

# INSPECTION REPORT

**PARRS WOOD HIGH SCHOOL**

MANCHESTER

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105556

Headteacher: Mr I Hall

Reporting inspector: Mr R C Drew  
7281

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2001

Inspection number: 186517

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wilmslow Road  
East Didsbury  
Manchester

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: L Fletcher

Date of previous inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> January 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7281	R Drew	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9710	R Burgess	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious Education	
18447	R Cohen	Team inspector	History	
19586	W Easterby	Team inspector	English	
17709	A Giles	Team inspector	Physical Education	
31680	P Redican	Team inspector	Art	
10209	V Gormally	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
31100	G Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	

21785	V Kerr	Team inspector	Science	
17404	J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern Languages Equal Opportunities	
4689	M Christian	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology	
3930	R Pitcher	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs	
27485	M Sims	Team inspector	Urdu English as an Additional Language	
27353	T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15407	M Harrison	Team inspector	Geography	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Parrs Wood is an 11 to 18 comprehensive school with technology college status. It is much larger than average with 1,850 pupils on roll, including 356 sixth form students. The school serves an unusually wide range of communities in south Manchester, including economically prosperous and significantly disadvantaged families, and a mix of ethnic backgrounds: about 66 per cent of pupils are of white UK heritage, 14 per cent of Pakistani background, two per cent of Black Caribbean origin, three per cent of Indian background and 15 per cent from other ethnic minority communities. Nearly 450 pupils have English as an additional language, though command of English is very secure for virtually all these. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, at 29 per cent, is significantly higher than average.

About 230 pupils have special educational needs, which is below the national average. About 1.5 per cent of these pupils have formal statements, compared with 2.5 per cent nationally. The prior attainment of pupils is very varied, but, on balance, is broadly average.

Since the last inspection, the school has moved into new premises, purpose built to develop learning technologies. The school is popular with parents and is heavily over-subscribed each year. It is heavily involved in the 'Excellence in Cities' programme.

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

This is a very good school with some excellent features. Teaching and leadership are both very good and help to produce equally impressive attitudes and behaviour among pupils. Standards of attainment are above average, while spending is broadly average; value for money is, therefore, very good. Cost effectiveness in the sixth form is also very good.

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

- Standards of attainment are above average, and well above average for similar schools.
- Management is very good. The ability to change vision into practice and the commitment to improve are both excellent. Management of the science department is excellent.
- The school provides very good teaching and ensures that learning is equally strong.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The school's overall curriculum is good: certain aspects are particularly successful, including provision for gifted and talented pupils, literacy and extra-curricular activities.
- The level of care for pupils and monitoring of their progress is very high and there are very good links with parents.
- Moral, social and cultural development are very successfully promoted.

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

There are no extensive areas of the school's work which are unsatisfactory by national standards.

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

The school's many strengths vastly outweigh its relative weaknesses. Most of the latter are in the process of being resolved by actions already initiated by the school.

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1996. Since then, it has made very good improvement on provision already considered to be good. The key issues raised in 1996 have been dealt with well: lesson timings and the use of form periods are better; punctuality has improved, but should do so further; provision for spiritual development and for special educational needs are now both satisfactory. Matching work to pupils' needs has shown marked improvement, as have the funding and resourcing of departments. ICT and religious education for Years 7 to 11 now meet statutory requirements, though sixth form religious education and act of worship statutes are not complied with.

More significantly, the school has transformed the context in which it operates with its new, well-designed and fully equipped premises, and with its very successful adoption of initiatives. These focus on teaching and learning styles, assessment and target setting, professional development, and the needs of distinctive groups of pupils, such as those from ethnic minority communities, those liable to exclusion and those deemed gifted and talented. As a result, teaching quality has improved significantly, along with the accuracy and extent of assessment data available to staff and the quality of guidance and support given to specific groups of pupils.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	20000
GCSE examinations	B	C	C	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	C	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

By the age of 14, the test results for English, mathematics and science are above average. Compared with similar schools, these results are well above average. In the work seen during the inspection, standards among 14 year olds were also above average, specifically in history, physical education and modern languages as well as English, mathematics and science. Pupils' work was average in standard for all other subjects.

At the age of 16, GCSE examination results are average or just above average in most years when compared with all schools. For schools in the same free school meals category, these results are well above average. The work of 16 year olds seen during inspection was above average overall. It was particularly good in science and above average in English, modern languages, history, music, geography, physical education and ICT. In religious education in Year 11, it is below average. Some

subjects under-perform in GCSE examinations compared with the school's average and compared with the same pupils' successes in other subjects: in 2000, for example, pupils' relative performance was significantly lower in the structures and graphics courses within design and technology and also in economics, German, child studies and food technology.

By the age of 18, examination results are usually generally well above average in terms of points scores, though 2000 results were average. Standards seen in students' work during the inspection were above average in nearly all subjects. They were well above average in science.

The achievement of pupils and students is good across all years. They make substantial gains in knowledge and understanding in nearly all subjects and sustain higher than average standards, despite entering the school with broadly average attainment. Achievement is very good in sixth form science, mathematics, English and modern languages. It is good for all other subjects across the school, apart from the satisfactory achievement in art, music and design and technology, and the unsatisfactory progress made by the current Year 11 pupils studying religious education.

Girls outperform boys at each stage, but less so than nationally, as a result of school's procedures. Special educational needs provision is limited in Years 10 and 11 and progress is satisfactory. In all other respects, pupils with special educational needs, English as an additional language and those deemed gifted and talented make good progress across the school.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The majority shows a strongly positive interest and involvement in school, both in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Exclusions are very low and there is very good behaviour in lessons in general. Pupils look after the fabric of the school very much better than is usually found. Around school, they are lively, but mature and orderly.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are much quicker than most to take initiative, appreciate the needs of others, and show respect for other pupils and staff. Very good relationships prevail across a socially and racially mixed school.
Attendance	Good. Attendance levels are above the average for comparative schools. Punctuality is much better than at the time of the last inspection, but is still in need of improvement.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching in the school is very good. In 98 per cent of lessons, it was at least satisfactory, and this included 31 per cent with very good and excellent teaching. Seventy four per cent of lessons had teaching which was at least good, while in two per cent it was unsatisfactory.

For Years 7 to 9, teaching is good. A small proportion, about three per cent, of unsatisfactory teaching is found across a range of subjects, but 97 per cent of teaching is at least satisfactory and 68 per cent is good or better. Science and physical education have consistently very good teaching across Years 7 to 9, while in most other subjects, it is good. In music and ICT, it is satisfactory.

In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good. Unsatisfactory teaching amounts to two per cent and good teaching comprises 74 per cent of lessons. English, science, physical education, geography and modern languages have very good teaching. It is good in nearly all others and satisfactory in art.

In the sixth form, teaching is also very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and in nearly half the lessons the quality was very good or excellent. Good teaching accounts for 75 per cent of lessons seen. Very good teaching was typical in science, English, mathematics, history, geography and modern languages and good teaching was predominant in all other subjects.

Teachers have very strong subject knowledge, especially in Years 10 to 13. Literacy is taught well and numeracy satisfactorily. Key skills in Years 12 and 13 are very effectively developed. Teachers as a whole plan lessons very well and have very high expectations of pupils. They use assessment information well to guide how they teach. The management of pupils is very good for Years 7 to 11 and is excellent for students in Years 12 and 13.

A minority of teachers in Years 7 to 9 use homework too irregularly and are less successful than most staff in the use of assessment and the setting of work of differing demands to meet the varied needs of pupils.

Pupils learn well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 to 13. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 are good at concentrating, acquiring new information and ideas, and gauging their own progress. In Years 10 to 13, these features are very good. Pupils with special educational needs satisfactorily learn in Years 10 and 11; they require more support in class if learning is to be very good. Pupils with English as an additional language learn well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<p>Good for Years 7 to 11. Statutory requirements are all met; there is less vocational provision than in comparable schools, but very good enhancement through literacy, extra-curricular and personal and social education provision, and links with primary schools.</p> <p>Satisfactory in the sixth form. Good range of A-levels, limited vocational provision; religious education fails to meet requirements.</p>
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory and well organised. Pupils need more extensive support in class and there are too few support assistants to offer this.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Well managed. Pupils make good progress across Years 7 to 11 and very good progress in the sixth form. They are carefully monitored, but the additional needs are modest due to good command of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Moral, social and cultural development are all very well promoted, while opportunities for spiritual development are satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Both the personal and academic development of pupils are very well supported. The quality of guidance and day-to-day care is impressive. The school has good systems in place, matched by equally good attitudes among staff and pupils.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL WORKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

The school works very well with parents, providing them with very high-quality information and receiving strong parental support.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is very good and in some respects excellent. The headteacher, governors and key staff share a clear vision for the school and educational direction is excellent. Delegation is extensive and very successful. Monitoring and supporting of staff is very effective. Senior and middle managers are good at taking the initiative, introducing strategies and implementing them very well. The school is already taking steps to simplify the management arrangements for ICT, which currently lack clarity.
How well the governors	Very good. Governors as a team have a very clear view of the

fulfil their responsibilities	school's strengths and weaknesses and how it might improve. They offer very strong strategic support for the headteacher and the staff as a whole. They have played a key role in helping the school to make such good improvement since the previous inspection. Some statutory requirements still need to be met, particularly provision of religious education in the sixth form and a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school is good at meeting its targets and its commitment to succeed is excellent. Staff at every level are remarkably imaginative, identifying new ways in which pupils could be better served and fresh aspects of their own performance which could be developed. Whole-school planning is very accurate in identifying priorities and devising strategies to address them.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Day-to-day financial management and the strategic deployment of funds to support planning priorities are both very well managed.

The school is well resourced and accommodation is very good; most of it is excellent, but exceptions exist, particularly accommodation for music. Staffing is very good, particularly the level and expertise of teachers, but there are too few special educational needs support assistants.

Financial principles of evaluating services and costs within the school are exceptionally well followed, with astute comparisons between alternate providers, often saving the school many thousands of pounds while securing better services.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's high expectations of their children.</li> <li>• The way the school helps their children mature.</li> <li>• The good progress their children make.</li> <li>• The good teaching in the school.</li> <li>• The quality of leadership and management.</li> <li>• The approachable nature of staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework arrangements in Years 7 to 9.</li> <li>• Information to parents.</li> <li>• The quality of liaison between parents and the school.</li> </ul>

The inspection team fully endorses the very positive views held by so many parents on the great majority of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors also found strengths in other areas.

They agree with parents that homework arrangements could be improved for Years 7 to 9, although the school's arrangements are as good as those found nationally. However, inspectors judge that the information to parents and other means of liaison are much better than in most schools.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. The school takes in pupils with a very wide range of prior attainment, but collectively standards are broadly average.
2. By the age of 14, the pupils' results in National Curriculum tests for English, mathematics and science are above average. These judgements are in comparison with all schools nationally; in relation to other schools in the same free school meals category, these results are well above average, placing them amongst the top five per cent in the country.
3. In the work of 14 year olds seen during the inspection, standards are collectively above average. Many individual subjects have above average standards, namely English, mathematics, science, history, geography, ICT, modern languages and physical education, while in the remaining subjects, standards are average. In English, in the work seen during the inspection, standards are above average in all aspects of the subject, but reading and speaking skills are particularly strong, while those for writing are marginally less so. In mathematics, pupils' work is above average across the subject, but the standards in algebra are very high. In science, standards are above average: pupils are very good at practical and investigational work, where they show great independence and initiative. They also master the large factual content of science very well, and use technical terminology with confidence and accuracy.
4. This represents good achievement across Years 7 to 9. It reflects good teaching and very positive attitudes from pupils. Pupils gain satisfactorily in their knowledge and understanding in art and music and make good gains in all other subjects. The school keeps very detailed records of pupils' progress and clearly identifies pupils with special educational needs, those deemed gifted and talented and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The provision put in place ensures that all make good achievements across Years 7 to 9. Girls' and boys' attainment is broadly similar, but is again closely monitored, and measures have been introduced to raise boys' standards to slightly exceed those of girls, contrary to national trends.
5. By the age of 16, pupils' results at GCSE are in line with the national average for all schools. This judgement is based on pupils' points scores: over recent years the proportion of candidates gaining five or more A\* to C passes has generally been above average. Compared with schools in the same free school meal category, results for 16 year olds are well above average. The school agrees demanding GCSE targets with the local education authority and consistently meets or exceeds them. Targets, as well as actual GCSE results, vary from year to year, and while they show a noticeable drop in 2000, these variations closely match the changes in the prior attainment of pupils from year to year. Results in 2000, when compared with the candidates' performance at the age of 14, represent well above average standards in terms of the proportion of five or more A\* to C grades and average standards when points scores are used.



6. Results vary significantly between subjects. In 2000, for example, science, sociology, ICT, English literature and media studies all had results well above average. In English literature, for instance, 86 per cent of pupils gained A\* to C passes compared with 61 per cent nationally. Others had results below the school and national averages, including German, food technology, history, geography, economics, graphics and structures. In food technology, for example, 18 per cent of pupils gained A\* to C passes, compared with 43 per cent nationally. These variations partly reflect the prior attainment of pupils, so that the standards reached in geography, for instance, are higher than the same pupils reached in most of their other subjects. Elsewhere, there are strong links between the quality of teaching and preparation for examinations and results. In science, for example, results at GCSE are well above average, the outcome of consistently very good teaching and excellent management. In music and art, standards are average, and teaching and management generally good or satisfactory.
7. In the work seen during the inspection, standards for 16 year olds were above average. They were well above average in science, above average in English, history, modern languages, geography, music, ICT and physical education. They were average in mathematics, art and design and technology. In religious education, current Year 11 pupils show below average standards. This reflects a short-term problem of less curriculum time than should have been made available and subject management which was less successful than it now is. In Year 10, standards are at least average.
8. Collectively, pupils are achieving well in Years 10 and 11. They make good gains in relation to their attainment on entry to the school and their standards at the age of 14. Good progress was typical of the lessons observed during the inspection. Achievement in individual subjects is good in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, music, modern languages, ICT and physical education. Satisfactory achievement is made in art and design and technology. For religious education, achievement amongst Year 11 is unsatisfactory, but in Year 10 it is satisfactory. Within design and technology, gains made in resistant materials and textiles courses are good, while in food technology and graphics and structure, they are below average.
9. In Years 10 and 11, girls' attainment is higher than that of boys, but less so than nationally. This is partly the outcome of teaching strategies having been developed to motivate boys more successfully than in the past; partly it reflects the very careful monitoring of boys' and girls' progress. In addition, both girls and boys identified as gifted and talented, or from ethnic minorities, have their progress clearly monitored and teachers successfully build on this knowledge. During the course of the inspection, Eid was celebrated: consequently, a large number of pupils who speak English as an additional language who would normally have been supported were absent. Nevertheless, they make good progress in individual lessons, where they are given a satisfactory level of support, and they also progress well over time. Gifted and talented pupils progress well because their needs are carefully monitored and teachers make good provision for them. Ethnic groups perform differently, as they do nationally, but the school's monitoring processes have reduced the deficit, for example, in standards reached by boys of Black-Caribbean background.
10. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and virtually all pupils are competent in literacy and numeracy by the age of 14. This is partly due to the

good degree of personal tuition given each week. Standards are closely monitored; pupils who are not progressing are spotted rapidly, and remedial action is taken. During Years 10 and 11, pupils with special educational needs have too few classroom assistants to help them. As a result, progress is satisfactory rather than good. However, virtually all pupils gain some success in public examinations. Where pupils have physical disabilities, the support given both by teachers and other pupils is excellent and the standards achieved reflect this. Pupils attending the learning support centre make good progress and are generally reintegrated to normal lessons quickly and successfully.

