

INSPECTION REPORT

**Howden Clough Girls' High School
and Sixth Form Centre**

Batley

LEA area: Kirklees

Unique Reference Number: 107770

Inspection Number: 186520

Headteacher: Dr D Drake

Reporting inspector: Mr I Benson
2739

Dates of inspection: 8 - 12 November 1999

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Girls
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. P Rout
Date of previous inspection:	January 1996

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Mrs MJ Kerry (<i>Lay Inspector</i>)		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Attendance; Partnership with parents and the community; The efficiency of the school.
Mrs P Hanage (<i>Team Member</i>)	Mathematics; Equal opportunities.	Curriculum and assessment.
Mrs VJ Elliott (<i>Team Member</i>)	Religious education.	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
Mrs L Dunsmore (<i>Team Member</i>)	Geography; Special educational needs.	
Mrs A Bridger (<i>Team Member</i>)		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare.
Ms B Baughan (<i>Team Member</i>)	English.	
Dr D Benstock (<i>Team Member</i>)	Science.	
Mrs L Kauffman (<i>Team Member</i>)	Design and technology; Information technology.	
Mr J Ratcliffe (<i>Team Member</i>)	Modern foreign languages.	
Ms J Goodman (<i>Team Member</i>)	Art.	
Ms P Dunwell (<i>Team Member</i>)	Physical education.	
Mr T Osgerby (<i>Team Member</i>)	History.	
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REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well
Where the school has weaknesses
How the school has improved since the last inspection
Standards in subjects
Quality of teaching
Other aspects of the school
The parents' views of the school

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school	1-6
Key indicators	7

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress	8-31
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development	32-43
Attendance	44-48

Quality of education provided

Teaching	49-61
The curriculum and assessment	62-81
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	82-90
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	91-100
Partnership with parents and the community	101-114

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management	115-127
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	128-136
The efficiency of the school	137-145

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science 146-188

Other subjects or courses 189-284

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 285-289

Data and indicators 290

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The headteacher, senior management team and governing body provide excellent leadership.
- The well-conceived plans ensure that resources are efficiently targeted on school improvement.
- The school is highly committed to achievement for all pupils and supports their progress through an effective monitoring programme, target setting and tutorial systems.
- Teaching is of consistently good quality across the curriculum.
- The school makes persistent and imaginative efforts to draw parents and the wider community into partnership and achieves a good degree of success.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and make impressive gains in their personal development.
- Pupils benefit considerably from the very good quality provision for supporting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Attainment is too low, especially in mathematics and science.
- II. Levels of attendance are too low.
- III. Statutory requirements are not met for religious education at Key Stage 4 and for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

This is an imaginative and increasingly effective school that is committed to improvement in all aspects of its work.

The cultural richness within the pupil population is recognised, valued and used to enhance the life and work of the school. All pupils benefit from the strong and positive links the school enjoys with its partners in local industry and commerce and with organisations in the wider community from which its pupils come.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Improvement since the last inspection is good, and the capacity of the school to maintain and effect further improvement is very good. All key issues identified at the last inspection have

been successfully addressed, although work on improving attendance is still in progress. A new management team is in place and, supported by staff training, an innovative system to implement and monitor quality across the school is in operation. Procedures have been implemented to monitor, analyse and review pupils' attainment and progress and to set targets for improvement in which they and their parents are involved.

• **Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1999:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			<i>well above average</i> A
			<i>above average</i> B
			<i>average</i> C
Key Stage 3	D	B	
GCSE Examinations	D	A	<i>below average</i> D
A/AS-levels	C	N/A	<i>well below average</i> E

Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are well below those expected for pupils of a similar age nationally. The results of tests, undertaken by pupils on entry to the school, support this view.

As they move through Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress, including in the development of basic literacy skills. By the end of Year 9 results and first hand evidence suggest that attainment is below average. In the national tests, attainment is below average in English and well below in mathematics and science. However, when compared with that of schools that have a similar intake, attainment is above average.

As they move through Key Stage 4 pupils continue to make good progress. By the end of the key stage, attainment is generally below average in relation to national averages for GCSE results and above average for GNVQ Part 1 results. Overall, they are well above average when compared with those for pupils in similar schools. Inspection evidence shows that attainment levels in many subjects are in line with the national average. In the sixth form, progress is good, and by the end of Year 12 many pupils are achieving course expectations. By the end of Year 13 the GCE Advanced Level and GNVQ equivalent points score is in line with the national average.

In class inspectors found that current pupils are attaining levels that are nearer to course averages or, in the case of GNVQ work, above the course expectation.

Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and attain levels often in line with or above average.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 7-9	Good	Personal, social and moral education; Design and technology; History, Physical education.	Music
Years 10-11	Good	Art; Design and technology; English; History; Physical education; Business education	
Sixth form	Good	History; Business education; French; Physical education.	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Overall, the quality of teaching is good, and in over three-fifths of lessons it is good, very good, or excellent. Teaching is satisfactory in over a third of lessons, good in over two-fifths and very good or excellent in just under a fifth of lessons. In just four of the 192 lessons seen, teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching is of good quality at both Key Stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form teaching is also good, and none is unsatisfactory.

Teaching is of consistently good quality, with none that is unsatisfactory, in English, art, physical education, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, personal and social education, and pre-vocational courses. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, and often good or very good, in science and geography, while in religious education and mathematics there is a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. The quality of teaching is least effective in music at Key Stage 3.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour is very good. Pupils are considerate and self-disciplined, and take responsibility with maturity and enthusiasm. Many make impressive gains in personal development as they progress through the school.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are unsatisfactory, but the school has used a range of strategies to improve significantly the situation over the past three years.
Ethos*	The school's commitment to every pupil achieving her very best is exceptional. Pupils value their learning highly, and relationships between all members of the school community reflect trust, respect and generosity.
Leadership and management	The headteacher, in partnership with senior managers and the governing body, provides exceptional leadership. There is a fully shared understanding across the staff of the school's aims, values and purpose. This, together with the very coherent development plan, provides a focus for school improvement and empowers all colleagues to contribute positively to enabling every learner to make good progress.
Curriculum	The broad and balanced curriculum is of good quality, with particular strengths in the pre-vocational curriculum at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Pupils' entitlement to religious education at Key Stage 4 is not fully met. The very good personal and social and careers education programmes and a good range of extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. Pupils' individual learning plans clearly identify their learning needs, and are used effectively across the school by curriculum support assistants and specialist teachers, both of whom are also influential in helping pupils develop basic literacy skills.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and highly sensitive to their needs. There is particular strength in provision for moral and social development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The school's teaching and support staff are of good quality. Resources for learning and accommodation are good.
Value for money	Although attainment needs further improvement, the good progress pupils make, the good quality of teaching they receive, and the success in promoting pupils' development in the widest sense, mean that the school gives good value for money.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the School	What some parents are not happy about
IV. It is very welcoming and approachable. V. It gives parents detailed information on pupils' progress and the opportunity to discuss this in depth. VI. Parents are pleased with standards and progress, attributing this success to the commitment of staff. VII. The fostering of independence, challenge of stereotyping and promotion of a broad range of opportunity is seen as a strength of the school.	VIII. A few felt that the school did not IX. Some felt that standards of behaviour

Inspectors agree that the school is welcoming to parents and gives them detailed information, particularly through the annual review day. They also agree that the staff has a high level of commitment to raising standards, although attainment needs to be further improved and is an important priority in the development plan.

Inspection evidence shows that parents should feel reassured that the school does meet the needs of the higher attaining pupils. Inspectors did not agree that the behaviour of the overwhelming majority of pupils was a cause for concern.

- **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**
- **Raise standards of attainment**

Standards of attainment are below national averages for all maintained schools. It must be the school's priority to raise standards, especially in mathematics and science. To this end, the headteacher, governing body and the staff of the school must use their skills and energies to:

X. Make more systematic use of the wealth of performance and assessment data within the school to focus more sharply on improving attainment and progress by ensuring that:

- *. Assessment and performance data are used systematically and rigorously to establish early benchmarks, to track individual pupils' progress, and to set precise targets for improvement throughout their time at the school;
(Paragraphs: 19, 59)

*. Measures taken and targets set are clearly focused on raising attainment at all levels, with particular emphasis on improving the average points score and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades and levels across the curriculum, but especially in mathematics and science;
(Paragraphs: 8-14, 18-19, 59, 67)

*. The assessment outcomes are used to identify weaknesses in the levels of pupils' knowledge and understanding and to inform the planning of further teaching.
(Paragraphs: 19, 59, 67)

- Improve the quality of the weaker aspects of teaching by ensuring that:

- *. Good practice is disseminated widely across the school;
* (Paragraphs: 48-50)

*. Planning identifies clearly what pupils should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson;
(Paragraph: 53)

*. The expectations teachers have of their pupils' attainment, progress and behaviour are consistently high;
(Paragraphs: 36, 54)

*. Work is well matched to pupils' learning requirements and contains opportunities for developing cross-curricular skills, including literacy and numeracy;
(Paragraphs: 20-23, 25, 54)

*. All pupils be active participants in their learning and by providing a range of other opportunities for them to make oral contributions to lessons;
(Paragraphs: 27, 29, 54)

*.The quality of teaching is regularly monitored to ensure that it is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress;
(Paragraphs: 121, 125)

- . Further improve levels of attendance by:

*.Working in partnership with the local authority to devise and implement strategies to deal with both long and regular absences of pupils at all key stages;
(Paragraphs: 44, 92)

*.Further strengthening the partnership with parents and community leaders in order to raise awareness about the link between better attendance and the achievement of higher standards and good progress;
(Paragraphs: 44-46, 90)

*.Continue to monitor and analyse attendance data using categories that will define where staff effort can best be targeted to improve attendance levels.
(Paragraphs: 46, 47)

- * **Meet statutory requirements**

The governing body should ensure that statutory requirements are met by:

*.Making further provision for the teaching of religious education at Key Stage 4 in order that the objectives of the current Agreed Syllabus can be met;
(Paragraphs: 63, 116)

*.Further moving towards meeting the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, through ensuring that current arrangements for the 'Thought for the day' are consistently implemented across the school, in tutorial time and in year assemblies.
(Paragraphs: 82, 116)

* **INTRODUCTION**

* **Characteristics of the school**

1.The school takes its pupils from a wide area, including some from Dewsbury, Huddersfield and the fringes of Leeds and Halifax. Approximately 60 per cent of them come from up to 14 partner primary schools in the Batley and Birstall area. The remainder, about 415 pupils, come from outside the area.

2.The wards from which many of the pupils come are among the most socio-economically deprived in the Kirklees Metropolitan Borough area and amongst the lowest 10 per cent in England. Parents from ethnic minorities who live in these wards are less likely to see a future in paid employment for their daughters, or seek a statement of special educational needs if this is required. There is a rich cultural mix in this school.

3.Pupils come to the school with levels of attainment well below that for pupils of a similar age nationally. About two-thirds of them come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Over half of the pupils (55 per cent) come from homes where English is not the first language, and many (48 per cent) attract additional support to learn English. At the age of 16 years many of the highest attaining pupils seek their sixth form education elsewhere – usually at one of the sixth form colleges in Huddersfield.

4.Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, and well over a third of them (37 per cent) are eligible for free school meals.

5.The school aims to provide the best possible provision to enable their pupils to take their place in the community – 'providing a quality education for tomorrow's women' is the mission statement. It has high aspirations for its pupils and works hard to raise their self-esteem and help them achieve their potential.

6.There are 222 pupils on the school register of special educational needs and 29 of them have Statements, which is well above national averages.

7.KEY INDICATORS

Attainment at Key Stage 3¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	0	246	246

7. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	133	82	76
	Total	133	82	76
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	54 (68)	33 (46)	31 (40)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	24 (31)	16 (21)	10 (17)
	National	N/A (35)	N/A (36)	N/A (27)

7. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	142	91	113
	Total	142	91	113
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	58 (75)	37 (50)	46 (58)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	22 (37)	21 (28)	15 (21)
	National	N/A (31)	N/A (37)	N/A (31)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 4²

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	0	194	194

GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Number of pupils achieving Standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	70	165	177
	Total	70	165	177
Percentage achieving Standard specified	School	36 (39)	85 (82)	91 (89)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of *such* pupils who achieved all those they studied:

	Number	% Success rate
School	40	72.5
National		N/A

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment in the Sixth Form ³

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1999	0	52	52

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	0	17.24	17.24 (12.5)	0	25	1.8 (4.3)
National	0		N/A (17.6)	0		N/A (2.8)

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of *such students* who achieved these qualifications:

	Number	% Success rate
School	61	98.36
National		N/A

³ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised Absence	School	9.6
	National comparative data	7.9
Unauthorised Absence	School	1.3
	National comparative data	1.1

7.

7. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	44
Permanent	2

7. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	19.37
Satisfactory or better	97.91
Less than satisfactory	2.09

7. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

7. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

7. **Attainment and progress**

8.The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below that for pupils of a similar age nationally. Whilst the end of Key Stage 2 results for pupils in Year 7 are below average in English and science, and well below average in mathematics, the cognitive ability scores and first hand inspection evidence indicate that attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average.

9.At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is below the national average. The levels reached in the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests were below the national average. In English, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 or above is below average, and well below average in mathematics and science. When compared with those of schools with a similar intake of pupils, results in English are well above the average, in line with the average in mathematics, and above the average for science. Lesson observation and the scrutiny of pupils' work indicates attainment which is in line with the average in English, well below average in mathematics, and below average in science.

10.In the other subjects, the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum assessments are generally in line with the national averages except in geography and modern foreign languages, where the results are below average, and in music, where they are well below the national standard. First hand inspection evidence shows attainment to be in line with the average in all subjects except geography, where it is below. Attainment in art, music and physical education is in line with national standards. In religious education pupils' attainment meets the expectation of the Kirklees Agreed Syllabus.

11.At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' attainment in the GCSE examinations is below average, and in the GNVQ Part 1 it is above average.

12.The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C, or the GNVQ equivalent, is below average for all maintained schools but well above average when compared with similar schools. The proportion obtaining five or more grades A*-G is well below the average for all maintained schools and below average when compared with similar schools. The average points score for each pupil gaining five or more GCSE grades, or their GNVQ equivalent, in the 1998 examinations is below average but shows a rising trend that is slower than that nationally. When compared with the average points score for similar schools, however, it is very well above the average.

13.The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C in 1999 is below average in English and well below in mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools, the results in English were very well above the median and well above in mathematics and science. First hand inspection evidence, however, shows attainment to be in line with the average in English, below average in science, and well below in mathematics.

14. GCSE results in most other subjects are below average. In 1999 the results were below national averages for grades A*-C in all subjects except the following. In English literature, art, drama and religious studies, they were well above national averages. In business studies, social sciences and Urdu they were average, and in mathematics, physical education and science they were well below average.

15. Results for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-G are generally in line with national averages except in art, which is above the average, and in English literature and science, where results are below the average for all maintained schools. In 10 of the 16 subjects for which pupils were entered, all gained grades in the A*-G range. First hand inspection evidence shows attainment to be broadly average in all subjects. In religious education, attainment of pupils at GCSE level is at the national average and the attainment of pupils following the core religious education course is in line with the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus. In addition to the levels of attainment at GCSE, about three-quarters of the Key Stage 4 pupils entered for GNVQ Part 1 accreditation are successful.

16. At the end of their time in the sixth form, attainment at GCE Advanced level is well below the national average. In 1999 the average GCE Advanced / Advanced Supplementary level points score was well below national averages.

17. The proportion of pupils gaining grades in the A-E range improved in 1998 but the proportion gaining the higher grades A-B is well below average. Pupils' point score in GNVQ Advanced is above the course average.

18. The overall GCE / GNVQ average points score, however, has shown an improvement over the last four years, and a significant gain in 1999. It is now broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils also achieving accreditation in GNVQ at Advanced and Intermediate levels is just under 100 percent, and is well above national averages. First hand inspection evidence shows attainment in the sixth form to be in line with course averages, but to be well above them in art, above average in modern foreign languages and GNVQ courses, and below in English, mathematics, design and technology and geography.

19. Since the last inspection there has been some change in the levels reached at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum assessment results have been in line with the averages in English, and well below average in mathematics and science. The GCSE results have remained below average over the last three years for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C and A*-G. The average GCSE and GNVQ equivalent points score for each pupil has shown a rising trend, but slower than that nationally. A similar trend is apparent in results obtained at the end of the sixth form in GCE Advanced and Advanced Supplementary Level, and in GNVQ Advanced course, with the points score being broadly in line with the course averages. However, when results are compared with those of similar schools, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in National Curriculum tests is above average, and at the end of Key Stage 4 results are well above average.

