

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL**

Peterchurch

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 116944

Headteacher: Mr C Le C B Barker

Reporting inspector: Mr K Davitte  
15029

Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> May 2000

Inspection number: 186276

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Peterchurch  
Hereford

Postcode: HR2 0SG

Telephone number: 01 981 550 231

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Wilcox

Date of previous inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> November 1995

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Fairfield High School is a 11-16 co-educational comprehensive school in Peterchurch located in the Golden Valley. There are 290 pupils on roll which is much lower than the average size for secondary schools. There are more boys (156) than girls (134). The biggest difference is in the current Year 11 where there are 38 boys and 19 girls. There are only two pupils for whom English is an additional language, their first language being German. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (23.7 per cent) is above average. There are 21 pupils with statements of special educational needs (7.2 per cent) which is well above average. Only 10 pupils are eligible for free school meals (3.4 per cent) which is well below average. The school does not currently have a hall or specialist indoor accommodation for physical education but plans have been passed to rectify those major weaknesses. Fairfield is part of an Education Action Zone which provides support and additional funding in an area of rural isolation. The attainment of the majority of pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 is average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Fairfield is a very effective school which enables pupils of a wide range of abilities to make very good progress and the majority to reach well above average standards. This is made possible by mainly very good teaching, very good leadership and management and a successful team approach in seeking the best for pupils. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- It enables the great majority of pupils to make very good progress from their time of entry to the school to achieve well above average results at 14 years of age and in GCSE examinations.
- It enables pupils to develop into mature and responsible individuals.
- It seizes opportunities to progress presented by outside bodies such as the Education Action Zone and is flexible and innovative in using new technologies, in providing greater choice in the curriculum and in making best use of a cramped site.

#### **What could be improved**

- GCSE results in history which were well below average in each of the last three years.
- Standards in physical education which are not high enough and which are currently affected by very poor facilities.
- The use of assessment data across the school to achieve greater consistency, to extend the use of target setting for pupils and to measure progress more accurately.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in November 1995. Since that time well above average standards have been maintained, over the last six years the trend in the average points score per pupil at GCSE has been above the national trend. The quality of teaching has improved. Standards in design and technology have improved following staff retraining and improvements in facilities. Pupils' understanding of religions is now better than at the time of the last inspection, but too little time is allocated to the teaching of religious education. Opportunities in physical education have improved but standards are still not high enough and are influenced particularly by the absence of suitable specialist accommodation on site. New rooms for food and textiles, art, geography and refurbished laboratories have helped to raise standards. Music has benefited from more teaching time being allocated and has made a very good contribution to improving pupils' understanding of other cultures through

performances and workshops involving visiting musicians from a variety of ethnic groups. There is now a more extensive and satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. Better ongoing training for staff and considerable investment in computers and other technologies have led to a wider range of teaching methods being used. There are now tighter systems for recording pupils' progress but the analysis and use of that information could be better and more consistent. The school still does not provide a regular daily act of collective worship. New courses leading to GNVQ and NVQ qualifications and GCSE physical education have widened choices and improved pupils' career opportunities. Despite some severe accommodation problems the school has made good progress since the last inspection.

## STANDARDS

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

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

In 1999, the overall results in national tests taken at the age of 14 were well above average compared with all schools. Results were also well above average in each of the three subjects in which pupils were tested, that is English, mathematics and science, for both boys and girls. These results compared with all schools nationally represent very good achievement and progress by pupils, the majority of whom entered the school in Year 7 with average standards. Compared with 'similar schools', which are defined purely on the basis of the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, overall results in 1999 were marginally below average.

Pupils continue to make very good progress in Years 10 and 11. In 1999 GCSE standards were well above average compared with all schools and also well above average compared with similar schools. Both boys and girls were well above average compared with boys and girls nationally, but girls more so than boys. The average points score per pupil and the percentage achieving five or more GCSE grades A\*-C were also well above average over the last three years. In 1999 results at grades A\*-C were well above average in most subjects including in English, mathematics and science. The two subjects where they were well below average were in drama and history. Over the past three years the strongest subject has been science and the weakest history. The targets for 2000 are suitably ambitious considering there are 38 boys and only 19 girls in Year 11 (girls traditionally achieve higher than boys at GCSE nationally). The expectation is that the percentage attaining five or more A\*-C grades will be similar to that of 1999, but the average points score is expected to decline.

