but the school is keen to make use of positive opportunities also. Despite the school's hard work, the majority of parents are unresponsive to its efforts.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The school is well managed. The present head teacher has been in post for five years. During this time, she has shown very good leadership in establishing a clear identity and educational priorities for the school. Her work has been ably supported by the senior management team and, together, they have energetically addressed all the key issues identified in the last inspection report in November 1995. They have raised expectations of attainment, established better assessment and targeting arrangements and set up holiday revision and literacy schools and homework clubs. They have successfully sought funds and staffing to provide support for numeracy and literacy and programmed setting and 'fast track' groups. The taught week has been increased to make better allowance for art, information and communications technology and music. Posts have been created for learning mentors and behaviour support staff. Time and resources have been directed towards improving attendance and a special appointment has been made to support these efforts. However, despite all these initiatives, standards of achievement and attendance have remained low although there is evidence that the school may have turned the corner and pupils' progress is now generally satisfactory.
56. In other respects, progress has been good. Appropriate and explicit aims and values have been established in consultation with all staff and the governors and, often, with the parents and pupils. Home-school agreements, the behaviour policy and the policy for equality of opportunity contribute to the creation of a harmonious community with good relationships and the almost total absence of oppressive behaviour, and these are highly valued by the parents. These policies and the school's other aims and objectives relate closely to the needs of the pupils and are reflected in the daily life of the school. They are known and respected by staff and parents. Given that the school has been without one of the deputy head teachers for more than a year, the extent and range of these developments is remarkable. Once this and other difficulties have been resolved, the school will be well placed to improve further.
57. Staff development is carefully directed towards priority areas. The senior management team and middle managers are closely involved with monitoring teaching and the curriculum. Regular classroom observations take place and notes are made according to an established pro-forma and fed back to teachers. Peer observation and review are also established practices. External advisers and inspectors have also been called in to observe teaching in specific subject areas and to give advice on curriculum development. These findings are built back into the school's internal programme for professional development. A programme to develop a wider range of teaching approaches has been established and, in the humanities and English, which were the first priority areas for development, there is ample evidence that the programme is being successful and standards of pupils' achievement have been significantly improved. All of these systems effectively contribute to the well-targeted programme of staff development. There is a sensitive and effective induction programme for all new staff. Although formal appraisal has had to be temporarily suspended, arrangements for performance management by the senior management team and by some heads of department are good. The school is well regarded by the training institutions for which it provides student placements.
58. Progress towards meeting development targets is reviewed through line management meetings and review reports in December and March each year. There is also a continuous process of monitoring through team meetings at all levels and at meetings of the governing body and its various committees. The whole plan is reviewed formally each term. Revised targets are drawn up in a consultative process involving senior and middle management and departmental staff. Departmental heads produce their own proposed plans linked to the budget and to the school's priorities. When the following year's budget is known, the head teacher produces a draft school management plan which is discussed by the governing body's Strategy Committee. The present school's management plan is a very well put-together document with clear links to the previous post-OFSTED action plan, to the current main issues identified by the review process set out above and to the relevant priorities in the

local education authority's development plan. The current priorities are directly related to educational developments. They are realistic and properly costed, responsible persons are identified and time deadlines are set.

59. The school's governors are very well informed, articulate and experienced. Meetings of the governing body take place generally once a term and are mostly well attended. Minutes show that meetings are businesslike and that they concern themselves with the major issues affecting the school, generally stemming from the very informative reports provided to each meeting by the head teacher. These minutes and discussions with governors show that the governing body understands the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. The governors play a full and effective part in planning the strategic direction of the school's development and in managing its affairs. They provide very good support and critical advice to the head teacher and the senior management team. Since the last inspection, legal requirements have been met for religious education in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form but the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
60. Development planning and financial planning are increasingly part of the same process. Governors and staff are involved in identifying where improvements are needed and their views are transmitted to the school's Finance Committee which meets every half term. Following these meetings, the head teacher and the school's administrative officer draw up a draft budget. These arrangements ensure that proposed expenditure is very securely based on educational priorities. Expenditure is monitored very carefully by the administrative officer and the head teacher and the governors scrutinise statements closely twice a term. Systems of financial control are stringent and the school has managed considerable new development, the newly acquired grants and its overall spending policy very successfully. Specific grants for staff development, for work with pupils who have special educational needs and for work with those learning English as an additional language are well managed and appropriately spent. The impact made by the newly established Educational Action Zone is not yet clear, as the initiative is too recent. However, the school has been able to benefit from the 'Excellence in Cities' funding by appointing learning mentors and planning the establishment of a properly set up learning support unit. The four principles of best value are carefully observed.
61. Since the last inspection, the staffing structure has been reviewed. Job descriptions are now clear and appropriate and there are sensible plans for reshaping the senior management team and deploying responsibilities more effectively as soon as external circumstances permit. The delegation of responsibilities to staff in middle management is generally good but the arrangements for the strategic management of the learning support staff, including specially appointed teachers, are unsatisfactory. The school does not make adequate use of new technology. The size of the sixth form means that only a very narrow range of courses can be offered and it is not a viable unit as it stands.
62. The school sensibly focuses its work with pupils learning English as an additional language on the comparatively small number who have had less than eighteen months exposure to English. These pupils receive in-class support, individually or in small groups, or are withdrawn from lessons for concentrated help. There has been progress since the last inspection inasmuch all staff have received professional development in being able to give general support in the classroom. This programme of professional development should continue. Teachers are not always aware of who these pupils are and a system is needed to identify them clearly and the levels of support required.
63. The school has enough staff to teach the curriculum it offers and the experience and training of the permanent teachers are appropriate. However, owing to circumstances beyond its control, one deputy head teacher has been on a prolonged absence and his post cannot be advertised, and two senior members of staff and a number of other teachers were on long-term sick leave during the period of the inspection. As a consequence, there were high numbers of supply teachers working during the inspection, several of whom were completely new to the school. This state of affairs has led to disruption in the continuity of education in some subjects, particularly mathematics, and to several changes of teacher for some classes. Parents expressed concern about this at the parents' meeting before the inspection and the majority of the unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection was in lessons taught by supply teachers or students. The school has to wait for external matters to be resolved before it can act to remedy the situation with the deputy head teacher and must also await the medical prognoses for the teachers who have been ill for some time.

64. There is a good number of support staff, most of whom are experienced and well trained. This is particularly true of staff supporting pupils with special educational needs who work effectively with those in their care. The school's administrative officer, the office manager and her assistants and the premises officer all make effective contributions to the work of the school and provide a welcoming and efficient reception to visitors.
65. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall. Since the last inspection, many improvements have been made. For example, new seating has been installed in the hall, a music suite has been created and specialist rooms for information and communications technology and food technology and a Scantek laboratory have been built. The library has been refurbished and it provides a pleasant setting which is conducive to study and there is now a good base for work with pupils who have special educational needs. A completely new block has been built for mathematics and another for modern languages is under construction. General classrooms are adequate in size but there is a shortage of specialist accommodation for science. Accommodation for physical education is satisfactory. There is a shortage of office space within some departments and the accommodation available for school dinners is inadequate. Litter accumulates throughout the school day, particularly after lunch. Resources are generally adequate although there are not enough textbooks for all pupils in religious education. Resources for information and communications technology have been significantly improved although the ratio of computers to pupils is still well below the national average.
66. Taking into account the socio-economic context in which it operates, the low attainment of pupils on entry, the progress they make and their other achievements and the quality of education offered, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. In order to improve further, the school's senior management and governors need to:

Raise standards of achievement in the core subjects by:

- continuing and consolidating the present initiatives for setting and fast track groups, support for numeracy and literacy across the curriculum and homework clubs; **(See paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 7 and 55)**
- devising ways of following up the good arrangements for assessing and predicting pupils' performance with carefully targeted and well monitored individual learning programmes; **(See paragraph 55)**
- establishing effective arrangements for the strategic management of the learning support staff, drawing up appropriate policies and principles of good practice; **(See paragraph 61)**
- extending the programme for developing a wider range of teaching approaches to teachers across the whole school; **(See paragraph 57)**
- ensuring that there are more opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of independent study and research and to work under examination conditions; **(See paragraph 8)**
- developing teaching approaches which will encourage pupils' listening skills and their ability to concentrate for reasonable periods of time; **(See paragraphs 8 and 26)**
- developing consistent, school-wide strategies for managing pupils' behaviour in lessons, particularly where classes contain a wide range of ability; **(See paragraphs 8 and 26)**
- improving the range of creative writing in English through the structured approaches already employed in some classes; **(See paragraph 8)**
- ensuring that the work set challenges pupils of all abilities and working towards more higher-level grades as well as increasing the proportion of grades at the nationally expected levels; **(See paragraph 8)**