20. The school has developed a wide range of well-conceived measures to raise standards and assess the value added to pupils' attainment during their time in the school. Systems are

rigorous, implemented consistently, and are kept under close review in terms of their effectiveness and impact. They result in an extensive and comprehensive range of data on pupils' attainment and progress. The data is generally used effectively to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress. The school continues to evaluate the overall levels of attainment at the end of key stages and the sixth form against those for all maintained schools. This has ensured that realistic targets are set for individual pupils, for subject areas, and for the school as a whole in order to raise attainment levels. The progress report to parents each term, the regular target setting and tutorial sessions for each pupil, and the annual Review Day all help to maintain the momentum for raising attainment and improving the progress pupils make.

21. Pupils' standards of literacy on entry to the school are below national averages. For many of the pupils English is not the language used at home, and these pupils are fluent speakers of two, and sometimes three, languages. However, in common with many other pupils in the school, they are not sufficiently competent in formal written English to reach the appropriate levels for their age in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The school does much to redress these problems. The summer holiday literacy school programme focuses on raising attainment levels. The programme also familiarises pupils with the environment they are about to enter in September, gives them confidence, and establishes them as library users.

22. A significant proportion of the pupils concerned gain one National Curriculum level before the end of their first term at the school; a smaller number have made sufficient progress to merit places in the higher English sets. The effective language development team, funded by the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant, works in curriculum areas, not only to support pupils directly but also, with the subject staff, to develop materials which will extend competence and range in English. Improvement in reading is further supported within the curriculum by intensive tuition from the special needs team, and, in addition, staff in the library resource centre run "Bookworm Club", which encourages reading as a leisure activity. The library development worker is pro-active in the Key Stage 3 intervention programme for literacy. By the end of Key Stage 3, levels of literacy are much improved and attainment in English is in line with national averages. This is further confirmed at the end of Key Stage 4 in the GCSE examination results.

23. Pupils' skills in mental arithmetic throughout both Key Stages 3 and 4 are below average. However, their skills are sufficient for the demands made on them by other subjects. For example, in science pupils can take repeated measurements and then find an average value. They are able to record data and present it graphically. In design and technology they can calculate food tables and work out quantities of material needed, and they use working drawings and show spatial awareness in pattern placement on lengths of fabric. Pupils studying on GNVQ courses develop their key skills. This was shown in the collection and presentation of data and also the interpretation of information presented in different forms in, for example, the use of breakeven charts in their business course.

24. Information technology skills are well applied across the curriculum. Pupils enter the school with skill levels in information technology that are below those for pupils of a similar age nationally. Many pupils make good progress in the Year 7 dedicated course of tuition. Throughout Years 8 and 9 most subjects ensure that the basic skills pupils have acquired are built upon across all the strands of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, but not always in sufficient depth. At Key Stage 4 pupils continue to develop their skills, although

some have more frequent opportunities to do so, both within and outside the curriculum.

25. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout the school. This progress is strongly supported by the excellent learning ethos generated by high expectations, good teaching, the very good attitudes pupils have towards their learning, and the very high quality of behaviour and relationships.

26. Many pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment in many areas of the curriculum, but especially in literacy. Their progress is well supported in all subjects by clear teaching and appropriately high expectations of the standards to be achieved, and of the hard work and commitment needed to achieve these. The acquisition of both knowledge and skills is strongly promoted by detailed schemes of work that rigorously structure their development, in English, art and history, for example. In all subjects pupils' learning is enhanced by the teachers' good subject knowledge and expertise. In art, for example, the teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject is used very effectively to teach clearly and to provide highly challenging work that enables pupils to make good or very good progress. Similarly, in modern foreign languages the highly effective use of the foreign language ensured that pupils' progress was rapid and that the level of demand and challenge in the teaching were high.

27. However, the rich language background of many learners and the highly effective use of the setting arrangements greatly supports progress and enabled teaching to be focused on meeting pupils' learning needs.

28. In all subjects progress is supported by effective teaching methods. In many subjects pupils' participation is encouraged through the targeted use of question and answer to consolidate knowledge and develop understanding. They respond well to this. However, in science, for example, where this technique is not skilfully used, pupils are reluctant to ask questions or seek to clarify and extend their knowledge or understanding. In religious education, there is a good use of well-designed tasks to enable pupils to explore the learning, seek answers to their questions, and develop higher order analytical skills.

29. Pupils' progress is strongly supported by the good quality of the procedures for the assessment and recording of their attainment. In many subjects, as in English, modern foreign languages and physical education, for example, very good use is made of assessment to set individual targets for improvement. Progress is supported by the strategic use of setting.

30. A range of teaching methods is used in most lessons, including question and answer, role-play and discussion, especially to develop thinking and oral skills. In some lessons, however, where pupils were reticent to take part, there were too few opportunities for pupils to learn through activities of this kind. In modern foreign languages good use is made of the setting arrangements to use methods and activities that will stimulate and support pupils' progress. In mathematics the arrangement of pupils into two populations for setting produces teaching groups that have a wide range of attainment and, on occasions, this hinders more rapid progress, especially among the higher attainers.

31. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. The pupils who attend workshop sessions, to develop their basic literacy skills, are making good progress and thereby gain greater access to the curriculum. Each pupil on the school's special needs register has an individual education plan. The plans have general learning targets and are

effectively used across all areas of the curriculum. The addition of specific subject targets in some areas is further assisting the pupils to make progress. The progress of pupils with the greatest level of need is enhanced by the provision of well-managed and targeted support from members of the curriculum support team. Pupils with special needs make good progress in English, technology and physical education. In technology, for example, this is as a consequence of subject teachers providing clear reports that highlight strengths and points to improve for each pupil. In physical education good progress is as a result of good lesson planning that incorporates the diversity of need of all pupils.

31. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

32. Pupils are well motivated, considerate and self-disciplined. They take responsibility with maturity and enthusiasm. Many make impressive gains in personal development as they progress through the school.

33. Attitudes to learning are very good. In most lessons pupils work with concentration, showing enthusiasm for the subject. They will often extend that interest to extra-curricular activities such as the open access computer club. There is a good take-up of the support offered for personal study in the library resource centre, especially before school, when transport difficulties are less of a deterrent. Most pupils organise their work well through homework diaries, and pride is evident in their talk and presentation.

34. Where searching questions are needed, as in history for example, pupils respond to the demands of the subject with interest and appropriate skills. Some pupils find it harder to feel confident enough to pose or answer questions, but they are helped to respond by the perceptive management of the staff. An excellent example of this was the Year 13 personal and social education session on self-defence, where pupils placed an impressive degree of trust in the teacher when discussing how to deal with threatening and embarrassing situations.

35. Pupils are capable of working well independently of staff. This was demonstrated in physical education in, for example, a Year 9 lesson, where pupils worked with good self-direction in gymnastics and dance. Sometimes, as in some mathematics lessons, they show evidence of more need to be directed, but in GNVQ they work well independently, supported by staff. In collaborative work, in experimentation in science or sculpture work in art, pupils work well together. As they progress through the school they work increasingly readily in ethnically mixed groups, helped by specific staff strategies, until in the sixth form this is second nature to them.

36. Pupils who have special needs work well and with confidence in workshop sessions. They are able to attempt new tasks and face the possibility of failure. They attend these sessions with a good degree of responsibility and find them very useful. Special needs pupils in mainstream lessons are well integrated into classes. When pupils receive support from a curriculum support assistant they do so willingly.

37. The behaviour of the great majority of pupils is very good. Where behaviour gives cause for concern, the school works hard with pupils to help them achieve acceptable standards. A small number of pupils do not reach the expectations set by the school for behaviour; they do,

however, usually respond to good management by the staff, especially the non-confrontational approach. Some pupils have come from other schools with a legacy of poor attitudes and attendance.

38.The school uses exclusion as a process to help the pupil modify her behaviour so that she can participate productively in the school community. Persistent efforts are made to marshal support from agencies and parents to help pupils improve. It is made clear to pupils, however, that they too must take responsibility for changing, and that lack of progress will not be tolerated indefinitely. The rate of both fixed period and permanent exclusion is broadly average for a school of this size, and the formal process is rigorous and well documented.

39.Around the school, pupils behave courteously; they are always willing to give help when asked, in directing visitors for example. Holding doors, however, does not appear to be a well-established part of the school culture. In moving around the school pupils are well disciplined, and they are careful and sensible with minimal supervision, not only within the school itself but also outside the school gates at the end of the day. There is great respect for property, and the many striking displays around the school do not suffer petty damage or interference. Although courtyards are litter traps, the building is noticeably litter free, even around drinks and snack machines.

40.Relationships are very good. In the last report concerns were expressed about racism. Pupils reported in a recent survey that they believed staff would effectively challenge racist attitudes. Some Year 7 pupils worked with pupils from partner primary schools on the writing of the school's equal opportunities policy, which, following its approval by the student council and the governors, they are now helping to implement. The peer counselling service, started after the last inspection to address equal opportunities issues, has been discontinued as pupils found it unnecessary. Inspection evidence showed good racial harmony, and the school has therefore made very good progress in this area, as part of its overall work in establishing and

maintaining a climate of mutual respect.

41. Pupils are accepting and supportive of each other, and there is good integration of pupils with any kind of special needs. In discussion in religious education, pupils have a high degree of respect for the values under discussion, and for the views of others where these differ from their own. Relationships are nurtured by the continuity of the group tutor system, and pupils show much trust in staff.

42. As they move through the school, pupils make impressive progress in their personal development, until they become mature, responsible, reflective and confident young women. They take full advantage of the experiences offered to them to assist in personal development, such as acting as peer mentors or teaching in a summer literacy school, showing initiative and a clear sense of direction. They see these activities as giving something back to the school community, whether this is through disseminating knowledge of citizenship learned at the national Youth Parliament or helping younger children with literacy skills.

43. Pupils are very willing to take responsibility, as student council representatives, for example, and grapple with important policy issues in a mature and thoughtful way. They show good understanding of the democratic processes of representation, and appreciate the fact that their opinion is genuinely sought and listened to. Older pupils often have clear aspirations for their further education, and are able to articulate these with confidence to visitors.

43. **Attendance**

44. Levels of attendance are unsatisfactory, but the school has used a broad range of strategies that have significantly improved the situation over the past four years. Work has been targeted more widely than the key issues identified at the last inspection and overall attendance has gone up slowly but consistently since the last report.

45.Unauthorised absence is in line with national averages. The unsatisfactory attendance is therefore related to a series of other factors, including: parentally condoned absence; extended holidays; medical reasons; established patterns of poor attendance on entry to Year 7; and significant numbers of transfer pupils, who may also come with poor attendance records. The school takes steps to challenge any absence that appears to be unnecessary and has paid particular attention to term time holidays, with a resulting reduction in number of days of education lost to pupils. Work is in process to target pupils early, but it is too soon for this to have started to bring results.

46.Attendance is given high priority at an individual level. Targets are set, and rewards given when these are met, and specific pupils are identified for support. Attendance is discussed with parents at the review, and where necessary is highlighted in annual reports as an inhibiting factor to progress. There is good support for returning absentees or those who are absent long-term, for medical reasons for example. Governors are well aware of attendance issues and actively support the strategies being used.

47.Absence from school has a significant impact on pupils' learning and certainly affects pupils' attainment and progress. During the inspection, for example in sociology and geography, pupils who had been absent were observed not to be making as much progress as the others. The school takes steps to help pupils manage their absence, through the design of coursework booklets in design and technology for example, or by providing structured work to take on extended holidays so that these periods may be used to support pupils' learning. There is not a clear pattern at subject level of the impact absence is having on overall attainment and progress.

48.Registration procedures, including arrangements for sixth form registration, work well. At the last inspection lateness was reported to be a problem both morning and

afternoon. Although a small number of pupils were observed to be entering during registration, as observations of the late book confirmed, most are punctual, and there is very little evidence of drifting in. Lesson changeover arrangements work well and, despite the geography of the building, lessons start punctually. Punctuality is therefore satisfactory, as is progress since the last inspection on this issue.

48. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

48. **Teaching**

49. Overall, the quality of teaching is good across the curriculum. The quality of teaching in just under a fifth of lessons is very good with a small amount that is excellent, over two-fifths is good and in about a third it is satisfactory. However, teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory in only four of the 192 lessons observed. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is good and often better in just under three-fifths of lessons. The highest proportion of high quality teaching is in the sixth form, where just over two-thirds of the teaching is good, often very good, and sometimes excellent, and there is none that is unsatisfactory. This profile of teaching is considerably better than that reported at the last inspection.

50. There is a high proportion of good and very good teaching in most subjects, and in many cases there is none that is unsatisfactory. In both design and technology and physical education, the quality of the teaching is high and none is unsatisfactory. The teaching in design and technology is excellent in just under one-fifth of lessons; just over a third is very good, the same proportion is good, and the remainder is satisfactory. In physical education over four-fifths of the teaching is very good, and the remainder is equally divided between the good and the satisfactory. Similarly, some of the teaching in modern foreign languages is excellent; in over two-fifths of lessons the teaching is good, the same proportion is satisfactory, and the remainder is equally divided between the very good and the excellent.

51. In English, history, art, personal and social education, and GNVQ lessons, there is a high proportion of teaching that is very good or good, and none that is unsatisfactory. In art four-fifths of the teaching is good or better while in English it is over half. In history, over four fifths of teaching is good and, as in art and English, the remainder is satisfactory. Teaching in science and geography is never less than satisfactory, and the remainder is good. In geography, there is a small amount that is very good and none that is unsatisfactory. In mathematics and religious education, at least two-fifths of teaching is good or very good. In these two subjects and in music, there is a small amount of teaching that is unsatisfactory. However, within the teaching in all subjects that is judged to be satisfactory overall, there are aspects of weaker practice that result in pupils not making as much progress as they should.

52. Teachers' knowledge, understanding and good subject expertise are well used for both the planning and teaching of lessons. In art, for example, teachers' expertise, enthusiasm and commitment to the subject are shared confidently with pupils, arousing their interest and

helping them to reach high standards.

53. The expectations the staff have of their pupils are high, and in many subjects, including design and technology, English, art, history and physical education, the result is a strong commitment to work and a positive attitude to the subject. In English, for example, the importance of work and the achievement of high standards is emphasised when the teacher determines the pupils' seating arrangements. In well-planned lessons expectations are made clear, as in physical education for example, where the teacher shares the aim and purpose of the learning with pupils.

54. Lesson planning is of good quality. Most lessons are well planned, and have a clear aim and lesson objectives that define what pupils should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the unit of work. Learning is carefully sequenced and interesting tasks are designed to enable pupils to explore lesson content and develop knowledge, understanding and skills. In most of the lesson planning, careful account is taken of the range of attainment within the teaching group, and great skill is used to match the work to the needs of pupils. Good planning is supported by detailed schemes of work.

55. Where pupils are in subject sets for learning, lesson planning is of good quality, provides appropriate challenge, and meets the learning needs of pupils. However, in a minority of lessons, planning does not always provide pupils at all levels of attainment with sufficient challenge. In a minority of mathematics lessons, for example, some of the higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged as they mark time waiting for others to consolidate knowledge and develop understanding so that all can move to the next stage of learning. In science, the exchange of question and answer is not always skilfully used to challenge and extend the understanding of the highest attaining pupils in some Key Stage 4 classes. In other subjects, occasionally the level of demand is not appropriate to the range of attainment in the class, thereby hindering the rate at which all pupils make progress. At Key Stages 3 and 4, there are occasions when too little initiative is expected of the girls and their silence is not always challenged by targeted questions. However, in some English, art, history and physical education lessons, for example, questions asked of named pupils elicited well-considered and thoughtful responses, while problem solving in technology produced some elegant solutions.

