

INSPECTION REPORT

LUTTERWORTH HIGH SCHOOL

Lutterworth, Leicestershire

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120244

Headteacher: Jenny Middleton

Reporting inspector: Christopher Green
2771

Dates of inspection: 06/03/00 – 09/03/00

Inspection number: 186692

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 14

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Woodway Road
Lutterworth
Leicestershire

Postcode: LE17 4QH

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. Sam Weller

Date of previous inspection: 15th January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| Christopher Green | Registered inspector | | <p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> |
| Michael O'Malley | Lay inspector | | <p>Attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p> |
| Malcolm Brice | Team inspector | <p>English and drama</p> <p>English as an additional language</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p> | |
| Ann Davies | Team inspector | Physical education | |
| Margaret Dickinson | Team inspector | Music | |
| Patricia Draycott | Team inspector | Religious education | |
| Elizabeth Hale | Team inspector | History | |
| Mike Lewis | Team inspector | Modern languages | |
| Graham Matthews | Team inspector | Special educational needs | |
| Ian Middleton | Team inspector | Art | |
| Jon Parker | Team inspector | <p>Information technology</p> <p>Design and technology</p> | |
| Alan Jarvis | Team inspector | Science | How well is the school led and managed? |
| John Stout | Team inspector | Geography | |
| David Thompson | Team inspector | Mathematics | How good are curricular and other opportunities? |

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Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lutterworth High School is a smaller than average, mixed comprehensive secondary school of 770 pupils (400 boys and 370 girls) aged 11 to 14, although it is large for a school with only one key stage. It serves Lutterworth and the surrounding rural area of South Leicestershire. In recent years the number of pupils attending has increased and the school will be over-subscribed for the 2000 intake. Standards on entry are above national expectations. There is a full and balanced range of ability, although the proportion of pupils that has a statement of special educational needs is above average. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, and only two pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, however, not all those eligible do claim this entitlement. There is an almost equal number of boys and girls in Year 9. In Years 7 and 8 there are thirty more boys than there are girls. The aims of the school emphasise 'living and learning together', promote challenge and are achieved in much of the everyday work of the school.

Lutterworth High School was last inspected in January 1996. Since then, the characteristics of the school have remained broadly the same. The inspection report and the action plan have been used by the school as the basis for many new developments and improvements. A new headteacher was appointed in 1998 and an existing parent governor became the chair of governors in 1999.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Pupils enter and leave the school well above average in English, mathematics and science and make sound progress overall. Through strong leadership and good teaching, pupils learn effectively and enjoy their work. National test results at the age of 14 in English and mathematics are above the national average and science are well above, although the results are not as good as those in similar schools. However, the standards of pupils' work observed in lessons are significantly better than indicated by these results. Trends over the last three years have improved in line with the national pattern. Progress in art, geography and history is very good. In all other subjects progress is steady. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly those with statements. The school has a positive ethos, clear direction and commitment to continuous improvement. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English, mathematics, science, art, geography and history are well above average.
- Pupils have very good attitudes towards their learning.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers know their pupils well and have high levels of knowledge and understanding of their subjects. The good teaching brings effective learning and causes high standards to be maintained.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- The quality and range of curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities are good.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff provide very good leadership.
- The governors' role in shaping the direction of the school is excellent.
- Pupils are cared for very well and parents are very supportive of the school.
- The school has very good systems for setting appropriate priorities.

What could be improved

- The rate of progress pupils make in relation to similar schools.
- Standards in design and technology, information technology, physical education, religious education and particularly music.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvements since the school was last inspected in January 1996 are very significant. In 1996 the following eight key issues for action were identified:

1. Increase the level of challenge for the more able.
2. Improve the quality of teaching in music and religious education.
3. Ensure that teaching is more closely focused on learning objectives, which maximise potential.
4. Identify and promote high quality teaching through regular observation of classroom practice.
5. Strengthen monitoring, review and evaluation procedures.
6. Ensure regular provision of high quality homework.
7. Meet statutory requirements for corporate worship.
8. Strengthen and celebrate spiritual and multicultural aspects of the curriculum.

On balance, good progress on these key issues has been made. Each issue has been addressed systematically through careful strategic and operational planning followed by precise action and evaluation. More needs to be done to ensure that the improvements in teaching have a consequent impact on pupils' standards of attainment in tests, and in music.

The headteacher, appointed in 1998, has focused on improving the quality of teaching. This has been very successful. There is now an increased level of challenge for more able pupils, even though in some subjects, for example mathematics, too few pupils achieve the highest levels. Teaching in music and religious education is now satisfactory and almost half of it is good. A strength of the teaching in most subjects is that it now focuses on what pupils should learn in order to achieve their best. In order to promote high quality teaching, regular observations of classroom practice have been used as a central feature of the school's monitoring, review and evaluation procedures. Teaching is now very much better in all its aspects and teachers set regular homework of appropriate quality. The improvement made in teaching pupils with special educational needs since the last inspection is very positive. The quality of support teaching and in-class support provided by learning support assistants is now never less than good and subject teachers know the needs of pupils very well. There is a positive school ethos for the inclusion of pupils with a wide range of special educational needs into normal lessons.

The school meets statutory requirements for collective worship. The spiritual and multicultural aspects are now good. The school's response and the commitment of staff and governors to continuous improvement are very good. The school is well placed to make further progress and improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | | Key |
|-------------------|---------------|------|------|------------------|--|
| | all schools | | | Similar schools* | |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 | |
| English | A | A | B | D | well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E |
| Mathematics | A | A | B | E | |
| Science | A | A | A | E | |
| All core subjects | A | A | A | E | |

* Similar schools are defined as those having fewer than 5% free school meals.

The pupils who took the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 were above average in the core subjects when they entered in Year 7 in 1996. In these subjects, these pupils maintained this above average

national standard in 1999. However, when compared with schools which have pupils from similar backgrounds, results in English were below average and in mathematics and science well below. Standards therefore are not high enough in test results, although in lessons the current Year 9 pupils are working at levels in English, mathematics and science, which are better than the 1999 results indicate. Good strategies are in place to improve results and appropriate targets have been set for the 2000, 2001 and 2002 test results. Good teaching is having an impact on the levels of attainment in Year 7, 8 and 9. However, the school still faces the challenge of ensuring that the rate of learning and progress of pupils is evident in improved attainment in the core subjects in the end of Key Stage 3 test results. In all years, achievement is strong in art, geography and history. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well against their prior levels of attainment. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations but could be improved in design and technology, information technology, physical education and religious education. Despite improvements, standards in music are still below expectations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Attitudes are very good. The pupils are keen to learn. They take an active part in lessons and a good range of extra-curricular activities. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Behaviour is good. Pupils respond well to their teachers, showing respect for each other and staff. They behave well at break and lunchtime. |
| Personal development and relationships | These are very good. As pupils progress through the school they develop a mature sense of responsibility both for their own learning and for their place in the school community. Pupils' relationships with one another and with their teachers are very good. |
| Attendance | Attendance is very good. It is well above average when compared with similar schools. Pupils arrive at school punctually and lessons start promptly. |

The attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships of pupils are strengths of the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They move about the school sensibly and arrive for lessons promptly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Teaching of pupils: | aged 11-14 years |
| Lessons seen overall | Good |