Improve attendance and punctuality by:

- continue to devise ways of rewarding good attendance and punctuality; **(See paragraph 19)**
- implementing a stricter regime for the supervision of pupils between lessons; **(See paragraph 20)**
- continuing to emphasise the importance of these two aspects of achievement and to allocate resources to monitoring patterns closely; **(See paragraph 19)**

Improve provision for information and communications technology at Key Stage 4 by:

- implementing the present plans for ensuring that all the elements of the programme of study are properly covered; **(See paragraph 137)**
- constructing a cross-curricular map which identifies how and in what contexts specific skills, knowledge and understanding will be taught; **(See paragraph 138)**
- rigorously monitoring teaching and assessing pupils' progress; **(See paragraph 138)**
- providing appropriate staff development to departments; **(See paragraph 138)**
- as and when financial resources permit, improving the ratio of computers to pupils and upgrading the stock; **(See paragraph 138)**

Improve provision for students post-sixteen by:

- conducting market research amongst parents and pupils;
 - reviewing the present curricular offer in the light of the 'Curriculum 2000' initiative, to determine where and how new opportunities might be provided to students;
 - conducting an analysis of the likely strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, including the financial considerations, of extending or closing down post-sixteen provision altogether, and investigating alternative ways of funding provision.
- (See paragraph 61)**

Improve parents' involvement with the life of the school by:

- continuing to provide them with good and regular information; **(See paragraph 53)**
- investigating ways of keeping parents more regularly informed about their children's progress and providing them with positive messages whenever possible; **(See paragraph 55)**
- encouraging parents of pupils with special educational needs to become fully involved in reviews and target-setting conferences. **(See paragraph 54)**

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

193

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

68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	16	38	35	7	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	873	39
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	452	n/a

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	240	8

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	229

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	79
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	85

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.7
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.3
National comparative data	1.2

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	0	169	169

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	94	60	66
	Total	94	60	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56 (49)	36 (30)	40 (41)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (24)	11 (10)	20 (16)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	81	53	78
	Total	81	53	78
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	48 (39)	31 (41)	46 (55)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	12 (11)	7 (17)	22 (23)
	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	0	150	150

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	0	0	0
	Girls	38	131	140
	Total	38	131	140
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	25 (30)	87 (83)	93 (93)
	National	48 (46)	88 (87)	94 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	25 (27.4)
	National	37.8 (36.9)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	0	4	4

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.5	1.5 (n/a)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (16.5)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.7)

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

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	n/a	n/a
	National	N/A	82.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	98
Black – African heritage	99
Black – other	189
Indian	14
Pakistani	13
Bangladeshi	7
Chinese	2
White	416
Any other minority ethnic group	74

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	15	2
Black – African heritage	9	1
Black – other	36	3
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	28	3
Other minority ethnic groups	5	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 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	54.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	347

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.4
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Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	2,536,006
Total expenditure	2,547,742
Expenditure per pupil	3,005
Balance brought forward from previous year	163,558
Balance carried forward to next year	151,822

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.5
Key Stage 4	21.1

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	912
Number of questionnaires returned	135

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	40	7	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	44	44	9	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	44	10	4	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	50	17	5	0
The teaching is good.	30	52	10	4	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	46	18	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	41	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	33	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	28	46	13	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	33	44	8	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	52	1	3	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	41	12	6	10

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

ENGLISH

68. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining the expected level or higher in the Key Stage 3 tests was below the national average for mixed schools and well below the results nationally for girls. The proportion obtaining higher levels was well below the national average. However, when compared with the results of mixed schools with pupils from similar social circumstances, results are very high. The trend over the last three years shows a slight rise in the average points scores at a rate just above the national trend.
69. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in GCSE English in 1999 was well below the average for all schools nationally and also below the school's results in 1998. The trend over the last four years has shown no discernible improvement but the results are just above the average for mixed schools with a similar intake. Nearly all pupils gained at least a grade G and over a quarter gained a grade D. When compared with the results for other subjects in the school, the 1999 results were just below the average but the results for English literature were much higher. The relatively few pupils who were entered for English literature at GCSE almost all gained A* to C grades, a slight improvement on 1998 and much better than in 1997. Very few students take A-level English but those that do usually gain passes at the lower grades. There were no A-level entries in 1999.
70. Standardised tests show that the attainment on entry of most pupils is well below the national average but they make satisfactory improvement over time. The erratic attendance of a significant number of pupils in Key Stage 4 interrupts their learning and adversely affects their attainment in examinations. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress. Many of them obtained a grade E in the 1999 GCSE examination and all gained at least a grade G. Pupils learning English as an additional language also achieve well in comparison with their previous attainment. The school has started to identify gifted and talented pupils but the proportion gaining higher grades is lower than the national average at the end of both key stages. Evidence from the Key Stage 2 tests and from analyses of their reading ages and their performance in cognitive ability tests indicates that pupils in the current Year 7 are performing at slightly higher levels than those in previous years.
71. The department has set higher targets for examinations in 2000, recognising that progress over the last four years has been unsatisfactory. It has also established strategies for improving performance, such as making regular checks on the progress of underachieving pupils and grouping pupils by ability before the end of Key Stage 3, and it is working hard to improve the quality of teaching. These initiatives are starting to have some positive effects but rather more slowly than they should.
72. In lessons and in written work, attainment in Key Stage 3 is close to the expected levels and pupils make satisfactory progress in those classes where teachers give adequate support to their learning. However, when they work independently, their written work is below national expectations. In Key Stage 4, the higher-attaining groups are achieving average grades in English and English literature but other pupils are not. In the sixth form, the very few students in Year 13 are achieving standards in line with the requirements of the A-level course. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 but achieve better in Key Stage 4, where there are smaller sized groups of pupils with similar abilities and their needs can be more effectively met. Those who speak English as an additional language achieve well despite not always having relevant work set for them in all classes.

73. In Key Stage 3, pupils' speaking skills are often good. Though not always using Standard English, they are able to communicate clearly. They develop ideas at length and provide logical answers to the searching questions their teachers ask about their reading and their own writing. The biggest impediment to their learning is the inability of many to listen carefully or to concentrate for reasonable periods of time. Teachers have tried a variety of strategies to engage their attention but, where classes contain a wide range of ability, these are not always successful. As a result, the pace of some lessons is too slow, the potentially higher-attaining pupils become frustrated and their learning is sometimes disrupted.
74. Over seventy per cent of the pupils in the school entered in Year 7 with reading ages that were well below their chronological ages. This poses a considerable challenge to the department and to the school. The range of fiction and non-fiction has been improved since the last inspection and there is now a reading lesson for all classes once a week. This, coupled with a concerted effort across the school to provide key words and technical terms for all subjects, is having a positive effect on reading standards. The school is making more demands of pupils to develop their breadth of reading. Overall, attitudes to reading are good and pupils are improving their reading and research skills. They often volunteer to read aloud in class and in groups when they are undertaking projects.
75. The quality of writing at Key Stage 3 varies. The few higher-attaining pupils respond well when challenging tasks are set and they produce some good writing. In Year 7, there are examples of lively, sustained pieces of work with pithy, humorous phrases, such as, "*I like Catford...but it's no Las Vegas.*" On the other hand, much of the writing is rather pedestrian and sometimes shows carelessness and a lack of accuracy. For example, there are a lot of exercise books where pages have been torn out and where written work is very brief or exercises are not finished. The accelerated group in Year 9 is producing more consistent work of reasonable quality. Teachers provide good opportunities for group work and many pupils learn by collaborating on tasks, for example when researching aspects of 'Romeo and Juliet'. However, teachers do not provide enough tasks that require pupils to work alone and in silence, in conditions which would help them to prepare better for examinations.
76. There is a better picture overall in Key Stage 4, where pupils are more prepared to listen. Standards of attainment are below the nationally expected levels for pupils of their age although a significant number of pupils do make good progress over the two years. The recent introduction of drama is having a very positive effect on those pupils who opt to study it for GCSE. In this subject, pupils interact very well and produce improvisations of good quality. They learn from each other and from the unobtrusive yet subtly phrased questions from their teacher. Pupils with special educational needs tell stories with clarity and often humour, having been stimulated by good models set by the teacher. Although lessons are better organised in Key Stage 4, some of them are slow to start because of pupils' tardiness in moving around the school. Most pupils maintain their enthusiasm for reading and standards continue to improve across the key stage. Even those who find reading difficult are keen to read out their own work or to take parts in reading poetry or plays.
77. Pupils learn how to research and construct answers to questions on literary analysis. In doing so, they often struggle, losing their control of grammar and punctuation, and their writing becomes stilted. However, some higher-attaining pupils have produced very well argued essays on 'Macbeth' with carefully interwoven quotations to support their judgements. A small number of pupils have made very good progress and have written collections of poems stimulated by reading 'Half-caste', by John Agard. Their poems are rich in local colour and explore the issues of dialect culture and racial attitudes in a very mature and sensitive manner. The structured teaching that occurs in most classes in Key Stage 4 has helped pupils to gain confidence in their creative writing, producing standards which are better than those reported by the last inspection team. If pupils attended more regularly, their attainment in examinations would be higher.
78. In the sixth form, good teaching and the use of imaginative stimulus material are helping the students to broaden their perspectives on literature. Consequently, students are becoming more adept at writing fluently on themes such as the dilemmas facing King Lear but, in lessons, they are often reluctant to respond to questions.