11. Results for students aged 18 are above average. The points scores for students over the last three years, 20.4, are noticeably better than the national figure of 17.9. While the school's results dropped in 2000, this represented the first examination for several new courses, all of which drew heavily on students with lower prior attainment than average for the sixth form. Examination results were well above average in 2000 in physics, chemistry, English literature, French, psychology and some minority subjects, such as ancient history, further mathematics and government and politics. Most of these had 60 to 70 per cent of candidates gaining A or B grade passes, when national averages are closer to 40 per cent. Results in 2000 were just below average in business studies, media studies, Spanish and mathematics. In the work seen during the inspection, standards among 18 year olds were well above average in science and French, and above average in virtually all other subjects. Standards were average in music and art.
12. These examination results and standards in work seen indicate that students achieve well in the sixth form. They benefit from very good teaching and they bring their own very positive attitudes to their work. The very few students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils also progress well. In some subjects, namely science, English, mathematics and French, achievement in the sixth form is very good. It is satisfactory in art and good in all other subjects.
13. Since the previous inspection in 1996, the school's high standards have been maintained for pupils aged 14 and 16, as well as for students aged 18. While the results in tests and examinations have fluctuated as national ones have steadily risen, the school's intake has changed over time and is slightly lower on average than in the early and mid 1990s. Also the beneficial impact of the many teaching initiatives has taken time to be fully felt. Improvement began early in science, for example, and has already raised standards noticeably; in history, in contrast, developments in teaching began later but were evident in lessons observed during the inspection and in the above average standards being reached by current Year 11 pupils. However, they had not been sufficiently well established to affect the 2000 GCSE results significantly. Government and school data show that the standards reached are consistently better than average for the pupils and students involved. The good value-added being achieved reflects the strong management and teaching in the school and the increasingly good use made of assessment and target setting.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

14. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and their standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils' ability to show initiative and demonstrate personal responsibility is very good.

Relationships in the school, between groups of pupils and between pupils and teachers, are very good.

15. Pupils show very positive attitudes to school and most attend willingly. Pupils of all ages and abilities display enthusiasm for school and for lessons and are keen to learn. They recognise the value of education and the potential in obtaining qualifications. The vast majority arrive on time at the start of the school day and for lessons, although a small minority is less punctual. There are a very small number of low-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 for whom alternative learning arrangements have been made, and who are successfully completing their education. In most lessons, pupils of all levels of ability are well motivated and accept challenge well. Listening skills are well developed, as was especially apparent in a Year 10 personal and social education lesson on speed-reading. Occasional instances were seen in the inspection where pupils were unco-operative or adopted passive attitudes to the lesson, but these were rare. Participation in extra-curricular activities, such as music and sport, is very good.
16. Standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils generally behave sensibly, moving around the school site at the beginning and end of the school day and during break and lunchtimes. There are instances of high spirits, but no evidence of malicious behaviour or vandalism. Pupils work sensibly in practical lessons, as seen in a Year 7 science lesson on dissolving and melting solutions. In physical education lessons, they adopt the necessary social skills from Year 7 and learn to observe the rules and conventions of team games and competitive sports.
17. There is an absence of oppressive behaviour and when bullying occurs it is effectively dealt with. Most bullying incidents occur in Years 7 and 8 and the number of incidents declines as pupils mature. Exclusions, both permanent or for a short, fixed term, are low and have fallen since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities who are excluded was higher in the last full school year than for white pupils, but the school has adopted effective strategies to minimise this discrepancy. Pupils of all ages understand the impact of their actions on others very well and show consideration for others' feelings, values and beliefs. Pupils value the system of rewards and recognise the need for sanctions.
18. Relationships in the school are very good, both between groups of pupils and between pupils and teachers. During the inspection, pupils in Years 10 and 11 demonstrated their loyalty to their teachers and there is an especially good rapport between sixth form students and staff. Pupils develop a capacity for collaborative group and pair work as they mature.
19. The personal development of pupils is very good. Pupils' ability to show initiative and exercise personal responsibility is good. Pupils are keen to attend extra-curricular sporting activities. Pupils of all ages express their views through the school council. Years 10 and 11 pupils run a lunchtime activity club and undertake training as peer counsellors to help younger pupils. A group of higher attaining Year 9 pupils willingly researched Jewish customs and shared their knowledge with Year 7 pupils in religious education. Sixth form students exercise social responsibility in the school and wider community through sports leadership courses, visits to a local hospital and helping in local primary schools.

20. Attendance is good, exceeding the average for comprehensive schools nationally, and has increased in line with national trends. Authorised absences include a small number of family holidays taken during term-time, which occasionally extend beyond the authorised two weeks and which can affect learning. Pupils who are absent with long-term health problems are well supported by the school.
21. Since the previous inspection pupils' attitudes to school have improved and the already good standards of behaviour have further improved. There has been a significant drop in absence, and exclusions have fallen amongst all groups of pupils, but especially amongst ethnic minority pupils.
22. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are consistently good and their attitude generally improves as they move up the school, whose ethos influences them positively. Pupils who have behavioural problems are given excellent professional support in the learning enhancement centre.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

23. Teaching across the school as a whole is very good and one of its great strengths. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good across Years 10 to 13. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, 98 per cent had at least satisfactory teaching; in 74 per cent of lessons the quality was at least good, while in 27 per cent the quality was excellent or very good.
24. Across Years 7 to 9, teaching has many strong features and it is good overall. While a very small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, about three per cent, is dispersed across a range of subjects, mainly the vast majority of teaching, 97 per cent, is at least satisfactory. Sixty-eight per cent of lessons had good and better teaching. This is the outcome of good subject knowledge and planning, high expectations and good variety within teaching methods. The management of pupils is very good. Compared with schools nationally, teachers use assessment and homework satisfactorily, but they are not as strong as other features of teaching in this school. Homework lacks full consistency in the way it is used and the assessments made using national curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 are not as accurate as they should be. However, the combined effect of teaching is positive: it leads to good achievement and helps to establish very good behaviour. Learning in Years 7 to 9 reflects teaching closely and is good in every respect. Pupils vary in their attitudes in Year 7 and in their ability to concentrate for substantial periods, but all of these features are good by Years 8 and 9. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are given adequate support and also learn well.
25. Both teaching and learning across Years 7 to 9 are very good in science and in physical education. They are good in nearly all other subjects and satisfactory in music. Teaching in ICT in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but pupils are particularly well motivated and learning is good. In no subject is teaching or learning unsatisfactory.
26. In Years 10 and 11, teaching overall is very good and leads to equally successful learning. Ninety-eight per cent of lessons had satisfactory or better teaching, and in 74 per cent it was good or better. Almost identical judgements apply to learning. There is virtually no non-specialist teaching, so that levels of expertise are consistently very good. Staff are also using

assessment and homework well and the management of pupils, planning and setting of high expectations are all very good. Pupils as a whole learn very well. They have become even better at concentrating, developing study skills and working at a rapid pace. They also have a very good knowledge of their own learning because assessment and the use of targets by teachers are very good; in Years 7 to 9 it is less well refined. Most teachers in Years 10 and 11 plan lessons particularly well, including making provision for the full range of pupils' abilities and interests. A minority take less account of varied needs within middle attaining pupils, and in Years 7 to 9 this is a slightly more marked feature. In Years 10 and 11, pupils with special educational needs receive limited support in class. Their learning is satisfactory, but for it to become good or better more support assistants are required. Teaching and learning are very good, on balance, in science, physical education, modern languages, geography and English. Good teaching typifies mathematics, ICT, history, music and design and technology, while teaching in art is satisfactory.

27. In the sixth form, teaching is very good. Good or better teaching comprised 75 per cent of lessons seen. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed and nearly half had very good or excellent teaching. Learning is equally impressive, with similar proportions of lessons having satisfactory, very good or excellent learning. All aspects of teaching are carried out very well, but management of students is excellent. Teachers show a very perceptive balance between encouraging and guiding students on the one hand, and allowing initiative and self-reliance to develop on the other. Learning is consistently very good, reflecting the strong, positive attitudes of students and the encouragement and fine skills of teachers. Teaching and learning are very good in science, English, mathematics, modern languages, history, business studies and geography, and good in all other subjects.
28. Across the school as a whole, basic skills teaching is good. Literacy is particularly well promoted, and ICT skills are taught well. Numeracy strategies are only just being introduced, though teaching is satisfactory. The school has been very successful at establishing consistent use of literacy strategies across a large proportion of its teaching: use of key words and vocabulary lists, structures to aid writing, skills for speed reading and note taking are all taught and they help pupils with very different needs improve. While aspects of ICT assessment need co-ordination, the school has already made more progress than is common in ensuring that ICT skills are widely taught and extensively used in all National Curriculum subjects. The integration of key skills into A and AS-level courses has been very successful and these are very well taught. Numeracy skills are largely taught as and when they appear necessary in each subject, but the new school policy is designed to establish much more extensive and co-ordinated coverage.
29. In a great many lessons, the combined effect of several well-developed teaching skills was highly effective. In a Year 9 science lesson on the properties of light, teaching was excellent because it stimulated excitement amongst the pupils and used practical demonstrations to help them to understand difficult concepts. The lesson was extremely well planned, making excellent use of pupils' prior knowledge and of the teacher's very good relationship with them. The pace was brisk throughout. An excellent example of mathematics teaching in Year 9, focusing on right-angled triangles, was also very carefully planned, and succeeded particularly well because different tasks, and varied forms of support from the teacher, allowed pupils of all abilities to make very good progress, including an identified group of gifted and talented pupils. A Year 9 geography lesson on Antarctica, with teaching which

was excellent, started with a clear statement of aims, to be noted down and focused upon by the pupils. Questioning by the teacher posed challenging follow-up questions; high expectations and pace were sustained throughout the lesson, and pupils were given scope for making presentations to the class. In a Year 13 English lesson looking at writing for different purposes, teaching was very good because the teacher's excellent knowledge of examination board requirements was used to great effect in directing the analysis students were making of various articles. Students were given ample scope to develop their own ideas, discuss in groups and test their thinking on the teacher and their peers. They made very good progress as a result.

30. Teaching in the school is not hampered by significant areas of unsatisfactory practice. The unusually high level of participation by staff in voluntary projects to analyse and improve teaching and learning methods has done much to eliminate poor practice, and even more to increase the amount of good practice. Effective monitoring by senior and middle managers has helped to enhance teaching quality, and informal observation by peers has also contributed. Teaching is much improved since the last inspection, when it was already judged to be good. The initiatives responsible for improvement have only recently gained sufficient momentum to have an impact on pupils' performance: in most subjects the impact was evident in the work of current classes and in above average recent test and examination results. However, some subjects are still completing the process of converting new understanding about teaching into new practice. In Years 10 and 11, for example, in mathematics, history and aspects of design and technology, recent average or below average GCSE results partly reflect an earlier period of teaching which was less well informed about strategies and course choice than that seen during the inspection. New practices are already helping pupils attain higher standards in current Year 11 in these subjects.
31. Teaching's continued improvement is in part dependent on turning areas of satisfactory or good practice into excellent practice. The key areas include: ensuring that the match of work to the full ability range is even more successfully developed, especially in Years 7 to 9; making assessment in those years more accurate and, therefore, more viable as a basis for setting correct targets; and, ensuring homework is set consistently. Pupils with special educational needs are given less support in class than they require for good progress to be made in Years 10 and 11. Elsewhere, the instances of unsatisfactory teaching or satisfactory teaching with some weak features are generally linked to a failure to follow the school's established guidelines. In a Year 7 English lesson, Year 8 music lesson and a Year 11 mathematics lesson, the common features were: the lack of a clear, brisk start, with all pupils listening; flagging pace; and, too little extension or support work to keep all ability groups working to challenging standards.
32. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. It is highly diligent and very supportive in every way. The teachers of these pupils show good understanding and sensitivity and appropriate methods of teaching. The classroom assistants are extremely important when deployed well in mainstream classes. The individual education plans are well designed and effective when used consistently. The range and availability of teaching materials and their appropriateness for these pupils varies significantly between teachers. The use of sixth form pupils in withdrawal literacy groups is limited, but valuable to all concerned.

33. The teaching of pupils using English as an additional language is satisfactory. Language support teaching is effective when there are clear language-learning objectives and specific targets for pupils. Lessons are planned with mainstream teachers, and there is a small amount of team teaching. Support teachers are accorded equal status in lessons with subject teachers, and both evaluate each lesson at the end of the session. Support teachers work with the whole class, as well as with targeted pupils, and are flexible when lesson plans change at short notice. Record keeping is used very effectively to inform planning and progress. Pupils have the opportunity for support through mentoring and support with homework at lunchtimes. Examples of good practice in support teaching have been established in Year 10 English and in Year 11 textiles. Language support teaching is less effective when there are long periods of inactivity by the support teacher, and where time is not used effectively, for example, during lengthy teacher explanations. Most support teaching is reactive, with little engagement with the whole class or the subject teacher during lessons. In some cases, there is too much intervention, for example, in some mathematics lessons. Some pupils were isolated in lessons where their colleagues were away celebrating Eid.
34. Pupils learning English as an additional language respond well. They are willing to learn and elicit help in lessons, turning equally to subject and support teachers. There are good relationships between pupils and support teachers, and pupils concentrate well throughout lessons.

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

35. The curriculum provided by the school for its pupils and students is good. The majority of statutory requirements are met, except in the continuing lack of religious education in the sixth form, a situation which prevailed at the time of the previous inspection. For pupils in Years 7 to 11, curricular provision is very good. Provision for students in the sixth form is satisfactory.
36. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is broad and balanced, both in the programme offered by the school as a whole and within individual subjects. However, drama, which enhances the curriculum for Year 7, is not available in Years 8 and 9, and the time allocation for physical education is well below the trend prevailing nationally. The programme of activities for boys is heavily weighted towards games, and gymnastics is not taught in Year 9. Further problems are created by the lack of suitable spaces for dance, which as a result is under-represented within physical education. Provision in modern languages is very good: almost all pupils have the opportunity to study two languages from the three available, and Urdu is offered. Pupils study ICT throughout Years 7 to 9, and start GNVQ assignments in Year 9. However, in modern languages, geography and music there is insufficient access to ICT.
37. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They follow the normal school curriculum, and 108 pupils benefit from extra literacy tuition every week. These lessons result in the pupils missing the same subjects throughout the year and there is thus a cumulative loss of entitlement in a narrow area of study. The special inclusion service supports the school in these withdrawal groups. The pupils are generally in small classes, and when there are also classroom assistants available, the impact is maximised. Pupils with

special educational needs share in the school's opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The moral and social aspects are particularly beneficial when related to the individual education programmes.

38. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also have good access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Opportunities in science are good: pupils may study three separate sciences or choose dual-award science. Lower attainers take a certificate of achievement in science. All pupils take English language GCSE; however, English literature is offered only as an option and only about half the pupils take this subject. Both drama and media studies are offered at GCSE. In addition to a wide range of GCSE option choices, GNVQ courses are available in health and social care, ICT, and, in collaboration with Manchester City College, NVQ is offered for pupils in Year 10. With the introduction of this wider range of courses, only around 35 per cent of pupils, considerably fewer than might be expected, study a humanities subject. Religious education now offers a short course to all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
39. The school's literacy policy is implemented widely. Pupils are given regular opportunities to discuss their ideas and to listen to other pupils, and, in several subjects, particularly science, pupils are encouraged to write extended pieces of work. Key words relating to subject-specific vocabulary are prominently displayed around most classrooms.
40. The school successfully operates a policy of inclusion. Disaffected pupils are taught in the learning enhancement centre, and a modified curriculum is devised, which includes links with courses at Manchester City College. A re-integration programme operates in all years, and the system is effectively supported by monitoring and rewards.
41. The school has used money from the 'Excellence in Cities' fund to take many initiatives in the teaching of gifted and talented pupils. The college is leading a cluster of four secondary schools in making sweeping developments. Twenty-eight per cent of all pupils benefit from these initiatives. Intensive efforts have resulted in faculty policies, termly reviews and enrichment work. Staff use the information from primary schools to develop targets, and these are continually updated to raise the percentage of pupils who gain a high level in their national tests in Year 9. A residential summer school is held, plus specialist courses in technology and science. In the sixth form, new AS courses are being developed in critical thinking and philosophy. Although developments are at an early stage, they are being pursued with utmost vigour.
42. Extra-curricular provision is very good, and the school offers a broad and challenging range of activities. Provision in physical education is excellent, and large numbers of pupils participate in clubs and fixtures. Each Saturday morning, six teams represent the school in matches. Good links with the local community have been established, and several pupils play with clubs outside school. The girls' Under14 football team has won the local championship for the past three years. The physical education department has achieved the English FA charter mark. Provision in music is very good. Over ten per cent of pupils learn to play instruments, take part in musical events, both locally and nationally, and work alongside professional musicians and other high-achieving young musicians, such as the National Youth Jazz orchestra. Trips and visits are regular features of several subjects.