Standards of work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 were well above average and similar to recent test and examination results. The biggest difference was in history where standards are being raised rapidly as a result of the appointment of a new teacher who started in January 2000. Considerable ground has been made up in tackling pupils' weaknesses in their understanding and use of historical sources and in plugging gaps in their knowledge, but it will take much longer to rectify weaknesses completely. Standards in physical education are not high enough and pupils suffer from not having any specialist accommodation on a cramped site and having to travel by bus to a playing field with inadequate facilities in a single one hour lesson.

The majority of pupils have well above average skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Most are very competent in using a variety of writing styles but pupils of all abilities make spelling errors which they could avoid, particularly in the case of average and middle attainers, with more careful thought. The school is right to be concerned by the below average literacy skills of a minority of pupils which the school's literacy policy is beginning to address. Standards in information technology are well above average compared with most schools.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: nearly all pupils enjoy school and are keen to do their best. Even in lessons which followed immediately after national tests during the week of the inspection Year 9 pupils settled down to work quickly.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons and around the school with few exceptions. Some girls in physical education are poorly motivated and show little interest in practising basic skills.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: the school's passionate belief that all pupils have their distinctive talents which can be nurtured produces confident pupils who relate extremely well to each other and to adults.
Attendance	Very good: well above the national average and unauthorised absence is well below average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all 43 lessons observed. Teaching was good or better in 90 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 62 per cent of lessons. There were some examples of excellent teaching in English and science with exceptionally good team teaching in the latter. Most teaching is relaxed, confident and purposeful. Teachers clearly enjoy their teaching and their enthusiasm and understanding of their subject help to capture the attention and imagination of pupils in the majority of lessons. The majority of pupils persevere, attempt to get the most out of lessons and make very good progress with GNVQ pupils, for example making use of a wide variety of resources. Pupils with special educational needs benefit enormously from the quantity and quality of extra in-class support. Expectations are realistically high but occasionally lower attainers find it difficult to cope with the standards set. There is a healthy and humorous repartee with pupils which helps in making learning enjoyable without sacrificing a serious intent, as seen in a Year 8 class in mathematics when constructing a time-distance graph linked to a car trip and shopping spree by one of the school's teachers. In a French lesson in Year 11, 'fashion' articles from the teacher's earlier years triggered some fun and discussion in the foreign language. Teachers know their pupils well and this shows in the way they ask the right questions of the right pupils. The management of pupils is nearly always very good but in a minority of lessons some inattentive Year 8 pupils are given too much leeway before decisive action is taken. A