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

In 95 per cent of the lessons observed teaching was at least satisfactory. Good teaching was observed in all subjects and accounts for two thirds of lessons, of which half is very good. Teaching is particularly effective in a high proportion of lessons in art, geography and history. On rare occasions there are shortcomings in the teaching of mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and personal, social and health education. Skills of literacy and numeracy are taught effectively. Pupils of all levels of ability are taught well and those with special educational needs are taught very well. As a result of good teaching, pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve results well above the national average. Progress is maintained in lessons but not sufficiently accelerated over the whole key stage. The effectiveness of the teaching has not had enough impact upon the rate of pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science, when compared to similar schools.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comments |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Pupils benefit from a good quality and range of learning opportunities. The curriculum is broad but there is too little time allocated to design and technology, music and religious education and this is adversely affecting depth of coverage. There is very effective provision of personal, social, health and careers education and a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, particularly those with statements of special educational need. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | The pupils who have English as an additional language are provided for appropriately. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | The provision in personal, social and health education is very good and pupils develop well in these areas. Across the school, moral and social development are strengths. There are good opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the diversity of other cultures. Spiritual development is good. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The school cares for its pupils very well. Teachers know the pupils very well and the school works very effectively to meet their individual needs. Arrangements for promoting good attendance and behaviour are strengths. Procedures for child protection, health and safety are sound. |

Despite the shortage of time for three subjects, the quality and range of the curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils have very good access to the curriculum and very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Levels of care for pupils are also strengths.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team is very good. Very clear educational direction is provided and there is a determination to raise standards further and to improve the rate of progress. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The governors' role in strategic management is excellent. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school evaluates its performance well. The headteacher and senior team have an accurate view of where improvements are needed and priorities in the strategic plan are well set. |
| The strategic use of resources | Resources are used well and long-term planning is good. Best value principles are applied and financial and administrative systems are very effective. |

The strategic leadership and management of the school are strengths. The headteacher and senior staff play a full role in leading the school and informing the governing body, who, in turn, undertake their strategic responsibilities in excellent fashion. Best value principles are properly applied, with full understanding of the need to serve the pupils fairly.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way the school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. • The way the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. • The good progress pupils make. • That they find the school approachable. • Good teaching. • That pupils like school. • Good behaviour. • The leadership and management of the school. • The range of interesting activities outside lessons. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount and frequency of the homework, because there is sometimes too much or too little. • Reports about how pupils are getting on are not sufficiently informative. |

Inspectors broadly confirm the positive views of parents. Inspectors' judgements are that pupils make steady progress and very good progress in art, geography and history. However, inspectors found that a wide range of types of homework is used. Homework is set regularly and is usually of an appropriate quality. The school is diligent in working with pupils and parents to get the balance right. Reports to parents are of variable quality and could be improved. Therefore the inspection findings confirm the parents' view. Inspectors found parents to be extremely supportive of almost all aspects of the work of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Results in Key Stage 3 national tests at the end of Year 9 in 1999 are above the national average in English, mathematics and well above in science. However, in comparison with similar schools the results are below average in English and well below in mathematics and science.
2. In English the results have dropped since 1997, but there is evidence of higher standards in lessons. Girls do slightly better than boys and their attainment matches the higher levels seen nationally.
3. In mathematics results improved significantly from 1996 to 1998 but declined in 1999. Girls have performed consistently better than boys, although the most recent results show a dip in girls' attainment.
4. In science in 1999, the percentage of pupils attaining the national expectation was above average, and the proportion attaining high levels was well above average. However, they are well below those in schools with a similar intake of pupils. The girls have generally done better than the boys. There are clear signs of improvement and the indications in lessons are that overall standards are higher this year and the performance of boys more in line with that of girls.
5. Therefore, in the core subjects, boys do less well than the girls, but recent trends show that the gap is closing. The headteacher and senior management team have analysed all the available data and they are keen to improve the results of both boys and girls further. Action has been taken. The quality of teaching is now good. The impact of this, and the strategies to improve the test results, are anticipated by the senior management team to make a significant improvement in the future.

The school's progress towards its targets

6. The school is well set to meet its targets for Key Stage 3 results in English, mathematics and science for the year 2000. Progress in learning and standards of the current pupils from Year 7 to Year 9 reflect a much better picture than the 1996 report.

Achievement and progress of pupils in all subjects inspected

7. In English, pupils' attainment over the past few years has been above the national average, although when compared with the results obtained by similar schools they are a little below the average. The work observed during lessons give support to the view that standards will rise in 2000 and 2001 in Year 9 tests. Attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing are above average. Progress is satisfactory.
8. In mathematics, attainment is above the national average but there are too few pupils achieving the highest levels. Performance is well below that of similar schools, whereas in lessons observed, pupils work hard and make sound progress to achieve high standards. This occurs at all levels of attainment and across the different aspects of the subject.
9. In science, pupils achieve very high standards. The girls have generally done better than the boys. Standards of attainment are even across the aspects of the subject.

Progress in science lessons is satisfactory but, overall, progress does not match that in similar schools.

10. Pupils enter the school with literacy skills, which are above the expectations for their age. The teaching of literacy is a high priority and pupils make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 9, both girls and boys are able to use their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills effectively across the curriculum.
11. In numeracy, standards are generally above those seen in most schools. Pupils make effective use of calculations in a range of subjects including science, design and technology and geography. They are able to make quick and accurate calculations and produce graphs to show how the use of data relates to their studies.
12. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress across the curriculum and also in relation to the targets set in their individual education plans. The achievement of pupils with statements of special educational need is particularly good and the quality and quantity of their work are high, given their prior attainment. All pupils with special educational needs are making good progress with their basic skills. Learning support staff focus well on the need for pupils to be able to transfer and use these skills in subjects. Individual programmes are well planned and pupils can draw on a range of strategies, for example, to learn spellings or to read a word that they find difficult.
13. The pupils who have English as an additional language achieve well and make good progress.
14. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and their progress is good in many subjects. However their achievement levels and their rates of progress are not high enough in mathematics, information technology, music and religious education.
15. Standards in art are very high. The very good progress of boys and girls in this subject enables them to achieve standards well beyond the expectation of the National Curriculum at the end of Key Stage 3 in both two and three-dimensional work.
16. Pupils of all abilities have a broad range of knowledge, understanding and skills in design and technology and their attainment is in line with national expectations. Girls and boys of all abilities make good progress and they achieve sound standards.
17. In geography standards are well above average. Boys and girls of all abilities make very good progress in gaining geographical knowledge and skills and, by the time they leave the school, their understanding and attainment is much better than normally seen.
18. Similarly, standards in history are well above the national average. The pupils gain a high proportion of Level 5 and Level 6 attainment in comparison with national averages. They can recall knowledge, have a good understanding of their work and are developing historical skills well. Progress in history is very good.
19. Attainment in information technology is broadly as expected nationally for boys and girls of this age range. Progress is satisfactory for pupils of all abilities. Standards are satisfactory, although there is considerable room for improvement. Pupils use their information technology skills particularly effectively in design and technology and science. They demonstrate a good range of skills, including word-processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases and use of the Internet.
20. In modern foreign languages the attainment of boys and girls, as assessed by teachers at the end of Year 9, has been consistently above the national expectation and the national pattern of results. This is the case in French. In German, standards are in line.

Pupils make good progress.