79. The department has a plan to cover information technology in both key stages and there is evidence that pupils are using the word processor to good effect. There is little evidence that a wider range of information technology is regularly practised, however.
80. Most pupils display good attitudes to their work and behaviour is generally good, if at times rather noisy. Some of the older pupils have developed independent learning skills which they use well, particularly in responding to drama and literature. Younger pupils tend to be very reliant on their teachers. They lack self-confidence and sometimes the motivation to work quietly on their own. Relationships are very good in almost all classes. Where teachers have established clear parameters for working, pupils respond positively. However, a significant minority of pupils in Key Stage 3 do not work hard enough and unpunctuality and poor attendance lower standards.
81. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and it is now good. However, there are still areas to be developed. In Key Stage 4, teaching is often very good and never less than satisfactory. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall but hardly ever good. The consistently good features of the teaching are the enthusiasm and expertise of the staff and the clarity and precision of their marking. In Key Stage 3, the main weaknesses are the low expectations of pupils in some classes and the inconsistent strategies adopted by teachers to channel the energies of volatile pupils. Some of the best practice was in drama and literature lessons in Key Stage 4. Here, teachers made skilful interventions, using pupils' previous knowledge to help them work out ideas for themselves. They provided opportunities for groups of older pupils to work collaboratively on aspects of a set play and then for individuals to share their ideas with the other groups. This proved very successful in helping pupils to gain a clearer understanding of themes and characters. Many teachers create imaginative and lively displays of pupils' writing and give pupils clear examples of what they should do to achieve high levels and grades.
82. The most common weakness in teaching is in the organisation and management of pupils in Key Stage 3. Teachers do not have a consistent set of expectations or strategies for dealing with the small number of pupils who are very noisy or late or who lack discipline in lessons. The work set in mixed ability groups does not always extend higher-attaining pupils.
83. There has been a satisfactory degree of improvement since the last inspection. The departmental team is beginning to cohere and work productively together in various ways, such as sharing ideas for raising the standards of teaching. The management of the department is thoughtful and has produced a clear plan to try to raise standards of attainment, especially in the GCSE examinations. The regular monitoring of teaching and learning is a step in the right direction and teaching will improve further when the head of department can feed back teachers' strengths and weaknesses more regularly and rigorously. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainments are good and improving as information from tests is being used to plan work and set targets for pupils. The introduction of drama at Key Stage 4 has been a great success but the resources needed to raise pupils' aspirations and to motivate them, such as lighting and stage blocks, are still minimal. The school's plans to enter a larger number of pupils for GCSE English literature will provide a necessary challenge to more pupils. The key issue still remaining is to raise the quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 from being just satisfactory to being consistently good.
84. Pupils' skills in reading and writing are low when they enter the school. However, the school's strong commitment to raising the profile of literacy and stressing its importance across all subjects of the curriculum is beginning to ensure that most pupils make satisfactory progress in the relevant skills. This is particularly true in reading, where weekly reading lessons and an improved range of books in English are helping. Standards would improve even more if all teachers drew up a regular programme for listening to pupils read. Literacy is supported in music by a good emphasis on reading and writing skills and in history and geography, where pupils are encouraged to read out their work clearly and accurately. Pupils also have the opportunity to write from different perspectives in geography.

85. The good use of technical language in physical education and science reinforces the range of registers necessary across the curriculum. Key words related to subjects are prominently displayed and carefully taught in religious education, art, mathematics and dance. These are then used in lessons and reinforced by the teachers' questions. Note-making skills are taught in Year 7 English lessons and are used effectively in art, when pupils watch instructive video programmes. There are some weaknesses in the GNVQ courses in Year 12 and teachers across the curriculum are not always sufficiently rigorous in marking the work of pupils with special educational needs.

MATHEMATICS

86. Based on the results of the Key Stage 2 tests, the attainment of most pupils who enter the school in Year 7 is well below the nationally expected level in mathematics. In 1999, the percentage of fourteen year-old pupils who reached the nationally expected level in the National Curriculum tests was well below the national average and below the average for schools with a similar intake of pupils. The average points score in mathematics was also below the average for schools with a similar intake. However, results have improved over the past four years at a slightly faster rate than nationally and the school can demonstrate that progress is being made between Key Stages 3 and 4.
87. The proportion of pupils who gained A* to C grades in the 1999 GCSE examinations was well below the national average and it was among the lowest in any subject in the school. Nevertheless, this is an improvement on 1998, when the performance in mathematics was almost half a grade below the average for all other subjects. Mathematics was one of the two subjects where the school's percentage of A* - G grades was higher than the national figure and the percentage of A* to G grades was also amongst the best in the school in 1998.
88. Standards of attainment in lessons are low. In the 'fast track' classes in Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils are working at the nationally expected levels for their age but, in all other groups, they are below and often well below these levels. This is due, in large part, to the high level of long-term sickness amongst the permanent staff and the correspondingly high number of temporary supply teachers who have been employed over the past three of four terms, particularly in Key Stage 3. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are mostly satisfactory and sometimes good. They are only unsatisfactory where the teaching is unsatisfactory. Pupils usually have good relationships with their teachers and have a positive attitude to their learning which helps them to make satisfactory progress in lessons. Where pupils are insufficiently challenged, they often misbehave.
89. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall. This is because it was unsatisfactory in more than one lesson in every five seen. However, all the unsatisfactory teaching was in Key Stage 3 and almost all of it was in classes taken by temporary teachers or students. In many of the other lessons in this key stage, teaching was good or very good. Teaching was better in Key Stage 4, where there were no unsatisfactory lessons and teaching was good or better in over half the lessons seen.
90. Where the quality of teaching is very good, teachers are enthusiastic about the topic and pupils make very good progress. In a Year 10 class, pupils worked hard and fast to prove Pythagoras's theorem. The teacher used good visual aids to help pupils learn and understand the work. In a Year 8 class, the very clear instructions given by the teacher, coupled with pupils' very good behaviour, gave pupils good support as they investigated how many people could sit round tables of different sizes. They were able to generalise their findings and tabulate them. In a Year 11 class, the teacher gave a good demonstration of how to find the area of an irregular shape and then, at a brisk pace, gave them a number of examples to work through. Pupils enjoy being set work and being able to complete it in a calm, hard-working environment. In many of these good lessons, teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and give them the confidence to attempt the work. Other strengths in the teaching include a good, brisk start, often including a quick session on mental mathematics to strengthen this area of weakness. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and are able to impart it to pupils. Most teachers make clear to pupils at the start of the lesson what they will learn and spend a few minutes at the end of the lesson checking whether they have learnt it.