56. A much wider range of teaching methods and strategies for learning is evident than was reported at the last inspection. Good use is made of purposeful whole-class and small group teaching that provides real challenge and pace. Learning is systematically explored through the good use of clear exposition, a variety of media, demonstrations, and the probing question and answer sessions. There is a good use of strategies such as brain storming, pair and group work, role play, and project and research work, all of which enable pupils to acquire knowledge and develop understanding and skills. In art, for example, there is innovative use of a variety of media and demonstrations to inspire and motivate pupils in their research and exploration of the topic or artist's work. In physical education, demonstration is well used, accompanied by question and answer and the analysis of pupils' own work to develop their understanding and skills. In religious education a very wide range of teaching methods is used to help pupils develop the higher order critical and analytical skills. The skilled work of learning and language support staff allows pupils with whom they work to benefit from the range of teaching methods and the well-structured tasks used to consolidate learning.

57. In all lessons there are high standards of discipline, and pupils are well managed. Lessons are characterised by courtesy, very good relationships based on mutual respect, and good levels of self-discipline. All of this contributes to the positive atmosphere found in lessons and to the quality of the learning experience. Pupils are unobtrusively and very skilfully managed, and when there is any misbehaviour it is dealt with quietly but firmly.

58. In the majority of lessons good use is made of both time and learning resources. Time is used to the full in lessons and challenge and pace are maintained throughout. On a few occasions, however, time is not always used productively for all pupils. For example, although lessons in mathematics, for example, are well timed and the pace of learning is brisk, on the occasions when the teacher is providing individual help to some pupils it can be at the expense of others by affecting their rate of progress. Well-chosen resources are effectively used in most lessons to support learning. The good use of resources in modern foreign languages, for example, helps pupils to sustain concentration and explore thoroughly the lesson content. In the Year 7 information technology course, because of the nature of the learning tasks and the disparate levels of attainment within classes, resources are better used than time.

59. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs. The teachers are aware of pupils' learning needs, the result of good liaison between subject areas and the special needs co-ordinator. The targets set in individual education plans are incorporated into lesson planning and a range of practical strategies is used to help pupils achieve them. In geography, for example, pupils with difficulties in reading text sit next to better readers. Pupils also have access to resources produced by teachers that are suitable to their needs. In English, pupils receive individual response to work and individual consultation in lessons. In physical education the presence of curriculum support assistants ensures that pupils with specific physical disabilities have access to the subject and are able to take part alongside their peers. Teaching of basic literacy skills by specialist teachers is good. In workshop sessions, activities are well planned and appropriate to the individual learning needs of pupils.

60. The girls' progress is well monitored and promoted by the good procedures for the assessment of their work. Marking and assessment of work across the curriculum is regular and thorough, and pupils value the written comments that provide constructive guidance to help them improve their work. Good use is made of oral feedback and review at the start of many lessons, following the marking of an assignment. In some subject areas, for example in English and design and technology, good use is made of regular moderation to ensure the consistency of standards in the assessment of pupils' work. Other testing, including the results of standardised and diagnostic tests, contribute to the reservoir of assessment information that informs lesson planning, the evaluation and revision of schemes of work, and the identification of priorities in development planning. All of the assessment information available on each pupil is also well used in regularly reviewing her attainment and progress in subjects. Practice is of very good quality in the sixth form.

61. Homework is set regularly as an integral part of learning in the great majority of subjects. In most instances the tasks set are interesting, appropriately challenging, and valuable in extending and consolidating the work done in class. Homework is well used in some subjects

to encourage the development of personal study skills. It also enables the girls to take initiative in extending understanding and in pursuing topics of personal interest in depth.

61. The curriculum and assessment

62.The school's clearly stated purpose, to 'provide a quality education for tomorrow's women', successfully influences the design and delivery of the curriculum. The school offers its pupils a good quality curriculum, which meets nearly all the requirements of the National Curriculum and is enriched by very good personal and social education and careers programmes. The governors are well informed about the school's curriculum. Issues are discussed in the full governing body and more detailed work is delegated to a separate curriculum committee.

63.The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory; it is broad, balanced and relevant. All pupils study one modern language, either French or German, on entry to the school in Year 7. There is no opportunity for pupils to take two languages. Information technology is taught as a discrete subject in Year 7 and as a cross-curricular theme in Years 8 and 9. Some subjects, such as mathematics, make good use of information technology in Key Stage 3, and a planned programme ensures that all pupils have opportunities to develop and consolidate their skills. In other subjects, for example in music, there has been a limited use of information technology this term. While the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are implemented and meet the statutory requirements, there is not enough coverage in depth of some aspects of the Programmes of Study, including modelling and control.

64.The curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. It has breadth, balance, and relevance and benefits from the enrichment provided by good links with a range of business, commerce, and the wider community. All pupils take double science and study one modern foreign language, with only one pupil studying two. Pupils have a choice from two option groups, as well as a choice in design and technology; all take a full course in design and technology. Most courses in Key Stage 4 lead to accreditation at GCSE. There are also a number of successful courses leading to GNVQ Part 1 accreditation; this provision has increased over the past two years, reflecting its popularity and relevance to the girls. GCSE options include business studies, art, drama, geography and history as well as a range of GNVQ provision. The options successfully extend curriculum provision, and in many cases allow students to choose subjects they have not studied before. The girls are pleased with the range of courses available and the opportunities provided to make their curriculum more relevant to them. Currently, the time provided for religious education is just below that needed to cover the objectives of the local agreed syllabus.

65.The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides opportunities for GNVQ Part 1 accreditation in business, health and social care and manufacturing at foundation or intermediate levels. The quality of the provision is good. GNVQ offers a secure framework for pupils to plan and manage their work well and become successful learners. The majority of pupils respond well to GNVQ teaching and learning methodology, as well as to the demands made on them and the learning opportunities they are given.

66.The parents of many pupils have exercised their right to withdraw their daughters from religious education provision at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. At both key stages the school makes appropriate and constructive provision for these pupils.

67.The curriculum in the sixth form is good. Pupils choose from a wide range of courses, focusing on GCE Advanced and Advanced Supplementary Level courses and strong GNVQ provision at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced Levels. The GCE Advanced / Advanced Supplementary Level subjects include a good balance of creative and expressive arts, humanities, separate sciences, European and Asian languages, technology, and economics and social sciences. There are also opportunities for pupils to re-sit some GCSE subjects, such as mathematics and English. The additional programme provided for all girls, including opportunities to work with younger pupils, for example in supporting reading, plays a valuable part in their personal development. Girls feel that their sixth form courses are good preparation for the next stage of their life.

68.The provision of GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced course in the sixth form is of good quality and has enabled many following the courses to be more effective learners and successful in gaining their accreditation. Current sixth form pupils undertaking GNVQ courses are very committed to their work. They value and benefit from the regular target-setting tutorials and reviews of their attainment and progress. The GNVQ provision complements other opportunities for them to broaden their learning and to benefit from life in the sixth form.

69.The provision for the personal and social education of pupils is very good throughout the school. The carefully planned and well co-ordinated programme also includes careers, health and sex education. It is mainly taught by group tutors, with good use of other adults at

specific points in the cycle. During the week of the inspection, the focus for Year 11 was

effective study skills and preparation for examinations. In one class, during registration time, small groups discussed how to use time in a successful revision programme for forthcoming school examination. Similarly, in a Year 11 tutor group lesson the teacher made sure that girls knew the relevant organisational details and could plan their study time effectively.

70. Pupils like the school's very good provision for careers education and guidance. The programme is clearly described in a booklet given to all girls in Year 9. Good quality information is given to pupils, and their parents, to assist their choices at key transition points. They value the careers library, and the sources accessed by information technology, which they use well. Pupils take part in a well-organised work experience programme in Year 10.

71. The current curriculum meets statutory requirements with the exception that the time provided for religious education at Key Stage 4 is just below that needed to meet the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus.

72. Pupil grouping arrangements in both Key Stages 3 and 4 are good in providing equality of access to the curriculum. The equal opportunities policy, written by pupils, provides a clear, practical, statement of entitlement. It has a strong influence on the organisation and teaching of the curriculum, for example the emphasis on ensuring that any technical words are clearly explained and that ease of understanding is not taken for granted.

73. In all areas of the curriculum the requirements for pupils with special educational needs are met. There is an effective system of link teachers with each curriculum area. This allows the communication of information about individual learning plans and supports the review each term of individual plans and the consideration of the progress pupils' have made in all subjects.

74. There are thorough and comprehensive systems for assessment of need, both in placing pupils on the register and ensuring movement within it. There are, however, a number of pupils at Stage 2 of the Code of Practice whose progress to Stage 3 cannot be considered because of the local authority's current procedures for reviews.

75. The provision of workshops for spelling and basic literacy, in addition to daily accelerated reading sessions, is effective in meeting the needs as set out on the statements of individual pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils with special needs are fully integrated into all aspects of the school. Curriculum support assistants, for pupils with physical disabilities, greatly assist in the integration process.

76. Planning for continuity and progression of learning is generally good throughout the school. The senior management team monitors this through links with individual subject departments. Planning for sixth form courses is usually good, particularly for GNVQ programmes, as course requirements provide a clear framework for progression. Planning is good in English and in modern foreign languages. Links with partner primary schools are through the local pyramid of schools. However, in some subjects, such as religious education, there are no active links. In mathematics and science planning is much better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4: in these two cases it is because the Key Stage 3 schemes of work have recently been revised.

77. There is a clear policy for homework, and the school has written a helpful booklet for parents and pupils. This describes, by individual subject, the type of homework girls will receive and how parents and guardians can help. Planners also provide a useful link between home and school, helping parents to monitor homework.

78. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. Sport makes a strong contribution, for example through basketball and swimming. Theatre visits are arranged and there is a drama club. There is a strong contribution from art, for example through artists in residence. Many subjects hold clubs, some focusing on revision topics, as in geography. There are a number of extra-curricular activities in music, such as the singing group, and the wind band.

79. There are good policies for assessment and recording throughout the school. Recently, a common framework, using a recently constructed data-base, has been developed and is used by all departments. This provides a good range of information about pupils and classes, which enables progress to be quickly monitored. Some departments are more confident in using this system than others. The GCE Advanced Level requirements, and GNVQ systems, provide a good framework for assessment in the sixth form. Assessment in music is good, and a number of methods, including pupils' self-evaluation and a summary assessment grid for each class, are used to build a profile of attainment and progress.

80. The use of assessment information to inform curriculum planning is generally satisfactory. There has been an increased emphasis on the use and interpretation of data, which in some subjects has had a direct influence on the delivery of the curriculum. For example, in mathematics, the identification of weaknesses in GCSE performance has led to a change of syllabus for some pupils. In art, assessment data is used as part of the on-going review of the effectiveness of the curriculum.

81. The issues raised in the last inspection report have been successfully addressed. The criteria for pupil grouping are clear, and the equal opportunities policy has a strong impact on the curriculum and on the life of the school. However, time for religious education at Key Stage 4 is still just below that recommended to fully meet the objectives of the local Agreed Syllabus, and so statutory requirements are still not met.

81. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

82. The school makes very good provision for girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It succeeds remarkably well in creating a thriving community of shared values, so that pupils develop positive attitudes of concern and respect for others, high self-esteem and personal aspirations.

83. Provision for spiritual development is good. Themes for a weekly assembly and thought for the day are planned in advance. These themes are based broadly on religious traditions and help to sustain the positive values upheld by the school. The delivery of the thought for the day in tutor bases does not always match in quality the planning which lies behind it. Pupils celebrate festivals such as Christmas, Eid and Diwali, with music and light. The school has moved nearer to meeting statutory requirements since the last inspection but does not yet provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

84. There is very good provision of a room for quiet contemplation. Girls and staff use this during Ramadan and Lent. In addition, it is used for afternoon prayers, thereby meeting a spiritual need felt by some pupils. Girls' spiritual development is also greatly enhanced by the quality of colourful display in many areas of the school. This includes, for example, a millennium prayer, written by a pupil. The variety of material on display, especially photographic work, joyfully celebrates the rich diversity of the girls' cultural values as well as their achievements in the life of the school.

85. Many subjects contribute well to girls' spiritual development. The religious education is of high quality. It effectively supports the personal convictions held by many, and helps girls to gain further insight into many aspects of religious faith and practice. In English, girls often have opportunity to recognise feelings and to develop empathy with human experience. Year 7 pupils, for instance, expressed wonder in looking at photographs of animals and their young, in a lesson involving research work for a poem. Art and drama effectively encourage girls' sense of aesthetic appreciation and self-expression. However, some subjects, including, for instance, geography and science, do not plan sufficiently for the spiritual aspect of pupils' development.

86. Provision for girls' moral development is very good throughout school life. There is a positive behaviour code that emphasises high standards of individual responsibility for action, and merit systems that consistently encourage achievement. Pupils are clearly developing a sense of right and wrong.

87. Many subjects help to raise girls' awareness of moral responsibility. In practical subjects, for instance, they are encouraged to take care of equipment and respect the property of others. Information technology makes a strong contribution by, for example, helping girls to understand, and deal with, issues of freedom of access to the Internet. In physical education they learn to understand the importance of rules and fair play. In geography there is opportunity to consider ethical questions that arise, for instance in planning for town bypasses. The programme of personal social education is very well planned and taught. It provides appropriate opportunities for considering a range of matters, including health and sexual issues, within a moral framework.

88. The school promotes social development very well. Adults set a positive example. They give generously of their time, and relationships between girls and with staff are very good. Girls are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and are very well supported in this by form tutors. Tutors know girls very well, as they remain with their groups as these grow up through the school. Opportunities for girls of all ages to take responsibility are numerous, and they give pupils experience of how they can make a difference to others' lives. There is, for instance, a school council, which is effectively involved in decision making on issues such as the code of conduct. Year 7 girls wrote the equal opportunities policy for the school. Sixth formers, as well as younger pupils, have very good opportunities to help others with reading and have supported improvements in reading skills. Many pupils are involved with charity fund raising events.

89. The regular drama productions give further opportunity for girls of all ages to take responsibility and experience teamwork. The personal social education programme is thoughtfully focused to support pupils' social needs. In Year 7, for instance, the emphasis is

to enable all girls, within tutor groups, to get to know each other. The programme of lunchtime and after-school activities encourages girls' recreational interests and social skills.

90.Provision for cultural development is good. The school achieves a good balance in activities to promote pupils' understanding of their own cultural heritage as well as those of others. There are many visits to the theatre. European awareness is raised through art, by visits to galleries, artists in residence, and the consideration of images of women in society. Art also shares many cultural traditions in methods of representation and patterns. In physical education, dance and music reflect a range of different cultures. The humanities department contributes to many girls' understanding of their own cultural, historical origins through study of Mughal India. In modern language lessons girls read poetry, and some write poems, in Urdu. However, music does not draw enough on different cultural influences and misses opportunities to enrich musical appreciation. Girls' cultural appreciation is effectively broadened by displays that celebrate the cultural richness within the school community.

90. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

91.Since the last inspection a number of additional measures have been put in place to improve the provision for pupils' support, welfare and guidance. These are working well. The role of group tutor has been redefined and strengthened through professional development and by the practice of tutors remaining with their groups as they move up through the school. The emphasis is on providing a holistic picture of each pupil. The rationale of this approach is strikingly demonstrated by the conversation with parents at review day, where there is detailed discussion of attainment, progress, both positive and negative behaviour, willingness to accept responsibility, and levels of attendance. In the sixth form, the programme of monitoring progress is successfully raising expectations, motivation and achievement of students, particularly those on GNVQ courses.

92.Monitoring of the attendance of individual pupils is thorough, although there is less rigour in the monitoring within subject areas than through the tutorial system. At whole school level there has been a sensible decision to identify particular areas and groups on which to focus attention, for example early intervention with Year 7 pupils coming with poor attendance records. Personal contact with parents and students early in a period of absence has been a particular strategy. When targets for attendance are fully met, pupils are appropriately rewarded. There is evidence of the good success of the monitoring work, both in increasing levels of attendance and with, for example, particular tutor groups. An impressive amount of analysis has been undertaken, such as the attendance history of pupils not entered for external examinations in Year 11. This approach provides a firm foundation for further work in this area.

93.The school has had considerable discussion concerning the service offered by the education welfare service. An agreement is now in place that includes time for individual interviews with students. In the past, changes of education welfare staff have made it harder to achieve continuity of partnership with the local education authority for the benefit of pupils. The school is meticulous in supplying the local authority with well-researched data concerning pupil attendance and in making a case for resources to address the problems.

94.The school very effectively promotes good behaviour. Girls have the opportunity to participate in a real way through the school council. This body deals with policy matters, such as the equal opportunities policy, the rules that regulate the community, such as the code of conduct, and the more practical matters of improving the quality of the day-to-day environment, such as mealtime arrangements.