21. In music by the end of Key Stage 3, standards are below the national expectation. In 1999, the teachers' end of key stage assessments show standards were close to the national average, but inspection findings show that current Year 9 pupils are not attaining as well as this. Progress in music is too slow.
22. In physical education by the age of 14, pupils' planning, performing and evaluation skills are in line with national expectations, with several pupils achieving high standards in swimming and very high standards in football. By the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments in 1999 showed three-quarters of pupils meeting the national expectation in physical education, which is precisely in line with national figures. Progress is satisfactory but some pupils' rate of progress is not as fast as it might be.
23. In religious education, pupils are achieving levels of attainment, which are broadly in line, and sometimes slightly above those expected in the local syllabus. Progress in religious education is satisfactory but not as fast as it might be for some pupils.
24. Pupils' attainment has improved since the last report. In all subjects, except music, attainment is at least average or above when compared with national expectations.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

25. The high standards in attitudes, values, and personal development noted at the last inspection have been maintained and improved.
26. Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good. They like school and are keen to take part in all it has to offer. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They are well motivated, willing to learn and apply themselves well to the task in hand. They enthusiastically take part in the good range of extra-curricular activities.
27. In classrooms pupils share their ideas, participate fully and are well supported by adults to do this. Pupils support each other well. This is evident when other pupils listen with patience to a pupil who is slower than themselves, when reading out loud or when answering a question. At no time do other pupils comment on the difficulties that pupils with special educational needs experience.
28. Pupils' behaviour is good and this has a significant positive impact on their learning. They are trustworthy and show good respect for each other's property. There were fourteen fixed period exclusions last year and no permanent exclusions, which is below average for a school of this size. With the exception of one pupil, all the exclusions were for short periods. All the exclusions were for good reason, and used as a last resort.
29. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities for taking initiative and responsibility, such as house captains, form representatives and members of the Student Council. They referee house matches and inter-form games. Pupils are trained to mediate as part of the Conflict Resolution in Schools Project and others help as guides on parent evenings. Older pupils supervise the lunchtime queues and others help in the library and computer rooms. Pupils are confident to take responsibility and initiative for their own learning through homework, research and investigation.
30. Pupils' relationships with each other, with their teachers and other adults in the school are very good. They work very effectively in pairs and small groups, such as when making novelty cakes in their food studies, preparing for performance in music, and collaborating with others on their work in mathematics. This has a very positive effect

on their learning.

31. When there are occasional disagreements, pupils are encouraged to reflect on what has happened and to consider the impact on others. They are asked to “explain why”. The pupils appreciate “being treated like adults”, and respond positively. There is little bullying, sexist, or racist behaviour, and the few incidents are addressed quickly and effectively.
32. Attendance is very good and it has improved further since the last inspection. Attendance last year was 94.6 per cent, which is well above the national average for 11 – 16 comprehensive schools. There is negligible unauthorised absence. The pupils are punctual and lessons start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

33. Teaching is a strength of the school and has improved greatly since the school was last inspected. During this inspection, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of all lessons observed. This compares with a figure of 75 per cent when the school was inspected in 1996. Over two-thirds of the teaching is now good, of which half is very good. This good teaching ensures that pupils make satisfactory progress and maintain well above-average attainment in art, geography and history.
34. Good teaching was observed in all subjects, with little variation between year groups, although the highest proportion of good teaching occurred in Year 7. The effectiveness of the teaching has not had enough impact upon the rate of pupils’ learning over the whole key stage. Progress is maintained, but not accelerated in most subjects, given the capability of the pupils. Teaching is particularly effective in a high proportion of lessons in art, geography and history. In lessons where teaching is good or very good, pupils learn quickly. They are challenged effectively and make good progress. The most successful teaching happens when teachers:
 - have good working relationships with pupils. This is the case in all subjects.
 - show a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and plan lessons, which focus on the learning objectives, covering the appropriate National Curriculum requirements. This is the case in most subjects.
 - challenge and expect the most of pupils, for example in art, history, geography, and modern foreign languages. The teachers’ enthusiasm for these subjects helps to set high expectations and enables pupils to deal with the complexities of different attainment targets and how they relate to each other.
 - use methods which enable pupils to learn effectively, for example, in most subjects the teachers use questioning effectively to establish whether the pupils understand the main objectives of the lesson. This occurred in the Year 9 English lesson on Antarctica, and the teaching in mathematics uses this technique extensively.
 - manage pupils well and ensure that high standards of behaviour and attention are maintained. Pupils are well managed in all subjects, for example, in music and religious education, where lessons are well organised and changes in pupils’ activities are managed effectively.
 - start lessons by making objectives clear to pupils and stating precisely what they all might, should or could learn, and end the lessons by checking whether the objectives have been achieved or not. This happens in many subjects, and was

very well demonstrated in a Year 7 science lesson on microbes.

- use a good range of teaching strategies, for example, as seen in physical education in a Year 7 swimming lesson.
 - provide good individual help to pupils, for example in design and technology, information technology and in all subjects where pupils have special educational needs or difficulty with reading, writing or numeracy.
35. The good and very good teaching ensures that pupils make rapid progress in their learning in some subjects and maintain high levels of attainment. They acquire new knowledge and skills in most lessons and teaching encourages a consistently high level of effort. Pupils learn new vocabulary appropriate to the technical requirements of the different subjects, for example in art and science.
36. The satisfactory teaching enables pupils to make steady progress. However, the rate of progress over time is not as high as that in similar schools, as this teaching has not made enough demand on pupils to build further on their prior learning. As a result of the well-planned teaching and the good relationships which teachers generate in their classrooms, pupils develop very good attitudes to their work. Pupils are confident in the classroom and around the school and teachers and learning support staff work as a team to meet the individual needs of all pupils. Good use is made of praise to encourage and motivate pupils with special educational needs, but, when praise is used to recognise achievement, the use of the word 'because' is not often used clearly to explain to the pupil why the teacher values so much what they have done. Homework set in classes is at an appropriate level and reinforces and extends pupils' learning.
37. There were shortcomings in a very few lessons in mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and personal, social and health education lessons. These weaknesses are usually caused by inadequate pupil management and result in slow progress being made. On rare occasions, teachers did not gain the attention of all the pupils in the class and did not manage bad behaviour sufficiently well.
38. The on-going assessment of pupils' work is done well in some subjects, such as geography, where there is a very well developed system of assessment. The teachers keep very detailed and helpful records of the progress of the pupils in their classes. These are used to help plan lessons and to help pupils set learning targets. Systems for on-going assessment are good in English, science, art, geography and history and are unsatisfactory in information technology and religious education.
39. Class teachers know the needs of pupils with special educational needs very well. The teaching of withdrawal groups is very good. In-class teaching and support from learning assistants is highly effective in helping pupils to think and learn for themselves. Most class teachers brief support staff very well about their lessons and ensure that pupil tasks are set at appropriate levels for their different abilities. The school has recognised the need to continue to work with subject departments on carefully matching work to meet the needs of the lowest attaining pupils, where this is unsatisfactory. Teachers are welcoming to pupils and this contributes to the inclusive nature of the school. Subject departments have embraced the responsibility of ensuring that individual education plans have subject targets and that these are regularly monitored in consultation with the learning support department. However, these targets are not always sufficiently specific and measurable.
40. Teachers are very aware of the needs of more able and gifted and talented pupils. The levels of demand in the teaching of English, geography, history and modern foreign languages are particularly appropriate to extend pupils' learning to the highest levels of

achievement. The challenge still faced by the school is to ensure increases in the rate of progress in all subjects, so that high levels of attainment are secured in the end of key stage national tests and assessments.