91. Where there are weaknesses, it is usually because of the ineffective strategies employed by comparatively inexperienced teachers in Key Stage 3. In these lessons, the impact of this particular weakness outweighed the numerous strengths demonstrated by the teachers because the quality of learning was adversely affected. Some teachers conduct lessons at a slow pace which often leads to too much chatting by the pupils, or they allow pupils to spend too much time on low-level activities, such as cutting, pasting and colouring their diagrams. These teachers tolerate a level of noise that is not conducive to concentration and good learning. Occasionally, teachers present their own work in an untidy or careless way or begin lessons when there is litter on the floor. This behaviour sets a bad example to the pupils. The teachers who have most difficulty in controlling pupils' behaviour are usually those who know the pupils least well.
92. In Key Stage 3, teachers give priority to developing numeracy and many lessons start with good mental mathematics sessions. This work is at a very basic level but pupils are improving their understanding of number, although pupils do not know all their tables yet. From the inspection of pupils' books and from the lesson observations, pupils are making satisfactory progress in all the required branches of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, as do those learning English as an additional language. Good progress was seen in a class where pupils were learning how to plan an investigation on the connection between the number of dots inside a shape and the number of triangles making up the shape. The development of numeracy across the curriculum is at an early stage in the school but a teacher with responsibility for this will start work in April. The department is working hard at improving numeracy and it runs a revision school during Spring half term and the Easter holidays for Year 11 pupils, as well as revision classes after school. These extra classes also have the effect of creating a high profile for mathematics.
93. The department is well managed. The head of department monitors teaching and pupils' progress and offers good support to the teachers. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and elements of the work, such as the studies of Islamic art, Chinese, Bengali and Hindu puzzles and different number systems, make a good contribution to pupils' cultural awareness. Teachers update their records weekly for pupils doing the individualised mathematics scheme. Arrangements for assessment are good and these records form the basis for progression from one topic to the next. The changes in the schemes of work have improved examination and test results at a faster rate than nationally and the revision school is having a positive effect on pupils' learning and on their attitudes to mathematics. Since the last inspection, the quality of the accommodation for mathematics has improved considerably and it supports pupils' learning well.

SCIENCE

94. A sample of results from the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 indicates that the attainment of pupils when they join the school in Year 7 is below the national average. In the national tests for 14 year-olds, the percentage of pupils who reached the nationally expected level has been well below the national average for the last four years. However, in 1999, the school's average points score was well above the average for similar schools and the proportion of pupils who reached higher levels than those expected nationally was about the national average.
95. Throughout Key Stage 3, most pupils attain standards in their lessons that are in line with national expectations. The rest generally achieve levels that are appropriate considering their prior attainment. In one lesson, higher-attaining Year 7 pupils had a good understanding of pollination and fertilisation and they could give a simple explanation of photosynthesis. By Year 9, higher-attaining pupils had good understanding of parallel circuits. Middle and lower-attaining pupils could draw the symbols for a switch, bulb and ammeter and a few pupils were starting to understand abstract ideas, such as the concept of electricity being a flow of electrons. In a significant proportion of lessons where the teaching was unsatisfactory, pupils' achievement was lower than expected. For example, Year 8 pupils did not achieve as much as could be expected in their understanding of oxides and Year 9 pupils did not make enough progress in their understanding of static electricity. Throughout both key stages, pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

96. In 1999, all pupils in Year 11 were entered for and achieved a result in the GCSE examinations although the proportions gaining passes at A* to C and A* to G grades were below the national averages and the school's average points score was also below the national figure. There has been no significant trend upwards or downwards over the past four years. In the single award science examination, the small number of pupils who took the examination achieved results which were below the national average but appropriate to their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language all achieved a result in science. Performance in the GCSE double and single science examinations was just below that in most other subjects in the school.
97. Standards in lessons and work are in line with these results. Pupils attain at the full range, but there are fewer pupils attaining at the higher grades. Pupils in Year 11 can use word equations and many can use symbols and balance equations. Higher-attaining pupils can analyse data collected in fieldwork and most pupils can make predictions about how acid rain damages buildings. Lower-attaining pupils have some understanding of polymers. In these classes, pupils' achievement is good against prior attainment. However, in a Year 10 class, unsatisfactory teaching led to a lack of understanding of the structure of the eye. In Key Stage 3, pupils perform well against similar schools and pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactory added value from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Overall, pupils' attainment in scientific investigations is lower than that in other aspects of science.
98. In 1999, no A-level science was offered. The work seen in biology was in line with national expectations. Students in Year 13 showed good practical skills when carrying out a turbidity test, making sound predictions and demonstrating that pasteurisation does not kill all bacteria. There was a wide range of attainment in the Year 13 chemistry class where students were gaining knowledge of the practical techniques used in organic chemistry. Their attainment was generally below the standards set by the course although it is in line with their prior attainment.
99. Overall, teaching in science is unsatisfactory although a third of the lessons seen were good. This is because teaching did not make sufficient contribution to standards attained by pupils and to their achievement in one in every three of the lessons seen. This is an unacceptably high level of unsatisfactory teaching. In most lessons, teachers are confident about their subject and some are able to teach a wide range of abilities. The skilled teachers provided a positive atmosphere in which pupils learn. For example, in a middle ability Year 11 class, the teacher challenged the pupils to work out the chemical reaction which influences the speed with which acid rain damages buildings. He made sure the pupils knew what they were doing by relevant and focused questioning and he circulated to help them. The pupils willingly applied themselves for a suitable period of time and improved their skills in planning an investigation. In a Year 9 class with a large number of pupils with special educational needs, the teacher gave a vivid demonstration of the relationships between pressure, force and area by using a blunt stick and a pin on a balloon. However, this level of ingenuity in presentation was not frequently seen.
100. Teachers generally have a secure knowledge of their subject. Where they are confident in the material, they can produce good illustrations to reinforce learning. For example, a Year 7 teacher successfully explained pollination and fertilisation and a Year 10 teacher used concrete examples to help lower-attaining pupils understand the abstract concept of cracking large molecules. These teachers had given particular thought and care to their planning and to the progress of lower-attaining pupils. Most teachers plan their lessons in detail. However, in a Year 10 middle ability class, the teacher had not thought through the best way to explain the structure of the eye and, as a result, the pupils lost interest and became disruptive. In a Year 9 middle ability class, the teacher had planned a good range of activities but she did not hold the pupils' attention during the discussion and background chatter reduced the effectiveness of the teaching and pupils' learning. In some classes, the work was not matched to the pupils' abilities. For example, in a Year 8 lesson where many of the pupils had special educational needs, the work set was too difficult and the teacher had weak management skills. Consequently, the pupils did not learn as much as the teacher had planned about burning metals in oxygen.

101. Most teachers work at a good pace but, where their management of the class is weak, constant interruptions lead to a slow pace. All teachers set regular homework and mark the work regularly. They work hard to develop the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and display key words to help pupils learn technical language. They teach pupils to draw tables and graphs and to manipulate formulae. Pupils have a good understanding of what they know through regular marking and tests at the end of units. In good lessons, teachers regularly check that pupils have learnt the key ideas before moving on. The commercial scheme used in Key Stage 3 encourages teachers to do this. A good example was seen in Year 7, when the teacher checked the pupils had learnt about pollination before moving on to fertilisation. In this class, pupils understood what they were doing and how they could improve. In Year 9, a teacher found out the pupils' prior knowledge of electricity before starting that day's lesson. Regular planned homework clubs and revision sessions ensure that pupils are aware of areas that need further work.
102. Where the teaching is satisfactory or better, the pupils are well motivated, expect to work hard and settle quickly. They have good relationships with the teacher and work effectively in groups when carrying out practical work. However, where the teaching is unsatisfactory, a lot of time is spent in establishing order and discipline, pupils' attitudes to science are unsatisfactory and relationships are tense. Most pupils take a pride in their work. All lessons include a suitable variety of activities including exposition and summing up, demonstrations and practical work. Higher-attaining pupils are taught in high sets at a faster pace and to a greater depth than other groups. There is a science club for younger pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented.
103. In all key stages, the science curriculum is broadly based and balanced and meets statutory requirements although the provision for information and communications technology is undeveloped. The school plans sufficient time for teaching the subject and there is satisfactory planning for continuity and progression in pupils' learning. There are regular and frequent opportunities for teaching and assessing scientific investigations, which is an improvement since the last inspection. All pupils have access to the science curriculum. Teachers are fully aware of pupils' special educational needs and, together with learning support assistants, they provide good support in lessons. In some classes, teachers make less provision for pupils who do not speak English although these pupils generally make progress at the same rate as other pupils.
104. The department follows a clear policy on assessment. Teachers use assessment to place pupils in groups and to provide them with an appropriate curriculum. However, when planning work in Year 7, they can not always take account of the very different levels that pupils have attained at Key Stage 2 and have to depend too much on the internal tests administered later in the year. The acting head of department has been in post since September. His leadership and management are good. He is continuing the initiatives set up by the school and previous head of department but he has increased the rate of change. The science department is becoming increasingly focused on the direction it is taking to improve results. He has made a good start in finding out the causes of unsatisfactory performance within the department and has continued to monitor books. Since September, he has monitored the work of three teachers and he has also effectively monitored Key Stage 3 results by groups. However, these initiatives are at too early a stage to have affected standards. He is also leading by example, successfully teaching a range of age and ability groups. However, not all the most experienced teachers follow this lead and inexperienced teachers are having to take a high proportion of classes containing pupils with challenging behaviour. The head of department has recognised that this is not satisfactory as it means that some classes are not well managed and do not benefit fully from the breadth of experience in the department.
105. The school has five full-sized laboratories and one small one. This is not satisfactory and almost one class in every ten has to be taught in an ordinary classroom, reducing pupils' opportunities to follow the full curriculum. Teachers are unable to teach practical lessons at the appropriate time and the continuity of learning is affected. The amount and quality of learning resources are satisfactory, apart from the provision of computers. The department is aware of this and plans to remedy the situation. Since the last inspection, the stock of books has been improved. The technicians work efficiently and effectively and there are no major health and safety issues.