very impressive feature of teaching during the week of the inspection was the high quality of revision classes for GCSE which provided the right balance of challenge and support. Revision lessons in history are making an energetic and valiant attempt to plug some gaps in pupils' knowledge. The use of computers across subjects is of a much better standard than found in most schools, as seen during the inspection in work in textiles, art, science and GNVQ engineering. Day-to-day assessment is mostly very good, as illustrated in extensive written comments in Year 7 geography books, but GNVQ pupils are not sufficiently aware of how well they are doing as they are unclear about the course grading system. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught with the school's drive on improving literacy beginning to bite. Very good use of reference sheets in English helps pupils in the correct use of grammar and in targeting what it calls its 'lazy spellers'. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning are very good overall and teaching has improved since the last inspection when ten per cent of lessons observed were unsatisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: the school does remarkably well considering its size to offer some alternatives to GCSE, for example a GNVQ in manufacturing and NVQs in information technology. The quality of physical education is affected by poor facilities. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities and very good residential trips. The benefits of exchange visits with other countries were seen during the inspection in the oral skills demonstrated by some pupils in Spanish.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good: teachers are well informed and mostly meet pupils' needs particularly when very good extra support is available in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils with English as an additional language do not require any special support. Only two pupils have English as an additional language, their first language being German.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: very strong for moral, social and cultural development. There are strong threads of spiritual development in a number of subjects and religious education makes a distinctive contribution. High quality assemblies focused powerfully on many issues including whether photographs can capture part of our spirit. This was appropriately linked to a whole-school photograph to be taken later that day.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: excellent monitoring of behaviour and personal development and very good liaison with outside agencies to extend support. Assessment should be used more consistently to measure academic progress. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are excellent.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: leadership at all levels is at one in preserving a reputation for hard work and traditional values but which is prepared to embrace the best of new ideas and opportunities. A strong community feeling is successfully generated with teaching and non-teaching staff working in the interests of pupils. Staff, including visiting teachers, feel valued by the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good: governors through their occupations and interests have a wide range of talents which are used to serve the school well. They fulfil nearly all their legal responsibilities except for ensuring the adequate coverage of the religious education syllabus in Years 10 and 11 and the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: increasing use is made of test and examination data provided by the local education authority to measure how well pupils are performing in different subjects. Some departments are using quite sophisticated systems to measure progress but there is a lack of consistency.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: an adequate budget is used well enabling above average sums to be spent on resources used in teaching and learning. Principles of best value are well applied to the management and use of resources. Although the amount of available time which teachers spend teaching is below average this is compensated to a considerable extent by teachers always covering for colleagues, including when attending external courses. The school has not used supply teacher cover for the last three years.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Their children are progressing well.</li> <li>• The behaviour of pupils is very good.</li> <li>• The teaching is mostly very good and some is excellent.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem.</li> <li>• The school is helping their child(ren) to become mature individuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular meetings to which all parents are invited to discuss pupils' progress.</li> </ul>

Inspectors' judgements agree with the very positive views expressed by parents on what pleases them most about the school. They value Fairfield. Inspectors also agree with parents that there should be more regular meetings to which all parents are invited to discuss their child's progress. The 'surgeries' which the school offers to parents by appointment after school, approximately every three weeks, to discuss any issue are excellent practice. There are parents however who do not wish to make a special appointment, as they feel that they do not have a particular problem, but who want to meet teachers and receive a first hand progress report which they can discuss with the teacher.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**The great majority of pupils make very good progress from their time of entry to the school to achieve well above average results at 14 years of age and in GCSE examinations.**

1. The foundations for such progress are laid right from Year 7. The fact that most pupils by the end of Year 9 are able to use a good variety of writing styles is due to the careful nurturing which they receive from their time of entry into the school. Similarly the basis for pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 in understanding algebra and being able to handle and apply mathematical data is laid much earlier, with good emphasis on mental mathematics tests. Four gifted pupils were able to enter GCSE mathematics by the end of Year 9 in 1999 of whom three achieved a grade A and one a B and all have started on A-level mathematics in Year 10. In science the process which culminates in most pupils by the age of 14 being able to plan and carry out experiments effectively and use evidence to explain their findings is being ingrained in pupils from the age of 11. The enthusiasm of many for music which results in a third of the school taking advantage of the tuition of visiting peripatetic teachers is cultivated in Year 7, as seen when pupils' interest was captured when taken through the characteristics of the guitar. A well above average understanding of artists and techniques by pupils in Year 9 is the result of enthusiasm and interest engendered over a much longer period and very good use of sketchbooks. Geography pupils in Year 7 achieve a very good understanding of quite complex issues including the role of the Welsh Development Agency.
2. Despite the lower than average allocation of time to religious education Year 9 pupils have made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of topics covered. In physical education pupils do not make the same progress as elsewhere and standards seen in Year 9 lessons were below average.
3. The acquisition of language skills is particularly important in pupils' progress and all teachers play their part. In an English lesson in Year 7 pupils, after an initial introduction by the teacher, made good progress in understanding the meaning of 'Utopia' through compiling a list of words which they associated with the concept. This left a much more indelible impression on their minds than if the teacher had explained everything and had not allowed pupils to explore their ideas. This is replicated and reinforced throughout the school and also makes it easier for pupils to pick up technical terms associated with their subject as well as to improve their general knowledge. In design and technology in Year 8 pupils already show a good grasp and use of descriptive vocabulary on fabrics and in Year 9 pupils absorbed the meaning of the terms 'left' and 'right' in politics in the context of a history lesson. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils have a good appreciation of Shakespearean text and are not daunted when starting on their GCSE work with a potentially difficult reading from Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men'. Pupils' minds are sharpened with discussions on differences between words such as 'despicable' and 'deficient'. Slack vocabulary is picked up by teachers and in English a Year 9 pupil was quite rightly asked to think of an alternative form of words when describing a character as 'stingy and tight', and the response was good. Teachers across the school are very good at this. In a Year 10 food and technology class the teacher insisted on pupils using correct terminology and approach which serves pupils well when they come to sit their GCSE examinations.
4. Pupils with special educational needs also make very good progress in nearly all