43. The introduction of a formally planned, but optional, third session at the end of the school day enhances opportunities for pupils of all abilities, including those identified as gifted or talented. Clubs and extra classes support pupils' learning in science, modern languages and geography. An annual summer school provides further opportunities for gifted and talented pupils in English literature and creative writing, and in modern languages. Good provision for sex education and drugs awareness is included in personal and social education lessons. Careers education is good. The amount of taught time throughout all year groups is lower than the national recommendation, but within the school's development plan a revised timetable with increased teaching time is included.
44. The school makes very good provision for the personal development of its pupils. A culture of openness and support enables pupils to develop their self-esteem and to see themselves as part of the whole school community.
45. The provision for the moral development of the pupils is very good. The school has a clear code of conduct and a system of rewards and sanctions that is well understood by the pupils. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and these standards are reinforced by the celebration of achievement and positive role models around the school. Pupils have the opportunity to consider contemporary moral issues in several subjects. In science, they discuss ethical questions, such as the use of non-renewable energy, and in ICT, they consider the responsible use of the Internet. In a sixth form German lesson, students were observed discussing moral dilemmas, such as euthanasia and animal experimentation. In religious education, moral issues form the framework of the course in Years 10 and 11. Pupils consider the concept of morality, and in personal and social education, they discuss such issues as abortion, the effects of conflict and prejudice, and abuses of human rights.
46. The provision for the social development of the pupils is very good. Relationships around the school are very positive and this is encouraged by the effective use of group work in many subjects, for example, in science, music and personal and social education. The wide range of clubs and activities provided by the school, in sports and other areas, encourages interaction between pupils of different year groups and the development of co-operation and tolerance. The school has an excellent system of peer support, where Year 10 pupils are trained as counsellors in order to support the integration of pupils in Year 7, and a 'buddy' system, working with less motivated, older pupils. There is an effective counselling system available for all members of the school. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are supported by participation in national events such as the 'Festival of Music for Youth' and participation in projects such as the 'Manchester Young People's Council'.
47. The school makes very good provision for the cultural development of the pupils through the various music clubs and drama productions. Opportunities are presented for pupils to enjoy workshops and performances by professional artists, poets and by companies such as Opera North and the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. Art makes a valuable contribution, providing a range of visits to galleries, and opportunities for older pupils to become involved in a variety of exhibitions, such as the enrichment weekends at Anglesey and the sixth form workshops, where they prepared 'Gigante' puppets for public display in Manchester and in the Millennium Dome.

48. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate the richness of the multi-cultural world in which they live are found in many subjects. In dance and music in particular, pupils benefit from participation in the 'Sri Lankan Dance Project' with its dance and drumming workshops, and in their experience of the creation of Indian music, supported by a visiting specialist. Gamelan and steel pan music are also part of the pupils' experience. Modern languages provide opportunities for pupils to travel to France, Turkey, Spain and Crete, and in religious education, pupils consider the culture of the religions that they study. Support for the observance of Ramadan and the celebration of Eid ul Fitre enabled other pupils within the school to share in a cultural experience of their classmates.
49. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. There are good examples to be found in geography, where pupils use poetry to empathise with the experience of earthquakes, and in music, where pupils reflect on the images of the majestic landscape of Antarctica. In personal and social education and in religious education, very good opportunities are provided for pupils to consider their existence in the universe and to reflect on questions such as 'What happens after death?' and coping with bereavement. Many teachers provide opportunities for pupils to reflect upon their learning, and provide opportunities for wonderment. Many other possibilities are missed, however, and there has been no recent policy or staff on this issue. Tutor groups have a 'Thought for the Day', a forum for reflection and moral development. However, the quality depends upon the delivery by the teacher, and in the examples seen during the inspection, this was very variable. Assemblies reinforce positive attitudes and behaviour, but are not used for spiritual development or for quiet contemplation or acts of worship, where the school fails to fulfil its statutory duty.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

50. The school makes very good provision for the care of its pupils. There are established procedures to identify and handle issues related to child protection; staff are informed of their responsibilities and the correct procedures have been adopted when necessary. Satisfactory procedures are in place to protect the health and safety of pupils and staff. Assessments of the risks associated with work in each department have been made. Clear guidelines are established to deal with first aid and minor emergencies. Routine checks are conducted at appropriate intervals to ensure the safe operation of electrical, fire prevention and other equipment. Pastoral care is very good for all groups of pupils. Transitional arrangements ensure a smooth transfer from junior school.
51. The school's monitoring of academic performance and personal development, and the educational and personal support and guidance available to pupils are very good. Teachers know pupils very well and are able to offer good personal support and guidance. Progress is monitored and enables appropriate arrangements to be made for pupils with special educational needs, gifted and talented pupils, and those with behavioural or emotional difficulties. Counselling services are provided where appropriate, either by a qualified counsellor or with peer counsellors trained to provide support for younger pupils. Pupils' needs are monitored so that all groups of pupils, whether white, black or Asian, are helped to reach their potential. Through monitoring of pupils by ethnicity, the department has seen a large increase in the A\* to C grades of black Caribbean pupils. The performance of Pakistani pupils has also increased. The use of proforma in lessons, for example, in a Year 7

class, enable staff to know the levels of pupils in their teaching group. The different needs of boys and girls of different ages and in different subjects are monitored and met.

52. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Reasons for absence are always sought by tutors and heads of year. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for pupils identified as at risk of disaffection or exclusion. Registers are taken at the start of each lesson and periodic checks are made to identify truants. The student support service office checks latecomers, ensures that students' whereabouts are known, and contacts parents appropriately. The school has a good rapport with the educational welfare officer, who meets the attendance officer and heads of year weekly and makes home visits on behalf of the school. An effective rewards system for good individual and group attendance is in place and has been effective in raising attendance rates. The use of manual systems to register pupils is cumbersome for a school of this size, and the planned electronic registration system should streamline and further improve monitoring and attendance rates.
53. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. A structured behaviour policy is used consistently by staff. They use the systems of rewards and sanctions well, which pupils appreciate. Outside agencies are involved as necessary. Alternative learning packages to overcome disaffection in some pupils have been introduced and are effective in helping a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 to complete a formal education. The learning enhancement centre is effective in helping certain pupils with poor attitudes to school to cope with mainstream education and not drop out. Procedures to monitor and eliminate oppressive behaviour are good. The school has an anti-bullying policy which encourages victims to tell a tutor, head of year, other member of staff or peer counsellor. Records are kept of bullies and victims. The number of incidents is low, and mainly confined to Years 7 and 8. Staff-awareness training has been implemented to help some teachers deal with the different mores of ethnic minority pupils. A black mentoring group, run with the help of City College, is effective in meeting their particular needs.
54. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good. The system has been designed to support the school's aims of developing fully the potential of every pupil, in response to the recommendation of the previous inspection. The school has a regular programme for comparing the performance of its pupils in national tests at the age of 14 and in GCSE results with the baseline information compiled from results for pupils aged 11. It then evaluates the effectiveness of its provision for both boys and girls, and for pupils from minority backgrounds. Particularly good implementation was observed in science, where under-performance of pupils from one particular minority has been identified and further mentoring has been introduced.
55. Teachers and form tutors are well informed about their pupils' capabilities. Performances across subjects are carefully monitored and scrutinised three times each year, and the resulting information is conveyed to tutors and to parents. Pupils then have the opportunity of assessing their own strengths and weaknesses, guided by form and subject tutors, before discussing the situation on an individual basis with the form tutor. Outcomes are relayed to parents in advance of parents' evenings. Where under-achievement is suspected or discovered, pupils are mentored to enable them to recover lost ground. The system continues into the sixth form.

56. Particular attention is paid to consistency of performance in all subjects. This is tracked over time, and targets for attainment by pupils by the age of 16 are translated into GCSE levels. This information is given to all pupils. However, the initial use of information gathered from teachers' assessments, national testing and standardised reading tests, in order to set targets, is satisfactory but not yet good. The global target does not take sufficient account of the particular abilities of the individual pupil in each separate subject. In mathematics, for example, some targets are too low, while in other subjects, such as geography, history, music, art and physical education, where there is no national standardised testing to support teachers' assessments, targets set are frequently unrealistically high. The school is aware of anomalies the system creates, and is monitoring the situation.
57. In its provision for its gifted and talented pupils, and for those with special needs, information from cognitive ability tests is included in order to identify such pupils at an early stage. However, the school has not yet developed a system for identifying gifted or talented pupils other than by performance indicators, and behavioural and social idiosyncrasies which may be further indicators of unusual ability are not yet formally considered.
58. Pupils' work is regularly marked and its consistency is monitored within each department. However, in religious education and in music, marking is not consistent. Assessment is used very well to inform curriculum planning in science, in Urdu, and for pupils with special educational needs. It is used well in other subjects, except in ICT, where this aspect is unsatisfactory. A whole-school marking policy is in place and is usually used consistently.
59. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. There is very good liaison with primary schools and tutors maintain well-organised records of pupils' subsequent personal progress, with rewards and other commendations being entered regularly. Personal development is further monitored and supported through the wide-ranging opportunities for extra-curricular activities, as well as in special projects, such as the learning enhancement centre. Form registration times with tutors are pleasant and sociable occasions. The best provide a purposeful and thoughtful start to the school day, and successfully encourage the use of different learning skills, such as the Year 7 use of 'thinking hats' to research a charity, and Year 10 speed-reading. The careers service is used well for pupils with special educational needs and for all Year 11 pupils.
60. Since the last inspection, there have been good improvements in the school's procedures to address child protection and health and safety issues. Pastoral care is very well informed by careful monitoring and the use made of form time has improved, although not in all instances.
61. The school's care for pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical handicaps, is very good. The hearing impairment, the behavioural support and the special inclusion services are effective and used well by the learning support co-ordinator. The work of the classroom assistants is admirable. The ongoing and annual review procedures for pupils and parents are better than is required on a statutory basis.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

62. Parents view the school as a very good one, and the school is over-subscribed. The percentage of parents responding to the Registered Inspector's questionnaire, and the number attending his meeting, were very low. Those who did respond felt that the school has appropriate expectations for children to work hard and achieve their best. Most said they thought the teaching is good, and that their children like school and make good progress. Concerns were expressed by over a fifth of parents responding to the questionnaire about the amount of homework given, and some do not feel sufficiently well informed about how their child is getting on.
63. The inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents. They found the teaching to be very good, that children make good progress in line with the school's expectations of them, and that the school is willing to deal with questions or problems. The setting of homework in Years 7, 8 and 9 is not consistent, though some very imaginative homework was set for Year 9 pupils in science, in which pupils had to explain their understanding of microbes in a piece of creative writing about life in the future, when microbes had ceased to exist. In Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, the use of homework is good.
64. Inspectors found that the school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed, with good, detailed reports in all subjects once a year. Termly review days and other opportunities to meet teachers are provided. There are lively, regular newsletters providing information of events in school, and a website is being developed, which parents can access for a range of information. Parents are contacted for a variety of reasons including letters and postcards of praise, and when things go wrong. Home and school agreements have been established and are working well. The quality of information provided is very high, and both the prospectus and the governors' annual report are well produced and informative, although not all details required by law are included. Parents are welcome to approach the school if there are concerns or problems. Their views are regularly sought on a range of subjects, both via formal opinion polls conducted on behalf of the school and through ad hoc forums, and they are well represented on the governing body. More help could be provided to parents whose first language is not English.
65. Parents' involvement in the work of the school is good. They attend performances and support sports events. They make a good contribution to their children's learning at home, and many communicate through the homework diaries. Whenever problems arise or special initiatives are needed to support pupils, such as attending the learning enhancement centre or in devising personal learning packages, parents are fully involved. There is a supportive parent-teacher association, which organises social and educational events and raises funds to enhance learning. Recently, funds have been used to help with the successful bid to achieve technology college status, to fund the purchase of a substantial number of computers and to provide storage for physical education equipment and staging units for the main hall.
66. Since the previous inspection, an effective partnership with parents has been maintained.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

67. The school is very well led and managed, and aspects of the work of the headteacher and key staff are excellent.

68. At several levels of management, there is very strong vision and, as a result, the school's leaders provide an excellent sense of educational direction. Staff, pupils and parents can see clearly what the school stands for in terms of providing for pupils, encouraging excellence in teaching and in building links beyond the school. They can also see how the headteacher and governors have taken many imaginative and bold steps to pursue their aims, most obviously the decision made three years ago to seek entirely new accommodation and resourcing for the school. Equally significant has been the way that change has been coupled with acquiring technology status, and with the decision to exploit to the full the potential of a new school for redirecting approaches to teaching and supporting pupils
69. The school's aims and values are very strongly reflected in its work. The high degree of respect between adults and pupils and students and the very good relationships across gender, race and religion sought by the school are evident. The monitoring and encouraging of pupils' progress through the school is done via systems which ensure the inclusion of pupils at all levels of academic ability and with a perceptive awareness of how social or cultural background or physical disability might influence progress, and therefore require specific support.
70. The school succeeds in implementing its aims and values because managers at every level lead well by example, and because systems of communication are very good. There are more formal meetings of staff and of governors than is common. Informal briefings and discussions are very numerous and effective in promoting a shared understanding of policies and immediate issues. Staff training on new developments has also been more consistent and extensive than in many schools. At a day-to-day level, there is an unusually high staff presence around the school, including that of senior managers, at the beginning and end of sessions. This helps to ensure that behaviour is good, and also offers innumerable informal opportunities for contact between staff and pupils. It reinforces the message that leaders and managers are interested in, and care for, pupils and everyday school life.
71. Delegation is extensive and very successful. Senior and middle managers are given major roles of responsibility, as appropriate in this very large school, but they operate with more independence than usual, with more direct access to outside agencies and more scope for co-opting other members of staff to help them. The overall quality of senior and middle managers is very good. Some whole-school responsibilities are particularly well managed, including provision for gifted and talented pupils, the professional development of staff and the handling of central data on pupils' assessment. Departmental management is excellent in science and very good in English, physical education, mathematics, geography and religious education. While much has been achieved towards establishing very good quality ICT provision, arrangements for leading and managing this have lacked clarity. However, the school has already begun to make changes to rectify this.
72. The learning support co-ordinator is very efficient, fosters a sense of co-operation, supports colleagues well and has clear plans to develop the school's provision. Close links with the senior management team, school governors and the local education authority have been established. There are no formal links and regular meetings with the school faculties to enhance a shared, cohesive development throughout the school. There is a good improvement plan and all of the special assessments, reviews and documentation are in

order. After pruning much old material, the department barely has adequate resources, but there is evidence that the school is about to rectify this in ICT, literacy and possibly mathematics. The staff are very capable, but there are fewer than is normally found in such a school. The support assistants are particularly important to the raising of standards.

73. The provision for English as an additional language is well managed. The small team of support teachers is effectively deployed and supported. The individual strengths of language, mathematical knowledge and mentoring are drawn upon. The department is well led by a qualified and experienced language specialist. Good relationships have been established within the school, and the senior management team is supportive. The head of department has contributed to the ethnic minority achievement and social inclusion group and analysis of pupils' attainment by ethnicity. The monitoring and targeting of pupils is very effective, particularly the analysis of examination results at the end of Year 9 to predict achievement at GCSE. There is an awareness of the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and good links with primary schools. Provision of support for English, mathematics and science is good, but there is little support in other subjects. Facilities for the department are good, as are ICT resources.
74. Monitoring of teaching is very good. It is extensive and well organised and it involves formal observations, sometimes by senior and middle managers, as well as informal peer observation. Largely as a result, the school has found introducing performance management relatively straightforward and has put highly effective arrangements in place. The school is very good at evaluating the effectiveness of not only its teaching, but of the full range of its provision, and has therefore succeeded in identifying entirely appropriate priorities in its development plan. Financial management is secure and educational priorities are very closely mirrored by spending. The large deficit of the late 1990s has been repaid and the application of the principles of evaluating how funds can be handled most effectively is excellent: imaginative comparisons between different sources of school services have saved the school many thousands of pounds, which have then been fed back into educational priorities.
75. The governing body is most effective. Its key members acquire, and then disseminate to colleagues, a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They do this by higher than usual direct contact with the school, regular briefing from the headteacher and directly from other members of senior and middle management, and by frequent meetings, at which attendance is high. Formal and informal meetings involve open discussion with the headteacher and his colleagues to ensure that all partners have a clear, shared understanding of the issues. Governors have played a crucial role with the headteacher in planning for, and recently acquiring, the school's new premises. Several have directly led aspects of financial negotiations between the school and the local education authority, or have been involved in establishing strong links with institutions and individuals within the community. Overall, the governing body has offered very good strategic guidance to the senior managers of the school. They fulfil their major statutory duties very well, though there are some technical aspects of their annual report to be corrected, and they need to resolve, with the headteacher, an approach to sixth form religious education which fully meets requirements.
76. Since the last inspection, the school has made very good improvement. There has been substantial improvement on most of the key issues from the last inspection, and high

academic standards have been maintained. More significantly, other changes have already brought about great benefits to the school and the process of improvement is gaining momentum.