ART

106. In 1999, teachers assessed pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 to be above those expected nationally. At the end of Key Stage 4, the GCSE results for art were above the national average. Pupils tend to obtain higher grades in art than in the other subjects they take. The school's performance in the GCSE examinations in 1998 and 1997 was above that of schools with a similar intake although the gap narrowed in 1999. The numbers studying art in the sixth form are too small to make meaningful comparisons with course requirements. However, the work seen in Year 13 was of a higher standard than is required for a pass at A-level.
107. In work seen during the inspection, attainments at the end of Key Stage 3 broadly match the national expectation for 14 year olds. By the end of Key Stage 3, girls have worked in a range of media. They have a basic understanding of colour theory and much of their work is decorative in style. Some highly innovative work was seen in a busy and productive Year 9 lesson. Girls were using their own prints to produce tessellated designs on sculptured paper clothes. These, in turn, had been inspired by studying futurist painting and stage design. Pupils work in groups to gain very sound ceramic skills in Year 7. By Year 9, they produce imaginative ceramic work of a good standard. They look at the work of different artists from a range of cultures, all from secondary sources, but have little knowledge of art in the contexts of time and place. The attainments of pupils with special educational needs and of those learning English as an additional language are good.
108. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national expectations. At this stage, girls work in a wider range of media and on a larger scale. Pupils in Year 10 use observational drawings as starting points for still-life collages to very good effect but, in both key stages, painting and drawing from observation - including life drawing - are less well developed. At this stage, more pupils are able to make informed decisions about their own work. They select from a wider range of media and scale and are encouraged to produce experimental and individual work. Much of the work uses historical and international references, including the decorative use of pattern from Islamic culture. A strength in the department is the use of colour and mixed media. Girls have a growing knowledge about past and current movements in art though few have a historical overview or are able to build on previous knowledge.
109. The attainment of students in the sixth form is higher than national course requirements. There has been no take up this year for A-level art and there is only a limited entry in Year 13. Good examples were observed of painting from direct observation, ceramic work that shows a high level of creativity and skill and good records of individual planning and critical studies. The course is well planned and it enables students to acquire a wider appreciation and knowledge of the art world, including modern art movements. Visits to galleries in the sixth form and in Key Stage 4 have a positive impact on standards.
110. Teaching is good and over three-quarters of the lessons seen were good or better. Very good teaching was seen in Key Stages 3 and 4. The department has some new teachers and some who are newly qualified. Teachers are enthusiastic but reflective about their practice and keen to improve the learning environment for their pupils. They have worked hard to rewrite much of the curriculum and make it relevant for all pupils. Planning is thorough and most pupils are able to make satisfactory progress. Teachers are aware of the learning needs of pupils who have English as an additional language and of those with special educational needs and these pupils make satisfactory and often good progress. However, expectations of gifted and talented pupils are not always high enough, with the result that, although their work shows promise, they are not achieving their potential. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of teaching strategies and make good use of resources. Although they ask frequent questions, teachers do not always draw out enough information from pupils or ask them to evaluate their work orally or in writing.
111. Teachers reinforce the use of a subject-specific vocabulary and set written tasks as part of homework. Marking in sketchbooks is good and generally includes comments to help pupils improve their art although grammar and spellings are not always corrected. There are high expectations of behaviour. In most lessons, pupils respond positively and work hard and well together throughout the lesson but

the pace of work is not always appropriate. The number of pupils who have chosen to study art in Key Stage 4 has increased but attendance in this key stage is a concern, particularly in Year 11, and has a negative effect on standards and on examination results.

112. The head of department has been in post for just over a year and has built on existing strengths. The department is well led and managed. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, except for the use of information and communications technology, although there are plans to introduce this in the summer term. The head of department undertakes some standardisation and monitoring but more is needed to ensure consistency of provision across parallel classes. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. The time allocation for Key Stage 3 has been improved, good results have been maintained, an assessment scheme has been developed and more opportunities for independent learning are being offered.
113. This is a good department that makes a significant contribution to the life of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

114. Pupils come to the school with limited knowledge and skills in this subject although they have a sufficient range of experience to make satisfactory progress. Nevertheless, teachers' assessments in 1999 showed that the percentage of fourteen year-olds reaching the nationally expected level was well below the national average. Higher-attaining pupils gain a sound understanding of systems and control through the recent introduction of a new information and communications technology-based learning programme. In the textiles and food technology elements, pupils improve their literacy skills through investigations into materials and processes. Pupils gain skills working with a variety of materials including timber, metal, plastics, food and textiles, although the standards they reach are variable. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress although some have difficulty in accurately measuring and cutting materials such as metal and timber and the practical skills of most pupils are less well developed than those of girls in similar schools.
115. The school has shown a steady improvement in results in the GCSE examinations and girls tend to do better in design and technology than they do in other subjects. Even so, the percentage obtaining A* to C grades in the 1999 examinations was below the national average. There is considerable variation in attainment between the different courses and over time. Last year, pupils did best in textiles technology, achieved roughly the expected standards in most other strands of the subject but did comparatively poorly in work with resistant materials. Inspection evidence reflects these differences. Pupils show stronger research and presentation skills in project work with textiles, including good use of information and communications technology, and similar strengths are also evident in the work of higher-attaining pupils in graphic products. Pupils working with resistant materials show limited design skills and, while some of the practical outcomes display secure skills in joining and finishing, the made products are narrow in range and show limited progress from work in Years 8 and 9. Overall attainment is reduced by the lack of progress made by those pupils with high levels of absence. In both key stages, standards are below those expected nationally.
116. Teaching is always satisfactory and in a third of lessons it was good or very good. Staff all have a good knowledge of their specialist area and use this effectively to develop pupils' understanding. They place a strong emphasis on the basic skills, particularly on information and communications technology for project research and on numeracy, with a focus on accurate measurement in graphics. Teachers are conscientious and supportive in lessons and in the after-school GCSE club and this helps some pupils make good progress in their major project work.
117. Most teachers manage their classes well and, although some classes take time to start, pupils behave well when involved in their work. The best teaching provides varied teaching and learning activities that help pupils work with greater pace and enthusiasm. These teachers also use questioning well to develop learning, for example to help pupils in Year 7 identify different kinds of textile. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils and use high-quality exemplar materials to help them develop better project work. The least effective teaching is often in practical lessons, where the

lack of targeted outcomes and a limited range of activities slow the pace of learning. Those teachers do not monitor pupils' progress closely or intervene sufficiently to improve skills and, consequently, pupils do not have a clear idea of the progress they make.

118. The Key Stage 3 schemes of work meet the requirements of the National Curriculum although there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their knowledge about modular systems and control in practical settings. Furthermore, the organisation of rooms around a single medium, such as metal, plastics or timber, prevents more varied and integrated activities taking place. The time-tabling of the course around a carousel system makes it more difficult to develop the progressive awareness of design and practical skills. Assessment in this key stage is not based on the National Curriculum's attainment levels. In Key Stages 3 and 4, there is insufficient use of assessment criteria to monitor pupils' progress or to help them improve their knowledge and skills. The subject is soundly managed and the school has invested considerably in a new modular technology suite with very good facilities for information and communications technology. The department has coped well with the recent absence of staff although the lack of technician support limits the extent to which materials can be properly prepared before lessons.
119. Since the last report, the department has made satisfactory progress with a more recent improvement in GCSE results, a clearer management structure and better resources, particularly in information and communications technology and in systems and control. Teaching remains satisfactory although some aspects of it could be improved, as could the organisation of the curriculum and the system of assessment.