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

41. The quality of the curriculum and the range of learning opportunities are very good.
42. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. A broad curriculum is provided, covering National Curriculum subjects and extended to include drama in Years 8 and 9. All pupils study French for three years and German is also available in Year 9. "Curriculum Extension Time" offers a very wide range of sixty-eight activities covering: hobbies, such as astronomy and chess; skills, such as calligraphy and first aid; subject extensions, such as science club and "understanding modern art"; and sport, such as volleyball and girls' rugby. This is valued very highly by pupils and is a successful, innovative approach to broadening the curriculum for pupils who have to leave school at the end of the taught day in order to catch buses. However, within this broad curriculum, three subjects have a lower than recommended allocation of time and this is adversely affecting standards. In design and technology, pupils have insufficient time to develop their projects and demonstrate higher level skills. In music, there is too little time to cover the whole programme of study effectively, in particular, to develop practical skills. In religious education, although the local syllabus is being taught, there is too little time to do this in depth. There is good strategic planning to teach information and communication technology as a separate subject to all year groups, supplemented by additional provision through other subjects. This is mostly successful, but is not ensuring full coverage of all skills, as in science, where experience of data logging is patchy. There is good emphasis on using investigational and experimental approaches in several subjects, such as mathematics and science, with a beneficial effect on pupils' understanding.
43. All pupils have good access to the curriculum from the pattern of lessons and extra-curricular activities. The school offers very good provision for pupils with special educational needs; all pupils receive full access to the curriculum; no pupils are disapplied from any aspects. There are very good arrangements for withdrawing pupils from lessons, which allows them to follow the same activities as others, but with additional support. There is a very effective literacy programme, which improves reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, enabling pupils to make good progress in a wide range of subjects.
44. Strategies for teaching literacy are good. There is widespread use of key words in posters around the school and many teachers make repeated reference to technical vocabulary, thereby enabling pupils to become articulate very quickly. Strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory. Mental warm-up activities are often used to improve skills during mathematics lessons and there are good opportunities to display and analyse data in a few subjects, such as geography. However, there is insufficient co-ordination of numeracy across the curriculum, resulting in fewer examples of the use and application of number than is normally seen.
45. Homework is used effectively to extend the curriculum and provide pupils with good learning opportunities.
46. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided. A strength is the planning of a very wide range of educational visits and events during activities week. This covers a three-year programme, presenting the maximum possible opportunity for pupils. The

diverse range includes visits to theatres, museums, wildlife parks, potteries and television studios, in addition to trips to Oxford, London, Boulogne and a ski trip. There is very good access to computers in three different locations at lunch-time and the provision of a homework club is highly regarded by pupils. There are fewer music-based activities than normally seen and there are few subject-based support clubs for pupils with difficulties.

47. Provision for personal, social and health education is very effective. The school has made very good progress in recently introducing a new programme of lessons and very quickly establishing high quality coverage of topics such as citizenship, health education and drugs education. The sex education policy has been produced as a result of wide consultation and presents a balanced curriculum of human reproduction and contraception together with other important issues such as responsibility, puberty and sexually transmitted diseases. Teachers are supported well with effective materials.
48. Careers and vocational education is of a very high standard. There is a very effective partnership with the local careers service and clear identification of their complementary contributions. All pupils are formally introduced to the careers information database and have very good access to the careers section of the library. There is a careers convention every year for Year 9 pupils with thirty five representatives from local employers and high levels of pupil attendance. The personal, social and health education programme includes appropriate sessions on the importance of skills, interests, decision-making and option choices. There are plans to involve local Education and Business Partnerships but this has not yet happened.
49. There are very good community links, including the police, magistrates, the church, disability groups and drug awareness groups. Money is raised for a variety of charities, and pupils help out at a home for the elderly.
50. Relationships with partner institutions are positive. The school arranges regular meetings with local primary schools to plan and evaluate arrangements for ensuring the smooth transfer of pupils. Teachers meet pupils from primary schools, for example, in organising basketball activities for them. There is a bridging project, which is started in the summer term of Year 6 and completed after transfer to the high school. Links with the upper school are effective. There is good use of information on option choices and effective bridging projects in some subjects such as science. Curriculum liaison is good with the upper school across subjects.
51. The arrangements for assembly have been reviewed since the last inspection. Assemblies are planned well and carried out effectively. They make a good contribution to all aspects of personal development. For example, the whole school assembly during the week of the inspection was based on the theme "Recreation and Leisure". It included messages such as "getting the right balance between work and play", and "be prepared to take a little risk and find out what the world has to offer". There was an opportunity for reflection on "Creation" as written in the book of Genesis, recognition of the notion of a supreme being and reference to the Jewish faith. It was a model of how to deal with the complexity of collective worship in schools. The combination of assemblies and moments of reflection in tutor groups meets statutory requirements for collective worship.
52. Provision for spiritual development is good. Pupils have opportunities to consider life's fundamental questions and reflect on their own beliefs and values. The teaching in some subjects makes a good contribution to spiritual development. For example in history, pupils study the impact of religious conviction, the power of the church, and the part it has played in peoples' lives. Religious education includes topics on belief, worship, and celebration of festivals. The pupils are given the opportunity to share their

personal beliefs, and discuss issues such as “life after death”. In English, pupils consider the magnificence and wonder of Antarctica.

53. Provision for moral development is very good. The school promotes moral values through its aims and behaviour management policy. The school code of conduct, entitled “Living and Learning Together”, sets high expectations and the great majority of pupils respond well. Adults set a good example and regularly remind the pupils of their obligation to support each other. Regular charitable activities, such as harvest baskets and Christmas boxes, remind pupils how they can help other people. The personal, social and health education programme helps the pupils to consider moral standards in sex and drugs, the abuse of alcohol, and the way they treat others. The majority of subjects make some contribution to moral development. For example, history includes discussion on ethical issues such as the quality of life for different groups at different times, racism, and the black people of America. In physical education, pupils learn the importance of fair play.
54. Provision for social development is very good. The house system is well established and valued by pupils. It gives them the opportunity to collaborate, compete, and live out the school motto “Providing Universal Challenge, encouraging Individual Excellence”. The school is keen to recognise achievement and build confidence, and does so through merits, commendations, and certificates. Curriculum extension time is taught in mixed age groups and activity week gives the pupils an opportunity to work with different people. The ethos of the school promotes, and then builds on, good relationships. Older pupils appreciate and respond well to being treated like adults. In this way the school can educate the pupils on serious issues and also appreciate the fun of living as a community. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, as house captains, form representatives and members of the Student Council. Pupils are trained to mediate as part of the Conflict Resolution in Schools Project, and others help as guides on parent evenings. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and initiative through homework, research and investigation.
55. Provision for cultural development is good. Activity week includes school-based activities like art and craft, and residential visits to the Lake District, France and Holland promote cultural awareness. Assemblies make a good contribution to cultural development. They include themes like “Cultural Harmony – Harmony exists in difference no less than in likeness”. The majority of subjects make good contributions to cultural development. Since the last inspection a wider range of cultural traditions has been introduced.
56. Curriculum arrangements are improved since the last inspection and contribute to improvement in standards. No pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum and all pupils with special educational needs have access to the whole school curriculum and school activities. The learning support department is working closely with subject departments to ensure that the learning needs of pupils are fully met in all subject areas.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. Since the last inspection the school has maintained and improved provision for the care of its pupils.
58. The school cares very well for its pupils. Heads of year and form tutors usually stay with their class group throughout all three years at the school and their contribution is very significant. This means that pupils are well known and their individual needs are met. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. The pupils spoken to during the inspection saw these relationships as a strength of the school. They state

“there is always someone to turn to, and the teachers always have time for us”. The arrangements for child protection and health and safety are satisfactory. However, although the school systematically carries out risk assessment, there is no procedure for auditing all other aspects of the health and safety policy.