77. In terms of the issues raised in the previous inspection report of 1996, better arrangements for lesson times and the use of form periods have been put in place. There is still scope for form periods to be used more consistently. Spiritual development now has satisfactory provision; resources and their funding are vastly improved; special educational needs provision has been increased, though more support is still needed, and a very high proportion of teaching now contains scope for pupils of different needs to learn effectively. ICT and religious education in Years 7 to 11 now meet statutory requirements, though religious education in the sixth form and the act of worship requirements are not met. Over and above this, the school has striven for, and acquired, new, superbly equipped premises for nearly all departments. They provide, for the vast majority of the school's activity, a first-rate working environment for staff and pupils. As the move was being planned and implemented, the staff also became increasingly committed to the concept of self-improvement. Within the last three or four years, they have tackled projects on: teaching and learning; the needs of gifted and talented pupils; assessment; professional development; support for pupils at risk from exclusion; and monitoring the needs and prospects of pupils from ethnic minorities. All have been pursued with far more imagination, energy and personal commitment than is common, to the point where the school is recognised, locally and beyond, as a source of very good practice in each of these areas. The impact of improvement is already evident in many respects, while in others, projects cannot be expected to bear fruit immediately. Teaching has significantly improved from an already strong position in 1996 to one with a very high proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching

## **STAFFING**

78. Staffing provision is good. The provision of teaching staff is very good. English, mathematics, science, modern languages, religious education, art and physical education are all staffed with well and very well qualified teachers, almost all of whom are specifically trained for the subjects in which they are teaching. For the most part, recruitment has not been problematic in recent years, though a recent vacancy in ICT initially proved difficult to fill.
79. Although there are sufficient learning support assistants and technicians in some areas, there are too few adults supporting pupils with special educational needs and in modern languages, and the provision of technical support in science is barely satisfactory.
80. There is a well-organised programme of induction for new members of staff and newly qualified teachers. A member of the senior management team is responsible for the observation and mentoring of newly qualified teachers' lessons, in addition to support from heads of department. Four recently qualified teachers have gained advanced diplomas in teaching skills through Manchester Metropolitan University, with which the school has well-developed links. The school is a very successful in training 20 or more initial teacher training students each year across the range of subjects.



## RESOURCES

81. The level of resources for teaching and learning is good and enhanced by the high level of technology available. All teachers have a laptop computer, and classrooms have television and video facilities, as well as an overhead projector and a computer linked to the Internet. English, mathematics and science each have a bank of laptop computers for classroom use. The ratio of computers to pupils, one to four and a half, is already high, and is increasing.
82. The provision of other resources is good, though there are some weaknesses: in physical education, the struggle to maintain consumables is exacerbated by the use of the facilities by the community; and in music, the keyboards are wearing out and there are too few ethnic instruments.
83. The Resource Centre is a vibrant area, with an enthusiastic and efficient full-time librarian. It is very well used, in class time, before and after school, and during breaks. There are insufficient books, but there is a bank of well-used computers. The library plays an important part in encouraging the good reading habits in the school.
84. Resources have improved greatly from the time of the previous inspection, especially in the technological area. Methods of distributing resources have also greatly improved, and money is now equitably distributed, according to a weighted programme. It is also possible for departments to receive extra allocation to address specific needs.

## ACCOMMODATION

85. The school has successfully completed an £11 million new building and refurbishment programme, which has produced accommodation of the highest quality. In some subjects, excellent accommodation is provided. Here, buildings are purpose-built to the latest specification, with ICT facilities available in every room. The quality of accommodation in English is excellent, while that of science, ICT, some aspects of physical education and in design and technology, is very good. This high-quality provision extends to the areas for pupils with special educational needs and for those who have English as an additional language. Most subject areas enjoy up-graded accommodation and facilities. However, there are major exceptions to this pattern. Difficulties with the refurbishment of Parris Wood House mean that music is housed in temporary classrooms unsuitable for the subject. These conditions hinder progress, particularly in the first three years of school. The provision for Urdu is poor in terms of quality and quantity: there are no regular teaching rooms and no opportunities for display, which would enhance the pupils' learning. In physical education, the department has built up an expertise in dance that cannot be fully utilised, since there is no designated space. Many rooms in the sixth form area are too small, and this problem will be exacerbated as Curriculum 2000 for post-16 education comes into full operation. There is insufficient hard area for play. The school is aware of the problems and has development plans for dealing with many of the weaknesses. These plans, however, are, in some cases, medium to long term and are partially dependant upon the acquisition of external funding.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

86. The governors, headteacher and staff, in striving to turn a very good school into an excellent one, should:
1. take all possible steps to raise standards at GCSE in those subjects currently performing below the school's averages for attainment and where pupils' results are well below their personal averages; (paras 6,7,30,105,133,140,160, 178)
  2. in line with current plans, establish entirely clear lines of management for ICT provision in the school; (paras 71,174)
  3. ensure that, in line with current plans, music accommodation is brought up to the standard enjoyed by the school as a whole; (paras 85,198)
  4. provide more special needs support assistants, so that progress for pupils with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 is as good as that currently found in Years 7 to 9; (paras 10,72,79,126)
  5. fulfil statutory requirements by: extending religious education provision in the sixth form, and ensuring there is a daily act of collective worship; (paras 49,75,77)
  6. monitor the use of homework in Years 7 to 9 to ensure its fully consistent use by teachers; (paras 24,94,163,172)
  7. ensure that teacher assessments in foundation subjects have a closer match to national standards than is currently the case; (paras 7,56,148,167,176,192)
  8. fine-tune the use of targets in Years 7 to 11, so that there is even greater accuracy and relevance in the individual targets given to pupils for each of their subjects (paras 26,31,112,158,166,174,184).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	268
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	110

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5.3	25.3	43.7	23.4	2.3	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>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1494	356
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	400	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	226	2

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	444

<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	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

### *Attendance*

<b>Authorised absence</b>	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	5.9

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.4

*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
	2000	160	137	297

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	87	121	112
	Girls	85	9	79
	Total	172	220	191
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (70)	74 (63)	65 (57)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (22)	49 (40)	32 (27)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	109	115	126
	Girls	104	100	104
	Total	213	215	230
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (65)	72 (60)	78 (62)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (30)	41 (37)	43 (34)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

*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
	2000	148	121	269

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	64	134	144
	Girls	62	113	117
	Total	126	247	261
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	47 (50)	92 (94)	97 (98)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35
	National	38.4

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

### ***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
	2000	70	88	158

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	16.5	19	17.9 (20.7)	4.0	4.4	4.3 (3.3)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	101
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	50
Indian	53
Pakistani	273
Bangladeshi	41
Chinese	17
White	1247
Any other minority ethnic group	84

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	8	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	5	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	42	2
Other minority ethnic groups	3	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)	118
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	36
Total aggregate hours worked per week	830

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.2
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26.8
Key Stage 4	23.3

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	4,670,213
Total expenditure	4,588,291
Expenditure per pupil	2,471
Balance brought forward from previous year	841
Balance carried forward to next year	82,763

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1870
Number of questionnaires returned	93

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	45	7	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	45	5	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	51	7	3	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	49	20	4	1
The teaching is good.	39	54	1	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	41	12	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	26	7	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	23	4	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	26	59	10	4	1
The school is well led and managed.	64	29	3	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	38	4	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	37	5	3	8

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

### **ENGLISH**

87. By the age of 14, standards are above average. In the National Curriculum tests in 2000, results were above average compared with national averages, and well above average compared to schools with a similar intake. Results were broadly similar to those in mathematics and science. Girls performed better than boys, but the school is reducing the gap by increasing the using of teaching strategies which help keep boys' concentration and motivation high. Standards have risen over the last three years. These above average standards are confirmed by the inspection judgement.
88. Pupils achieve well between Years 7 and 9. They develop a lively interest in reading. Boys and girls read for pleasure and enjoy discussing their books. The Resource Centre, which serves as a library and research area, though low on stock, plays an important part in nurturing this enthusiasm. Reading habits are good and pupils are competent readers. High attainers understand Shakespeare well and can see various levels of interpretation of 'Macbeth'. The majority appreciate imagery and can analyse the effect it creates. Low attainers understand the plot of 'Macbeth', and why the characters behave as they do. Standards of speaking and listening are also high. Pupils are confident in discussion and in giving their opinions. High attainers extend their responses and moderate the ideas of others in group work. Standards of writing are slightly lower than those in reading and speaking, but are still above those found nationally. High attainers produce accurate, sustained writing that maintains the interest of the reader. They use evocative imagery, for example in response to 'Dulce Et Decorum Est'. Middle attainers write with reasonable accuracy but sometimes omit paragraphs. They select words carefully and can introduce quotation into their responses in support of their ideas. Lower attainers struggle to extend their ideas, but punctuate simple sentences accurately. Their spelling is insecure and handwriting often untidy.
89. By the age of 16, standards are above average. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, results were marginally above average compared to schools nationally. In English, 58 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\* to C, and 100 per cent of those entered, which was nearly all the cohort, achieved grades A\* to G. Results were well above average compared to schools with a similar intake. Pupils did better in English than in most of their other subjects. Girls did better than boys but by slightly less than is common nationally. Results in English literature were well above average, but fewer than half the pupils elected to take this course. This is well below the proportion of pupils entered nationally and well below the capabilities of the pupils. The school is aware of this and is taking steps to address it. Results in both subjects have remained similar for the past three years. These above average standards are confirmed by inspection judgement.
90. Good achievement is maintained between Years 10 and 11. Reading is a great strength, and boys and girls still read for enjoyment. High attainers develop personal responses to literature. They see implicit meaning in Simon Armitage's poetry and make stylistic observations, well proved. Middle attainers appreciate the techniques used and what effects they have. Low attainers understand what poems mean, but have difficulty extending their responses in detail. Standards in speaking and listening are good. High attainers explain



complex ideas clearly and confidently. Middle attainers, though somewhat self-conscious, deliver their ideas to the class effectively. Low attainers are more reticent. They need to be cajoled to speak in front of the class but communicate well when given a structure with which to develop their ideas. In their writing high attainers produce work of a consistently high standard. Standards of accuracy are good. The descriptive writing of higher attainers is excellent, creating an evocative atmosphere, and analytical writing shows perceptive insight into literature texts. Middle attainers express themselves accurately. This is the case, for example, in their work in media studies, where pupils use their understanding of audience and purpose to good effect. Low attainers write at length, with reasonable accuracy. Pupils are used to drafting and refining, beginning in Year 7. They work hard to improve their work as they develop their ideas in conjunction with their teachers, often using computers in this process.

91. By the age of 18, standards are above average. In the A-level examinations in English language and English literature in 2000, results were above average. The proportion of students gaining grades A and B in both subjects is high and very few students fail to meet course requirements. These standards are confirmed by inspection judgement. Students are independent learners, keen to express their own views and responses. They are confident and mature with wide knowledge and interest beyond their set texts. Sophisticated discussion on 'Talking Heads' showed thorough knowledge of the text and an ability to analyse the effects of such techniques as satire and bathos. Students are intent on improving their performance. They achieve very well during Years 12 and 13.
92. Pupils with special educational needs, including the gifted and talented, achieve in line with the rest of the group. Teachers nearly always identify their needs and individual attention helps them to succeed. However, there are a few occasions when support in the classroom is needed, but none is available, and times when the gifted are not challenged sufficiently and the least able struggle to understand the work set. This holds back progress from being very good.
93. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well. The emphasis on the development of language through speaking and listening gives them good support. The range of cultures in the classroom is used to enhance discussion, for example when analysing poetry about apartheid.
94. Standards of teaching and learning are very good. In Years 7 to 9, the overall quality is good, although a significant minority is very good and a substantial amount is satisfactory. Teaching rarely falls beneath this. In Years 10 and 11, both teaching and learning are very good on balance. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are consistently very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and very effective classroom management, resulting in pupils and students concentrating well on their work and making sustained efforts. The wide range of methods used maintains the interest of the pupils and keeps them working at a good pace. The effective use of the overhead projector, for example, concentrates pupils' attention on the task, as do the clear objectives set for each lesson. Lessons are broken up into a variety of tasks, covering reading, writing and speaking and listening, often closely timed, which ensures pupils learn at a good pace. Beginning in Year 7, pupils are encouraged to make their own decisions, for example in how their books for younger children will be developed, and to be independent thinkers. By Year 11, therefore, they can

make assured personal responses. Teachers are skilled at using questioning to assess understanding and to encourage pupils to develop their answers. Because work is thoroughly marked with diagnostic comments, and targets set for improvement, pupils know where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Teaching places great emphasis on developing understanding through discussion, which means English has a big impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Frequent extra-curricular activities, such as a brilliant performance by poet in residence, Levi Tafari, also contribute towards this. Where teaching is less effective it is because insufficient thought has been given to planning activities which challenge all pupils at their own level. Sometimes all pupils are doing the same work at the same pace. Extension work is sometimes set which is just more, at the same level, and does not extend higher attaining pupils. Similarly, lower attaining pupils struggle to access the work or have insufficient support to help them. The department is currently working on developing this area of its work. Homework is not used as effectively as it should be in Years 7 to 9, and is rarely precisely matched to pupils' attainment.

95. Pupils' and students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, especially so in the sixth form. Pupils are pleasant, cheerful and co-operative. They get on well together and with the teachers. They strive to do their best and are interested in their work. On the rare occasions when an individual misbehaves, teachers follow the school behaviour policy, which works well, and lessons carry on without major disruption.
96. The department is very well led and managed. New initiatives are well planned and put into practice with calm efficiency. There is a clear vision for the future and a clear commitment to raising standards and developing all pupils to their potential. Curriculum and teaching are monitored closely. As a result there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Higher quality teaching and the improved curriculum have already begun to raise standards, but their beneficial impact has not yet had time to be fully felt. More pupils now take literature, though this needs further improvement. Progress has been made in ensuring all pupils are set work suitable for their needs and further development is underway. Many improvements have been implemented in the schemes of work and in the development of literacy strategies. This is a thriving department, whose staff work well together in their commitment to their pupils.

## **LITERACY**

97. Standards of literacy are above average. The school has very good arrangements for developing literacy across the curriculum. A literacy co-ordinator has been in post for several years, and there is good support from the senior management team. A steering committee meets regularly to develop practice still further and involves not only representatives from different faculties, but also the librarian, the special educational needs co-ordinator and several other committed parties. The school approaches literacy from two angles, academic and pastoral. Each unit of work in form periods has a literacy element. Year 10, for instance, were engaged in developing speed reading during the week of the inspection. Regular personal reading takes place in form periods. Almost all departments have received extensive training on how to improve literacy in their own subjects, and, although some are considerably further ahead than others, have begun to prepare suitable material. In science, for instance, teachers have enthusiastically embraced the idea that improving facility in language improves attainment, and they introduce new words carefully each lesson. They

encourage pupils to give detailed, extended answers in discussion, using correct terminology. Pupils are occasionally asked to write imaginatively on topics to improve understanding. In geography, pupils became much more aware of the effects of an earthquake after being asked to write a poem about one. Pupils have access to structured frameworks to guide their writing, in history for example, to help them to extend their ideas. In religious education, there is very good support at the planning stage of projects.

98. One hundred and eight pupils who need additional help are withdrawn every week for very beneficial literacy intervention lessons. In addition, pupils in Years 7 and 8 have a useful designated literacy lesson, taught by English specialists, using a similar framework for lessons to that used in the National Literacy Strategy.