GEOGRAPHY

120. Pupils' attainment in the 1999 teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 was in line with the national average for all schools although it was slightly below the average for girls' schools. Standards have improved steadily over the last four years. At the end of Key Stage 4, the results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were a little below national averages for girls' schools but they, too, are improving. The proportions of pupils obtaining A* to C grades and A* to G grades compare favourably with the results in most other subjects at the school. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' written work show that standards at the end of both key stages are in line with national expectations and that pupils' learning and progress are generally good across the school.
121. In Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate an appropriately detailed understanding of the places selected for study at local, national and international levels. They show a satisfactory awareness of how physical processes such as the water cycle, drainage basins and weather systems operate. They demonstrate satisfactory field-work skills, both in a local river study and in other work around the school or in the local area. Pupils in Year 7 learn how human and physical processes can interact to produce hazards such as flooding through their work on Bangladesh. In Year 8, they have produced well presented and detailed guides to the Dorset Coastal Path that demonstrate map-reading skills, providing a good example of their understanding of how aspects of physical, human and environmental geography inter-relate.
122. Pupils have a sound understanding of how the use of coal as a non-renewable source of energy affected the location of industry and can explain some of the environmental implications of different energy sources. They can explain how primary, secondary and tertiary industries differ and understand some of the causes and effects of migration and of changing patterns of settlement. In Year 9, pupils understand some of the issues of inequality caused by international trade and development in work focused on Ghana and the manufacture of chocolate. The range and quality of pupils' written work improve as they progress through Key Stage 3, with several examples of well presented extended work based on geographical enquiry. Pupils also demonstrate the ability to use and interpret mathematical data at increasing levels of complexity. However, with the exception of some individually word-processed work, they have insufficient opportunity to use information and communications technology and, consequently, attainment in this aspect of their work is unsatisfactory.

123. In Key Stage 4, those pupils who study geography build on what they have learned in Years 7 to 9 and continue to make good progress in their learning. In Year 10, they demonstrate their understanding of the complexity of the human and physical causes of desertification in the Sahel region of Africa as an environmental issue. In a Year 11 case study of India, pupils develop an increased understanding of the impact of changing international work patterns as illustrated by the Bhopal Union Carbide disaster and the growth of the Indian software industry. Pupils considerably extend their field-work skills in Key Stage 4 and they have produced impressive studies of coastal erosion on the Norfolk coast which show evidence of the use of information and communications technology to a good standard.
124. Teaching is of a good overall quality throughout the school, although of a more consistently high standard in Key Stage 4, where there are also examples of very good teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. This contributes to the good achievements of pupils of all ages, including those with special educational needs. In both key stages, teachers demonstrate an appropriately detailed and confident command of the subject and their specialist knowledge provides a good basis for the clear explanations and instructions given in lessons. Non-specialist teachers teach some lessons in Years 7 to 9. However, they prepare their lessons well and teach to at least a satisfactory standard. In both key stages, lessons closely follow the departmental scheme of work and teachers effectively recapitulate previous learning and use key questions to structure pupils' learning. In the best lessons, pupils are actively engaged through the teachers' effective questioning. Well chosen activities help to promote discussion and provide opportunities for pupils to present what they have learned.
125. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, the tasks set are less challenging, pupils are less actively engaged and have less opportunity to write at length. In nearly all lessons, attempts are made to ensure that activities are adapted to meet pupils' different learning needs. This is generally effective but, where teaching is only satisfactory, potentially higher-attaining pupils are sometimes insufficiently challenged by the work set and work at too slow a pace. The quality of homework is a very strong feature of teaching in both key stages. Tasks set are frequently challenging and many pupils respond positively. Teachers make effective use of well structured and interesting assessment tasks at the end of each topic to provide an effective method of evaluating what pupils have learned.
126. Pupils' responses and attitudes to learning are generally good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. They behave well in lessons, listen to instructions and show the ability to work independently. Work is usually completed and often well presented. Pupils respond very positively where teaching is of the highest quality. Where given the opportunity, they rise to the challenge of working on more open-ended and imaginative tasks.
127. The geography department is effectively led. The curriculum is broad and balanced and it makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. Good systems for assessment and record keeping are in operation and these provide a very good means of monitoring pupils' progress. There have been significant improvements in nearly all the areas recommended for development after the previous inspection. However, insufficient use of information and communications technology in Key Stage 3 remains an area of weakness.

HISTORY

128. In 1999, teachers' assessments showed that the proportion of fourteen year-olds reaching the nationally expected levels was in line with the national average. Standards at the end of the key stage have improved year on year for the past three years. The use of carefully structured teaching materials combined with an emphasis on the improvement of literacy skills has been effective in raising standards. By the end of the key stage, pupils have developed a sound knowledge base and skills in handling data and resources which they can apply to a range of situations. Lower-attaining pupils benefit from the careful matching of tasks to their needs and higher-attaining pupils are aided by well planned extension work which enables them to perform to their full potential.

129. Results in the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 have been below the national averages for the past three years. However, since the appointment of the current co-ordinator, the department has implemented a long-term strategy which has been very effective in raising standards across the key stage. The introduction of resources designed to enable pupils to learn and practise historical skills, the close monitoring of teaching and the grouping of pupils by ability have all contributed to this progress. Effective assessment procedures, in which pupils are directly involved, and an emphasis on improving literacy skills have also combined to raise standards. A thorough preparation in examination techniques has raised pupils' confidence and improved their performance skills. Pupils in Key Stage 4 handle source material with maturity and insight, entering into discussion with confidence, and the higher-attaining pupils are proud of their ability to infer conclusions from a range of sources and to form and test hypotheses. These skills are reflected in their written work. Lower-attaining pupils have also responded well to the well-structured and challenging teaching although, in some cases, their written work does not reflect the quality of their discussion.
130. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of attainment are in line with national expectations at the ends of both key stages and that pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory and very often good across the school. In both key stages, pupils achieve higher standards in history than in most other subjects, largely because the department's organisation and teaching are effective in ensuring that pupils achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make good progress. The subject is well organised and careful attention is paid to matching work to the pupils' ability. The emphasis on teaching historical skills, as well as knowledge, ensures that pupils in both key stages show an increasing independence in their work and a growing ability to discuss hypotheses. For example, pupils in Year 7 produced theories to explain changes in the design of castles, pupils in Year 8 provided the reasons for the storming of the Bastille and a Year 9 class discussed the suffragette movement with confidence and accuracy. Pupils in Key Stage 4 show a developing maturity in their analyses and one class discussed the New Deal with considerable insight.
131. Pupils generally respond well to the teaching and to the challenges presented by the subject. Almost all pupils in Key Stage 4 and the great majority in Key Stage 3 expect to work hard and to concentrate for lengthy periods. They readily enter into discussion and share their opinions and conclusions with confidence. The overwhelming majority of pupils are co-operative and show a respect for each other and for the teachers. Pupils are willing to take responsibility for their work, through independent working or by contributing to their history targets through self-assessment, and they use resources well. However, there is a small minority of pupils in Key Stage 3 who can become unsettled and require a disproportionate amount of the teachers' time to keep them on task.
132. The teaching of history is good. Teachers' know the subject well and this is reflected in their thorough planning and preparation for lessons. Expectations of attainment are high and, as a result of careful and effective assessment, tasks are well matched to the pupils' ability. Work is supportively marked, giving pupils a clear idea of their achievements. The involvement of pupils in the assessment of their own work and in target-setting encourages a mature attitude. Good strategies for managing behaviour ensure that pupils are kept on task. Pupils are now being effectively prepared for examinations and the good levels of achievement are directly linked to the interesting way in which the subject is taught. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and teachers use questioning and discussion to ensure that all pupils are included. For example, in a lesson in Year 7, pupils worked with a sense of urgency and produced hypotheses about how the construction of castles determined the ways in which they could be attacked and defended. In a Year 9 lesson, the brisk pace and good relationships kept the pupils on task and well motivated. Homework is used in a constructive sense to support and develop the work done in class.
133. The previous report identified the need for pupils to discuss their work and to work independently more often. Both of these issues have been well addressed and form the basis of much of the teaching. The improvement in assessment procedures, the quality of the teaching and the management of the subject all indicate that the history department has made good progress since the last inspection.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