95.All staff monitor carefully pupils' behaviour. They make good use of support systems such as the conduct management database. There are detailed records of incidents, and parents are fully involved in the process. There is good use of praise, including letters home to parents, and recognition of taking responsibility at the annual review day. Anti-bullying and anti-racist measures, as well as assertive discipline strategies, are successful, as is the system of Supercover that enables any disruption to lessons to be kept to a minimum. Younger pupils in particular are benefiting from the close attention paid to behaviour, and speak appreciatively of the effects in class of the school's behaviour management policy. The part played by ancillary staff in behaviour management is valued. Lunchtime supervisors have taken part in a programme of training in behaviour management, with a further session to follow shortly.

96.The personal and social education programme is very well structured and managed, and provides very good support to pupils' personal development. Timetabled sessions are led by group tutors in the lower school, with the addition of specialists visiting lessons for the older girls, for example to provide sex and drugs education, and careers guidance. In the sixth form, personal and social education is taught within the General Studies programme. In each year group, equal opportunities are a major theme of personal and social education. Career links feature in all departmental schemes of work.

97.Pupils with special educational needs receive support from specialist teachers in the case of those pupils with hearing or visual learning difficulties. This is in the form of time spent in school as well as advice and the in-service training given to teachers. Pupils are encouraged to use the facilities in the learning support base at break and lunchtimes.

98.The school follows local education authority guidelines for child protection procedures, and there are good systems in place managed by the deputy headteacher. The whole of the staff is kept fully informed of the steps that are to be followed in the event of incidents. There is very thorough documentation, with excellent procedures for ensuring regular review and maintaining confidentiality. Great sensitivity is shown in the handling of information.

99.The school successfully promotes the health, safety and general well being of its pupils. There are suitable arrangements for first aid and for medical care, including the positioning of a monitoring camera in the medical room. The building is inspected regularly and a safety certificate issued. The fire alarm has been upgraded to comply with millennium safeguards. There are some problems relating to leaking flat roofs during spells of rain; work displayed on walls is sometimes damaged, although staff and pupils promptly replace spoiled work. The health and safety issues raised at the last inspection have been successfully addressed.

100.The school works productively with a number of external agencies and is assiduous in its efforts to obtain support for pupils where this is needed. There is limited access to the educational psychology services for the purpose of reviewing the performance of pupils on

the special needs register.

100. Partnership with parents and the community

101. The school informs parents through a range of documentation, but also by a high level of personal contact. All systems and structures within the school are designed to promote genuine communication of information to parents and dialogue with them. This approach is exemplified by the innovative review day, when all parents are able to have an individual appointment to discuss their daughter's attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance.

102. This combination of written information and individual contact means that the quality of information available to parents is very good. Efforts to establish dialogue start before girls enter the school, when prospective Year 7 parents are contacted and encouraged to attend a meeting. The work of the community liaison worker, who is attached full-time to the school, has resulted in increased parental understanding of, and support for, such educational activities as work experience. Because parents are better informed, they are willing for their daughters to take up opportunities that might otherwise be lost.

103. Parents are also given a great deal of other information through 'praise and concern' letters, and opportunities to meet to talk over behaviour, for example, or to attend open days where the work of the school can be viewed. Written information, such as option choice guidance and homework booklets, is of good quality.

104. The prospectus is full, informative, and well tailored to its audience. At the last inspection communications with parents were judged to be too formal, but inspection evidence this time showed no hint of any unduly formal tone. In fact, the school goes out of its way to make information accessible in a variety of forms. There has therefore been very good progress on this since the last inspection.

105. The governors' annual report is quite accessible in style but lacks many of the items required. Although a report is included on special educational needs, it is not

sufficiently detailed to meet the requirements of the current regulations, particularly in respect of the allocation of resources.

106. Annual reports contain information on attainment and effort reported in terms of levels and grades. The report cover interprets grades for parents, while the text often concentrates on attitudes and makes general comments. The information contained in annual reports should not be seen as isolated from the rest of the information systems operating within the school.

107. The involvement of parents in their children's learning is very good. Some parents live a long distance from the school and face some substantial logistical difficulties if the partnership is to work. Despite this, attendance is very high on review day, and there is increasing attendance at other meetings, such as the Year 10 parents' evening, especially where the school has targeted effort to achieve this.

108.The school has constantly in mind how parents can be involved in its life and work, and this is followed through into practice. A good example is the inclusion of workshops for parents within the summer literacy school to help them support their daughters' learning. The active involvement of parents has also increased opportunities for work experience, both by enabling more pupils to be involved, and by increasing the permissible range of activities for some girls. Parents are also willing to provide transport to after-school activities such as netball.

109.The parents of pupils with special needs are involved, either by telephone or in person, at the time their daughter is placed at Stage 2 on the special needs register. The school adopts the best practice, and proceeds from Stage 3 of the Code of Practice only if parents are fully involved and attend consultation meetings. The school's home-school liaison worker assists when parents require the services of an interpreter.

110.If there are sensitive curriculum issues, such as the teaching of dance, the school works very productively with parents to explore and resolve matters to the benefit of the pupils' education. Where there are concerns about other types of learning, such as the parameters of acceptable behaviour, parents are very well involved through personal contact and meetings.

111.The very extensive range of community and business links enriches pupils' learning. The links effectively support the work of subject areas, as well as assisting the professional development of staff, through industrial placements for example. In addition, the school works persistently and sensitively with the wider community to ensure that pupils' education is as rich as it possibly can be. For example, there are extension-learning clubs at the Pakistan and Kashmir Welfare Association. There is homework support and studies activities for girls only on one evening, and a homework club at a local partner primary school. In addition there are 'take your daughter to work' days; women's careers days and other themes that broaden the pupils' perceptions about themselves and their future.

112.The impact of community links on pupils' personal development is excellent.

The way in which experiences are used means that they are of real value to pupils. For example, experience gained in supporting younger pupils in paired reading can be taken on into helping at the school's summer literacy school, and then into taking a responsible role within the work of the University of The First Age. Such well-managed experiences have a profound impact on pupils' competence and confidence. There are also good opportunities to work with the wider community and learn to appreciate the views and needs of others. A good example is the joint sports day held with local special schools, where pupils work alongside others in a joint enterprise that brings pleasure and learning to all involved.

113. The use of links is also excellent. For example, the social science department uses work experience as the basis for a sociological study. Pupils gain health and safety awards, also based on work experience. Sixth form students have additional opportunities for work placements, mainly as part of their GNVQ assignments. The school is careful to ensure that wider opportunities are available to all, scheduling trips abroad, for example, so that pupils who are not able to stay away overnight can participate.

114. Overall, this area of the school's work is highly successful.

114. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

114. **Leadership and management**

115. The quality of leadership and management of the school is outstanding. Since the last inspection, important changes have taken place to ensure that the staff and governing body fully share the school's aims and values and contribute to the strategic and development planning processes. The highly effective working partnership between staff and governors has resulted in a mission statement and a clear set of aims that inform their work, planning and decision-making.

116. The governing body is well organised and managed by an active and committed chair. He visits the school regularly and maintains close contact with the headteacher and her senior colleagues. The recruitment and induction of governors is a demanding task that is successfully shared between the chair and the headteacher. The governors are very well informed and, twice each term, they receive extremely detailed oral and written reports from

the headteacher. As part of developing their strategic role, the governors regularly review whole school policies and receive reports on many aspects of the school's operations.

117.The detailed work of the governing body is effectively managed by a series of well-organised committees that have clear terms of reference. Increasingly these groups are becoming more active in exploring their areas of work and in sensitively challenging the school as part of the governing body's accountability role. The committees are well advised by the headteacher and her senior managers, as well as by the bursar, and enable the governing body to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. These are fully met, with the exception of making adequate provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

118.The headteacher's leadership is of outstanding quality and has a profound impact on every aspect of the school's life and work. She combines intellectual rigour and professional integrity with a sensitive, thoughtful and perceptive approach to leadership, as well as being an excellent role model for the staff and pupils. Respect for her leadership goes beyond the confines of the school and its parents. Through her leadership colleagues at all levels are enabled to take up their roles, take initiative, and become involved in the development of whole school approaches to meeting pupils' learning needs. Her insight and tenacity provide confidence for governors and staff in effecting further improvement in the school's standards and quality of education.

119.There is much evidence of the effectiveness of the headteacher's leadership. The excellent ethos of the school demonstrates an unusual combination of high expectations and rigour on the one hand and, on the other, of understanding and support based on close knowledge of and concern for individuals. Each is valued, and equality of opportunity is evident in practice as well as theory. As a result, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good: they are given every encouragement and support to achieve their potential. Relationships are based on trust, respect and generosity. The raising of standards in all aspects of the school's work, which is monitored through an innovative quality assurance programme, is having a significant impact in reinforcing the goals to which each pupil can aspire. The profile of the school and its pupils is now high in the eyes of the parents and the wider community.

120.Through the strategic leadership of the headteacher, the school now has a good sense of purpose and direction, as well as management structures, operational procedures, policies, and plans to provide a clear framework for its work and to support school improvement.

121.The reconstituted senior management team has operated for just over a year and its members work extremely well together. Its members have clearly defined responsibilities and tasks that ensure co-operative working. There is an effective link between tutor teams, curriculum areas and the senior team, who skilfully share responsibility for operating the whole school quality assurance process. Their morale is high and their relationships with each other and with other staff are positive and very productive. They work hard to ensure that the management of people combines expectation of high performance with compassionate support for those experiencing difficulties.

122.Good leadership is provided by middle managers. Leadership is strong in a number of

areas, including English, science, art, design and technology, religious education, GNVQ co-ordination, and the ethnic minority achievement team. The curriculum area managers and tutor team co-ordinators also provide a good quality of strategic leadership and undertake their responsibilities with great commitment. Some good management practices, already well established in a large number of areas, provide a clear sense of direction for the area and for establishing priorities for further development. There is both formal and informal monitoring of work, which inform development planning and the establishment of strategies for the implementation of priorities.

123. The leadership and management of the clerical and support staff teams is also of good quality. These well-motivated and effective teams share with other staff the understanding of the school's aim, values and purpose, respond well to a diverse range of priorities, and make a major contribution to the smooth running of the school.

124. The co-ordinators for special needs and the ethnic minorities achievement project are both part of the curriculum managers group, an indication of the change in thinking that has occurred since the last inspection. These areas of work are now significant curriculum issues. The special needs co-ordinator works well with the curriculum managers. As a result the special needs policy is coherently put into practice, and the link teacher from each area enables liaison across the curriculum to be effective. The specialist teachers and the curriculum support assistants are well managed. There is an outstandingly good partnership in supporting pupils' learning between the special needs and the ethnic minorities achievement teams.

125. Development planning is of very good quality. The plan, a document written by the whole staff, provides a strategic overview of each of the well-defined priorities and to the detailed targets, success indicators, timescales and costs relating to each. It is a significant management tool that is effectively used by middle and senior managers to monitor the fulfilment of the priorities. The sections of the plan that focus on developments in subject and tutor team activities are well targeted to ensure that it has a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. Planning is of good quality in English, science, art, design and technology, modern foreign languages, physical education, and religious education. It is also good in respect of special needs, the GNVQ, language development, and ethnic minority achievement.

126. There is very good support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development at both senior and middle management levels. The quality assurance process is a well-conceived and comprehensive system for ensuring quality across all of the school's work. Both formal and informal systems are used to monitor provision, teaching and the impact of staff development on practice in the classroom. Some curriculum area managers, in English for example, have a regular programme of classroom observation. The quality assurance system also monitors the impact of whole school policies, the analysis of internal and external assessment data against National Curriculum Attainment Targets, the implementation of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study as well as special needs and equal opportunities. The imaginative process ensures that all managers have a responsibility for monitoring the standards pupils achieve and the quality of education the school provides.

127. Staff have many opportunities to contribute to the school's work, and are encouraged to do so. The school is well documented, schemes of work are generally detailed, school policies are comprehensive, and the staff handbook and other guidance all support the work of the staff. As a result, there is a shared sense of purpose as well as a coherent understanding of the school's aims and values, all of which contribute to the life and work of this culturally rich and purposeful community.

127. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

128. The members of the teaching staff are of good quality. The number of well-qualified specialist teachers is closely matched to the needs of the curriculum in almost all subjects, the exception being music. In religious education, there is some non-specialist teaching, but teachers cope well with the demands of the subject. There is a good mix of gender, background and range of experience among the teaching staff. All the staff are dedicated and work immensely hard to try to ensure rising standards of attainment. Many contribute to the good quality extra-curricular activities programme.

129. The work of the school is greatly enhanced by the quality of work and the high level of commitment of all the support staff. The finance, clerical and administrative staff play a valuable part in ensuring that their colleagues, the pupils, and the parents are well supported. There is a very good level of technical support for the curriculum, with recently appointed technicians for design and technology, information technology and art. The level of staff to support pupils with special educational needs is good. The library resources centre is very well staffed and managed, with an increase in time and personnel since the last inspection.

130. The arrangements for induction of new staff, and the appraisal and professional development of all staff, are very good. Newly qualified teachers have a full programme of induction into wider aspects of school life and the support they receive includes arrangements for lesson observation, evaluation and feedback. There is also an appropriate programme to introduce new, experienced staff to the school. A suitable scheme of appraisal, which meets statutory requirements, is in place. It is effective in helping individuals and the school to identify staff development needs.

131. There is an appropriate induction programme for support staff, managed by the headteacher's personal assistant. In addition to their important professional development

process, the support staff team is piloting a local authority programme of appraisal.

132. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff have moved towards those standards required for Investors in People status, an award for which the school aims. Training is clearly linked to the priorities in the school development plan. A notable feature of professional development is that some of the staff are undertaking middle management studies validated by Huddersfield University as part of work towards a master's degree. Professional development is focused on improving attainment and progress. For example, the majority of GNVQ teachers have increased expertise by gaining assessor and verifier awards. The support for the non-specialist teaching is less formal and involves mentoring and the observation of lessons taught by specialists.

133. The provision of learning resources is good, though in some subjects, including science and geography, there are not enough textbooks. In religious education, resources have improved, especially artefacts. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are good. Information technology resources are in the process of being up-graded through the new strategic plan for the area. There has been considerable improvement in the numbers and quality of computers since the last inspection; there is also access to the Internet through the library resources centre. Computers are well used in many areas, including the GNVQ courses. However, in some subjects, including music and geography, access to and provision of computers, is not adequate.

134. The library resources centre is very well resourced and is a significant strength of the school. It is well stocked with fiction, and is effectively used for English. The range and variety of books support different learning needs in most subjects. However, in some areas, such as geography, there are not enough reference books and other materials to support higher attainment in GCSE and GCE Advanced Level. At lunchtime, the library resources centre is a hive of activity, full of girls engaged in researching, working quietly, using computers, or having a good read.

135. Accommodation is good in relation to the needs of the curriculum. Sports facilities are very good. The accommodation for the library resource centre is outstandingly good. However, the overall accommodation has some deficiencies. The use of the main halls for dining at lunchtime detracts from the quality of the learning environment and affects subjects that use the halls for teaching, such as drama. The art facilities are cramped, with lack of storage space and no sixth form studio area. Generally, there are not enough seminar rooms for small sixth form groups. Whilst the sixth form has an adequate common room there are no social areas for any other year group in the school. The teaching space for special needs is shared with others. Much of the accommodation is well maintained, although there are some problems, such as rain leaking through flat roofs in the modern foreign languages area.

136. Learning is enhanced by excellent use of display in many classrooms across the curriculum and in the public areas of the school.

136. The efficiency of the school

137. The school makes very effective use of all the resources available to it, with a clear focus on school improvement. Financial planning and management are very good. Outline planning is in place for the next five years, based on pupil projections, assumed staying on rates, and possible budgets. Further demographic and other detail is added gradually as required, and this gives the school an adequate framework in which to assess the future financial position.

138. A strategic view is presented by the school development plan, which is properly linked to budgeting and departmental allocations. This constitutes good progress since the last inspection. A major strength of the plan is the very clear targeting of resources to support particular developments. The system for allocating development and maintenance expenditure to departments promotes an overview of the school and an understanding of the needs of different parts of it. The plan contains good detail in many areas, although there is some variation in the quality of costing information between different parts of the document. As an overview of resource implications it gives a comprehensive picture, with resources well directed towards specific improvement strategies.