## **DRAMA**

99. Standards are average in Year 7. Drama is taught as a discrete subject to all pupils in Year 7. Although there is a very good drama studio, there is insufficient space to extend lessons to Years 8 and 9. Pupils enter the school with very little previous knowledge but they work co-operatively in groups and join in activities with enthusiasm. They understand the ideas of freeze frame and thought tracking. Most are self-conscious, but some sustain an image well. They achieve satisfactorily.
100. By the age of 16, standards are average. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were average. Pupils did better in drama than in most of their other subjects, but more average and lower attaining pupils choose the subject. Inspection evidence confirms these standards. Several pupils perform at a high level, with skill and conviction, but some lack confidence. Pupils work together well in their groups, developing and shaping their dramas, with minimal intervention from the teacher. They analyse each other's performances helpfully, giving good advice.
101. The quality of teaching is good, enabling pupils of very mixed prior attainment to reach national average standards. Lessons are carefully planned, assessment is thorough, and subject knowledge is good. Lessons move at a fast pace with good variety of activities and pupils are interested and behave well. They learn new techniques quickly, and are encouraged to think carefully about the strengths and weaknesses of their performances.
102. Drama makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. In a Year 7 lesson, for instance, pupils investigated bullying and how people involved would feel. It also regularly makes a very good contribution to the wider life of the school in its well-received dramatic productions.

## **MATHEMATICS**

103. Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests, taken at the age of 14, were above the national average for 2000. When compared with the results obtained by pupils from similar schools, results were very high. Over the years 1997 to 2000, the results for 14 year olds have been above the national average. Boys perform better than girls.

104. The standard of work of pupils aged between 11 and 14 seen during the inspection was above national norms. By the age of 14, higher attaining pupils are very strong at algebraic manipulation. Average attainers understand the angle properties of a triangle and a quadrilateral and use these to solve problems for compound shapes. Lower attaining pupils can multiply a scalar by a bracket, for example,  $4(2x+3)$ , and can draw a line of best fit on a scattergram.
105. Mathematics results in the 2000 GCSE examinations were broadly in line with national standards for all state schools. Compared with similar schools' results, they were well above average for grades A\* to C. Mathematics compares less favourably with other subjects in the school, and over recent years, results have not shown significant improvement. The department is aware of each of these weaknesses and is addressing them. All pupils now have their own textbook and strategies are currently being implemented to ensure that pupils will be entered for a modular based GCSE examination in the future, so that consistent work and improvement over time may be reflected in improved results.
106. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 produce sound algebraic work, including solving equations with exponentials in them. Some sketch functions well, but others' attempts show a lack of understanding of basic shapes, such as the quadratic, when drawing graphs from tables. Average attaining pupils have good facility with sequences, being able to recognise how they are formed and express their derivation algebraically. Lower attaining pupils cope well with, and solve, simple linear equations by inspection. They attempt simultaneous equations, but find them difficult. Pupils' attainment in Year 10 is comparatively better than that of those in Year 11, reflecting an improvement in performance overall year on year.
107. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Their achievement is therefore good between Years 7 and 9. Those pupils who took GCSE in the summer of 2000 also made good gains on their performance in standard national tests in 1998. Pupils are currently achieving well in their knowledge throughout Years 7 to 11, especially in algebra and arithmetical skills. Pupils with special educational needs progress well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. They lack in-class support in Years 10 and 11, though teachers offer help through work designed for pupils with varied needs. Those with English as an additional language make good progress throughout, having quickly acquired full command of English. In each case, their achievement benefits from extra individual help in lessons from effective learning support assistants and teachers. Well-considered departmental arrangements for setting also contribute to the progress made by those with special educational needs, and to those pupils identified by the school as being gifted and talented in mathematics.
108. Entry to the sixth form is limited largely to those pupils who have already gained a grade B or better in their GCSE examinations. Results in the year 2000 summer examinations were above national averages. The results of A-level vary. For example, 1998 was also a good year. Fluctuations tend to reflect the number of students opting for further mathematics. At their lowest, results do not fall much below the national average. Progress for students in the sixth form is very good.
109. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are very good. Apart from two lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory, the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were seen to be regularly good,

sometimes very good and occasionally excellent. Behaviour and attitudes improve as the pupils progress through the school. In the sixth form, they are excellent. This very good behaviour stems in a large part from pupils responding well to the good teaching they receive and the ethos for learning and concentration developed in lessons. Departmental arrangements, which allow for the pupils marking their own work, which is then checked by the teachers, are effective. A feature of many lessons is the extent to which pupils are encouraged to play a part orally, as well as by writing. These factors provide a powerful impetus for improvement. The position would be further improved if more of the pupils were clearer about where they stand in relation to national standards and benchmarks. Relationships in the classroom, both between the teachers and the pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves, are very good. The quality of these relationships does much to contribute to the pupils' progress.

110. The teaching seen during the inspection was good from Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. In all except two of the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better. Most teachers have very good knowledge and understanding. Expectations of what the pupils should be achieving are high, so that lessons generally present a good level of challenge to the pupils. Organisation and planning, particularly the long-term planning built into the schemes of work, are good, and pupils are managed well, so that little time is wasted. In the two unsatisfactory lessons, there was a lack of pace and poor use of homework. Pupils were neither clear enough about what they were doing nor adequately involved in the process. This contrasts with almost all other lessons, where the converse was true. In the best lessons, one of which was to the sixth form on sketching polar curves, and the other a Year 9 lesson on the trigonometry of a right angled triangle, the pupils were closely involved throughout, and were challenged to think and talk about what they were doing.
111. Learning outcomes mirror the quality of teaching closely. Pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding to a good level and work hard and productively to do so. Most pupils can deduce how to improve their work from the guidance they are given; some of the lower attaining and those whose attendance is erratic, however, would benefit from clearer advice as to what precisely they need to do to improve, and need more help when marking their work. Pupils work with a will and are successful under guidance, but retention and understanding are weak for many of those with below average ability.
112. Departmental leadership is now very good. The head of department displays strengths in teaching and in organisation and enables a well-qualified team to work closely and harmoniously together, focusing on improving pupils' performance. Management is good, having begun to introduce a range of changes two to three years ago which are now starting to have a beneficial impact. Teachers' work is now being supported by formal classroom observation and by monitoring of marking and record keeping. This has improved teaching quality and made assessment more effective, leading to raised attainment at the age of 14. The proposed curriculum change at GCSE is necessary if standards are to rise here, though the skill of tracking progress and setting targets for GCSE candidates is already improving. Arrangements for mutual support are effective for newly qualified teachers and for those new to the department. The department provides very good training for those beginning a career in teaching, through opportunities for sharing good practice and for professional development. Accommodation is now excellent and helps sustain the high motivation of both

staff and pupils. The proposed new timetabling arrangements should enable all mathematics lessons to take place in the dedicated mathematics area for pupils in the main school.

113. On balance, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## **NUMERACY**

114. Pupils have a satisfactory level of competence in numerical and graphical skills across the curriculum. In science, they have sufficient skills to cope with the demands of the schemes of work. In geography, they understand grid references, latitude and longitude in relation to grid references and scale, as reflected in mapping.
115. There are examples of teachers taking opportunities to enhance pupils' awareness of number in their lessons. The science department is very strong in this respect, and has had detailed discussions with the mathematics department to align their schemes of work and make sure that common approaches are taken to terminology and understanding of mathematical ideas. Other departments are less advanced because the whole-school policy for the teaching of numeracy has only just been introduced. Progress on this front has been held back whilst work has been taking place with literacy. There is now an urgent need to address numeracy as a whole-school issue. The school recognises this within its development plan.

## **SCIENCE**

116. At the age of 14, results in the standard national tests are above the national averages and very high in comparison to similar schools. Results have been at a similar high standard over recent years. As pupils enter the school with results matching the national average, this represents good achievement. Standards observed during the inspection showed that this level of achievement is being maintained. When pupils come to the school they have relatively weak practical and investigational skills. By halfway through Year 7, improvement is significant. For example, Year 7 pupils successfully undertook a difficult set of experiments designed to compare calorific values, by burning samples of four different breakfast cereals. They were well organised, careful and clearly beginning to grasp the importance of controlling variables in experiments. The standards in Year 9 are above average in every respect. Higher attaining pupils demonstrated their full understanding of the relationships between force, area and pressure by devising their own experimental investigation. In another class, pupils wrote imaginative and interesting accounts of the way germs infect people based on detailed and accurate knowledge of the scientific facts.
117. The results in the GCSE examinations taken at the age of 16 are well above the national average and, in comparison to similar schools, are very high. Almost 60 per cent of the GCSE results in 2000 were at the higher grades of A\* to C compared to the national figure of 50 per cent. Over the last few years there has been gradual improvement in the performance of all candidates. The improvement in standards from Year 7 to Year 11 is very good achievement. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirmed the maintenance of this high standard. Investigational and experimental skills are particular strengths that enable pupils to gain high marks in course work. Year 11 pupils, taking GCSE physics, worked with great independence on a very difficult practical activity on electronics and most were able to extend their knowledge by very competent use of a relevant computer program.

Pupils in the lowest set in Year 11 were gradually coming to terms with the abstract concepts of endothermic and exothermic reactions, by noting the changes in temperature resulting from the mixture of several carefully chosen chemicals.

118. Results in A-level science examinations taken at 18 are above the national average. In 2000, 41 per cent of entries resulted in a grade A or B, compared to 36 per cent nationally. The results in chemistry are particularly high and well above the national average. Results in physics over the last two years have not been as good as in chemistry and biology. Observation of lessons and analysis of students' files indicate that standards are being maintained in biology and chemistry and rising in physics where a new and more appropriate A-level syllabus is now being followed. Overall, inspection evidence indicates standards which are now well above average. Sixth form students are working at consistently high levels both in class and in their independent assignments. Year 12 students learning about the properties of electro-magnetic waves all coped with calculations set at the highest level. Physics students in Year 13 were able to discuss the properties of fundamental particles, such as the quark, with a secure knowledge and understanding. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is good. In the sixth form it is very good. This reflects very good teaching across the school, but with a concentration of the most impressive teaching and intensely positive student attitudes in Years 12 and 13.
119. From Years 7 to 13, the differences in performance by boys and girls are close to that seen nationally. There is no significant variation in the achievement of any particular groups of pupils.
120. The teaching of pupils of all ages and levels of attainment is very good. Of the lessons observed, 90 per cent were good or better and nearly 60 per cent were very good or excellent. Lessons are extremely well planned and based on an accurate understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. It helps pupils of average prior attainment in science reach above average standards by the age of 14 and well above average standards at GCSE and A-level. The degree of difficulty is well judged to extend pupils, but not make unrealistic demands of them. Additionally, teachers make very imaginative efforts to make lessons stimulating and often exciting. Pupils in the lowest set in Year 9 understood the properties of light for the first time, because the teacher had arranged a realistic model of light rays that they were able to physically comprehend. Excellent coloured illustrations and skilful use of the overhead projector enabled students in the second year of A-level biology to gain, at great pace, detailed knowledge and understanding of the structure and function of the brain. The long double periods are carefully divided into a variety of different activities so that interest and concentration are maintained. In a Year 9 lesson on forces, pupils did three separate practicals, watched a short video, spent time discussing the work with the teacher and completed several well designed worksheets. All were absorbed in the work for the whole lesson.
121. The study of science at all ages demands the learning of a great deal of factual knowledge. Teachers present factual information in ways that encourage pupils to be active learners and to record information only when they have understood it. There is far less passive copying from texts or worksheets than is usual in most schools. Every lesson includes integral assessment of pupils' understanding, which is monitored by very close marking of exercise books. As part of a lesson on the structure of the earth, pupils were asked to use knowledge they had gained from a short video and the account in the textbook, to produce

their own model by cutting out sections from a work sheet. The pieces were intentionally slightly different to the diagram in the text so that pupils had to work out their relationships for themselves. This resulted in very secure learning as well as accurate notes.

122. Throughout the teaching of science, there is great emphasis on independent learning. Pupils are given more trust and responsibility than is usual and they respond very positively. By Year 13, students are mature and independent learners, well prepared for the challenge of higher education.
123. The teaching of literacy within the science curriculum is very good and pupils' command of technical terminology is unusually good. Numeracy skills such as graphs are taught effectively in commonly agreed ways, which match the methodology used in mathematics lessons. The department's imaginative investment in laptop computers is allowing all pupils to use ICT as an integral part of science lessons. Data-logging equipment has been ordered so that the use of ICT to enrich the learning of science can move from being good to very good.
124. Pupils with special educational needs are taught with great sensitivity and skill. Usually in small classes, they are provided with demanding work, which cleverly includes a great deal of repetition, by presenting the same information in different ways. This approach results in successful learning and great gains in self-confidence. The use of individual targets for every science lesson, based on pupils' individual education plans, is excellent practice and is helping pupils to overcome their difficulties with both learning and behaviour. In Year 10, pupils follow the certificate of achievement course, which is well suited to their needs and very well taught. In 2000, all candidates passed and over half gained distinctions. They are now going on to take GCSE science in Year 11, full of confidence and determination to succeed.
125. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the study of science. They clearly value the subject, work hard and enjoy their lessons. Almost without exception, they behave very well, showing great respect for laboratory equipment and for safety issues.
126. Leadership and management of this very large department are excellent. Delegation of responsibilities is sensible and all aspects of science education are effectively and efficiently managed. An outstanding feature of the department is the way in which all staff, including the excellent technicians, work together as a mutually supportive team. Pupils' progress is rigorously monitored, as is the quality of teaching. Any perceived problems are dealt with quickly and effectively. All staff take responsibility for the quality of science education, are very open to innovation and constantly strive for improvement.
127. Since the last inspection, every aspect then criticised has been radically improved. Standards have risen significantly, the quality of teaching is much better and the new accommodation is very good. This is a very good department providing high quality science education for all the pupils it serves.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

128. By the age of 14, results in national curriculum assessments are average, and similar standards are confirmed by inspection evidence. Pupils can use a range of materials and processes to produce work in two and three dimensions. Their colour work is good, and



some bright paintings, informed by the work of Georgia O'Keefe, are seen in which pupils demonstrate good composition and a considered use of warm and cool colours. All the work seen is informed by a study of a range of artists and art movements. This includes the study of the art of other cultures, for example, African and Indian art. Pupils use ICT for research, and experiment with materials well. They are adept at recording their ideas in their sketchbooks and draw on the content well in their next piece of work.

129. By the age of 16, results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were broadly average, with 57 per cent of pupils gaining grades A\* to C, compared to 64 per cent nationally. Standards in work seen during the inspection were also average. Pupils have a good grasp of three-dimensional work, as seen in the very attractive pieces in card and tissue paper, which show an imaginative approach to shape and space. Pupils use line and texture sensitively, as in the good intaglio prints. Pupils' painting skills, however, are less well developed, and pupils have less confidence in this area.
130. At the end of the sixth form standards are average. In the A-level examinations in 2000, results were average, with two fifths of students gaining grades at A to B. A strength of the work seen is its diversity, and students show confidence in using a wide range of approaches to their artwork, with very high levels of personal involvement. Students are very good at using ICT. This was the case, for example, when students used their knowledge of ICT to produce a short film which showed an imaginative exploration of images, and was very professionally presented.
131. Achievement is satisfactory across the school. Younger pupils gain in their knowledge of art and artists and learn to use ICT to do this effectively. They acquire skills in constructing and building, using wire, paper and card. In Years 10 and 11, pupils develop greater confidence in three-dimensional work. In the sixth form students pursue personal interests and use a wider range of materials to realise their ideas. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, because of the encouraging manner of the teachers and the materials available, especially in Years 7 to 9. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well, because of the good standard of individual coaching which allows the level of challenge to be suited to their needs.
132. Attitudes are good in Years 7 to 11, and pupils have an interest in their work and a willingness to engage with the materials vigorously. In Years 10 and 11 pupils show good application to their work. However, a small number of pupils, particularly in Year 11, show less engagement with the work, and are not inspired by the materials and methods used. In the sixth form attitudes are very good, and students have a high level of personal involvement with their work.
133. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good. These enables pupils with limited prior attainment reach national average standards by the end of Year 9. A strength of the teaching is seen when the lesson gathers pace and momentum as it progresses, with the quality of learning improving as pupils experience success. This was seen in a lesson on painting when pupils made very good gains in their use of wash and line. There is also a good match of materials and methods to the attainment and interest levels of the pupils, especially in three-dimensional work. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Strengths are seen in the good quality of individual advice given to pupils, which promotes good learning in high attainers. High standards are also exemplified, and this promoted good learning in the

early part of a lesson on examination preparation, where high quality work was used as an example. However, weaker aspects of the teaching are where materials and methods are not exciting enough to inspire pupils, and their level of engagement with the work decreases. In addition, there is sometimes a lack of pace, with the lesson not moving on quickly enough, and this limits learning to a satisfactory level. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. A strength is the level of individual coaching which produces very good personal engagement with the work. This was seen in a lesson where students were working in fabric, painting on board and making constructions in card, plastic sheets, and string. Here, the teacher was able to guide each student individually and effectively, and this produced good learning.

134. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The quality of teaching is monitored and developed, and this has led to an improvement since the previous inspection in Years 7 to 9. Art and design has also begun to make a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development with a programme of gallery visits, and involvement in initiatives and exhibitions. For example, some giant puppets were produced for a festival in Manchester, and were also displayed in the Millenium Dome. There remains scope for more to be done to improve the teaching in Years 10 and 11, which remains satisfactory; as a result, standards at the age of 16 have been sustained rather than raised.

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION**

135. Provision for the subjects in Years 10 and 11 involves GCSE economics and GCSE business studies, although these subjects fall within different faculties. Business studies is a very popular option with high take up rates; results in recent examinations have been in line with national averages. Economics results in 2000, at 47.8 per cent A\* to C grades, are below national norms. However, in classes seen during the inspection, standards of pupils' work are above national norms, reflecting a year group with generally higher prior attainment. Pupils understand the functions of money and effectively describe the effects of inflation. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have calm control, have good knowledge of the subject and set high challenges to which pupils respond well.
136. In the sixth form, Year 13 students are still working to the previous 1995 specifications, whilst Year 12 have embarked on the first year of the vocational A-level double courses. Results in A-level economics last year, when 32 per cent gained grades A or B, were below national norms. However, in lessons seen, the standard of students' work is above national expectations. Students understand a range of business related issues such as the law of contract and aspects of management theory, such as motivation. In all lessons seen, teaching was never less than good and often very good. Teachers are particularly adept in involving students in discussion and in undertaking their own research and this leads to increased learning on the part of the student. Teachers are very successful in ensuring full inclusion and participation by all students. Key skills are well embedded in the course. This also true in A-level business studies in which results in recent years and the standards in work seen are both well above average. In the 2000 examinations for example, 56 per cent of candidates gained grades A or B compared with 40 per cent nationally.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

137. At age 14, pupils' attainment is average. There is, however, some variation between areas of study within the department. Pupils show satisfactory skills in working resistant materials: they are able to measure, cut and shape with accuracy and to bring their work to a good standard of finish. High quality work is evident in textiles: a project culminating in the production of a wallet took pupils through the design stage to the making stage, providing experience in pattern making, cutting and sewing, and incorporating computer-controlled embroidery in the final stage, where a personalised logo was affixed. Standards in food technology, structures and electronics are average overall but pupils show significantly better than average computer skills in word processing, in design and control and in desktop publishing. In graphics, skills in drawing are broadly average. Differences in standards largely reflect variation in teaching strengths in different aspects of the subject.
138. Achievement to age 14 is good. Pupils with relatively modest design and technology skills early in Year 7 reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 9. Gifted and talented pupils fulfil their potential in response to the way in which projects are constructed; this allows for success at a very wide range of levels. For the same reason, pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
139. There is evident progress in literacy and numeracy, which are addressed in a number of ways. Lists of relevant terms are displayed and are analysed as they arise in discussion in lessons. Numeracy is emphasised in measuring, scaling and calculating, for example, the proportion of ingredients in food technology.
140. At age 16, the overall standards attained broadly match national averages. In recent years, results in GCSE examinations have fluctuated both in collective success rates and in the grades in the different options taken. In the most recent year, results overall were below average, with 43.5 per cent of pupils gaining grades A\* to C against the national average of 50.1 per cent. Relative to the school's general standards, results were noticeably above average in resistant materials and textiles. In food technology, graphics and structures however, results were well below the school average. Though the results in food technology represent a significant advance from 21 per cent in the previous year, the trend in graphics shows a drop from 74 per cent. Overall results over the last three years show a decline. Boys, who constitute the larger proportion of the cohort, gain collectively a smaller percentage of grades A\* to C than girls, thus depressing the combined percentage of boys and girls. The results obtained are close to the average for all schools nationally. The department has also begun to offer a Basic Skills course in health and hygiene as an alternative to the established GCSE options and results have been above average. The department is aware of the difference between girls' attainment and that of boys, and they are promoting new teaching and learning strategies to redress the imbalance.
141. Standards observed in class were satisfactory. Good work was evident in projects involving circuitry in electronics, and some pupils showed a good level of inventiveness, the designs for a warning device to detect movement of a parked motorcycle being an example. In textiles, some good work was seen in costume with well-designed and tailored garments. In resistant materials, work seen was satisfactory in design and construction and sound in GCSE option

courses generally. Pupils were able to follow a design brief and to develop their ideas in personal ways in projects.

142. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, but, for design and technology as a whole, the good momentum of progress to age 14 is not sustained in this later stage. While pupils achieve good added-value in the resistant materials and textiles options, those taking food technology, graphics or structures make gains which are below the school's average. Gifted and talented pupils generally continue to fulfil their potential, and pupils with special needs are able to make successful progress at their own rate and to achieve satisfactory levels in relation to their prior attainment. The dual use of some rooms, for example the two textile rooms, militates against smooth progress from lesson to lesson, as ongoing work needs to be stored away and later retrieved. As in Years 7 to 9, at this later stage, pupils make discernible progress in basic literacy and numeracy. They compile subject glossaries and are often involved in complex calculation and measurement.
142. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to their work are mainly good, and no instances of poor response were seen. The level of concentration is good and is usually sustained well throughout lessons. Pupils co-operate well in their workshop practice and the atmosphere is productive. Pupils can work independently on their projects, showing initiative, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The crowding noted in some lessons is tolerated in a mature way, and pupils behave responsibly and courteously.
143. Teaching in the department is good in a large proportion of lessons, with some noteworthy strengths. There are, however, some weaknesses. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is marginally better than in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are in the main well prepared and presented, with good pace. A good feature is the clear display of learning objectives at the outset of lessons. Reference to these objectives is made at appropriate points to reinforce pupils' understanding of the teacher's expectations. A further strength is the sensitive individual tuition which takes place once the lesson is underway. This enables appropriately differentiated help and encouragement to be given across the whole group, promoting learning by gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs alike. A minor weakness in some teaching is the practice of asking very general questions, unrelated to previous work, at the start of lessons: while this results in an occasional good answer, it does not help focus the attention of the majority of the class on the topic in hand. There are also weaknesses in the structure of a minority of food technology lessons in Years 7 to 9, in which theoretical analysis can occupy an entire lesson. This is less effective at holding pupils' attention and promoting good progress than the approach seen more widely in the department, where theory and practice were closely integrated. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 several of the courses have a greater proportion of average and lower attaining pupils than other subjects so that pupils' study skills are not quite as well developed; as result learning is average rather than good.
144. Assessment is thorough and well related to the National Curriculum. Projects are assessed with an annual statement up to age 14. This pattern continues to age 16, and is supplemented by the assessment objectives of the GCSE syllabuses. Targets are set throughout Years 10 and 11 based on earlier achievement. These are monitored against actual grades gained in GCSE. The curriculum to age 14 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, with a broad range of experience in design and food technology and including ICT. Computer

control is experienced in embroidery in textiles, and pupils employ computers in design where appropriate, and in word processing and full desktop publishing for display work. In Years 10 and 11, a similarly wide range of GCSE options is offered, and pupils are able to link their option choices to their previous experience, thus making continuous progress. The allocation of time is adequate.

145. The department is well managed by a director of faculty who makes a significant and important contribution to the teaching. Relationships within the department are good, with a clear sense of shared aims. Staff meet regularly and there are good lines of communication. The level of commitment is high. The teachers are deployed effectively in relation to their qualifications and experience. Two very recent appointments bring new ideas and enthusiasm to the work of the technology area and technical support is of good quality. Resources are adequate. The accommodation made available for design and technology is of very good quality and well furnished, though some workshops are too small for large groups.
146. There has been good overall improvement since the previous inspection, especially in terms of accommodation and resources, but also in the quality of teaching. This was previously judged to be sound, but is now good.
147. None of the above subjects are offered at A-level.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

148. Attainment by age 14 is good overall and the subject shows steady improvement over the last three years. Results in teacher assessments show attainment well above national average, but standards seen during the inspection are above average, rather than well above. The disparity occurs because school targets do not wholly relate to geography requirements for National Curriculum levels, nor is the department as confident and accurate as it would like to be in relating its own assessments to national standards. Numeracy skills are improved by developing pupils' skills in drawing graphs and charts. The quality of fieldwork on a Year 9 river study illustrates this, with detailed measuring of a local river, including drawings of meanders and computer-generated line graphs. Literacy is developed in geography lessons by short periods of silent reading, by the writing of definitions and by the use of a variety of writing styles. Pupils show good knowledge of key terms, and develop writing and research skills through fieldwork and enquiry projects.
149. Attainment by age 16 is above average. There has been a steady improvement in results over the last three years, with results above the national average. In 2000, results were slightly below national average, with 50 per cent of pupils gaining grades A\* to C, largely due to slightly lower prior attainment than the 1999 or 2001 candidates. In work seen during the inspection, standards of written work were good and for coursework very good, being based on different retail areas in the locality. All pupils write details of methods used and analyse their own graphs made from evidence collected. There is also some excellent written evaluation from higher attaining pupils.
150. A-level results over the last three years show attainment to be broadly average, but standards in the work observed during the inspection were above average, reflecting slightly better prior attainment than the previous year's candidates. Current Year 13 students show a

good grasp of geographical terms and demonstrate good understanding of weather and slope profiles in lessons observed. They are competent with Internet research and show good understanding of the complexities of census data. All students have at least satisfactory and often good skills in note taking, evaluative writing and data collection. Short coursework projects are good overall.

151. By the end of Year 9 pupils have achieved well. They develop good skills of presentation, and almost all pupils complete the work set. They are encouraged to use a variety of writing styles and a collection of poetry by Year 9 pupils showed very good empathetic writing on recent earthquake disasters. In addition, diary entries are used by pupils to illustrate the experiences of people moving from rural to urban areas. Pupils are enthusiastic for these creative writing tasks and give of their best. Pupils' responses in lessons indicate good knowledge of key terms, and all pupils develop writing and research skills through fieldwork and enquiry projects. Higher attaining pupils achieve very good standards of extended and analytical writing. Lower attainers are better able to complete tasks when work is suited to their needs. This is done in most classes, with the use of structured writing exercises. More planning is needed to ensure that this good practice becomes universal in the mixed-ability groups in Year 7.
152. By the end of Year 11 pupils have again achieved well. They have gained a good understanding of topics in their written work, and lower attainers are helped to do so by the use of structured worksheets. There is good development of knowledge, and of the understanding of key terms. This is frequently demonstrated by good oral responses in the classroom, and related to the excellent listening skills shown by pupils. In addition, pupils develop good numeracy skills through the use of graph, map and diagram work and through using statistics to draw and analyse graphs. Pupil's skills of environmental analysis are good. For example, when they analysed retail areas their skills improved even further, and this was related to the high-quality planning for fieldwork
153. Students in the sixth form develop good research skills related to their coursework projects and essay work. Internet skills are well developed and students have well-organised files which are checked by teachers. Students develop good note-taking skills, evaluative writing and data collection, and learn to choose appropriate methods for revision notes. Short coursework projects are good overall.
154. All pupils and students are attentive and concentrate well. Pupils work well in groups and show co-operative attitudes towards each other. A high level of mutual respect is shown by pupils and teachers.
155. Teaching is very good overall. The few weaknesses are shown by a lack of pace in a minority of lessons, lack of challenge for the highest attainers, and insufficient provision of suitable tasks for mixed-ability pupils in some Year 7 classes. In these lessons, learning is satisfactory. There is much very good teaching at all levels. In one Year 7 lesson, pupils worked in pairs to identify urban zones from high quality photographs. Structured question sheets were used to promote discussion and written work, whilst higher attaining pupils used land use maps and gave a short presentation. Pupils of all abilities shared in the high achievements of the lesson and gained a very good understanding of the structure of urban areas. In a Year 9 lesson on the Arctic landscape for lower attainers, listening to classical

music, using photographs, maps, atlases and providing brief descriptive writing ensured high levels of achievement. The best lessons show good pace and challenge to suit pupils' needs, and a demanding variety of activities. All teachers use some targeting of pupils during questioning to ensure maximum participation, and provide positive encouragement to responses.

156. Management of the subject is very good and led by a committed and enthusiastic teacher. Assessment is well organised, and lessons and marking are monitored by the faculty. The subject has a comprehensive handbook, which includes clearly stated policies and a realistic development plan. Annual reviews with plans for improvement ensure ongoing development. After-school revision classes are held and well attended. Fieldwork is well organised and there are some good cross-curricular links.
157. Since the last inspection, attainment has improved at all levels, and the quality of teaching has improved from mostly satisfactory to mostly very good. Lesson planning has improved, and resources and accommodation have greatly improved.
158. Further improvement could be achieved by closer monitoring of marking to ensure consistent use of the marking scheme. Some teachers need to develop more understanding of the methods available to help pupils with different ability levels. The use of ICT needs to be included for specific teaching units in the schemes of work.

## **HISTORY**

159. At the age of 14, in classes observed during the inspection, pupils' attainment is above national expectations. In these lessons, pupils handle historical facts well and they increase their ability to analyse and evaluate the key concepts of causation and effect. For example, Year 9 pupils, in their study of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, could not only set, in chronological order, events such as the bombing of the United States navy at Pearl Harbour and the various battles in the Pacific such as Leyte Gulf and Iwo Jima, but they could also evaluate effectively the importance of each event in causing the American decision to drop the bomb. This level of class-based attainment is reflected in the results of the teacher assessment tests, which are above national norms. In such tests and across time, pupils' attainment is affected positively by their burgeoning levels of literacy and by their understanding of the academic approach to the subject inherent in the National Curriculum and therefore they attain above national expectations.
160. At the age of 16, standards seen during the inspection were above average. In the lessons observed pupils were skilful at linking several facts together to make a comprehensive and cohesive historical picture. For example, Year 11 pupils, in their studies of the impact of the Second World War on technological change, can note the changes in such weapons as aircraft and tanks and can show how these weapons led to a global war affecting civilians as much as soldiers. In public examinations, however, results, at 52 per cent A\* to C in Year 2000, are below national expectations, due largely to pupils' lack of confidence when dealing with the complexities of analysis and evaluation in tests and examinations, and the lack of strategies for retention of facts. The department is aware of the work needed in these areas.