134. Standards in information and communications technology at Key Stage 3 have improved since the last inspection but teachers' assessments in 1999 and inspection evidence indicate that they are still below the level expected nationally. The results of teachers' assessments show that there has been improvement over the past three years but from a very low base. The subject is not timetabled in Key Stage 4 and so it was not possible to see any lessons or to form any secure judgements about pupils' attainments or the overall standards achieved.
135. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are able to find their way around most types of software and most can log-on to the Internet and find information that is useful to their work. They can, with guidance, move around the directories in their computers but very few can explain how or why they are achieving results. However, much of the work they are set takes no account of their previous knowledge and skills and, consequently, the subject matter is not always relevant to their needs and their attitudes to lessons are often unsatisfactory. Girls often arrive late and take a long time to settle.
136. In Key Stage 3, the teaching of information and communications technology is satisfactory. The teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and of the underlying technology. Relationships with pupils are generally good but the quiet, relaxed approach frequently adopted permits too much background noise and off-task behaviour and time is wasted in regaining pupils' full attention. Planning is adequate but the effectiveness of the teaching is reduced because teachers do not take sufficient account of the pupils' very wide range of skills and knowledge. Consequently, tasks are not well matched to pupils' learning needs. Assessment is not well developed. Pupils are given some oral feedback but there is no framework in use and criteria are not applied consistently in lessons. Most classes are slow to respond and to start work but the majority of pupils make adequate progress through lessons.
137. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met at Key Stage 3 but, at Key Stage 4, there are insufficient planned opportunities to ensure that all pupils cover the programmes of study. The curriculum leader has drawn up some good plans for implementing the National Curriculum in Key Stage 4 but a great deal of work is needed to implement them. The school has begun to assess attainment at Key Stage 3 and these arrangements will provide an overall picture of individual progress but they need to be extended to cover all pupils in Key Stage 4. Good use is made of this technology in business studies but, generally, insufficient use is made of it across the curriculum.
138. The head teacher has a clear and appropriate strategy for further development. The school has made significant progress since the last inspection. In particular, the quantity and range of equipment has improved, as has pupils' access to it. Even so, the ratio of computers to pupils is well below the national average. There is now an effective scheme of work in Key Stage 3 and there are good plans for Key Stage 4. The school needs to implement these plans to ensure that all the elements of the programme of study are properly covered and draw up a cross-curricular map which identifies how and in what contexts specific skills, knowledge and understanding will be taught. Arrangements for monitoring and assessment need to be improved and appropriate staff development provided in all teaching departments.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

139. In 1999, teachers' assessments showed that the attainment of fourteen year-olds at the end of Key Stage 3 was well below the national average and that standards in this subject area were amongst the lowest in the school. However, attainment in the majority of the lessons observed was judged to be in line with national expectations. This discrepancy is accounted for by the fact that only a limited spectrum of the overall curriculum was being taught during the inspection, not those elements that pupils find more difficult, and teachers and other staff were providing good levels of support and well chosen resources and reference materials during the lessons. When the results of the scrutiny of written work are taken into account, attainment overall is below nationally expected levels at the end of the key stage.

140. At the end of Key Stage 4, the results in the GCSE examinations have been well below the national averages in French, German and Spanish for the past four years although the percentage of A* to C grades in French doubled in 1998, as it did in German in 1999. Results are generally lower than those in other subjects. As in Key Stage 3, and for similar reasons, lesson observations found attainment in the key stage to be in line with national expectations in almost half of the classes. However, when the scrutiny of work is taken into account, attainment at the end of the key stage is below the nationally expected standards.
141. In both key stages, pupils' achievement is satisfactory or better in both key stages, based on the progress they make against their own prior attainment. They build on and develop their knowledge and understanding of the language being learnt and consolidate the skills required to communicate in that language. In Year 9, pupils can converse in simple French about car repairs and maintenance and they can adapt and substitute words and phrases where necessary. Their pronunciation is generally accurate and they can use dictionaries to help them change words in order to adapt a model of the language. In Year 8, pupils respond well to the energy and enthusiasm of the teacher and are able to listen to and follow spoken Spanish in short passages about booking hotel rooms. They use the language themselves with relish and can engage with some ease in exchanges of two to three sentences, using correct pronunciation. Pupils in Year 11 can conduct discussions in German about personal qualities and they can respond to and manipulate dialogue in the language. They can also initiate and develop short dialogues made up of a number of exchanges.
142. Some progress has been made in this curriculum area since the last inspection. Homework is now set regularly and usually complements work done in class. The National Curriculum levels attained by pupils are now recorded and reported at the end of Key Stage 3 although there is still insufficient reference to level descriptors in Years 7 and 8 and the first part of Year 9 as a means of judging progress and raising attainment. Marking is carried out regularly and conscientiously, using the school's policy. One member of staff consistently adds supportive and encouraging remarks and helps pupils set general targets but this practice needs to be applied across the whole department. Teachers are using more support and extension materials to address the range of attainment in classes in Key Stage 3 particularly. This still needs to be applied more consistently. Attainment is still below the national average and there is limited use of information and communications technology to support learning. However, plans have been drawn up to remedy this and new computers will be installed as time and resources permit. The new modern languages block will be occupied in the summer term, successfully meeting the criticism of the accommodation made in the last report.
143. The teaching of the permanent staff was always satisfactory and it was often good or very good. Overall, the teaching of modern languages is satisfactory. The strongest features of the teaching are comprehensive and detailed planning, with learning objectives made clear to the pupils. Teachers have an adequate knowledge of their subject and they use the language being taught consistently in most lessons. Pace and variety of activity are built into the lessons, together with a high level of energy in the best cases. For example, in a Year 10 Spanish lesson, clear objectives, an energetic approach and brisk pace meant that pupils applied themselves well, enjoyed their work and made good progress in speaking the language, using the future tense. Time and resources are used effectively and, in a number of cases, extra support material is provided for lower-attaining pupils. Activities are usually enjoyable and meaningful and pupils have plentiful opportunities to speak the language. Pupils' performance is regularly assessed to ascertain their progress in understanding. Expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement are high and have a positive influence on progress and attitudes towards learning. Weaknesses in teaching occur where the foreign language is not used consistently, where the pace of lessons is too slow or where tasks are not carefully matched to the needs of all pupils in mixed-ability classes.
144. Curricular provision for modern foreign languages is satisfactory. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and it is well organised and well resourced. Classroom practice, marking and recording are monitored regularly and this now needs to be linked to a form of assessment which reflects progress through the National Curriculum levels and enables pupils to set themselves more rigorous and specific targets aimed at raising their attainment.

MUSIC

145. In 1999, teachers' assessments of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 were below the national average but not significantly different from their assessments in most other subjects. At the end of Key Stage 4, the results in the 1999 GCSE examinations were below, but close to, the national average. This represents good achievement since the low performing skills of many pupils when they enter the course reduce their potential for obtaining higher grades. The GCSE results are amongst the best in the school and music students often obtain the highest individual grades.
146. During the inspection, the work seen at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 was often above the standard expected nationally. Some very good foundation work in composition was seen, with pupils in Year 7 producing atmospheric pieces. In Year 9, pupils undertaking a project based on the blues are producing excellent work, with many groups creating exciting and stylistically appropriate performances of their compositions. Pupils are often enthusiastic performers in front of their peers and are fully aware of their own success. Most pupils at Key Stage 4 are strong in performance and composition skills but their knowledge of the wider and more theoretical aspects of the subject is less secure. Pupils in Year 11 are producing some very good multi-layered compositions, showing clear structure and variety of texture and based on good original ideas. Some good solo and duet singing was heard with the singing teacher. The school gospel choir, 'Singerz', works to a very high standard and its performances have a high 'tingle factor'. Good tone, tuning, ensemble work and style in performance are all striking components of the performances and the school is rightly proud of the pupils involved. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language attain well and make good progress. The school fully subsidises instrumental tuition, including the provision of instruments, and around twelve per cent of pupils have lessons. About one in ten of the pupils takes part in the school's very good extra-curricular provision.
147. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is very good and it is excellent in Key Stage 4. Learning is very good at all levels. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject are excellent. His planning and preparation are very good and his teaching methods, linked to his excellent management and organisation, make pupils feel very secure and willing to take the risks which lead to excellence in the arts. This was particularly well shown in Year 9 lessons on the blues, where group performances at the end of the lessons were full of vigour and showed an active understanding of the style. Very good use of questioning extends pupils' knowledge and awareness and builds their self-esteem. Clear targets are set at the beginnings of lessons, with criteria for success, and stringent demands are made of pupils, to which they respond very positively. In Key Stage 4, where pupils create compositions using information and communications technology, the teacher is used as guide, mentor, expert, consultant and work manager. As a result, all pupils make good progress. Assessment is based on all pupils in a group listening to recordings of work at the completion of a project and then assessing them against set criteria, individually and together. Self-assessment is at the core of this process, which is extremely effective and has a positive impact on subsequent work. This process was seen in action with a Year 7 group, and the atmosphere was intense.
148. Pupils' attitudes are very good in Key Stage 3 and excellent in Key Stage 4. Even potentially difficult classes display open and positive attitudes and their response to the teacher's style of classroom management is always excellent. The school has made it easier for pupils to choose to study music in Key Stage 4 and numbers opting for the subject are increasing. There is a strength in group work, where pupils demonstrate good levels of co-operation and collaboration even when not directly supervised. Pupils are strongly mutually supportive and music plays an important role in the development of their self-esteem. Listening is very focused and intense and lessons have a sense of excitement about them. Management of the subject is charismatic and efficient. The teacher is totally committed to raising standards. He knows what he is doing and why he is doing it. The curriculum is very strong in composition and in multi-cultural work, which includes the celebration of the cultures of pupils in the school. Music plays a very positive role in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. All the issues raised by the last inspection have been fully resolved. For example, the accommodation and resources are now excellent. Standards of teaching and learning, provision for extra-curricular music and the examination results have all improved significantly and the department has made very good progress.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