139. The school manages its finance very well. There is good housekeeping through seeking savings, in the division of utility charges with shared facilities, for example, or in obtaining good value for money when awarding contracts. Sound assumptions are made about the future, and uncertainty is well managed. Decisions on diminishing resources involve governors, and consideration is given to a wide range of possible options. If reductions have to be made, sensible priority is given to that area should additional funds become available.

140. Members of the finance committee are well involved and informed about the decisions they have to take. Information presented to them is full and often includes a number of scenarios for consideration. Governors are well able to undertake their

monitoring role and have a good awareness of the financial constraints and issues facing the school. There has been good progress since the last inspection in involving governors in financial decision-making.

141.Designated funds are very effectively used. Funds for special educational needs are efficiently managed, with funding decisions being regularly reviewed.

Uncertainty of funding provision causes some difficulties in planning staffing levels, but this situation is currently being reviewed in partnership with the local education authority. Funding for ethnic minority achievement is also very well managed, with bilingual support effectively targeted on pupils at an early stage of acquiring English.

142.All the elements of time, staff, accommodation and learning resources are well used. Particular attention is given to the cost effectiveness of sixth form spending, including the viability of small groups. The school is successful in funding a good range of provision within the overall constraints of the sixth form budget.

143.Particular strengths in the use of staff were noted in modern foreign languages, history and vocational education. In English, the staff was effectively used except within Key Stage 3, where shared classes did not always promote high standards. Again in English, accommodation was well used, with notable strength in display. In vocational education there was extensive and creative use of the Internet and other applications of technology, such as digital cameras.

144.Routine administration and financial control are of very good quality. The recent audit report highlighted no major concerns, and the school has already responded to those minor matters that were raised. During inspection week, routine administrative procedures functioned with unobtrusive efficiency. The work of teaching staff is well supported by this effective administration, as well as by the provision of information technology, such as the conduct management database.

145.The school's intake factors are unfavourable and its unit costs are average. Although attainment needs further improvement, the good progress made by pupils, the good quality teaching they receive, and the school's success in promoting their development in the widest sense, mean that the school gives good value for money.

145.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

145. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

145. English

146. Pupils' attainment in English on entry to Year 7 is below national averages. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 show low levels in reading and writing for a large proportion of the pupils, including many whose home language is not English. A substantial number of pupils have test scores that are well below national averages. These findings are confirmed in the results of a range of tests administered by the school soon after the pupils' arrival.

147. Progress through Key Stage 3 is good, so that in the 1999 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, levels of attainment are below national averages but above average for pupils in similar schools. Throughout the first three years, pupils gain confidence in their use of English. Those with poor reading skills receive extra help from the special needs teachers, and those bilingual pupils whose knowledge of English is at an early stage are supported in lessons by the language development team. As their range of vocabulary and their command of sentence structure increases, pupils take a positive and active part in class and group discussion. They gain proficiency in reading for different purposes. For instance, a Year 8 class was skimming through the text to find examples of racism in *Huckleberry Finn*, and a class in Year 7 was using a range of reference books in the library to gather information about animals. Competence in writing develops more slowly, but here too pupils gain the confidence to write at length, to make notes and to use a range of forms, such as letters, diaries and play scripts, as well as narrative and discursive pieces.

148. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is in line with national averages for pupils in all maintained schools. All pupils take the GCSE examination in English, in which they usually reach national averages, although in 1999 attainment was below average. Three quarters of the pupils take English literature in addition, and here the results are above, and sometimes well above, national averages. In 1999 results were above average for the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades and below average for those gaining grades in the A*-G range. Inspection evidence, including the scrutiny of pupils' work, confirms this picture. Through Key Stage 4, progress is good. Discussion of texts and issues, particularly by higher and average attaining pupils, is of good quality; group discussion is efficiently organised, the pupils making sure that all views are heard and all aspects of the tasks addressed. In whole class work, pupils are sufficiently confident to express and expand on their ideas. Writing by higher attaining pupils is fluent and well structured. Average and lower attaining pupils are also fluent, especially in factual description and in narrative; they are more limited in the range of expression needed for discursive and reflective writing.

149. Attainment in the sixth form at GCE Advanced Level is below course averages. However, the attainment of the range of pupils who join the course is wide; the entry requirements are lower than is sometimes the case. All students make at least satisfactory progress and find the study of literature and the close analysis of language both enriching and challenging. For many of them English is an additional language, and some have not always

acquired the full range of structures and vocabulary that the course demands. The small proportion of students with higher levels of attainment and more security in language do well, reaching the higher grades in the examination.

150. Attitudes to work in English are predominantly good. Pupils respond well to the subject and enjoy their lessons. Almost all behaviour is good, with positive relationships between pupils and teachers and among the pupils. The department policy of directing pupils into groups for collaborative work is happily accepted, and all benefit from sharing ideas with pupils of different backgrounds and interests. There is a good level of response to homework throughout the school. Pupils take responsibility for their learning, using the library well, and often go to great lengths, in the use of information technology for instance, to present their work well. A very small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are less well motivated, but their behaviour is not allowed to interfere with the work of other class members.

151. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching is very good in just under a fifth of lessons, good in over two-fifths, and satisfactory in the remainder. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in English. Members of the teaching team are well qualified, and have good subject knowledge and a range of experience and interests. Teachers have high expectations of the behaviour and commitment of their pupils, and the tasks and activities they devise are challenging and stimulating. Pupil management is good; poor attitudes and behaviour are dealt with extremely skilfully and sensitively. Record keeping and assessment are strengths of the department. All teachers keep detailed cumulative notes on their response to work, and pupils' current strengths and weaknesses are under constant analysis. Teachers are aware of, and involved in, the identification of the specific problems of pupils with special educational needs. There are very good levels of collaboration with the support teams dealing with special needs and language development. Supported lessons are carefully planned, so that the additional teachers and assistants are fully aware of objectives and are able to share in the lesson delivery. Course planning overall is of good quality, although time in lessons is not always well balanced.

152. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, including the provision of opportunities for use of information technology and for study of the media. After the first term of Year 7, classes are organised into sets based on prior attainment, and this enables all pupils to gain access to the curriculum through work and approach that fits their needs. Specialist help is usefully targeted into classes where it is most needed. There are problems for some classes that are shared by two teachers; although there is good communication between the teachers concerned, there is some adverse effect on attainment and progress.

153. Management and leadership of the department are very strong. Carefully planned and balanced schemes of work, with very clear policies and consistent practice, ensure coherent delivery of the subject, even when staffing changes. Monitoring of the work of the department is efficient and effective. There is a programme for the observation of lessons by the curriculum manager, and the regular moderation by the whole team of oral and written work across years. The teaching area is very well managed. The curriculum manager takes active responsibility for good behaviour in the department's public areas, and all teachers ensure that their rooms are orderly and stimulating, with attractive displays of work and information.

154.The department has maintained the high standards reported in the last inspection, and has responded to concerns about the balance of teacher and pupil activity in lessons, by providing more opportunities for group learning. The need in lessons in the first term of Year 7 to provide a greater choice of graded materials and activities to suit the range of attainment in the classes is under review.

154. **Mathematics**

155.Pupils' attainment in mathematics on entry to the school is well below average. This is confirmed by direct inspection evidence and by the results of the 1999 National Curriculum Key Stage 2 tests. In these tests about half the current Year 7 reached the national standards for pupils of a similar age, a big improvement upon previous years.

156.At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is well below national averages, with some pupils in the higher sets reaching above average standards. The National Curriculum Key Stage 3 test results for 1999 confirm this. The 1999 test results are broadly in line with national averages for similar schools. Teachers' assessments are generally higher than the test results. The 1999 results are not as good as those for 1997 and 1998.

157.By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils can multiply linear algebraic expressions, and simplify the results. They can find unknown angles in diagrams that contain parallel lines and find a general rule to describe a given sequence of numbers. Average attainers are able to simplify fractions and write numbers to a certain number of decimal places. They can find unknown angles in a number of two-dimensional shapes. They are able to design questionnaires and use charts to represent data collected. Lower attaining pupils can use negative numbers in contexts such as temperature, and recognise and use simple equivalent fractions. They can find the area and perimeter of some two-dimensional shapes.

158.By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are achieving standards well below national averages, with a few pupils achieving above average standards. The 1998 GCSE examination results are well below national averages at A* - C, and in broadly in line with them at A* - G. The 1999 results are not as good as those for 1998 or 1997 at A* - C. The 1998 results are above the national averages for similar schools.

159.By the end of Key Stage 4, the higher attaining pupils can use trigonometric ratios to find unknown sides or angles in right-angled triangles. However, the algebraic skills of many pupils are comparatively weak for the level of work needed for higher GCSE grades, and preparation for GCE Advanced Level. Average attaining pupils can identify planes of symmetry in three-dimensional solids, can solve simple equations, and can calculate areas and volumes of a range of shapes. Lower attaining pupils consolidate and extend their knowledge with a continuing emphasis on improving basic skills, for example using simple percentages to calculate amounts of money. All pupils are able to find information from graphs, and also to represent graphically data they are given, for example through bar and pie charts and line graphs, with higher attaining pupils drawing and interpreting cumulative frequency curves.

160.Attainment at the end of Year 13 is below national course averages, particularly at the higher grades, and this is confirmed by the 1998 examination results in GCE Advanced Level in mathematics. Those for 1999 are better, although still below average. However, it is difficult to compare results and establish trends, as the number of pupils taking the subject is

small, for example two in 1998, nine in 1999.

161.By the end of Year 13, pupils can apply statistical techniques to the solution of problems, for example selecting from a number of distributions. Pupils, particularly the higher attaining pupils, are able to differentiate a number of functions, some from first principles. Pupils can sketch a range of algebraic functions. Pupils follow a modular course in pure mathematics and statistics. The mathematics department produces a helpful induction booklet for girls beginning the GCE Advanced Level, and this provides a good introduction to the course.

162.The school's data analysis, confirmed by direct inspection evidence, shows that there are proportionately more higher attaining Asian than indigenous pupils, and proportionately more of the low attainers are found among the Asian than indigenous pupils.

163.Progress through Key Stage 3 is satisfactory for pupils of all levels of prior attainment, including those with special educational needs. Inspection evidence indicates that the introduction of a more structured and detailed scheme of work, and changes in teaching strategies, are key factors in improving standards. The latter changes largely come from the detailed work of two recent projects. Pupils' rate of progress needs to be further increased to mitigate the low starting point of many of them. Some pupils' speed of working is reduced by language difficulties, however key technical words are displayed and emphasised during lessons, to help their understanding.

164.In some lessons, a few high attaining pupils do not make enough progress, as they are not given sufficiently different and appropriate tasks. For example, they may have to complete the same examples as the rest of the class, even though they have already mastered the skills.

165.In both key stages pupils make similar progress across most aspects of mathematics; they successfully learn to apply techniques to standard types of questions. They are not as skilled at tackling unusual questions and need a deeper level of mathematical thinking, as they lack confidence in unfamiliar situations and seek reassurance from the teacher before attempting to find a solution. All pupils make some progress in extending their mental arithmetic skills, but this is insufficient for many pupils to be able to answer questions quickly and accurately.

166.Although progress in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, progress over time in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory, in particular for those capable of achieving the higher grades of A* - C. Those pupils preparing for the higher tier paper have to cover the considerable extra content through after-school classes and, in Year 11, a self-study programme. This makes it difficult for teachers to ensure full syllabus coverage for these pupils, and also discourages some pupils from attempting it. Absence also adversely affects the progress some middle and lower attaining pupils make over time. The highest attaining pupils undertake a great deal of work outside class time to reinforce and extend their skills. However, this is not true for some average and lower attaining pupils. For example, although homework is set, some do not complete it, or hand it in on time, in spite of reminders.

167.During Years 12 and 13, all pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils build on their knowledge and skills in pure mathematics and apply these to statistics. The mathematics department accepts, and supports, pupils with a wide range of mathematical backgrounds.

The small classes enable teachers to give pupils individual support and this, together with their positive attitude, contributes to their progress.

168. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to work is good; they settle down quickly, and even if, as with one Year 7 class, their entry to the classroom is boisterous, they respond well to a quiet reminder from the teacher. Pupils are keen to help with classroom tasks, but do not show much initiative when dealing with difficulties in solving problems. They rely on learning, and then applying, standard techniques and many find it difficult to explore new ideas, or try things out. However, particularly at Key Stage 3, the 'Access for All' and the 'Axioms' projects, referred to above, have had a positive impact on pupils' self-confidence and have increased active participation in lessons. Pupils in the sixth form organise their work well and can describe what they are finding difficult, and why.

169. The quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Teaching is good in about a quarter of lessons; in approximately a twentieth it is very good and a corresponding amount of teaching is unsatisfactory. The remainder of the teaching is satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.

170. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject for the classes they teach; they use it well, illustrating explanations with relevant examples and practical demonstrations. In many of the lessons where teaching is satisfactory, but not good, the highest attaining pupils in the class are not given sufficiently challenging work. In most lessons, time is well used, objectives are clearly explained to the class at the beginning of the lessons, and written planning provides a helpful framework.

171. Sometimes, the pace of teaching slows down in the middle of a lesson as the teacher spends too much time working with individuals, and some pupils use the opportunity to talk briefly about non-work topics. When teaching is very good, the pace of the lesson is swift, and questions are used to probe and to make pupils think. Pupils are expected to be able to explain what they are doing, and why, both orally and in writing.

172. Management of pupils is good, creating a pleasant atmosphere within which pupils are expected to work hard. When teaching is unsatisfactory it is because the level of work is too low for many of the pupils in the class, in particular the higher attainers. When teaching is good or very good, an imaginative range of methods is used to capture pupils' interest and work is provided that meets individual needs. Teaching methods are adapted well to the needs of different age groups, in particular a tutorial approach for those in Years 12 and 13.

173. Homework is set and marked regularly, and the assessment of pupils' work is good. Teachers assess pupils' work continually, through oral questioning, mental arithmetic tests, class work, and end of module tests. Lessons are then adapted as necessary. Marking is usually up to date, with ticks and encouraging comments. The best practice shows clearly what pupils have to do to improve.

174. Assessment procedures in the department are good and a departmental database enables the progress of individual pupils, and of specific classes, to be tracked. Good use is made of the analysis of external assessment results to identify areas of weakness, leading to curriculum review; an example of this is the choice of coursework tasks for GCSE.

175.The display in classrooms is lively and colourful and includes key words and information to help pupils' progress. This effective mathematical environment is sometimes spoiled by water leaking through the ceilings in some classrooms.

176.The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements; opportunities to use information technology are good in Key Stage 3, but not as well planned at Key Stage 4. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is good, and investigative tasks are systematically integrated into it. Not as much progress has been made in detailed planning for the Key Stage 4 and sixth form curriculum. Departmental documentation, including the development plan, identifies necessary areas for improvement, but not enough action has been taken to deal with these rapidly.

177.The department has worked together as a team to take part in recent specific projects to improve teaching and to produce the new scheme of work for Key Stage 3. These factors are having a positive impact on pupils' progress and participation. There is some monitoring of teaching, but not a great deal; more would enable the good practice of the department to be shared. Satisfactory progress has been made on issues raised in the last inspection report.

177. Science

178.On entry to the school, pupils have a knowledge and understanding of science that is in many cases well below that for pupils of a similar age nationally. However, the level of skill in experimental and investigative science is more in line with the average.

179.At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment remains below average. In the national tests of 1998 and 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5, or greater, and of pupils reaching Level 6, or greater, was well below the national average. However, although the overall average level achieved by all pupils was well below the national average level it is broadly in line with that for similar schools. Over the four years from 1996 to 1999, the average level achieved by the girls remained consistently below the national average.

180.At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results in 1998 for double award combined science show that the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades and the average GCSE points score were both well below the national average. In 1999, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades, and the average point scores, is similar to the previous year, although over the past four years there has been slightly rising trend.

181.In the sixth form, attainment at GCE Advanced Level is variable, depending largely on the particular strengths of the few girls entered. In 1998, both candidates in biology, and about half of those entered in chemistry and physics, gained A-E grades. A similar pattern is found in 1999. Overall, attainment is broadly in line with the course averages, in that grades are achieved across the whole range.