161. Inspection evidence indicates that standards at the end of the sixth form are above average. Students have an above average grasp of the complexities of historical analysis. For example, Year 13 students can evaluate the responses of different powers to the pleas for help by both the republican and nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War and they understand the complexities which led to the decisions taken by the powers to those appeals. Results at the end of sixth form education vary from year to year. In 2000, at 8 per cent A or B grades, they were well below national norms, but in 1998 and 1999 they were well above. Results are largely explained by variations in the prior attainment of students choosing the subject, though even the strong current Year 13 students show some lack of wider reading in the subject and in their retention and independent research abilities.
162. Pupils' achievement in each year from Year 7 to Year 13 is good. This is strongest in the first three years where the positive effects of such strategies as the literacy policy are now being shown in pupils' work. By the end of this stage of their learning pupils have a good knowledge of the periods they are studying and they are effectively able to relate causation to effect. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 effectively build on the progress made in the first three years. Learning through empathy is a strength of the subject. A Year 9 class, for example, was clearly moved at the pictures of survivors of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress in Years 7 to 11, although gifted and talented pupils, whilst making satisfactory progress, could be stretched and challenged even further.
163. Teaching is good throughout the Years 7 to 11. It is very good in the sixth form. During the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well planned and well prepared and lead to pupils learning. Sometimes, teachers are inclined to be overly didactic and this does not always encourage pupils' independent learning. However, the overall quality of teaching makes a significant impact on pupils' learning, attainment and progress. A characteristic of history teaching is that the teachers' belief in the value of the subject is reflected in their enthusiasm for it. This is infectious and has a strong impact on pupils' learning. Teachers are particularly good at establishing good relationships, using humour often whilst always maintaining control of classes. Teachers are adept at drawing out significant points from material which is both challenging and exciting. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on Lenin, the teacher was able to take a quote from the speech which Lenin made on his return to Russia from exile in 1917 and used it to elicit from the students their understanding of Lenin's psyche and how this affected his later political decisions. The quality of teaching led to good learning since students were stimulated by the challenge and applied their best intellectual and creative efforts to fulfil the tasks set. In Years 7 to 9 homework is set and marked regularly by some staff but not by all.
164. The response of pupils is good. They generally show application to their work, respond diligently, settle quickly and sustain concentration. Pupils enjoy the subject and their positive behaviour and response, which are often a direct result of good teaching and good management of the lesson, are important factors in their increased learning.
165. The department is led effectively and efficiently by the head of department, who is a good role model for a department team committed to raising standards and to the encouragement of pupils to high achievement. Colleagues in the department offer good support. Their



commitment is reflected in the range of additional voluntary classes and workshops which they run after school for pupils. Under the head of department's leadership, informed and informative policies have been produced, and these are being implemented with success and have a positive impact upon pupils' learning. For example, a very good system of structured guidance for writing and the use of key word lists underpin a good literacy programme. There has been marked improvement in the general reading, writing and listening skills of pupils. This is a feature of the last report on which there has been good progress.

166. There is a comprehensive assessment policy for the department which is based on sound principles and achievable outcomes. There is a need for greater consistency in marking against a common scheme predicated on National Curriculum levels in history. Since the last report, the recent new building and refurbishment programme has created a suite of teaching rooms which are generally bright. They have displays of pupils' work which act as an incentive and which create an atmosphere conducive to learning. There is, in every room, the potential to link into the very good computer provision, but as yet, lack of interactive whiteboards and insufficient access for staff to ICT training, is restricting the maximisation of that potential. Some of the rooms, particularly in the sixth form block, are too small for the comfort of classes in double figures. Good use is made of visits to supplement pupils' learning. These range from visits as diverse as the armouries at Leeds in Year 7 to the visits to the European Conference in France. The department has good strategies for increasing learning for lower attaining pupils, but planning for the gifted and talented pupils is not so advanced.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

167. At the age of 14, pupils' results in National Curriculum assessments for information and communication technology (ICT) indicate attainment which is well above average. In the most recent end of Year 9 teachers' assessments, 79 per cent of pupils attained level 5 and above, compared with 62 per cent nationally. Results have risen over the past three years by 23 per cent. Boys outperform girls by a small margin, which is unusual at this age. In work seen during the inspection, in lessons and in pupils' work files, standards were above average rather than well above: teachers' assessments are reliable on some, but not all, aspects of the subject. By the end of Year 9, pupils' work on word processing is good. They know how to make text look more interesting for the reader as they are very aware of the impact of colour and can change letter styles and add pictures and borders. Spreadsheet work is good, as most pupils understand about putting data into cells and using, although few actually create, formulae for calculations. Pupils know how to use a CD-ROM and the Internet to find information. Work on databases is an area which lags behind, partly because software and hardware have yet to be fully commissioned. Pupils collect information and enter data to make records, but they are not as proficient at manipulating the data, sorting or interrogating the database as they are at other aspects of ICT. The promotion of other skills such as the use of screen art, animation, control boxes and data-logging has been limited by the need to await new software. Resources are already satisfactory compared with schools nationally; existing orders for further resources indicate very good provision will soon be achieved. Attainment is already above average but requires the additional resources to improve further.

168. At the age of 16, pupils' results are slightly above average. In the most recent GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was above the national average, but the percentage of those gaining grades A\* to G was below it. Girls outperformed boys by 10 per cent. Results in this subject are better than the school's average performance at GCSE. In work seen during the inspection standards were above average overall. They were high in word processing, desktop publishing, use of spreadsheets and databases and in their understanding of the Internet and the use of ICT in the outside world. Pupils in Year 11, for example, are working on a scuba diving holiday task. They have devised leaflets and posters, constructed web-type pages, written business letters, calculated costs, created client records and analysed the advantages and disadvantages of foreign trips. Portfolio work is of a high standard from the higher attaining pupils as they interpret set problems sensibly, devise solutions and present their work carefully. A minority of pupils miss important sections and their analysis is weaker. In general, although pupils' skills are very good on handling and presenting information, they are adequate in monitoring and control; a minority are unused to e-mailing and the use of digital cameras and scanners.
169. At the age of 18, students' standards are above the national average. In the summer of 2001, students will take A-level in the subject for the first time, so it is not possible to determine trends or relative performance by gender. In work seen during the inspection, in lessons and in students' work files and portfolios, students' understanding of legislation and the impact of ICT on society are good. They detect data-handling problems in businesses and organisations, work out possible solutions, select appropriate software for tasks, write user and technical guides and evaluate their work honestly. They have involved the users in testing the systems and altered them to accommodate clients' suggestions. Many students produce very detailed portfolios with high quality printouts and explanatory sections to prove their knowledge and understanding. Students keep their written work in good order.
170. Achievement from Years 7 to 13 is good. Pupils enter school with generally sound skills in using a computer to write words, draw pictures and do mathematics tests. From their first lessons in Year 7 they have to remember passwords, log on to the network, save, retrieve and print their work. As there are plenty of workstations, pupils learn to be self-reliant by using their own computers. As they grow older, pupils build up skills in using a wide variety of programs and, towards the end of Year 9 and through the GCSE course, select which of them to use on projects requiring the co-ordinated use of multiple tasks. Students in the sixth form add on appropriately high level skills of analysis, testing, refinement and presentation. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well on practical tasks, but struggle with theory, as they do not always have texts that match their literacy and numeracy levels. Overall their progress is satisfactory. On the limited occasions when they have additional class support with close adult supervision, they achieve well. Pupils who are gifted and talented achieve very highly as extension work allows for experimentation and individuality.
171. Throughout the school, most pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They appear eager to learn, listen carefully to instructions, watch demonstrations with interest and are keen to answer questions. Behaviour is very good. Pupils settle to work quickly, concentrate hard and persevere, even when they find operations difficult. They are confident in asking for assistance, heed advice and thank the teachers for their help, showing respect. Relationships are very good. Pupils get on well together and when they have to share computers, they do so without undue fuss. Sometimes pupils of differing abilities are paired so the higher ability

pupils gain self-esteem and the lower attaining pupils gain confidence as they contribute to the decisions and help to double the output. A few of the more confident pupils help each other if they realise their friends are struggling, showing maturity. During lessons, many pupils like having their work appraised and are proud to show what skills they possess.

172. For the school as a whole the qualities of teaching and learning are good. In the 15 lessons seen during the inspection, seven were good, eight were satisfactory and there was therefore no unsatisfactory teaching. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is satisfactory, while in Years 10 to 13 both teaching and learning are good. In the department as a whole subject knowledge is sound and teachers ensure pupils gain accurate knowledge and skills. They introduce technical terms and number problems that help pupils to raise their literacy and numeracy levels. Planning is satisfactory, but the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 requires rewriting to ensure pupils have a better balanced programme of work that includes all the necessary aspects. Teachers expect pupils to do their best and set realisable targets for them. They create more demanding tasks for the higher attaining pupils to extend their learning, but tasks for the lower attaining pupils are sometimes too difficult. As pupils are well behaved, teachers do not have to waste time gaining order and discipline. Teaching across Years 7 to 9 is characterised by broadly satisfactory classroom strategies and use of assessment. Homework is not set consistently though expectations are generally appropriate: in the other year groups these aspects of teaching are usually strong. However, pupils in Years 7 to 9 learn well, reflecting not only the contribution of their teachers but their very marked enthusiasm and skill at acquiring new knowledge. Marking of class work is clear and helps pupils to understand how they can improve their work, but the final assessments at the end of Year 9 do not accurately reflect standards as the grades are awarded on a limited range of tasks. The assessment of performance in ICT from other subjects is not collated or included in the overall assessments.
173. ICT is effectively used in many subjects. Departments such as business education, physical education, geography, design and technology and science use the computers often to present coursework, film dance programmes and transfer them to CD-ROM, record field work, compile portfolio sheets and conduct screen experiments. Other departments have agreed plans and strategies for the full use of their computers when all the software is loaded onto the network and all the additional equipment and linkages arrive. Most departments do not assess pupils' work using the ICT criteria, so they are unaware of the desirable levels of attainment.
174. Management is sound. The teachers in the department have worked well as a team, despite the lack of a single head of department, difficulties with staff absences, changes in accommodation and the installation of new equipment. The interim arrangements, before the new department head starts work, have been mainly satisfactory, as the department is fully committed to giving pupils the required skills and knowledge. Currently, there are weaknesses in the monitoring of teaching, the scheme of work and assessment for the pupils in Years 7 to 9, the use of assessment data to guide planning and co-ordinating, and assessing ICT across the curriculum. The book stock in the library is poor and does not support the learning and there are too few textbooks.
175. The department has made a good response to the comments made in the last inspection report. Standards are higher throughout the school, especially in using spreadsheets and in

using the Internet. Pupils use ICT in more subjects, literacy and numeracy skills are higher, and practical skills are much higher as pupils have access to more and better quality computers. The quality of teaching has improved, leadership has been resolved and statutory requirements are met. Accommodation is vastly improved. In addition to the responses, there have been significant changes. Pupils in Year 9 now take intermediate GNVQ, GCSE has been reintroduced and A- level information and communication technology has been established. The developing school web site, for use by pupils, teachers and parents, is extensive.

## MODERN LANGUAGES

176. The results of teacher assessments at age 14 suggest that pupils attain well above national averages, with more than 80 per cent of pupils reaching level 4 or above. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are not quite this high but are nevertheless above national averages in all four skills, particularly in writing and listening skills. The use of National Curriculum levels for teacher assessments is not yet sufficiently reliable, lacking a dependable link to results across the country as a whole.
177. Pupils achieve well across Years 7 to 9. By the age of 14, pupils can describe events in the past, present and future in speech and writing; higher attaining pupils construct their own sentences and lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs use set phrases and substitute words to change meaning. All pupils express simple opinions, and average and higher attainers give more detail and justify their views. The majority have a good understanding of patterns in the languages, explain verb endings and agreements and apply them successfully. Some pupils' pronunciation, particularly in French, is adversely affected because their first encounter with new language is through the written form, but, overall, pronunciation and intonation are good because of frequent exposure to excellent role models in their teachers and foreign language assistants. All pupils can identify the main points and specific detail from short texts at near-normal speed, higher attainers requiring little repetition or guidance. They write short accounts, produce posters, leaflets, graphs and letters on a variety of topic areas such as their home, school and family, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs by following a model, average and higher attainers manipulating the language to meet their own needs.
178. By the age of 16, results are broadly in line with national averages. In GCSE examinations, the percentage of candidates achieving A\* to C grades in 2000 in French and Spanish were in line with national averages, but in German they were below. Girls achieved better than boys in German, and boys achieved better than girls in French and Spanish. All candidates do better in French and Spanish than in other subjects and worse in German. During the inspection, standards achieved in lessons were above national averages in all three languages, and there was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. This largely reflects changes in the prior attainment of Year 11 pupils, which is higher than it was for GCSE candidates in 2000.
179. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is good. By age 16, pupils have developed good listening skills. They respond with little hesitation to questions and instructions; higher attainers respond in detail, drawing on vocabulary and structures from a variety of topic areas, and adapting the languages to suit their own needs. Lower attainers speak and write

using set phrases, and all describe events in past, present and future, and express opinions on topics such as future plans, past actions and environmental issues. Writing is well presented and usually accurate. Average and higher attainers write and speak at length on various topics and for a variety of audiences, have a good understanding of grammar and adapt the language to communicate their own ideas. All are efficient in using dictionaries to check meaning. Higher and average attainers deduce the meaning of some unfamiliar language. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across Years 7 to 11.

180. Over the last three years, A-level results have been well above national average in French, broadly average in German and below average in Spanish. Inspection evidence indicated above average standards in all three subjects, reflecting improved teaching and particularly positive attitudes to study amongst current Year 13 students. By the age of 18, students understand and respond to questions with great speed. They speak and respond spontaneously with a good degree of fluency, and usually with very good pronunciation and intonation. They command a good range of vocabulary and structures, have a very good understanding of grammar, and can understand and use idiomatic phrases appropriately. They scan texts from a variety of sources and report back on their findings, and can identify the main points and details from speech at normal speed. They use ICT to extend their learning, and use dictionaries and reference materials efficiently. They have a very good grasp of grammar and apply rules successfully in their speech and writing. They write for a variety of audiences and purposes, and have a good understanding of register. They debate contemporary issues, such as euthanasia, animal experimentation and environmental issues, with understanding and appropriate terminology. Although their proficiency in the languages would indicate that they are competent and confident, they are not often given the opportunity to present arguments or report to others independently of the teacher.
181. The overall quality of teaching is very good, matched by the quality of learning. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good, while in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, teaching is very good. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better. More than eight out of ten were good or better, and a third very good or excellent. Examples of very good or excellent teaching were seen in all languages. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and the language used is matched well to pupils' previous experience and capabilities. However, in a minority of lessons, opportunities are missed to challenge higher attaining pupils by asking them to interpret for others, and English translations are sometimes given too readily. Management of pupils is usually very good: high expectations, very good relationships and frequent use of praise motivate pupils and create a supportive atmosphere where pupils are not afraid of making mistakes. Objectives are usually clear, and a review of key words and structures at the end of lessons reinforces learning. Activities are usually very well planned to ensure that pupils build effectively on previous learning, but in a minority of lessons, pupils are not clear about what they have to do and become restless and lose interest. Teachers know pupils well, monitor individual progress during tasks and intervene sensitively to support and challenge. The pace is usually brisk: pupils are given strict deadlines, which maintain a high level of concentration and interest. Very effective question-and-answer techniques enable pupils to contribute successfully to oral work. Teachers give clear presentations and pupils rapidly identify and apply patterns in the language for themselves. Good use is made of resources and a good variety of activities maintains interest and motivation. In the most effective lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm is contagious, making oral work fun, and pupils are keen to try and are confident of their ability to succeed. Pupils are usually given frequent

opportunities to practise in pairs and rapidly increase in confidence and independence when they are asked to use the language in realistic situations, for example, to canvass opinion about school or environmental issues, although these opportunities are sometimes missed.

182. Pupils are very well behaved and have positive attitudes towards their learning. They work in pairs sensibly, concentrate, and organise themselves well. They are keen to contribute to oral work and listen attentively. Students in the sixth form are very well motivated and operate almost exclusively in the language they are studying. Work is very well presented and many pupils greatly enjoy their learning and take pride in their achievements.
183. The department is committed to raising standards and analyses results, identifying how they can be improved. The department makes a valuable contribution to pupils' moral, cultural and social development and provides support for pupils outside lessons, for example, offering extra classes for gifted and talented linguists, additional examination practice and classes in Latin after school, organising trips abroad and providing sample lessons for pupils soon to join the school. Curricular provision is good, most pupils being given the opportunity to study two languages, but a small number of Year 7 pupils are withdrawn from one lesson each week for extra help with literacy and are at a disadvantage in their language learning. All Year 10 and Year 11 classes are timetabled at the same time, which leads to some classes being taught outside the area of specialist accommodation. This makes it difficult to provide specialist support from colleagues if teachers are absent. Resources and accommodation are very good: all specialist rooms are very well equipped and all staff are appropriately qualified and well deployed. Display is of very high quality and is used effectively to support learning and to celebrate pupils' achievement.
184. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now a high level of consistency across all languages. Standards have improved, and differences in the achievement of boys and girls have been addressed successfully. Assessment has been developed and is now used effectively to track progress, although there is still scope for further development in planning for the progress of groups of differing ability within teaching groups. Accommodation and resources have improved significantly, and the use of ICT is being developed successfully. Management of the subject is good: teachers work very well together as a team and there is a high degree of consistency.