59. The school is very effective at monitoring and promoting good attendance. Teachers follow-up all unexplained absence. Holidays during term time are discouraged. There is a good partnership with the Education Welfare Service, which gives extra support to those pupils with significant attendance problems.
60. Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour are very good. The code of conduct “Living and Learning Together” and the school rules “Make the Most of It” are well known and followed by the majority of pupils. Pupils value the system of rewards, and sanctions are appropriate. There are good arrangements for reporting standards of behaviour and special behaviour programmes, which give effective support to pupils who need extra attention or guidance.
61. The school is very effective at eliminating oppressive behaviour. The personal, social and health education programme makes it clear to pupils that any form of oppressive behaviour is unacceptable. Pupils and their parents are encouraged to report incidents of bullying. The little bullying, racist or sexist behaviour, which occurs, is quickly and effectively addressed.
62. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. There is a sound assessment policy, which makes the link between assessment, recording and reporting very clear. Appropriate training has helped to reinforce the policy, and monitoring is beginning to identify good practice, in order to make it more widespread. However, the policy is mostly written as an account of what is happening in some subjects rather than emphasising the need for a consistent approach across the school. This results in too much variation in the approaches of teachers. There are effective procedures to improve assessment accuracy in some subjects, such as art and English, where collections of pupils’ work are used well to compare teachers’ judgements of attainment and improve consistency. There is some good practice in a few subjects, such as art and history, where pupils are provided with clear criteria for measuring achievement. This enables them to assess themselves and compare this with teachers’ assessments. There is good verbal feedback to pupils on their strengths and weaknesses in English, but insufficiently clear targets are set to promote progress. In some subjects, such as design and technology, French and religious education, there is too little use of assessment to inform pupils of their gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. An appropriate system of identifying attainment in different aspects of information technology has been introduced but assessment is insufficiently accurate and inconsistent. The use of assessment to inform pupils of strengths and weaknesses, and how to improve, is insufficiently widespread.
63. Pupils with special educational needs are greatly encouraged by the way they are assessed and praised for their achievement. Individual education plans and their interpretation are variable in quality. In some subjects, such as history and geography, clear targets are set, enabling pupils to improve, but in many others targets are too vague.
64. There is sound use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning. Meetings of teachers are held in most subjects, where outcomes from assessment of pupils’ work are carefully analysed. Common weaknesses in pupils’ understanding are identified and then addressed by making changes to curriculum plans and teaching approaches. There is sophisticated analysis of assessment data by the senior management team to measure the progress made by groups of pupils and compare this with the national picture. However, this analysis is not yet widely understood by subject leaders, who are

making insufficient use of data to raise standards.

65. There is a very effective system of monitoring pupils' effort, attitudes and behaviour across all subjects, based on appropriate, clear criteria, which is consistently applied. The system is used very well to identify pupils who are making too little effort and then to determine a wide range of strategies for supporting improvement. Effective use is made of a computer software package to record nationally standardised assessment data, such as end of key stage tests, and this is beginning to be used to record the school's own assessment information. However, this has not yet been developed to monitor pupils' academic achievement effectively and there is no rigorous system to regularly compare current and predicted performance for individual pupils. There is good use of nationally standardised assessment information to identify pupils with weaknesses in literacy and provide them with support, but there is no similar scheme for numeracy. Overall, procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are adequate, but they are not as rigorous as they might be.
66. The arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. The procedures for student review are very effective at picking up strengths and weaknesses in application, concentration, attendance and behaviour. This process is reinforced through the reward system and followed up through targeted support for individual pupils. The personal, social and health education programme enhances pupils' confidence and provides valuable insights into their personal development. Whenever necessary, there are special behaviour programmes and mentoring for individual pupils. Pupils are very well known as individuals and the teachers actively seek opportunities to help them build confidence and take responsibility.
67. Good links exist with partner schools and the needs of, and provision for, pupils with special educational needs is clearly identified before they attend Lutterworth High School. Annual reviews of statements of special educational need are well organised and the special educational needs co-ordinator carefully scrutinises statements and annual review reports to ensure that they are accurate. Pupils know their targets, record them in their personal homework organiser and assess their own progress. The achievements of pupils are reviewed every term. Learning support assistants support pupils' life-skills in a practical way, for example, at lunchtime they help pupils to calculate and to use their money wisely when buying food. Different learning support assistants may work with a particular pupil during any one day, but there is no formal documented system, through which they exchange information between one another.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

68. Parents are very satisfied with the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves. The school's links with parents are effective and the involvement with them has a very good impact on the work of the school.
69. The quality of information provided for parents is good. There are regular, informative newsletters. Both the prospectus and governors' report to parents are well written. Together they give parents a good summary of the school's provision, expectations and achievements. Overall, the arrangements for keeping parents informed on progress are good. Parents receive reports following reviews twice a year. There is formal consultation with the teachers following reports, and the school encourages parents to raise concerns at any time. However, the view of some parents is that reports are not sufficiently informative. The inspection findings confirm this. Reports do not state clearly the progress made by pupils or give sufficient detail on what they have achieved or need to do to improve.
70. The links with parents contribute very effectively to pupils' learning. The school keeps

parents well informed about what is being taught and consults with them regularly. Course outlines are published in the newsletter. Curriculum evenings are organised through the Parents and Friends Association. There have been presentations in science and French and focus groups to discuss the home school agreement and the programme for personal, social and health education. There is particularly good guidance in the prospectus on homework and how parents can help with their children's education. The school continually seeks parents' views through surveys and newsletters. For example, parents' views have been sought on the school aims, code of conduct, curriculum extension time, and food at break time. The personal homework organiser is a good communication link between home and school. In addition to being a notebook for homework, it includes comments from teachers and an on-going record of merits. Parents are asked to read, comment, and sign the organiser, and this is systematically monitored. Whenever pupils need extra support and guidance, the communication system fully involves parents. Parents get involved with the school's work by contributing to the careers evening, taking part in curriculum extension time and activity week, and helping on trips and visits.

71. There is a high level of attendance by parents of pupils with special educational needs at annual review meetings and the school makes every effort to identify times which are convenient to parents. Learning support staff attend all parents' consultation meetings. The 'mini-individual education plan', which pupils have in their personal homework organisers, ensures that parents can monitor the targets set for pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

72. This is a very well led and managed school. Since the appointment of the headteacher, approximately two years ago, many positive changes have been introduced, which have led to improvements in school management, the teaching and learning environment and the school's ethos for learning. There are clear signs that the changes are also starting to improve further the generally high standards found in the core subjects and elsewhere.
73. The headteacher has brought a positive approach, which permeates the whole life of the school. Her lively, thoughtful and bright personality has brought the best out of many staff. She is seen by the pupils and parents as motivating and bringing much needed improvements to the school. She has re-invigorated the school by establishing a much improved management structure, bringing the school aims up to date, giving a key focus to improving the quality of teaching and learning and putting improved standards at the heart of developments. Important weaknesses have not been brushed aside and staffing issues, which have been holding the school back, are being dealt with carefully and sensitively.
74. The school aims are reflected extremely strongly in the everyday work of the school. The old and outdated aims have been updated through a process involving wide consultation. They now focus on "Living and Learning Together." They encourage pupils to make the most of the opportunities available to them, to aim for their personal best, to be positive and to treat themselves and others with respect. The aims are actively promoted and can be seen in lessons where teachers give good challenge to pupils. This is also evident in assemblies, for example during the inspection the headteacher talked about the importance of being a balanced person. A further example is evident in the extent to which pupils with special educational needs are cared for in the school, with their teachers and support staff sitting with them at lunchtime and keeping a watchful eye on their needs.
75. There is a very good and improving contribution made by staff with management responsibilities. The strength lies in an extremely effective senior management team.