182.Attainment observed in school, in lessons and from evidence of written work and records, reflects closely the standards indicated by the end of key stage National Curriculum tests, GCSE, and GCE Advanced Level results. For example, girls in Key Stage 3 studying

Attainment Target 1, experimental and investigative science, can make and record observations with reasonable care. However, only a minority consider the accuracy of the measurement or extend conclusions, using scientific knowledge. In Key Stage 4, the majority of girls studying the principles of electromagnetism in Attainment Target 4 understand the basic ideas but few can extend their knowledge to explain correctly the application of concepts in simple electrical devices. Pupils in the sixth form have some understanding of principles, but do not apply their knowledge well to solve problems.

183. Progress over both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. In those lessons where progress is good, the work provided was more carefully matched to the attainment of the pupils. The progress of higher attaining pupils, in particular, was limited by the absence of appropriately challenging work, by inefficient use of the time available in the lesson, and by lack of teachers' skill in ensuring that all pupils in the group participated. Progress of

lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs was good where classroom support was provided, especially for the many pupils where English is an additional language. In the sixth form progress was good. A number of GCE Advanced Level pupils limit their progress by not attempting to question or confirm their understanding of the concepts involved.

184. Attitudes of pupils are mainly good, and at least satisfactory across both key stages and the sixth form. Pupils listen quietly to instructions and diligently carry out the activities provided. They respond to the teacher's questions, but show little willingness to become involved in discussion. A significant number of pupils avoid participation and, particularly in Key Stage 4, interest in the subject is often lacking, especially in chemistry and physics topics. In practical work, pupils carry out experiments responsibly, collaborate well, and share ideas in investigative tasks. Behaviour in class is generally good, and proper respect is shown for scientific apparatus and safety procedures.

185. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. In under three fifths of lessons teaching is satisfactory and in the remainder it is good. However, in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 teaching is good in about two fifths of lessons, and in the remainder it is satisfactory. In the sixth form teaching is generally satisfactory, but the strength in teachers' subject knowledge often provides a basis for good exposition. All teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of their specialist subject, and more generally across science. There is an appropriate range of expertise and experience that ensures confidence in teaching the subject material. The management of pupils' behaviour is good. Homework is used well to extend learning.

186. Where teaching contains some unsatisfactory features, the level of planning is insufficiently detailed. The revised schemes of work are well used in lesson preparation at Key Stage 3, but at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form planning is largely based on the content of the examination syllabus. As a result, often not enough provision is made for matching tasks to the attainment level of pupils, especially those with higher attainment but also those with special educational needs. In a number of lessons the pace of learning is slow, time is used inefficiently, and there is a lack of appropriate expectation for the still considerable range of attainment in the strictly set teaching groups. On occasions, some staff do not ensure that all girls participate in the learning. Several teachers find difficult the framing of questions to determine the level of understanding reached, but neither do they always use the outcomes of assessment and marking to measure the extent of pupils' progress. Not enough use is made of setting short-term targets for improvement, arising from marking pupils work. Teachers have available to them considerable data related to prior attainment, which is used well to predict future performance. However, appropriate records of assessments and monitoring an individual's progress are not detailed and immediately accessible.

187. Information technology is increasingly used, and data logging and other applications are being introduced. Resources for every day experimental work are adequate, although textbooks for use at home are not provided. The curriculum provides good progression from Key Stage 2 work through to the sixth form. Accreditation using the Certificate of Achievement course as well as GCSE is appropriately used to validate the work of lower attaining pupils.

188. The curriculum area is well managed, and improvements have been extensive since the last inspection. The handbook provides comprehensive support and guidance for staff, including all appropriate policies. However, schemes of work are not yet fully in place. Monitoring of aspects such as reporting and coursework assessment is in hand, but the monitoring of teaching and marking is not yet sufficiently rigorous to identify and share good practice.

188. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

188. Creative and expressive arts

188.

189. The creative and expressive arts curriculum area includes art, drama, music and physical education. At Key Stage 3, the subjects often work on common themes, while at Key Stage 4 the pupils are offered the opportunity to follow a GCSE course in expressive arts, involving music, art and drama. The first examination entry will take place in the year 2000. Pupils are confident and articulate about their work and respond enthusiastically to the opportunity to pursue a multi-disciplinary arts course and to develop their ideas in considerable depth. Communication between staff in this large and effective curriculum area is good, with shared aims, common policies and coherent schemes of work. The high profile of the area and the good quality of its work are evident in the displays of photographs and artwork around the school, and in the performances that it regularly produces.

189. Art

190. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is in line with national average standards. Pupils handle paint with confidence and make expressive use of colour in pattern-making and imaginative composition. They experiment with a wide range of materials for two- and three-dimensional work and make links between the content and technique of artists' work, for example the tonal and narrative qualities of Paula Rego's work, and their own outcomes. Pupils begin to articulate their understanding of art, to collect information, and to develop specialist vocabulary.

191. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 at GCSE is well above the national average for grades A*-C, and above the national average for grades A*-G. There has been a significant increase in the percentage of A*-C grades since 1997. After two years of relatively modest numbers of entrants in 1998 and 1999, numbers of pupils following the GCSE course for entry in 2000 have doubled and are continuing to rise. Pupils' work in Key Stage 4 has a distinctive style, combining large-scale outcomes with strong, expressive use of colour, pattern and layered images, employing a wide range of materials. Pupils use the research and exploration process with maturity and purpose. Artists' work is used constructively to support the development of personal outcomes. Pupils' ability to think conceptually enables them to use art in its widest sense, to express and explore beliefs, concerns, and issues through the production of individual images, which are well researched and appropriately modified. In both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, pupils' skills to use a range of graphic techniques are less developed than their ability to think conceptually and to use shape and colour expressively.

192. In the sixth form the GCE Advanced Level course was reintroduced in 1997 for entry in 1999. The number of entries was small, thus making accurate comparison with national average standards difficult, but all candidates gained passes at grade B or above. Pupils develop good habits of research, investigation and experimentation that enable them to work through ideas and concepts in depth. They become serious artists who can articulate their ideas and feelings fluently and make independent choices about the use and appropriateness of materials. As a result of extensive exploration and planning, they produce striking work that often makes strong statements. There is evidence of pupils' information communication technology skills across Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, including some impressive digital imaging work in Key Stage 4, produced during an artists' residency.

193. Progress overall in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing an understanding of the basic elements of visual language, through projects that explore specific areas such as tone and colour. They make good progress in critical studies through frequent opportunities to discuss their own and others' work, including the work of artists. Progress in Attainment Target 1, investigating and making, is slower towards the end of Key Stage 3, when pupils continue to enjoy exploring concepts and using colour but need to develop a more sophisticated range of drawing skills. Progress in Key Stage 4 is good. Pupils make good progress in research, planning, and technical and conceptual skills, and in the ability to modify their work. They become competent in synthesising elements of the work of artists with their own ideas and practical skills. In the sixth form progress is very good. Pupils make very good progress in the analysis of and research into artists' work, and in supporting their final outcomes with relevant and personal experimentation with methods and materials.

194. Pupils' response is good in all key stages. They enjoy their work and behave well. They develop good relationships with each other and with teachers. Pupils complete homework regularly and many spend extra time in the art department at lunch times and after school. A number of pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form take part in voluntary visits to galleries and show initiative in independent research. Pupils across the key stages and in the sixth form take pride in their work, which they enjoy explaining and discussing.

195. The quality of teaching is good, and in no lessons was it seen to be less than satisfactory. Teaching quality is very good in under a fifth of lessons, good in over a half, and satisfactory in the remainder. This teaching profile is a considerable improvement on that reported at the last inspection.

196. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and challenge them to explore concepts, cultural traditions and the use of materials. Good teamwork is evident in a cohesive approach to teaching, to promoting the positive ethos of the department, and to contributing towards the work of the whole of the arts curriculum area. Teachers organise the department and manage pupils very well, despite constrictions of space. The support staff members are used constructively to achieve the smooth running of the department and to help pupils to reach an impressive depth of written analysis of their artwork. Helpful displays of information, such as specialist vocabulary, are provided for pupils in the art rooms, and striking, high quality artwork enhances the department and the public areas of the school. Very thorough assessment procedures have been devised and implemented to encourage progression for pupils and to monitor the effectiveness of schemes of work.

197.The subject area benefits from strong and effective leadership. Since taking over the department after the previous inspection, the head of subject has addressed and remedied the issues raised. Sensible planning and successful strategies have resulted in greatly improved examination results and a consistently high standard of work, especially in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teaching and storage space is very cramped, however, and affects the range of teaching styles and strategies that can be successfully used. There is little room for movement around the art rooms by pupils and teachers, or for the use of audio-visual equipment when needed. Although teachers are making every effort to offer pupils an appropriate level of information communication technology experience, this is being hindered by lack of equipment. Sixth form pupils are inhibited in their working practices by the lack of a dedicated studio area.

198.In a relatively short space of time, the department has become a thriving and stimulating area of the school. It is clear that it is poised to develop further, but the problems of lack of space and computer resources need to be addressed if the department is to fulfil its potential and become a beacon of good practice.

198. Drama

199.At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in drama is at least in line with national expectations. Some of the work seen in the inspection was of very good quality. In a lesson in Year 9, pupils showed good levels of skill in group planning for a presentation to the class: they organised time, space and dialogue, allocating roles and discussing interpretation most effectively and efficiently. In presentation they were assured and convincing, and the judgement shown in their analysis of the performances was shrewd and knowledgeable.

200.Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, shown in GCSE results, is in line with national averages. Good progress has been made through both Key Stages, and pupils have acquired sound knowledge of production and stage technique, as well as good levels in individual skills. The writing they produce throughout the course is reflective and personal; it shows very well the learning that takes place from lesson to lesson, and it enables the pupils to analyse and consider their own experience and their progress.

201.Attainment in the GCE Advanced Level course in performing arts is above national averages with a full pass rate at grades A-E, although it is below average in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher A-B grades. Progress is good.

202.Behaviour and attitudes to work are good. All pupils derive great enjoyment from the lessons and are enthusiastic and keen to show what they can do. They sustain good levels of concentration and co-operation as they work in groups. Many of them, at all stages, do extra preparation between lessons in order to achieve the best standards. The annual productions spring from improvisation and script writing by the pupils and have very strong pupil involvement in all aspects, providing fulfilment for individuals and success for the school.

203.Teaching in the area is at least satisfactory, and half of it is very good. The course is very carefully planned to provide not only skill in dramatic technique and presentation but also opportunities for considering the issues and cultures on which the drama is based. For

instance, a Year 9 unit looking at the values and customs of an imaginary society related the experience to issues, such as racism and discrimination, which are closer to home. The department has established excellent links with community groups, and there are regularly visits and workshops given by dancers and theatre groups from outside the school.

203. **Music**

204. The music department, which is part of the creative, expressive and performing arts area, experienced staffing difficulties during the inspection, owing to illness, but a new specialist head of the subject is to take up post at the start of next term. As a result, there was little work available for scrutiny, none at all for Year 9, and few lessons taught by permanent members of the music teaching team. As a result, no teaching was observed in Key Stage 4 and in Years 12 and 13.

205. Levels of attainment in the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum teacher assessments are well below those expected for pupils of a similar age nationally, but they are an improvement on the comparable results for 1998 and 1997. There were no GCSE candidates for the expressive arts examination, the first entry being in summer 2000. In the GCE Advanced Level performing arts examinations for this period, eight candidates were entered, seven achieving grades in the A - E range, and two in the A - C range. These results are above course averages and are an improvement on the two previous years.

206. Pupils enter the school with a variety of musical experiences, and though some pupils have reached the expected level of attainment for the end of Key Stage 2, the majority are below it. Attainment in Year 8 is broadly in line with the average, as the demands of the work covered by this year group do not extend those from Year 7. First-hand inspection evidence from observation and the work scrutinised suggests, however, that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with the expectation for pupils of a similar age.

207. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is below average, and the written work scrutinised showed little progress from the work covered in Key Stage 3. Pupils are creating musical sound effects using graphic scores with no sense of development or structure.

208. Progress through Key Stage 3 is broadly satisfactory, but much is good. Where progress is less than satisfactory there is little curriculum coherence in what pupils are expected to do and not enough related activities in lessons to build on previous attainment. Where progress in lessons is at least satisfactory, pupils are provided with occasionally well judged opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across the National Curriculum Attainment Targets. On the evidence of pupils' work and some assessment data, the progress in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory. Their work shows little progression in learning from that at Key Stage 3. Pupils' compositions showed satisfactory progress over time through work undertaken in a series of workshops led by a local theatrical composer. However, without direct observation, it was not possible to ascertain how much progress was the result of pupils' own contributions to the workshops.

209. Pupils' behaviour, and their attitude to teachers and work at Key Stage 3, is satisfactory overall. The response was least good in those lessons taught by temporary teachers.

Although no lessons could be observed in Key Stage 4 or the sixth form, relationships amongst the pupils are good, and relationships between the staff and the majority of pupils are satisfactory.

210.The overall quality of the teaching is satisfactory. One third of the teaching is good, a further third is satisfactory and the remainder is unsatisfactory. A range of teachers was observed. This included permanent staff members, where teaching was good, and non-specialist supply teachers where a third of the teaching was satisfactory and the remainder was unsatisfactory. Generally, tasks are explained clearly and groups are efficiently organised to ensure that pupils do not work with their friends, but mix with others in their class. Pupils of all levels of attainment are sufficiently challenged. Lessons are well planned and move with a good pace; pupils are kept profitably occupied, and consequently there are no pupil management problems. Resources are prepared in advance and are appropriate for the intended tasks. In some lessons where teaching was less than satisfactory, the teacher did not have adequate subject knowledge to enable pupils to be appropriately challenged, and to provide progression in learning through a range of teaching methods and tasks.

211.Homework is set, as required by the school policy, and is broadly appropriate. During the inspection, tasks included research, with plenty of guidance given as to where pupils might find the material and possible sources in books and CD ROM. However, in many cases, books had not been marked during the course of this term.

212.Currently, the curriculum for Years 8 and 9 does not build on the skills already developed in Year 7. Furthermore, there is not enough use of computer technology as part of teaching and learning within the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum Programmes of Study. There is little evidence in the current music documentation of opportunities for pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds to contribute the wealth of musical experiences with which they are familiar. The department organises a small number of extra-curricular activities, but excels when combining with the other creative arts departments for the annual production, involving pupils from all year groups.

213.The current leadership and management of the subject is unsatisfactory, although it is recognised that there have been attempts to maintain continuity in the provision and quality of musical experiences for the pupils. A good level of instrumental music tuition is provided by local authority's peripatetic service. When pupils are able to benefit from good quality musical experiences devised by visiting artists they are enthusiastic about the subject, but it is not surprising that they find the current Key Stage 3 activities undemanding. Apart from a few lunchtime activities and during lesson times, the department is deserted and the overall appearance is discouraging.

Physical education

214. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below, and in many cases well below, that expected nationally. The overall attainment in physical education at the Key Stages 3 and 4 is in line with that expected nationally. Attainment is at expected levels in games, gymnastics and swimming. It is higher for some Year 9 pupils in dance, where work shows greater technical content. Most pupils are able to plan, perform, and evaluate through a range of physical activities to the level expected. Pupils know and understand the reason for exercise and how the body needs to be prepared. Most pupils can sustain good levels of physical activity. GCSE examination results are well below national standards, although improving.

214.

215. Overall progress is good for pupils of all levels of attainment throughout the key stages. As pupils move through Key Stage 3 their progress is good. In Year 7 pupils make progress in extending their range of survival skills in swimming. Year 8 pupils make progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills in some strategies and tactics for hockey team play. Many pupils in Year 9 also make good progress and can show an increasing range of gymnastic movements. At Key Stage 4 pupils also make good progress. They know what activities they want to specialise in and show a commitment to improving their performance. The majority of pupils studying for GCSE examinations are making good progress. Those whose progress is less marked find the written elements difficult. Pupils currently studying for GCE Advanced Level make good progress and are gaining a good understanding of the relationship between the theory and practice of physical education.

214. The response of pupils of all ages is very good. They are well motivated, work with concentration, and contribute readily to discussion. Most pupils use practice well to improve specific skills and engage in tasks for sustained periods of time. They work together very co-operatively and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of others. Relationships are good among the pupils and with their teachers. The pupils demonstrate a genuine respect for others, for equipment, and for the environment in which they work.

215. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. In well over two-thirds of lessons teaching is very good, and in the remainder there are equal amounts that of good and satisfactory teaching. There is none that is unsatisfactory. Teachers are experienced and well qualified in their subject, and this enhances the quality of their lesson planning and the confidence with which they share this with their pupils. Lessons are well planned, have a clear aim, and provide tasks and resources to cater for range of attainment within the teaching group. The continuous assessment of pupils' practical and written work informs present and future planning. Some teachers are particularly proficient in asking pupils questions to ensure their participation and to explore their learning. Teachers quickly establish levels of knowledge, understanding and skills and help pupils to become more proficient in evaluating their own work and that of others. There is, however, no formal system to share good practice within and beyond the subject area.

216. The physical education area is very well managed and led, and clearly supports the aims of the school. Medium-term planning is under regular review and is structured so that it can reflect any changes to the National Curriculum in the year 2000. The practice of supporting pupils with special needs is well documented, and both theory and practice are particularly effective. An appropriate and manageable system of assessment at Key Stage 4 has been established since the last inspection. This now complements and builds on that already being well used at Key Stage 3.

217. National Curriculum requirements are being met at Key Stage 3, and the Programmes of Study are well covered. However, the time allocation for Key Stage 4 is less than recommended and, as a result, does not always allow pupils to make very good progress in the range of activities available in their electives. Sixth form pupils can gain access physical education activities but there is no lesson provision on the general studies timetable. The learning resources are good, and plans are being made to develop pupils' access to information and communication technology in physical education lessons. There is a lack of appropriate classroom provision for pupils studying to examination level. Accommodation

for practical activities is excellent and positively contributes to the high standards pupils reach and the very good progress they make.

219. Humanities

219.

220. The humanities curriculum area includes geography, history, religious education, and the social sciences. The curriculum area manager is the link between this team of specialist teachers and the senior management team. He offers good leadership to his colleagues and, in partnership with them, has established common policies, guidance and other structures to support a coherent approach to teaching and learning. The area and its constituent subjects are well documented and resourced.

220. Geography

218. The results of teachers' assessments for the end of Key Stage 3 indicate that attainment is below that expected of pupils of a similar age nationally. Over the last three years the proportion of pupils gaining A*- C grades in the GCSE examinations has fluctuated slightly, but results remain below the national average. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are generally below course averages. There is, however, a wide spread of attainment within the relatively low numbers of pupils who follow the GCE Advanced Level course.

219. By the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form, the attainment of pupils is below average. However, pupils enter Key Stage 3 with attainment well below average, as a consequence of a variable prior experience of the subject. By the end of Year 9 higher attaining pupils are able to identify that the location of the largest cities varies over time, and can offer some explanation for this change. Lower attaining pupils are able to describe how people are affected by the rapid growth of a city.

220. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils are able to independently access relevant information from secondary source materials to explain various methods of flood control and how they work, and are able to use appropriate geographical terminology. Lower attaining pupils are able to annotate accurately a diagram of a drainage basin and describe the features.

221. By the end of the sixth form all pupils are able carry out testing on properties of soils, with higher attaining pupils able to analyse results accurately and draw appropriate conclusions.

222. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3, and satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Progress is assisted by pupils' positive approach to learning and their obvious enjoyment of the subject. Pupils across Key Stage 3 are making gains in knowledge and understanding of processes, for example the transportation of eroded material by river, ice and sea. They are increasingly effective in presenting geographical data in simple charts, choropleth maps and graphs. Progress for some higher attaining pupils is hampered by the repetition of work already done at Key Stage 2. Pupils across Key Stage 4 are making gains in the skills, knowledge and understanding required to meet the demands of the recently changed GCSE course. They are developing enquiry-based learning skills that require independent research of primary and secondary sources of data. In the sixth form, students make valuable gains in the fieldwork skills from the residential experience in North Wales.

Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers are aware of their specific learning needs and pupils work effectively towards targets set to ensure these are met.

225.

223. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They are well behaved and co-operative, both with teachers and with one another. Work is carefully presented and pupils show a good degree of pride with it. They also show good study skills of note taking, during the showing of videotapes for example. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form show interest in relating subjects under discussion in the classroom with world events. For example, they related current events in East Timor to work they were undertaking on separatism. Many of the pupils volunteer oral contributions, but these are usually only one-word answers and most pupils generally lack confidence and the encouragement to speak at length.

226.

227. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching is very good in just under one-tenth of lessons, good in over a third, and satisfactory in the remainder. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Lessons are generally well planned but at Key Stage 3 do not always address the needs of some of the highest attaining pupils. All teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to enliven their teaching. The teachers are producing resources that ensure that pupils of all levels of attainment are well supported and can be successful learners. For example, the work on weathering and erosion in Year 8 allows lower attaining pupils a more structured approach to recording data, enabling concentration on the key concepts. Homework is regularly set, and used to reinforce class activity. An improvement since the last inspection is that pupils are given frequent opportunities to work autonomously from secondary sources, assisted by the teacher's well-prepared task sheets.

227.

228. Pupils' work is thoroughly marked, with comments to guide improvement. The recent introduction of grades further assists monitoring of pupils' progress. There is, however, an overuse of the teacher as the source of information. Thought needs to be given as to how the teachers' role works alongside a wider range of resources. The provision of more opportunities for pupils to debate geographical issues and move beyond one-word answers is under review, and will assist in developing confidence and higher levels of knowledge and understanding.

228.

229. This is a hard working department whose members care greatly that their pupils succeed at, and enjoy, geography. It is effectively led and managed. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. However, the planning for continuity and progression in learning between Key Stages 2 and 3 currently needs attention. As a consequence of the large number of partner primary schools, pupils arrive with variable geographic experience, requiring the teaching of some of the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum Programmes of Study. This results in some higher attaining pupils repeating work unnecessarily. There is good use of lively and fresh display work. Book stocks are barely adequate and will shortly be inadequate to support learning, particularly at Key Stage 4.

224. Response to the weaknesses raised at the time of the last inspection has been positive. Resources and strategies have been developed which better address the needs of pupils across the range of attainment. There is more frequent monitoring of achievement, with pupils in each year of Key Stage 3 being assessed against the National Curriculum three times each year. The introduction of grades for the marking of work has added objectivity to the

subjective comments of the previous system. The development of the skills of application, analysis and evaluation has been addressed by greater use of enquiry-based learning approaches at Key Stage 3 and within the new GCSE examination syllabus at Key Stage 4. There are still insufficient opportunities to use information technology to support and extend pupils' learning.

230. History

225. Most pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are generally below that expected for pupils of a similar age nationally. The levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national averages. The 1998 teacher assessments show that the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above is in line with the average and, although there is a slight decline in the 1999 results, attainment is at the average. At Key Stage 3, most pupils demonstrate satisfactory factual knowledge, linking causes and events, but some find the skills of chronology and the use of evidence difficult. Most can use a variety of sources to come to appropriate conclusions for example, in Year 8, in the study of the Tudor war against Spain.

226. At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results are in line with national averages. In 1998, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was in line with the average but in 1999 the proportion was just below that for the previous year. In 1998 all pupils entered gained grades in the A*- G range, which is above the national average. This performance was maintained in 1999. At Key Stage 4, pupils use historical sources effectively and evaluate events, recognising that there may not necessarily be a correct answer. An example of this was in their studies of medicine and the problems of Germany between 1919 and 1945. They benefit from depth studies, and many produce effective individual research.

227. In the sixth form, small groups have produced results mostly in line with national averages. In 1998, all pupils gained A-E grades, whilst in 1999 the figure was a little lower. During their sixth form studies much good research work is carried out, causing pupils to discuss and debate issues, and often to present their arguments with conviction.

228. Rates of progress of pupils in Key Stage 3 are always satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form progress is good. The numbers of pupils choosing history at Key Stage 4 are relatively small. Many pupils view history as lacking the same relevance to the modern world as vocational subjects. Pupils make good gains in their ability to understand, and to make sense of and account for the past. They develop a good knowledge of historical events, their causes, and their results. They are steadily learning the skills of investigation and analysis of a variety of information sources, for example in Year 10 in the study of the causes of the Black Death. Appropriate extended tasks intensify pupils' knowledge, especially in the sixth form, where they are required to think more deeply and critically.

229. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with well-selected tasks that are matched to their attainment levels. Class teachers are aware of individual education plans and consult them regularly to monitor progress. There is limited classroom support for these pupils, and they make satisfactory progress overall.

230. The attitudes of pupils to learning are always satisfactory and often good, across both key stages and in the sixth form. Pupils display positive attitudes to their work and are usually

fully involved in lessons, with good levels of concentration. Classroom behaviour is good overall, with only a few instances of time wasting. Pupils mostly remain on task, whether working on their own or in a group. Across both key stages, there is much good individual research into the history of the locality, based on the 1871 Census in Batley and on effective local fieldwork. Pupils take satisfactory care of books and resources. The presentation of class and homework is generally satisfactory. Pupils show genuine respect for the views of classmates in discussion, and there are good instances of peer support in lessons.

231. The overall quality of the teaching is good. Teaching is of good quality in over four-fifths of the lessons and is satisfactory in the remainder. At Key Stage 3, teaching is always satisfactory and is often good. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, it is good. Where teaching is good, lessons are based on secure subject knowledge, good planning and high expectations of pupils. Stimulating questions challenge understanding, with satisfactory pace and the use of a variety of teaching methods in lessons. Classroom relationships are good and are based on mutual respect. Control and the management of pupils is generally good, and is unobtrusive and non-confrontational. Books are regularly marked, with constructive comments added to help the progress of pupils. Links with National Curriculum level descriptors at Key Stage 3 and projected GCSE grades at Key Stage 4 are being developed. Homework is regularly set and marked. Attendance is always checked and few pupils are late for lessons.

232. There is effective monitoring of the curriculum in regular departmental meetings, and an effective system of assessment and recording of attainment is being developed. The management of the department is very good, with a clear vision of future development and appropriate concern for raising the attainment and progress of the pupils. Teaching mostly takes place in specialist rooms, where there is attractive display of pupils' work.

233. Good use is made of videotape excerpts. The supply of textbooks has been modernised and is adequate, with books allowed home in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There is a growing use of information and communications technology, when access to the computers is possible. There are appropriate extra-curricular activities available for the pupils, for example the visit to Conisbrough Castle in Key Stage 3, and to the theatre in Key Stage 4 for a historical trial of Hitler. In school, learning is supported in a history extra session at lunchtime and by visits from professional historians.

234. The department continues to build on the good practice commended in the last report. There has been a steady rise in standards since the 1996 inspection, with a thorough review of schemes of work. Tasks closely match attainment, and increased use has been made of library resources and of information and communication technology. The department is well led and it has many good practices. Its good results show the effectiveness of the teaching.

240. Religious education

235. The attainment of pupils in religious education at the end of Key Stage 3 matches expectations of the Kirklees Agreed Syllabus. They have good knowledge and understanding of special beliefs of Christianity, Islam and other major world faiths. They know, for instance, how different holy books are used as a source of guidance and comfort. Many have personal

experience of how their own faith is expressed in daily life, for example in prayer and fasting. Pupils are developing understanding of religious ideas such as faith and trust, as well as skill to evaluate questions of belief. Lower-attaining pupils have a more basic knowledge and less understanding of religious ideas. Most girls reach expectations in attitudes of respect for religious beliefs.

236.The pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 3. Many enter the school with awareness of religious practice, but broader knowledge and levels of understanding for most are below expectations. However, the pupils steadily extend their knowledge and their understanding of religious ideas. Most pupils, of all levels of attainment, progress well because teachers usually plan interesting activities, which challenge them to think for themselves. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson, where pupils enjoyed researching different birth rites and presented their findings to the rest of the class. Those with special educational need make satisfactory progress because teachers give them individual help and support with language, reading and writing needs. Progress was less good in some lessons where the activities enabled some pupils to copy from texts, without full understanding.

237.At Key Stage 4, a very small number of pupils take GCSE. Over the last three years, all have attained grades in the A*- G range. In 1999, all six pupils achieved A*- C. Most pupils' grades compare favourably with their results in other subjects. Standards reached by current Year 11 pupils, in lessons and coursework, indicate a pass rate in the range A*- G. Most have good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Islam. Higher-attaining pupils have good skills to evaluate different ideas. They can, for example, examine contrasting approaches to marriage, and apply teaching from the Bible and the Qur'an in consideration of the differences. Average and lower-attaining pupils have less skill to consider varying viewpoints.

238.Throughout Key Stage 4, in GCSE, pupils make good progress. This was evident in a lesson where Year 10 soon learned details of the special features in churches and mosques by looking at a rich range of artefacts.

239.Lower-attaining pupils, as well as those with special educational needs, make satisfactory, and often good, progress because teachers explain very clearly the material being studied and take care to ensure that all understand.

240.At Key Stage 4, a non-examination course is provided for all. Here, attainment is below the expectations of the Kirklees Agreed Syllabus. This is entirely because the time given is too little to enable full coverage of the syllabus. In lessons, most pupils make satisfactory or good progress in the limited number of topics studied. They develop understanding and insight, for instance into moral questions. However, throughout the key stage, progress is unsatisfactory in that pupils do not sufficiently deepen their knowledge and understanding of the wide range of religious and moral issues, as expected by the Agreed Syllabus.

241.In the sixth form, a very small number of take GCE Advanced Level. In 1999 all achieved pass grade in the C-D range. Scrutiny of course work and observation of lessons indicate that current Year 13 pupils are achieving course expectations. Progress in the sixth form is good. The pupils steadily deepen their knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and cultural traditions of Islam. In lessons and through extended coursework, there is further development in the understanding of complex philosophical arguments, such as those concerning the existence of God. Standards of pupils' attainment for GCSE and GCE Advanced level have been sustained since the last inspection. Numbers entered are too small for valid statistical comparison.

242. Response in class is mostly good, or very good. At all stages pupils have positive values and attitudes of respect for the beliefs of others. Relationships are very good; pupils work industriously in groups and are very supportive of each other's efforts. Behaviour overall is very good. Most come to lessons expecting to learn; they are interested and concentrate on their written work. However, on one occasion in Key Stage 4, where lesson planning did not take enough account of individual needs, a small minority of pupils lacked interest and were disruptive. In the GCSE and GCE Advanced Level courses, pupils make good progress through extended coursework and develop capacity for personal study through essays and independent research.

243. Teaching overall is good. At both Key Stages 3 and 4, half the teaching is good or very good. Almost all the remainder is satisfactory, with an instance, at Key Stage 4, where it is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Subject expertise is good overall. Both specialist and non-specialist teachers show clear commitment to, and interest in, the subject. Teachers introduce topics clearly and enable girls to grasp key ideas well. Teachers expect all of their pupils to think about meaning, and most lessons make intellectual demands on them. Progress is supported by a particularly good insistence on development of skills to investigate and assess. Lesson planning is mostly good. Teachers usually devise sequences of activities that enable girls to build effectively on prior learning. For example, a Year 7 group followed up learning about the Ten Commandments in a role-play activity where they illustrated negative and positive values, relevant to their own experience. However, at Key Stage 3 there is not always enough planning of different activities to support varying learning needs. Furthermore, in one lesson at Key Stage 4 where teaching was unsatisfactory, planning was insufficient to ensure that activities and learning resources matched the learning needs of all the girls and supported the achievement of the aims of the lesson. Methods are well varied and relationships are very good. Teachers usually succeed in creating an atmosphere of mutual trust. In the best lessons, this trust enables pupils to progress well by sharing their own ideas confidently. For example, Year 11 pupils gained in capacity to empathise, through a sensitively guided observation and discussion of a powerful video, about pain suffered by victims of bullying.

244. Resources for learning have improved and are used well. There is notably good planning for some tasks that involve the use of information technology at Key Stage 3. Teachers mark work regularly and offer guidance on improvement. Systems for assessment of work are good and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Homework is used well to extend learning in lessons.

245. The department, part of the humanities area, is very well led and makes high quality provision, successfully and sensitively teaching the subject to pupils from many faith backgrounds. The curriculum is planned effectively and contributes well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Statutory requirements are not fully met for making adequate provision at Key Stage 4. Good displays of pupils' work and other colourful material support learning. Good, informal support is given to the non-specialist teachers, although, so far, time for professional development to help with teaching in this subject has been limited.

246. At both key stages parents have exercised their right to withdraw their children from the statutory provision. The school makes appropriate alternative arrangements for these girls to have a supervised programme.