## **Urdu**

185. At age 16, standards are below the national average for other languages. At GCSE, 51 per cent of pupils achieved A\* to C grades, an 11 per cent rise compared to 1999. One hundred per cent achieved A\* to G grades, which is above the national average. The subject is studied from Year 10 only, so that standards seen in Year 10 are below national averages
186. By the end of Year 11, pupils can speak Urdu with confidence and produce extended pieces of writing to describe their experiences over Eid. They can respond to short messages, signs and notices, but find extended passages of text hard. There are no pupils with special educational needs, and no girls studying Urdu in Year 11.

187. Pupils are highly motivated and hard working. They behave well and concentrate throughout lessons. Pupils show respect for each other and for the teacher. They take pride in their cultural heritage, for example, in Year 10 studying the origins of Eid. Year 10 pupils lack confidence speaking Urdu in class, especially in mixed-gender groups. Opportunities to take initiatives and personal responsibility are limited.
188. Teaching is good. Classes are well managed and organised. The teacher has strong knowledge of the subject, and relationships between teacher and pupils are good. Lesson aims and objectives and tasks are explained clearly. Tasks are set to cater for pupils at different levels. Urdu is used well to explain instructions, though in some instances, pupils are not encouraged to give extended replies in Urdu. No ICT or audiovisual equipment is used in lessons.
189. Fewer pupils than in the past now study the subject, as they are now screened at the end of Year 9 to ensure prior knowledge of the subject. A beginners' class after school has recently been established, but is not yet well attended. The acting head of the faculty is supportive but there are inhibiting factors to be dealt with. There is no ICT equipment, few audiovisual resources and no opportunities for trips or visits. The library does not stock Urdu or dual language books. Urdu does not have a regular teaching room. These factors partly reflect the fact that though teaching has been in place for two and a half years there has been no permanent appointment made.
190. Since the last inspection, Urdu has been established as a taught GCSE subject within the modern languages faculty. Examination results are improving, and a small stock of Urdu resources has been built up.

## MUSIC

191. Standards of attainment in music by pupils at the age of 16 and students at the age of 18 are good. In the most recent GCSE results, 69 per cent of pupils entered obtained grades A\* to C, with 50 per cent obtaining A\* or A. This pattern has been consistent over the past three years. In the A-level examinations both in music and in music technology, students regularly gain higher-grade passes, although in 1999 and 2000, when more students were entered, results clustered around middle grades. Standards in current Year 13 are above average.
192. Teachers' assessments for pupils at the age of 14 indicate attainment above the national average, but this was not borne out by inspection evidence, which shows attainment at this stage to be average. The department's application of National Curriculum assessment criteria is not as reliable as it should be and tends to over-estimate attainment. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils' strengths are in listening and in performing. Pupils at all levels of ability listen perceptively and perform confidently and often with sensitivity. In a Year 7 class, pupils invented, rehearsed and performed 'Mechanical Music' with great commitment, using good listening techniques and supporting each other's playing well. Their compositions are particularly successful when, as a result of careful planning by the teacher, topic and challenge are well matched to pupils' different needs, as in a Year 8 class where pupils explored texture and created well-organised compositions by using vocal sounds and a variety of percussion instruments. When this match is less carefully considered, ideas are poorly developed, outcomes are superficial and pupils under-achieve. Younger pupils sing enthusiastically, but do not listen to the quality of the sound they produce.
193. At the age of 16, higher attainers compose confidently, successfully undertaking demanding topics such as pieces for a big band, featuring the different characteristics of the instruments used. Many such pupils perform at a level well beyond the requirements of the examination, and most are entered at the age of 15, reflecting the school's provision for talented pupils. Their listening skills are very good. Average attaining pupils achieve high grades in music. Most perform confidently and create well-structured pieces. Lower attainers achieve well in music, can compose simple pieces by following guidelines and can play simple pieces fluently. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in music across Years 10 and 11.
194. A-level students perform sophisticated repertoire confidently. Older students have developed good aural and harmonic skills, and compose imaginative, extended pieces. Their written work is well researched and systematically presented. Achievement across Years 12 and 13 is good.
195. Pupils at all stages are enthusiastic about music. They co-operate and concentrate well in class, and waste very little time when given the opportunity to work independently. They are willing to discuss each other's ideas and within groups they readily learn to negotiate, support and contribute. Their social skills and self-esteem develop rapidly from an early stage.



196. For the school as a whole, teaching is good with some very good features. Although there are some shortcomings in lessons in Years 7 to 9, teaching quality for these year groups is satisfactory. Teachers know their subject well and effectively communicate their enthusiasm. Control is good, and lessons are planned to make efficient use of the available time. In the most successful lessons, where the material and the level of challenge meet pupils' different needs well, pupils learn well. In lessons based on a single activity, such as a keyboard task, not sufficient thought is given to the capabilities of higher attainers, with the result that activities are not varied, the pace is slow and the rate of learning diminishes. Teaching in both GCSE and A-level classes is good. Pupils benefit from the wide range of expertise which music staff are able to offer, and are provided with good role models, both by the musical competence of their teachers and by the systematic and energetic way in which the subject is taught.
197. More than 10 per cent of the school's population learn instruments, taught by a team of 11 instrumental teachers. The quality of this teaching is good. A wide range of extra-curricular activities regularly takes place, offering excellent opportunities to all pupils who participate and contributing significantly to their social and personal development. Pupils take part in local and national events, and work with high-achieving young musicians from national organisations, such as the National Youth Jazz Orchestra, and with professional musicians. They are regularly involved in community events and annually present a major musical production. These opportunities reflect the school's provision for its gifted and talented pupils. Provision for pupils to learn about music from other traditions is very good. Instrumental lessons and ensembles for steel pans, balalaika, Gamelan and Indian music all feature within the department's activities.
198. Departmental management is sound: many aspects are good, but some important features need attention. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 takes insufficient account of the needs of pupils of higher attainers in each class. The assessment system is inconsistent and lacks clear focus. Lesson objectives are often confused with lesson activities, and planning needs to ensure systematic progression, taking greater account of the development of underlying skills. The department is well staffed. Resources are adequate, but a great many classroom instruments are rapidly wearing out. Previously good provision for ICT in music for younger pupils is no longer readily accessible because of the congested nature of the computer room, and students studying music technology A-level have great difficulty in working in such cramped conditions. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, but the situation is on the point of improvement with the arrival of temporary soundproofed classrooms. Although the quality of accommodation in the sixth form block is good, the room is small and the audio equipment is not sufficiently sensitive.
199. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has become more consistent at all stages. Except for the delivery of ICT, the syllabus now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Extra-curricular activities, multi-cultural music and provision for able musicians are strengths both of the department and the school. However, in the light of the deteriorating condition of classroom resources, and the difficulties caused by inadequate accommodation, improvement is only satisfactory.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

200. By the age of 14, standards in physical education are above those expected nationally. Standards at the age of 16 are also above national expectations. The faculty is successful in maintaining high levels of challenge for the majority of pupils by using effective methodology that motivates achievement for all. The results of the 2000 GCSE examinations in the higher A\* to C category are below the national average. The academic profiles of pupils taking these examinations change from year to year, and the recent trend in results has varied from above the national average to well below. The 2000 examination results suffered because students under-achieve in the personal study element of the course work. The percentage of pupils achieving passes in the A\* to G category was above the national average. Pupils in the present Year 11 GCSE group are performing above national averages. Recent improvements in the provision for theoretical aspects of the course, and a change of examination board, are benefiting their work. The results of the first group to take A-level physical education in 2000 matched the national average for the higher A and B grades. Current Year 13 work is achieving similar standards.
201. Achievement is high for all age ranges. Pupils of all abilities make consistently good progress because tasks enable them to practise and refine at their own levels. Learning objectives are shared with the pupils, giving them clear targets for immediate and future improvement. Sensitive encouragement and very positive relationships between teachers and pupils are particularly beneficial to learning within the lower-attaining sets. This is noticeable in net games, where previous experiences are very limited. The very good response by pupils aids progress. In gymnastics and dance, pupils willingly collaborate in groups to perform set sequences and routines. Older pupils have a good understanding of how different types of activity affect specific aspects of their fitness. Pupils undertaking examination courses make good progress using research methodology, often using ICT to improve file work. Achievement is less strong in pupils' ability to use evaluation to improve performance.
202. Teaching is very good throughout. Significant strengths are teachers' subject knowledge and the high expectations they have of pupils. Teachers demonstrate clearly the appropriate techniques and pupils are able to adapt and refine their skills in a wide range of activities. Departmental policy has had a positive impact on planning. A Year 8 orienteering class demonstrated well how different challenges can be given in terms of distances to be run, expectations in map reading, and estimating distances to allow for tactics. Variations in challenge also produce good responses and learning in basketball, tennis and cross-country. Teachers consistently make very good use of their knowledge of pupils' previous achievements to plan for the next stages in learning. Good marking identifies strengths and weaknesses in examination course work, allowing pupils to work more closely to target grades. However, previously recorded fitness levels are not being efficiently used in Year 8 athletics-based lessons. Well-organised teaching leads to effective use of the lessons, though the below average time allocation adds to the problem of changing activities halfway through a double lesson.
203. The faculty has very effective procedures in place for action planning whereby relevant practices and targets for future development are identified. Recent innovations include expanding the choice of activities, a consideration of ways to certificate achievement with older pupils, and the implementation of the school's literacy policy. There is a strong ethos

for staff development, of which the successful implementation of A-level and the mentoring programme for student teachers are examples. The department recognises the need to extend this further by sharing the expertise of all members of staff. The programmes of study provide very good continuity and progress in the curriculum from Years 7 to 13. However, the allocation of time between Years 7 and 9 is below the national average, making it difficult for the department to enhance provision beyond statutory requirements. Departmental assessment procedures are very good. The faculty has made rapid progress in adopting the new National Curriculum levels to inform their understanding of pupils' performances. Significantly, these judgements often do not match the generic targets set by the school. In both the core and examination courses, there is some confusion about the relevance of these targets and this complicates the process of trying to raise attainment.

204. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Changes have been made to curricular provision as a result of the move into new, purpose-built accommodation. The games programme now offers a wider range of options, gymnastics and dance are being made more challenging, and health-related fitness permeates a wider range of aerobic work. The provision of extra-curricular activities continues to be excellent: individuals and teams achieve a very wide variety of honours and strong links have been established with the many clubs using the new facilities. Standards of performance are affected by the continuing struggle to maintain appropriate levels of resources to run the programmes of study, and there is a lack of a suitable space to teach core and examination dance classes.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

205. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils by the age of 14 matches the standards expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils have a broad understanding of the Islamic tradition, for example the place of the mosque within the community. Pupils in Year 9 investigate the main characteristics and beliefs of the Sikh religion, reflecting on the role of symbolism as used in this tradition and also in other faiths. They identify religious artefacts and by doing so they reflect on the importance of belief to believers, and the need to treat the beliefs of others with respect. Higher attaining pupils display sensitivity towards the importance of symbols to the religious community. All pupils recognise the use of symbols to express unity of purpose. Pupils consider the concept of Christian love and use ICT to research into the lives of individuals who have demonstrated it, for example Maximillian Kolbe. Pupils in Year 8 consider the concept of forgiveness and higher attaining pupils begin to recognise the destructive nature of hate and revenge. The length of lessons and the limited opportunity to develop ideas in the time, result in pupils finding it hard to move beyond stereotypical responses. Limited use of homework as an opportunity for pupils to explore their ideas results in the loss of early stages of understanding in some instances. Pupils in Year 7 have a satisfactory knowledge of some of the significant events of the life of Jesus and an understanding of the concept of the miraculous. They can identify at least one example from the Christian tradition. They can recount a parable placing it in a present day setting, such as an attack after a football match.
206. The attainment of pupils by the age of 16 is below the standard expected for pupils of the same age nationally. Insufficient prior knowledge of religious traditions results in pupils in Year 11 approaching the investigation into contemporary moral issues from a largely non-religious standpoint. Information about religious teaching is noted but there is limited

understanding of the underlying beliefs. Pupils consider the concept of the sanctity of life and the moral dilemmas that are presented by issues of euthanasia and abortion. Pupils can exchange their different viewpoints and treat the opinions of their peers with courtesy. They are aware that there may be more than one valid opinion and that religious belief may affect a decision. The attainment of pupils in Year 10 is in line with the expected standard. Pupils are developing a more detailed understanding of the Christian teaching related to such issues as gender roles, and use it to consider arguments for and against the ordination of women as ministers. In some classes pupils of higher ability demonstrate, in extended writing, an understanding of the issues and an awareness of the effects of religious belief on the believer. Lower attaining pupils make good progress where teachers support group work with prompts and questions. Written work, however, tends to be brief and responses are undeveloped. From the beginning of the autumn term this year, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 have followed the short GCSE course. The structure of the course in Year 10 supports the delivery of the agreed syllabus and entry into the GCSE examination. The course followed by current Year 11 is based on a much smaller time allocation and as a result, the breadth of pupils' knowledge and understanding is constrained. The achievement of some higher attaining pupils in some groups is also limited by the lack of commitment of a minority of pupils who do not have a tradition of study in religious education. The attitudes of pupils in Year 10, who have been supported by a wider knowledge of religious tradition, are more focused, and as a result achievement is higher.

207. The behaviour of pupils in religious education is generally good and relationships are very good. Pupils work very well in groups and are prepared to listen to the opinions of their peers. In almost all lessons seen pupils worked well with their teachers and were willing to collaborate with each other. The attitudes of the majority of pupils in Years 7 to 10 are satisfactory and support the development of understanding and respect for the ideas of others.
208. The quality of teaching is good for all year groups. New schemes of work and the teaching strategies which accompany them have not yet had time to fully overcome the limited knowledge with which pupils enter the school, or the inadequate time previously allocated to the subject. Lessons are well structured with aims and objectives that are routinely shared with the class. Lessons where teaching was very good were characterised by the very good progress of pupils due to the careful planning of the teachers. This enabled pupils to move through a series of tasks, each one providing an opportunity for the further development of understanding. A good example was a lesson on the use of symbolism in the Sikh religion. Good use of question and answer at the start of the lessons enables teachers to reinforce previous learning and to assess pupils' understanding. The use of a shared review to close the lesson is an effective method of ensuring that the lesson objectives have been met. A strength of the teaching is the ability of teachers to allow pupils the space to form their own opinions and to develop the skill of analysis of information. The limited time allocation, particularly in Years 10 and 11, however, results in lessons being curtailed to fit the time when they could be well used to extend knowledge that would support greater understanding. Teachers' expectations of behaviour and group work are good. Expectations of written work are lower, as teachers wish to provide a positive response to the efforts of their pupils. As a result, responses are often brief and lacking thought and development. In many cases, work is left unfinished or uncorrected by the pupil. Homework is good in some areas, but this is not consistent across the department. The quality of homework provided is

further limited by the insufficient numbers of textbooks for private use in the GCSE course. Understanding of the structure and teaching of the bible is affected by the absence of a set of bibles within the department. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. Teachers ensure that classrooms are attractive and welcoming and that pupils recognise that their views are valued. Discipline within the faculty is good whilst not intrusive.

209. Management of the department is good. Current leadership is very strong and many improvements are being made or have recently been put in place, and their impact is already being felt in some aspects of the department's provision. Schemes of work are being regularly reviewed and a system of assessment is at the early stages with much work still to be completed. Use is made of past examination questions to enable pupils to become familiar with the GCSE criteria but although pupils review their work, they do not yet take responsibility for improving their work or identifying weaknesses.
210. Since the previous inspection, the department has moved into the new building and in co-operation with the other social sciences has developed an area that provides very good support for the well-being of the pupils. Display in and around the classrooms demonstrates concern for their support and self-esteem. The inclusion of the short GCSE course for Years 10 and 11 provides a clear framework through which to deliver the agreed syllabus and an additional incentive for pupils to strive to achieve their potential. The use of visits and visitors is still minimal; however, targets indicate greater planned use in the future. The school is not yet providing students in the sixth form with their statutory right to a religious education, although a course has been include in the sixth form prospectus for next year.