lessons in relation to their earlier attainment. This is very important in a school which has an above average percentage of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers and support staff work well together to achieve this end. The school is aware however that not all pupils have acquired the necessary level of literacy skills to cope with some of the expectations set and this has already been recognised in its plans. A good start has been made by introducing a literacy policy across the school.

5. In a school as small as Fairfield where very high or very low performances of a handful of pupils can influence overall results significantly it is essential to look at results over a period of time to get an accurate picture. Fairfield does very well in this respect in consistently moving the majority of pupils on from average standards overall on entry to well above average standards by the time they leave the school. In GCSE examinations results were well above average in nearly all subjects in 1999.
6. Although the school anticipates the average points score to decline in the 2000 GCSE examinations the majority of pupils are still achieving well above average standards. An able group of Year 11 pupils in response to skilful and sensitive teaching showed great maturity, way beyond their years, in analysing and appreciating poems from other cultures. They were able to get inside the feelings of Sujata Bhatt in her poem 'Searching for my Tongue' and discuss whether if you lived in a place and had to speak a foreign tongue 'your mother tongue would rot, rot, rot and die in your mouth until you had to spit it out'. In the same year group pupils in mathematics show a very good understanding of bearings and angles and in both mathematics and science most pupils have very good investigational skills. In chemistry there is confident use of formulae. Improved standards in design and technology are shown in the skills used to make items in wood and metal with a more creative approach in design work. In art exciting project work on topics such as Greek landscapes, the paranormal, Gothic and millennium fashion and ball gowns of a very high standard have clearly inspired pupils. In all year groups there are examples of pupils' work which has been word-processed, improving presentation, giving pupils additional pride in their achievements and which are eye catching for the reader. Heavy and wise investment in information technology is helping pupils to make very good progress.
7. Pupils on the GNVQ course in engineering, only started this year in Year 10, are already showing high standards of graphic communication, technical drawing and technical accuracy and are able to use a variety of methods including computer-aided design packages. They draw on broad sources of information and use the internet both for information and to place orders for components and to communicate with industrial mentors.

### **The school enables pupils to develop into mature and responsible individuals.**

8. Whilst the school places much store on pupils achieving very good examination results it sees its role as much wider than that. This is clearly recognised and acknowledged by parents who value the school's emphasis on self-reliance and developing well-rounded pupils. All pupils are treated equally and in assemblies and elsewhere are encouraged to develop their own particular talents. Pupils' Records of Achievement are well used by the headteacher when interviewing pupils at various stages in their time at the school to reinforce consistent messages on what it is possible to achieve. Such practices, as well as the school's drive to create an atmosphere where pupils are encouraged to develop in a happy atmosphere, are significant factors in pupils' personal development. Despite very good parental support there are small numbers of pupils who demand much attention and who are not as well motivated as others, but the school does not give up on any pupil.
9. Pupils interviewed by inspectors showed themselves to be articulate, self assured and thoughtful and some exceptionally so. Pupils are mature enough to be able to

praise the school for what it already achieves but are equally prepared to suggest how the school can be improved. All staff working at the school, including visiting specialist teachers, speak well of pupils.