The school now works with one deputy headteacher less than at the time of the last inspection and two senior teachers, with much-improved effectiveness. They have very clear lines of responsibilities and are given the freedom to lead their work, while being clearly accountable for what they do. A good example of how they help move the school forward is by forming short term working groups. One was recently set up to respond to parents' wishes for pupils' reports to include better information about the rate of progress their children make. The senior management team are also bringing about improvement through their termly meetings with subject managers and the school development group, which involves all subject managers and heads of year. A lot of work is, and has been, directed to develop the role of middle managers. Currently their management is good. Better job descriptions have been formulated but these do not yet set out yearly targets for departmental managers. Extra non-contact time has been given to focus on departmental work. However, this is not yet sufficiently orientated towards monitoring the quality of subject teaching, identifying the achievements and targets for subject teachers and placing a sharp focus on rectifying weaknesses in pupils' standards of attainment in subjects. The present management structure in art is not used effectively to address considerations of best provision. The management of information technology has not yet ensured the effective co-ordination of the curriculum across subjects nor established accurate assessment of information technology capability.

76. The school has an excellent governing body, which is chaired very effectively and backed by knowledgeable members and an efficient committee structure. Since the last inspection, the work of the governing body has improved considerably and it plays a very important part in shaping the future direction of the school. For instance, governors played a key role in appointing a headteacher, who would give the school a new direction. They are very involved in overseeing the strategic plan and its implementation. There is a much stronger parental influence on the governing body than normal and elections for parental representatives are strongly contested. A very clear framework has been established, through which the governing body can hold the school accountable for standards and play a full part in setting priorities for development and improvement. A recent example of their continuing development and involvement is evident through an improved pattern of governor visits, which target key areas or initiatives. However, more ways should be found for the governors to improve their skills through appropriate training. The governors have ensured that they meet their responsibilities very well, apart from putting in place a system currently for the formal appraisal of staff.
77. The governors have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. For example, governor visits have been arranged to look at the quality of collective worship and the arrangements for personal, social and health education. A clear brief for each visit has been established, appropriate direct observation of work is recorded and very useful monitoring reports written. The results of these visits have been fed back into the strategic plan and discussed with appropriate members of staff. Links with most subject areas are developing well and help governors to stay in touch with the everyday work of the school. Governors play a very important part in the annual review of developments at the school and in the development planning process. The designated governor for special needs is very supportive of the learning support department and knowledgeable about its work.
78. More emphasis is now given to the monitoring of the quality of teaching. All staff have now been observed teaching by the headteacher or deputy headteacher and the findings have been discussed with each member of staff. This has been used to help draw up clear statements of what constitutes high quality teaching. The management is well informed about where the strengths in teaching lie and where action needs to be taken to tackle weak teaching. Monitoring the quality of teaching has led directly, for example, to matching pupils' needs better in geography and to buying more equipment

for music to allow better access to instruments. However, the system needs further development and the school has planned for this. Subject managers monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching but the result of the monitoring needs to be much clearer, with clear performance targets being set. The monitoring of pupils' efforts and attitudes is much stronger than the monitoring of their academic progress. This leads to pupils making less progress in their academic work than they might do otherwise.

79. Some informal arrangements are in place for appraisal and there are clear plans for these to be enhanced in the near future, in line with national initiatives. Although there is currently no formal system for appraising the headteacher, appropriate targets have been set, which are linked to the strategic plan. The system for monitoring the quality of teaching is contributing to an understanding of each teacher's work but neither individual teachers nor subject managers are yet set clear targets for improvement. However, most staff are working well towards the common goals that have been set and the small number of concerns about teaching have been tackled directly and in a sensitive manner.
80. The school has prioritised its developments very carefully. There is an exceptionally wide range of monitoring taking place where findings are fed back into the strategic plan, improving the quality of teaching and financial planning. These have included governor visits, monitoring reports from the LEA link adviser, subject reviews, close monitoring of attendance and exclusions, close analysis of how the school compares against similar schools. It has used the last inspection report as a benchmark to judge progress. Increasing use is made of data, showing pupils' standards of attainment on entry, in order to gauge the rate of their progress through the school. The school takes far more note than normal of the concerns and wishes of its parents in constructing its plans and this is an extremely helpful feature. The school now has good information on its strengths and weaknesses, the nature of its pupils, the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and how well it is doing compared to other schools.
81. Good action has been taken to address the school's priorities for development. A strength has been the recent linking of subject department goals to the school's strategic plan. However, an area of weakness is the focusing of developments on how best to raise standards of pupils' work and ensure a higher rate of progress of pupils through the key stage. At departmental level, too few departments have really incisive ways of raising pupils' standards of attainment and better success criteria need to be thought through and included in their plans. In addition, teachers' strategies for raising pupils' standards are not precise enough.
82. There is a shared will of management to succeed and improve further, with a developing sense of strong teamwork, and high commitment from parents, governors and most members of staff. The school is pressing forward enthusiastically to achieve Investor in People status by September 2000. This will ensure that funding for training is sensibly allocated and this is a further example of the commitment of the school to lifelong learning for staff as well as pupils. The great majority of staff is keen to develop a professional development profile, which will help them focus the school's tight resources on particular needs and further develop them as professionals. However, strong commitment to this very worthwhile initiative is not yet forthcoming from a small minority of staff.
83. The overall quality of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is good and makes a positive contribution to pupils' high attainment and sound progress. Together, they provide another significant strength of the school. The school is appropriately staffed with teachers who are well versed in teaching at Key Stage 3. A particularly strong aspect is the quality of staff who support pupils with special educational needs. A newly qualified teacher has been exceptionally well supported in developing the broad aspects of his job as well as subject specific needs. The school has high quality

administrative staff, who contribute significantly to the quality of education provided. The previous lack of support staff allocated to information technology and design and technology has been rectified.

84. Professional development of staff is well managed by a member of the senior management team, who oversees a programme of whole-school developments in addition to subject and personal training requirements. The school receives a direct grant for training and, in addition, has successfully bid for funding to allow all staff to become proficient in information technology. Although the school believes very strongly in developing staff, the amount of money spent is just below the national average. There is a generally good take-up of training opportunities by subject staff but, in a minority of cases, the importance of this is not fully appreciated. A good analysis of how money is spent has been undertaken and there are very good plans to re-allocate resources and time to ensure better value for money. Professional development has a positive effect on the quality of teaching and the pupils' standards.
85. The school's accommodation is good. It is looked after very well and noticeable improvements are evident. Much has been done to improve the quality of the learning environment through carpeting, redecoration and the provision of good displays around the school and in many classrooms. There is an excellent, spacious and calm library, where it is easy to work. Computer management of the stock and good logging of usage have enhanced efficiency. Nearly all departments take advantage of this facility, with particularly good use being made by science, art and history, but less so for religious education and music. There is no evidence of graffiti or litter. The narrow corridors barely accommodate the movement of large numbers of pupils at the start and ends of lessons. However, staff keep a close eye on movement and some classes are dismissed when the next class arrives to alleviate congestion. Health and safety issues are dealt with well and security has been improved considerably. Lunchtime arrangements are satisfactory, even though they are rushed because of the tight schedule for large numbers of pupils eating school lunch. The school hall is used once a week for a whole school assembly and just about holds everyone. Access around the school for the disabled is generally good. The science laboratories are increasingly not meeting the needs of the curriculum and lack sufficient services to enable the large groups to work comfortably in some circumstances. As a result, the teachers have to adopt alternative methods of working to ensure safety, and this constrains learning. The school has plans to upgrade all four laboratories when funding allows.
86. There are generally adequate resources to allow subject departments to operate effectively. However, compared to similar schools, the amount spent in recent years on materials and equipment has been lower than the needs of the curriculum as a result of constraints on the budget. The school is addressing needs as they arise through its monitoring programme and a development fund is available so that justified bids can be dealt with. Examples of current shortcomings include: mathematics, where Excel and Logo are used well, but the lack of subject specific software is impeding pupils' learning; science, where a lack of modern computers and data-logging equipment needs to be rectified; and geography where sharing of text books limits the setting of homework.
87. Currently, the school's finances are tight and caused by two factors. Firstly, the school is operating with a deficit budget, which was caused by an administrative error in 1995. There is an agreed time-scale for the payback of this money. Secondly, a number of long-term staff absences have drained money from the budget as a large amount of money has had to be spent on supply cover, which has not been fully recoverable from insurance. This situation has been managed well by the headteacher and governors and appropriate action taken to resolve matters in the best interests of the staff and school. However, the two factors have had an adverse impact on the school's capacity to move forward and have constrained its ability to direct finance to raise pupils' standards of attainment. The corner has now been turned and it can look forward to a

more stable period of financial management.