Modern foreign languages

247. Since the inspection of January 1996, standards in French and German at GCSE have been maintained whilst in Urdu they have improved, both in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The curriculum has been reorganised to focus pupils' efforts on a single foreign language, French, German, or at Key Stage 4 Urdu, the latter of which is no longer taught at Key Stage 3. Numbers taking European languages at GCE Advanced Level have declined sharply.

248. In 1998, GCSE A*-C results in French were below the national average for all schools and well below those for girls, but almost all pupils obtained at least a grade G. German GCSE results were above average, but they cannot be compared with later results because at that time only a small number of pupils took German. French results improved in 1999, as did those in Urdu where girls' performance had consistently improved over three years. The small number of candidates at GCE Advanced Level in both French and Urdu all obtained a grade in the A-B range, which has been true of Urdu in each of the three years 1997-9. There were no GCE Advanced Level candidates in German.

249. The 1999 end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments indicate average numbers attaining National Curriculum Level 5, but below average attainment at Level 4, the national expectation being that most will attain Level 4 by the end of Year 9. However, on inspection the great majority of pupils were seen to be reaching an average standard in relation to their prior attainment in French or German. Urdu is no longer taught in Key Stage 3. Good study skills are developed as pupils learn to record and learn vocabulary appropriate to their stage of development, and this is a key to improved attainment in listening, reading and writing. Speaking in the classroom situation sometimes appears weaker because of the natural reticence of some girls, though it is said that they perform well under examination conditions. Most low attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, reach appropriate levels of attainment, but there is a small minority whose attention-seeking behaviour and uncooperative attitudes adversely affect attainment and progress.

250. A significant number of pupils enter the school with a high level of language awareness because they speak more than one language already, which could have a bearing on attainment in other subjects. Overall, they make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 3, which includes awareness of the countries of the European Union and their languages. In the top sets progress is good. High attaining pupils in Year 8 were seen undertaking a listening exercise at Level 5, involving population statistics of the regions of Germany, whilst others in the same year group had produced very good colour printed display work in French. Year 9 pupils in German were gaining real insight into the opening up of the Berlin Wall exactly ten years previously. Besides contributing to their language skills, work with high numbers contributes to pupils' numeracy. Good progress is made, including by pupils who have special needs, when they have opportunity to speak in the foreign language with one of the two *assistantes*.

251. In Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils make good progress, not least because the expectation is GCSE for everyone and because most pupils are well motivated to achieve this, though a few do not co-operate well with their teachers. For many pupils, progress is focused on the examination. This includes those special needs pupils who continue to attend

regularly; one such group where all had special needs was making good progress in using information technology to produce a poster about jobs. Progress in Urdu lessons represents development from illiteracy in Punjabi to functional literacy in Urdu.

252. Progress is good overall in the sixth form, when account is taken of Urdu GCE Advanced Level in Years 12 and 13, French in Year 12, and the GNVQ French units. It is excellent where students succeed in GNVQ although they have little or no background in French, and very good where students have not taken French since the end of Key Stage 3.

253. Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour in their language lessons are good. In most cases they respond positively to teaching in the foreign language and, in spite of the reticence of some girls for public speaking, oral work of a good standard was seen in a Set 3 German class. Levels of concentration are good, and there is a high commitment to hard work. Relationships with each other and with staff are good and there is a significant respect for the culture of others.

254. The quality of teaching is good. Teaching is excellent in just under a tenth of lessons, very good in a similar proportion, good in just under a half, and satisfactory in two-fifths. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Where teaching is merely satisfactory this is usually because there is insufficient involvement in the foreign language with the pupils. This involvement is enhanced when the teacher or the *assistante* is a native speaker of the language being taught. In these cases, the teaching makes an especially strong impact on pupils' learning, especially regarding both their language skills and their knowledge of the culture of the countries concerned.

255. Organisation of pupils into sets contributes effectively to matching tasks to pupils' attainment, and methods used are suitable. However, on occasions, there is insufficient access to information technology. Time is fully used and concentration is normally sustained throughout the 60 minute lessons. Assessment is good and is linked to monitoring pupils' progress and setting targets. This enables teachers to move pupils between sets on the basis of clear evidence of their attainment and progress.

256. Apart from shortcomings in the provision of textbooks, homework is well used. Pupils record and learn vocabulary, and high quality worksheets support pupils' learning in both class and homework tasks.

257. The curriculum area is well managed, roles are clear, and expectations are appropriately high, for example in the policy of GCSE for all. Planning is good overall and sometimes very good, as for instance in the GNVQ work. A positive learning environment is provided which is enriched by good quality displays. The curriculum area provides good support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

263. **Design and technology**

258. When pupils enter the school, their attainment in design and technology is below, and in some cases well below, that expected for pupils of a similar age nationally. Pupils make good progress as they move through Key Stage 3. Levels of attainment in the end of Key Stage 3

National Curriculum assessments are in line with national averages, and nearly a quarter of the pupils reach higher levels. Pupils rapidly adapt to the range of materials offered within design and technology and strengthen their use of the design process across those materials. The issues from the previous report - concerning the overall standards, the match of the curriculum to the attainment levels of the pupils, and the challenge offered to the higher attaining pupils - have all been dealt with by the rigorous attention to detail in the planning, assessment and teaching across Key Stage 3. Pupils work through a full range of appropriate tasks and enrich their work through the demanding application of computers, and literacy and numeracy skills.

259. Pupils make good progress as they move through Key Stage 4. Attainment at end of Key Stage 4 in GCSE examinations is below national averages, but between 1998 and 1999 there has been a small increase in the overall design and technology results. Textiles have made the greatest improvement, along with an increase in attainment in graphics. However, less progress has been made in the results for food technology and resistant materials. As a result of the effective detailed analysis of attainment data, a range of strategies has been developed to improve the results for pupils in the current Year 11. These include improving presentation, using independent decision-making, meeting strict deadlines, and providing regular individual feedback through tutorials with each pupil. The department also offers validation through GNVQ in manufacturing. This has brought good success for pupils following the course. Pupil's work shows improvement through the concentration on orthographic and isometric drawing, but free hand sketching at the design stage lacks flair.

260. In the sixth form, GCE Advanced Level results have been disappointing and below course averages. The revised schemes of work across the department and new staff appointments are now in place to raise attainment generally at this Level. GNVQ courses in manufacturing are gaining good results, and pupils have achieved distinctions and merits in the intermediate examination. The style of learning and assessment suits the pupils, and they enjoy the investigative nature of the assignments and the independent learning opportunities. They also appreciate the emphasis that is placed on the inspired use of the computer in, for example, the manipulation of digitised images.

261. Attainment of pupils who have special educational needs is good in relation to their other lessons. Making consolidates their understanding and knowledge, and they produce quality products that enhance their pride and self-esteem. Pupils who have English as a second language are making good progress, which is improved by the opportunity to reflect their cultural background in their studies.

262. Progress at Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils can cut shapes and join a range of materials and ingredients and are able to evaluate and suggest improvements in their designing. This was evident in the work in textiles, where pupils enjoyed, and gained benefit from, having individual tutorials with their teacher to review their progress. There is also increasing accuracy and detail in working drawings. Pupils designing a container in resistant materials learnt to follow their working drawings and modify them where necessary. An end of module grade formally assesses progress through each unit of work, but pupils lack an opportunity to use National Curriculum levels to monitor their own success and allow the higher attainers to be challenged in moving forward independently.

263. At Key Stage 4, pupils opt for a specialist area of design and technology, and there has been a recent increase in the uptake of food technology. Progress is good across the elements of designing and making, because pupils have chosen the material they prefer. Their designs increase in sophistication with the use of production plans in food and textiles to encourage independent thinking and logical sequencing. In resistant materials pupils gain an understanding of manufacturing techniques as they design and model their product, initially using card. The digital camera is helping students to gather evidence of their modelling, and this enhances the final product. Safe, efficient use of equipment has a positive influence on students' progress. This aspect of their work is underpinned by practical class exercises on risk assessment, both in the classroom and in discovering how risk assessment may apply to an industrial context. Very good assessment strategies are making an impact on improvement of the design and make process. Deadlines are difficult for some pupils who find personal organisation a problem.

264. Progress in the sixth form is very good in GNVQ manufacturing and is sound in GCE Advanced Level design. Independent action planning makes a positive impact on pupils' responsibility for their learning. They hold mature discussions, and their significant research and the effective use of information communication technology strengthens their thinking and reasoning skills.

265. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good. Teamwork, research and personal presentation are good, and concentration is of a high order. Pupils' use of the computer room is very responsible; it encourages them to collaborate across age and attainment groups, and enables them to share and improve their personal capability and familiarity with both the hardware and software. The pupils show respect for each other and their environment, and work safely with a variety of tools and materials. Relationships are very good, both between pupils and between pupils and their teachers.

266. The quality of teaching is generally very good. Teaching is excellent in just under a fifth of lessons, very good in three-eighths, good in a similar amount and satisfactory in the remainder. The teachers have a wide range of skills and knowledge, and a love of their subject, and are well supported by effective specialist technicians. The teachers make expectations clear, and good demonstrations are used to clarify what skills pupils will develop. These have a significant impact on both attainment and progress. Teachers discuss criteria that pupils must match in terms of attainment, progress and behaviour. Lessons are well planned and take account of the range of subject knowledge and understanding to be developed and skills to be acquired, as well as the learning needs and cultural diversity of the pupils. In most lessons teachers use time targets to maintain the pace and challenge of the learning. A good range of methods is used to promote high standards and independent learning. Management of pupils is good and, in line with school policy, effectively uses a non-confrontational approach to occasional instances of poor behaviour. Assessment is a strong feature of design and technology, and the outcomes inform curriculum planning. For example, the style of individual action planning, so successful in the GNVQ courses, is being introduced in Year 9. The regular setting of homework extends knowledge and understanding, and pupil's response to the tasks is good.

267. The management of the department is very good. It is strong and seeks to involve all teachers and technicians. Line management is well informed and supports the continuing

improvement in attainment and further development of quality in the learning process. There is a range of policies in place, some of which do not give sufficiently clear guidance about aspects of the department's work. This curriculum area makes a considerable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, not only through the work done in food but across the range of projects and approaches which the pupils experience. The quality assurance programme enables all of the staff in technology to feel responsibility for its work.

273. Information technology

268.The National Curriculum Programmes of Study for information and communication technology are taught through dedicated lessons in Year 7 and cross-curricular provision in the remainder of Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4.

269.Attainment on entry to Year 7 in this cross-curricular skill is well below that expected for pupils of a similar age nationally. However, by the end of Year 7 attainment is in line with that expected nationally because of the impact of an intensive course to develop pupils' computer skills. By the end of the key stage, attainment is still in line with the national average as pupils move through the agreed cross-curricular provision made by each subject area. Progress is generally satisfactory, but it is better in some of the skill areas than in others. For example, communication and information handling are pupils' strongest skills, with some work in control and measuring. Work on the use of spreadsheets is further developed at Key Stage 4. However, all subjects make a positive and structured contribution to provision that covers the strands of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. During this term music has made less use of computer facilities than usual because of staff absence.

270.During Key Stage 4 the use computers is less consistent across the curriculum, and attainment remains at the average expected for pupils of a similar age. Pupils' progress is satisfactory and their skills are maintained by computer use, both in and out of lesson time. Pupils further develop their competence in word processing and the use of desktop publishing, and in recording and analysing data gathered in science experiments. They use computer-aided design software in design and technology, develop graphs by using the plotter in mathematics, and draw upon and interrogate a variety of information sources in other subjects. Their confidence in many of these areas is satisfactory, but the change in booking arrangements for computer rooms has caused some difficulties.

271.Attainment in Years 12 and 13 is in line with that expected for pupils of this age. However, the attainment of pupils undertaking GNVQ courses is better than the national picture and many pupils achieve distinctions and merits. In these courses pupils make purposeful use of computers to gather knowledge, and search and sort data, as well as using effective desktop publishing to present their work.

272.Pupils with special needs, including those with English as a second language, have equal access to computers. Their attainment is in line with the average and they make satisfactory progress. They produce good quality hard copy of their work with few mistakes, because they make good use of the tool bar and can check their spellings and punctuation, as well as

enhancing the presentation of their work. The result is confidence and competence in their use of the computer that raises their self-esteem. Their work is further improved by the use of a computer-generated independent learning system to develop basic skills in English and mathematics.

273. There has been a shortage of software programmes to provide appropriate community language support, but this has now been rectified for pupils using Urdu, Gujarati and Punjabi.

274. Computers are generally used with enthusiasm and confidence. At lunchtime the computer rooms and the library resources centre are very busy, with pupils finishing homework and course work or practising their skills. The curriculum area co-ordinator, the library resources centre manager, and the computer technician together monitor the use of computer areas and are on hand to support pupils. In Years 12 and 13 pupils negotiate additional use of the computers. All pupils respect the equipment, and they use it with great care. The relationships in lessons and in the lunchtime computer sessions are good. Pupils respect and help each other and respond positively to the support they are offered by their teachers and the technician.

275. The quality of teaching in discrete information and communication technology lessons is consistently good, despite the temporary shortcomings of the accommodation layout that limits the range of teaching styles. Expectations are high and planning takes account of the need for pupils in Year 7 to gain skills rapidly. Teaching across the curriculum varies. Some teachers have well developed skills, knowledge, and understanding and show confidence in exploring software and subject-specific applications with their pupils. Some have good ability to apply information technology as a problem-solving tool, while others are more limited and reticent in their use of the technology in class and so restrict the opportunities and progress of their pupils.

276. Assessment is regularly used to monitor attainment and progress in each of the strands of the Programmes of Study, and careful records are kept. The outcomes of assessment inform teaching in each of the subject areas, and specific tasks in Year 9, contribute to the overall end of Key Stage 3 assessment that is reported to parents.

277. Each department in the school has a link teacher representative on the 'information technology across the curriculum' group. This group oversees subject developments and raises concerns about the use of computers in the departments. Resources are generally used well. For example, the computer room in the design and technology area is constantly in use throughout the day. However, the booking system for the computer rooms has changed and teachers are no longer able to block book these valuable facilities.

278. Management of the area is good. The area now has the services of a technician, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The recently appointed co-ordinator has a good development plan which complements past good practice and future developments. There is a very tight timescale for its implementation. Since the previous inspection, judicious spending of the limited national and local funds available to the school has improved access. The school has also benefited from additional advisory support; the local officer for the Single Regeneration Budget has ensured that strengths of departments are recognised and supported during the interim changes in management.

284. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

284. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

279. A team of 14 inspectors, including a lay inspector, visited the school for a total of 58 days. During the inspection a total of 192 lessons were observed, as were many registration and tutorial periods and assemblies. A sample of the range of extra-curricular activities were also inspected. Full-time and part-time teachers were seen teaching, many of them several times.

280. Planned discussions were held with the headteacher, members of the senior management team, and many teaching and support staff. A large number of informal discussions took place with other members of staff. Meetings were held with the chair, vice-chair and other members of the school's governing body both before and during the inspection.

281. Inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils, including all the available written and practical work of a sample of over 70 pupils, chosen to represent the range of attainment in each of the subjects in Years 7 to 11 and the range of attainment within courses for pupils of sixth form age. Interviews were held with three pupils from each year group whose work had been inspected. In addition, informal discussions were held with many other pupils during extra-curricular activities, clubs, at break and lunchtime, and within lessons.

282. The detailed documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection and used to inform the inspection team about the school's aims, policies and procedures.

283. The registered inspector held a meeting, attended by five parents, prior to the inspection an analysis was made of this and of the 232 questionnaires completed by parents and carers of pupils registered at the school.

290. DATA AND INDICATORS

290. Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y7 – Y13	1245	29	222	471

290. Teachers and classes

290. Qualified teachers (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	79.45
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	15.67

290. Education support staff (Y7 – Y13)

Total number of education support staff:	18
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	492.0

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	74.5
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Average teaching group size:	KS3	26
	KS4	22

290. Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
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	£
Total Income	2881638.00
Total Expenditure	2870482.00
Expenditure per pupil	2314.90
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 36210.00
Balance carried forward to next year	- 25054.00

290. PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

1245

Number of questionnaires returned:

232

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	20	63	12	4	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	22	68	5	5	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	11	52	28	6	3
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	22	62	11	4	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30	61	5	3	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	29	60	6	4	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	22	59	16	2	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	25	59	8	6	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	16	59	16	7	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	13	54	21	9	3
My child(ren) like(s) school	26	59	8	3	4