10. The relaxed but purposeful approach of the school rubs off on its pupils. They are well organised and give themselves time to think. They are mature enough to appreciate the very humorous side of some assemblies without losing sight of the main messages. They are moved by the dire plight of the less fortunate in the world and do something about it such as raising large sums for charity, about £4,000 last year.
11. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to benefit from new experiences including Duke of Edinburgh awards, day trips, residential in this country and exchange visits abroad. Years 9 and 10 have opportunities to help at the day care centre at Peterchurch. There are good opportunities for personal development through School Council where pupils are allowed to work within their own budget. The school is acutely aware of the importance of all pupils being exposed to and appreciating the world beyond the Golden Valley. Visiting bands from different cultures and ethnic groups reinforce this. Whilst the school realises that more can be done good progress has been made in preparing pupils to live in a much more diverse society than most have experienced.
12. The school cultivates an atmosphere which gives confidence to pupils to put themselves forward for activities. Having done this pupils then benefit further from the experience. It is unusual to see so many taking advantage of singing lessons provided by a visiting teacher. Pupils from Year 7 made a significant input into a high quality assembly during the inspection on famine in Africa which raised social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues very powerfully. Pupils are eager to contribute to the construction of a trail around part of the perimeter of the school as they know that their ideas are listened to. Year 10 pupils working on an art project on the trail were given much decision making, were effectively encouraged to consider all financial costs and benefited from working as part of a team with other pupils and adults. Pupils in Year 11 showed themselves confident in mathematics to come to the front of the class to illustrate their answers on the white board. There are many similar examples in other subjects helped by the fact that pupils are supportive of each other and do not snigger when mistakes are made. In food technology pupils had justifiable confidence in being innovative in modifying recipes. Year 10 pupils on the GNVQ course in engineering are very mature in their approach and take a great deal of responsibility in managing their work and their course portfolios.
13. Some pupils respond to the unique opportunity to write their own job descriptions for the post of school prefect when they see a particular niche where they feel they can make a positive contribution. All prefects are interviewed by the headteacher towards the end of their term of office which adds to the importance of the role and makes them think of what they have achieved. This early experience of individual job appraisal is an invaluable preparation for later working life.

**The school seizes opportunities presented by outside bodies such as the Education Action Zone. It is flexible and innovative in the use of new technologies, in providing greater choice in the curriculum and in making best use of a cramped site.**

14. The style of leadership and management is one which places great store on preserving traditional values and embracing the best of new ideas and opportunities. It is careful to preserve a reputation for hard work and traditional values but is prepared to embrace new ideas and be innovative and practical in its use of resources. It is a 'can do' school which always seeks positive responses to problems and challenges. It is prepared to ask questions of itself where necessary to improve support for pupils. The traditional study leave for GCSE pupils has been discontinued and replaced by on-going support at school right up to the examinations. The school is able to link improvements in results directly to that change of policy. The high quality revision lessons seen during the inspection is testimony to the excellent support which pupils receive. There is an awareness, missed by many schools, that some key tasks can be performed by staff other than teachers and the appointment of a technician with training qualifications to help to co-ordinate the assessment of vocational courses is enterprising.
15. Membership of the Education Action Zone (EAZ) has helped to achieve additional funding and has been embraced as a catalyst to bring about change particularly in the use of computers and new technologies and in measures to broaden the curriculum. Computers are used very effectively in many areas of the school to improve the quality of pupils' learning and raise standards. In the last school year all pupils by the end of Year 11 achieved the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 2 in information technology key skills. Some pupils are currently working towards the higher NVQ level 3. This is a school where teachers and pupils really understand how and when to use computers to help them improve the quality of their work. There are also examples of high quality design work as a result of using computer software and of pupils using a digital camera to record the various stages of their practical work in art. The school's website is used imaginatively to provide additional support and reassurance and includes past examination papers for pupils to access, work sheets and helpful information for parents. The library and resource centre is totally integrated in the provision of information technology. Innovative use of computers has been extended through the recent acquisition of 'interactive whiteboard technology' with science leading the way. This will allow the exchange of information in lessons between teachers and pupils using a large whiteboard linked to computers. The school is ensuring best use of resources through the widespread training of teachers in the use of computers.
16. The headteacher has a good feel for what is required for a rural school preparing pupils for a changing and wider world including changes in patterns of employment locally. In addition to NVQ programmes a GNVQ course in engineering has been introduced in Year 10 this year. All schools have been given the opportunity to be more flexible in its curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and despite the restrictions imposed by its size Fairfield is more advanced in this respect than many schools nationally. The extended day with lessons going on beyond the normal school day has been used creatively to offer additional subjects. GNVQ is successfully offered with good attendance even though timetabled after school on Fridays! A current bid to the EAZ to enable the resource centre to stay open until 5 p.m. fits in well with plans to push on further with the concept of an extended day.
17. Deficiencies in accommodation have been an ongoing headache for the school. To improve classroom accommodation every nook and cranny has been used in the original building, once a Victorian 'gentleman's residence'. Some very attractive rooms have been created, none more than the library and resources centre which is at the heart of much of what the school is trying to achieve. Not all deficiencies have