88. The governors' oversight and involvement with financial matters is excellent, and since the last inspection a detailed monthly analysis of income and expenditure has greatly helped their work. The governors' tracking of developments through the link with subject areas is improving. Financial control is very good. The small number of issues in the latest auditors' report has been successfully addressed. The school's administrative team handles the day-to-day management of finances very well. This aspect is another strength of the school.
89. The school has a good approach to ensuring best value for money. It has become much better in comparing its performance and expenditure against similar schools and all schools nationally than at the time of the previous inspection. As a result, it is keen to further improve pupils' standards, so that they compare more favourably with similar schools nationally. The school consults widely about the changes it wishes to make. Consequently, the improvements made to the quality of teaching and learning, the school's management structure and reporting structures are well aligned to its needs. The governors' financial sub-committee and the senior management team consider large and small spending very carefully. A recent example of this good practice has been the cost-effective purchase of computer equipment as part of the National Grid for Learning initiative. Best value is also evident through the proper use of earmarked funds, the use of buyback funds to purchase services from the local education authority and the assessment of how finances for developments will have greatest impact on standards.
90. The special educational needs provision is very well managed and provision is very effectively organised. All learning support staff feel valued and this results in staff being highly motivated to do their very best. The senior management link to the department is very supportive and also very knowledgeable about the needs of the pupils. Although the work of teaching staff is appraised and monitored, learning support assistants do not benefit from any systematic appraisal, which acknowledges the quality of their work and identifies their specific professional development needs. Improvement planning by the learning support department is good and most heads of subject departments have included a specific reference to special educational needs in their departmental plans. There is a good range of resources to support pupils' learning, but the learning support department lacks appropriate software and 'talking computer' technology to support the teaching of basic skills.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to improve further the quality of education and raise standards, the headteacher, governors, senior team and staff should pursue the priorities in their school development plan and do the following.
- (1) Increase the rate of progress pupils make still further in English, mathematics and science from Year 7 to Year 9 by:
 - building more effectively on the high levels of attainment with which pupils enter the school and in mathematics for the more able pupils, (refer to paras 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 14, 35, 93, 101, 108, 115, 120, 124).
 - ensuring that assessment data is used more effectively to set targets for pupils and to monitor their achievement, (refer to paras 39, 62, 94, 97, 101, 111, 115, 122).
 - (2) Raise standards in music by:
 - increasing the amount of teaching time allocated in each year group, (refer to paras 42, 175, 177, 179);

- ensuring that all pupils build systematically on their previous learning across all aspects of the subject, (refer to paras 175, 177, 179);
 - completing the writing of a comprehensive scheme of work, (refer to paras 178, 179);
 - increasing the proportion of good teaching, (refer to paras 177, 179);
- (3) Raise standards further in design and technology, information technology, physical education and religious education by:
- increasing the amount of teaching time allocated to design and technology and religious education, (refer to paras 42, 141, 146, 191, 192);
 - increasing the proportion of good teaching in information technology, physical education and religious education, (refer to paras 38, 163, 166, 184, 187, 190, 192).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

125

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

28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 6% | 26% | 38% | 26% | 5% | 0% | 0% |

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

| | Y7 – Y9 | |
|---|---------|--|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 770 | |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 30 | |

Special educational needs

| | Y7 – Y9 | |
|---|---------|--|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 26 | |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 94 | |

English as an additional language

| | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 2 |

Pupil mobility in the last school year

| | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 16 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 2 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.3 |
| National comparative data | 7.9 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.1 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

| | | | | |
|--|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 133 | 101 | 234 |
| | (98) | (120) | (129) | (249) |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 89 | 106 | 89 |
| | Girls | 89 | 81 | 67 |
| | Total | 178 | 187 | 156 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 79 (80) | 80 (78) | 67 (72) |
| | National | 63 (65) | 62 (60) | 55 (56) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 33 (39) | 45 (50) | 31 (35) |
| | National | 28 (35) | 38 (36) | 23 (27) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 92 | 96 | 111 |
| | Girls | 87 | 86 | 89 |
| | Total | 179 | 182 | 200 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 77 (83) | 78 (74) | 86 (84) |
| | National | 64 (62) | 64 (63) | 60 (61) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 38 (46) | 40 (47) | 45 (56) |
| | National | 31 (n/a) | 37 (n/a) | 28 (n/a) |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 1 |
| Black – African heritage | |
| Black – other | |
| Indian | 15 |
| Pakistani | |
| Bangladeshi | |
| Chinese | 1 |
| White | 719 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 4 |

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y9

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 39.4 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 20 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 11 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 235 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y9

| | |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 80 |
|---|----|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Key Stage 3 | 20 |
|-------------|----|

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | | |
| Black – African heritage | | |
| Black – other | | |
| Indian | | |
| Pakistani | | |
| Bangladeshi | | |
| Chinese | | |
| White | 14 | |
| Other minority ethnic groups | | |

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Financial year | 1999 |
|----------------|------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 1365423 |
| Total expenditure | 1356170 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1761 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -54519 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | -45266 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 770 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 168 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 48 | 46 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 56 | 40 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 27 | 67 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 26 | 58 | 13 | 2 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 32 | 63 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 40 | 47 | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 66 | 30 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 61 | 38 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 37 | 49 | 8 | 1 | 5 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 54 | 39 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 51 | 46 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 45 | 44 | 4 | 1 | 7 |

The parents' views expressed at the parents' meeting were highly supportive of the work of the school.

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

ENGLISH

92. In English, good teaching and good attitudes shown by the pupils lead to satisfactory progress and to results at the end of Key Stage 3 that are well above the national average.
93. Results in English over the past few years have been above the national average. Against the results obtained by similar schools, however, the 1999 results were below the average. A concern is that results at Key Stage 3 have dropped since 1997 but the English department's view is that they will level out in 2000 and see a rise again in 2001. The standards observed during lessons support this view. The department met the results target set by the school in 1999 and results predicted indicate that the target for 2000 will be reached. From the time the pupils enter the school to the end of Key Stage 3, their attainment matches the higher levels seen nationally. Girls do slightly better than boys. Observation in lessons indicates that the rate of progress in Year 7 is initially good and then settles to being steady in Years 8 and 9 as demands increase. Overall, progress is sound. Standards in speaking and listening are good and reading improves to good for most pupils. Writing skills are suitably extended for most and pupils' responses to literature are at least satisfactory and sometimes very good. However, some pupils still make copying and spelling errors, even in Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language, make good progress, as do gifted and talented pupils.
94. Of the lessons seen, all were at least good and half of those were very good, with one lesson judged as excellent. In all the teaching, there is good teacher knowledge, good planning and use of methods that enable pupils to learn effectively, such as in a Year 7 lesson on a poem about elephants. Pupils are managed well and good behaviour is ensured so that effective use is made of time, for example, in a Year 8 lesson on poetry about the sea. Pupils' work is assessed effectively through comments to pupils. However, assessment criteria are not sufficiently shared with pupils and teachers do not clearly check, at the end of lessons, whether or not pupils understand what they have done. Praise is often given during lessons. Homework is used appropriately.
95. Where teaching is very good, organisation and pace take the learning forward well. In a Year 8 lesson on a lifeboat story, the teaching was very lively and challenging, so that interest was assured and pupils were helped to attain highly in their work. Pupils' answers and ideas are encouraged and welcomed. All their contributions are well accepted and there is sensitive comment and a sense of challenge that expects pupils to produce the right answer, or a better answer, or to explain themselves further. This helps to extend the higher attainers, as seen in a Year 9 comprehension lesson on Antarctica. The management of the classes is always fully ensured. Due to good teaching, pupils are keen to make progress and the pace of work is good, leading to high attainment. Strong teaching is supported by the use of material designed to help pupils to make the most of their learning.
96. The attitudes shown by the pupils are good. Virtually all pupils behave well and generally stay on task, whilst working individually, in pairs or in groups. If there is any inattention it tends to be from a few boys but this does not reduce the overall pace of progress. In good lessons, pupils usually answer questions willingly, offer ideas and opinions confidently and show interest in their learning. In the very good lessons, pupils are attentive and interested. Nearly all pupils show good commitment to their learning and most pupils enjoy their work.
97. The curriculum provided in English is broad and balanced and all statutory requirements