149. In 1999, teachers' assessments showed attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 to be very low and the results of the optional GCSE course at the end of Key Stage 4 were well below the national average. As reported below, teachers' assessments are not accurately based on the expectations set out in the National Curriculum's programmes of study. During the inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 were judged to be in line with those expected nationally but it was not possible to come to a judgement about the oldest pupils in Key Stage 4, as no core physical education lessons were time-tabled for this age group on the days when the inspection was taking place.
150. There has been some satisfactory progress since the last inspection but there remain some important aspects still to be improved. Standards overall have remained the same. Achievement in dance is still a strength and pupils' skills are now more consistently developed across a range of games although their tactical ability is not as good as previously reported. The outdoor hard courts need to be better maintained as they are a valuable resource, particularly for the teaching of games, and their under-use has limited the development of pupils' skills. The department's schemes of work are not sufficiently linked to the National Curriculum's programmes of study and this weakness has not been remedied since the last inspection. Procedures for recording the assessment of pupils' attainment are satisfactory but teachers' assessments are not secure and those submitted for the end of Key Stage 3 are very inaccurate. This is because the schemes of work do not state clearly what pupils should know, understand and be able to do in a measurable way by the end of each phase of work. The head of faculty is taking steps to improve arrangements for assessment, such as making video-recordings of pupils' work in order to moderate and standardise teachers' judgements, both within the school and against national expectations.
151. Whilst the standards achieved overall are satisfactory, pupils achieve much better in some aspects of physical education than in others and standards would be higher if the weaker areas were addressed. For example, pupils do well in learning new skills in gymnastics, dance and games and work with perseverance and enthusiasm to improve their attainment and they are given opportunities to devise, evaluate, adapt and refine their own and others' performances. However, in games, their tactical awareness and understanding are underdeveloped. Although the quality of teaching is generally satisfactory, it needs to be improved in these areas. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good.
152. Teaching is consistently satisfactory and sometimes better. A strength of the teaching is the clarity with which tasks are explained and demonstrated to pupils, enabling them to respond quickly, to be fully engaged with their work and to maintain a very good level of physical activity in lessons. At the beginnings of lessons, the aims are always shared with pupils and reviewed with them at the end. Although this is good practice, it is not as effective as it should be because, in most lessons, the aims are far too broad and do not provide a specific enough measure for pupils and teacher to assess achievement. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject, manage pupils well and pay appropriate attention to health and safety matters. In all lessons, pupils warm up before exercise and cool down at the end of the session. However, these activities are over-directed by the teachers and pupils are not given enough opportunity to take responsibility for their own preparation. Consequently, they are slow to recognise which activities are appropriate and why. There was a notable exception when pupils in Year 9 were asked to devise and lead a warm-up routine at the start of a dance lesson. The majority did this confidently and well.
153. Teachers effectively help pupils to learn new practical skills and to apply them to different situations. For example, pupils in Year 9 confidently used the gymnastic skills they had developed in Years 7 and 8 when they first worked on the trampoline. In a Year 10 volleyball lesson, the teacher progressively built up the pupils' skills by adding additional challenges, such as increasing the number of volleys to be completed after the ball was served. In most lessons, teachers analyse the pupils' performances and offer constructive comments about how they could improve. In dance lessons, for instance, teachers identify common mistakes and give pupils ideas for improvement, such as trying to sustain movements for a longer time. However, teachers seldom give pupils the chance to

make their own evaluations. Consequently, pupils' ability to evaluate their own and others performances is not well developed. In the best lessons, teachers adapt tasks to support pupils who are making slower progress or to challenge the higher-attaining pupils. For example, in a Year 9 volleyball lesson, pupils who found serving easy were asked to stand further back while those who were experiencing difficulty were encouraged to stand nearer to the net. This does not happen in all lessons and often pupils do not make sufficient progress as a result.

154. Teachers teach skills and techniques well but they are generally less successful in teaching the basic strategies and tactics of games and attainment here is below the expected level. Pupils understand the basic rules of netball but do not move well from attacking to defensive play or use space well in the game. Teachers do not adapt or modify games in ways which would develop pupils' understanding of strategies and tactics and their planning in this respect is unsatisfactory. Technical language is well developed in the teaching of gymnastics and dance through the display and use of a key vocabulary. Teachers are well informed about the targets for pupils with special educational needs and these pupils make good progress, particularly those who have been set behaviour targets.
155. The head of this curriculum area regularly monitors teaching and the outcomes are used to determine priorities for curriculum development. Procedures for monitoring standards of attainment, assessing added value and making national comparisons are not satisfactory although the planned arrangements for moderation in Key Stage 3 will go some way to address this. The outcomes of moderation and evaluation activities are not sufficiently well used to plan for improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

156. Up till this year, there have been no GCSE classes in religious education so it is not possible to comment on examination results in comparison with national standards. In the class work in Year 11, standards of attainment are broadly in line with those outlined in the locally agreed syllabus. The pupils have a basic knowledge of Christianity and several other world religions and they can use religious language in a meaningful way. Their spiritual and moral development is good and they can discuss a range of ethical issues, such as capital punishment, abortion and animal rights, although they do not relate their arguments to a particular system of religious belief. The standards of attainment in the new GCSE short course are broadly in line with the standards outlined in the examination syllabus. The pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of some of the key beliefs, concepts and practices of Christianity and Islam and they can consider questions such as the significance of suffering or the existence of God. Their ability to analyse and evaluate responses to religious and moral issues is not as well developed as their ability to select, describe and process information.
157. The standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with those outlined in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have an adequate knowledge and understanding of Christianity and of several other religions followed in Great Britain. They understand specialist religious terminology and they can use it intelligently. They can identify key elements which are common to several religions and they understand how different traditions express themselves through worship and by moral and social attitudes. Their ability to evaluate religious responses to ultimate questions and ethical issues and to relate them to their own beliefs and values is not as strong as their ability to understand how a religious belief affects the lives of its own followers. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory as the teachers are aware of their needs and respond accordingly and those learning English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress although they have no in-class support. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are consistently good across the key stages. Pupils show an interest in their work and concentrate and they are always well behaved.
158. The subject is consistently well taught and there is a positive atmosphere in lessons. Lessons are well planned and the general objectives are made clear to the pupils so that learning is distinct and purposeful. However, the objectives are not sufficiently linked to the locally agreed syllabus or to the examination syllabus. The teachers are confident in the subject matter although the specifically religious element of the teaching is not always securely related to a system of religious belief. Indian religious traditions are not used for examples or illustrations as frequently as those of some other

religions. Pupils are not always encouraged to give personal responses to religious issues, making them more immediately relevant to their own lives and experiences. Teachers' expectations and control are good but the pace of lessons is sometimes too slow. Where teaching is very good, there is clear religious content in the lesson and the pupils are encouraged to make a personal response to the issues raised. In the minority of instances where teaching is less than good, the religious content is insufficient or there is too much emphasis simply on the acquisition of knowledge. Homework is consistently set and this enables the pupils to consolidate their learning. Assessment takes place regularly and marking is generally good although it does not always provide pupils with constructive guidance.

159. The department is well managed. The documentation is appropriate for the current transition period although it will need to reflect the new agreed syllabus when it is implemented later this year. Coverage of the curriculum is adequate but more emphasis is needed on the acquisition of skills and attitudes. There is a new GCSE course at Key Stage 4 and statutory requirements are being met here and at Key Stage 3. Religious education is now taught in the sixth form but it needs to more closely reflect the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Monitoring of attainment and progress and assessment also needs to be incorporated into this programme.
160. There has been good progress since the last inspection on most of the issues raised then. The department has plans to increase the use of information and communications technology but as yet they have been unable to implement them. Accommodation is satisfactory but more texts are needed for the new examination classes. The department makes a significant contribution to the standards of literacy in the school by introducing and explaining new words and phrases. It also makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils through the study of world religions and moral and social issues.