been overcome and some rooms are cramped. Outside the main buildings a number of 'temporary' classrooms have been made as attractive as possible to blend in with the beautiful natural and tiered rural setting of the school. The very well maintained site and the acute regard for environmental factors sets a good example to pupils. The Arnott Trail being constructed around part of the perimeter of the school is a good example of the latter. It will be used for leisure and teaching purposes and its construction and design is involving many pupils and students from a local technology college. Imaginative projects are envisaged at various points on the trail including for artistic and sporting use. The plans and photographs noticeably displayed in the school stimulate further interest and ideas, both from pupils and staff, with a sunken theatre and a temple being mooted amongst many. All this is in line with the innovative and positive thinking of the school that the whole site should be seen and used as a classroom.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **GCSE results in history which were well below average in each of the last three years.**

18. Results over last three years were well below average for both boys and girls. In 1999 only 29.6 per cent of pupils succeeded at grades A\*-C compared with the national average of 56.2 per cent. In 1998 the success rate was 38.7 per cent and 25 per cent in 1997. These are the weakest results of any subject at GCSE over recent years.
19. The much higher standards observed at the inspection coincide with the appointment of a new teacher this year. There has been an accurate assessment of pupils' weaknesses and positive steps have been taken to address these. A very good start has been made in the lower school to provide pupils with a firmer basis than that enjoyed by current pupils in Years 10 and 11. In a Year 7 history lesson this showed in a lively and enquiring approach to history in studying the role of women in a medieval village. Completed work of Year 9 pupils already shows much better skills in the use of historical sources and GCSE pupils are benefiting from intense revision to make up lost ground. Standards have risen but the full effect on GCSE results will have to be monitored over the next two years to measure the exact impact made by new teaching methods.

### **Standards in physical education which are not high enough and which are currently affected by very poor facilities.**

20. Any assessment of standards in physical education has to take into account severe weaknesses in accommodation, including the distance of the playing fields from the school and the necessity to transport pupils there and back in a one hour slot on the timetable including time for pupils to change. The playing fields are very basic without any toilet facilities and maintenance of the jumping areas are poor.
21. During the inspection standards seen in physical education in Year 9 were not high enough. The standards of groups practising the basic skills of catching, throwing and fielding a ball were well below average. Pupils' skills of co-ordination are poor. Too many, especially girls, lack concentration and commitment and their attention wanders when instructions and advice are given to them. They are unable to evaluate their own performance and that of others effectively. Teaching recognises these weaknesses and attempts to do something about them but in the time available lessons hardly get under way. Those pupils who are unable to participate are set observation tests which they are required to complete, some of which requires them to focus on the progress of a particular pupil in the lesson. These were poorly completed. Other pupils practising the long jump tried harder but without enough

thought. Most failed to achieve any distance as a result of the lack of height in the jump and some over-ambitious run-ups. They and the teacher were not helped by the poor condition of the jumping pit and take-off boards.

22. Although plans have been agreed for a building programme which will transform many facilities for physical education the problem of the inadequate current playing field and timetabling problems will continue unless any action is taken. The school also has the task of improving current standards over the next year whilst it awaits its new accommodation.

**The use of assessment data across the school to achieve greater consistency, to extend the use of target setting for pupils and to measure progress more accurately.**

23. There is no consistent whole-school system for generating and collecting data on pupils' progress as they progress through the school. The departments of mathematics, science and design and technology have devised their own systems for recording and using assessment data, they are very different. Other departments are not as advanced. Different staff have different levels of expertise in understanding and using data and in comparing the performances of the same pupils in different subjects.
24. The school does not have to start from scratch. It is now much better than at the time of the last inspection in using data but more could be done. There is already a system requiring departments to predict grades which pupils are expected to achieve at GCSE, but the process of what they should achieve could be extended. Departments are also required to analyse subsequent performance in the light of predictions made, but those reports vary in quality and in general are too sketchy. The headteacher has a simple but effective system of grading pupils at regular intervals, but that information needs to be shared more widely, including with parents.
25. In preparing for the inspection the school has already found that analysis of very good data made available by the local education authority helps in the assessment of its performance.

**WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

26. In order to improve standards the senior management and governors should:
- 1) Improve GCSE results in history which were well below average in each of the last three years by:**
    - maintaining the present significant improvements in teaching and learning as seen during the inspection;
    - the school monitoring progress in lessons;
    - using the results of assessment to set targets for pupils to aim at.
  - 2) Raise standards in physical education which are not high enough and which are currently affected by very poor facilities by:**
    - informing pupils of the national expectations which they should be aiming at and improving levels of motivation of some pupils;
    - close liaison with primary schools to plan an integrated programme to improve skills;
    - seeking alternative playing fields or improving facilities on the existing field;
    - allocating sufficient time for transporting pupils between school and the playing fields;
    - careful planning to make the best use of new indoor accommodation as soon as



it is on line.

**3) Use more consistent methods across the school to extend the use of target setting for pupils and to measure progress more accurately by:**

- creating a whole-school system for the consistent collection and use of data;
- using the best features of systems being already developed in some departments;
- extending the use of target setting already started at GCSE;
- training staff in the interpretation and use of data using existing expertise to lead that training;
- keeping systems as simple and manageable as possible with the focus on the use of data to improve standards;
- taking advantage of the very good facilities in computing to record and recall data.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7.0	55.8	27.9	9.3	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>		Y8 - Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll		290
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		10

<b>Special educational needs</b>		Y8 - Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		21
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		69

<b>English as an additional language</b>		No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language		2

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>		No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission		7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving		3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	27	27	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	17	18	17
	Girls	25	18	18
	Total	42	36	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 [84]	67 [68]	65 [74]
	National	62 [65]	62 [60]	55 [56]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 [29]	54 [49]	33 [42]
	National	28 [35]	38 [36]	23 [27]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	18	19	17
	Girls	23	19	19
	Total	41	38	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 [78]	70 [77]	67 [93]
	National	64 [61]	64 [64]	60 [61]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 [31]	54 [56]	39 [51]
	National	31 [30]	37 [37]	28 [30]

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	24	32	56

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	12 [12]	24 [26 ]	24 [26 ]
	Girls	25 [20]	31 [26 ]	31 [27]
	Total	37 [32]	55 [52 ]	55 [53]
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	64.9 [59.3]	96.5 [96.3]	98 [100]
	National	46.3 [44.6]	90.7 [90]	95.7 [95]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	49.6 [45.4]
	National	37.8 [36.8]

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

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	286
Any other minority ethnic group	1

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	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: Y8 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3: 1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y8 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	268

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y8 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.8
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y8– Y11**

Key Stage 3	27.1
Key Stage 4	23.3

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	789,101
Total expenditure	739,513
Expenditure per pupil	2,541
Balance brought forward from previous year	15,619
Balance carried forward to next year	49,482

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	290
Number of questionnaires returned	266

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	47	7	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	48	47	1	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	48	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	53	12	3	2
The teaching is good.	54	39	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	45	16	4	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	32	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	25	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	49	9	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	66	31	1	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	41	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	41	14	2	10