are met. The school ensures coverage of prose, poetry and some aspects of drama in read and written forms. In general, the writing of poetry and extended passages of writing is at a reasonable level but could be greater in some classes as there is some inconsistency in the lengths of work expected. The awareness by pupils of the need for accuracy of spelling at all times also varies and this needs greater emphasis. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs through effective systems for withdrawal, through effective support in class and by the use of materials designed to help pupils meet course requirements. Practice is also given in the use of computer skills for redrafting and presenting work.

98. The English department is well managed, and staff and pupils are given clear educational direction. Good records are kept of pupils' work and their test results. Reports to parents are generally sound and include comments on progress and targets for improvement. The department is yet to firmly establish a system for setting pupils targets to improve from one piece of work to another. Departmental meetings are held weekly, with decisions recorded, and there is a good atmosphere of co-operation and team spirit within the department. The meetings are used for a range of purposes, include training and agreeing standards. The work of teachers is carefully monitored and evaluated. Accommodation and resources in the department are sound and good use is made in classrooms of display. The management of the department is good and ensures a positive ethos for learning.

99. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

100. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved significantly and standards reached are now well above the national average, whereas in 1995 they were in line. The quality of learning has also improved from sound to good. Standards of speaking and listening are still good and greater opportunities to develop or reconsider answers are now given, particularly in the very good lessons. Reading is still well encouraged by reading sessions and reading records. The book resources in the department have improved. There is now greater use of differentiated materials designed to help pupils make the most of their skills. Whilst a system for assessment is now in place, consistency in its use for regular target setting still needs improvement.

101. To improve further, the department needs to:

- increase emphasis on the need to spell words correctly at all times and, ideally, to establish this as a whole school approach.
- increase the levels of questioning, challenge and pace in all lessons, so that they match the good practice in the very good lessons.
- increase the consistency in the use of helpful comments on pupils' work and the regular use of target-setting from one piece of work to another.

Drama

102. Aspects of drama are provided in Year 7 by the English department but a separate course of drama is normally provided in Years 8 and 9 by a specialist drama teacher. At the time of the inspection, however, this teacher was absent but the school was efficiently continuing to provide drama lessons. In these lessons the teaching was sound. The standards achieved in Year 8 were in line with the levels of skill expected nationally for the age of the pupils. However, in Year 9 classes there was neither depth in the work nor reference to techniques expected for pupils of this age. This led to attainment below the levels expected. It is accepted that this may not reflect the normal situation. In all lessons much of the quality of the speaking and the listening was at the

level typically expected and the tasks set for the lessons were all achieved at least at the basic level. Commitment to the work by a few boys was sometimes lower than expected.

103. There has been good progress in the quality of the drama provision since the last Ofsted inspection. The schemes of work are now well planned and include coverage of an appropriate range of dramatic techniques. The materials used deal with social issues such as bullying. Liaison with English leads to some coverage of the work of Shakespeare in Year 8 and lessons to reinforce work on the Key Stage 3 English set text in Year 9. A good range of challenging stimulus materials is used during the course, including prose, poetry and drama texts. The assessment of pupils is soundly done and includes some pupil self-assessment. Success leads to the award of certificates of achievement in drama.
104. Since the last inspection, when a specialist drama teacher was also absent, there have been many improvements in the provision of drama. The schemes of work not only include reference to English but also liaison with geography, history, music, religious education and science. There is a clear section in the handbook which details the way that spiritual development is encouraged through drama and the drama provision adds to the ethos of the school through the nature of the course and school productions such as "Our Town" in 1999. The management of drama is now good, with good curriculum planning and a good ethos for learning.
105. To improve further, the school needs to ensure greater consistency in the provision of specialist drama teaching.

Literacy

106. Standards of literacy are above the levels normally found. Speaking is generally confident, as in a discussion led on Hinduism in religious education, and fluent, as in music. Listening is a strength, as for instance in art, English and modern foreign languages. Pupils generally listen and respond well in question and answer sessions, most being willing to offer answers, ideas and opinions. Reading aloud is usually sufficiently clear with appropriate volume and expression. Sound factual understanding is generally shown but not all pupils respond equally well to reading materials that call for some reading between the lines. Many do, however, and good examples were in English, where pupils are encouraged to think about the way words are used and in religious education, where the significance of being Jewish in today's world was well explored. Pupils write neatly and present their work well. They tackle a range of types of writing successfully, for example, using a variety of formats in history. Pupils handle many basic aspects of writing, such as grammar and punctuation, competently, but examples of inaccurate copying of words or poor spelling are still evident even in Year 9 work. Help is usefully given by displays in classrooms of new words and some spellings. Opportunities are given for extended writing in English and in geography, for example, through enquiry work and projects such as on Brazil. Computer skills are effectively employed, both in school and at home, for some redrafting and much presentation of work

MATHEMATICS

107. Pupils benefit from a broad mathematics curriculum. They work hard and make sound progress to achieve high standards.
108. Attainment in national tests at age 14 is above national averages. The percentage of pupils attaining the national expectation is well above average but there are too few

pupils achieving the highest levels. Results improved significantly from 1996 to 1998 but declined in 1999. Girls have performed consistently better than boys, although the most recent results show a dip in girls' attainment. Performance is well below that of similar schools. Pupils enter the school with attainment, which is well above the national pattern and they make sound progress to maintain these standards. Many pupils demonstrate good achievement at all levels of attainment across the different aspects of the subject. Some pupils in low attaining groups demonstrate achievement which is at least in line with the national expectation, such as when Year 9 pupils use properties of quadrilaterals to classify different types. Pupils in the highest attaining groups, including gifted and talented pupils, often produce work of a very high standard, as when calculating dimensions in problems involving cuboids and prisms or when solving a wide range of complex simultaneous equations. However, these high standards are not achieved consistently. Pupils with special educational needs progress well. For example, they quickly improve their use of a protractor, choice of scale and accuracy of reading. There are a small number of teaching groups where pupils' progress is unsatisfactory and they gain new knowledge, understanding or skills more slowly than in other groups of similar previous attainment. For instance, some Year 8 pupils are much slower than others to extend their ideas on number sequences. This inconsistency in pupils' achievement is having an adverse effect on progress and standards overall.

109. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Almost all are keen to learn and sufficiently confident to put forward their own ideas or ask for help. Most pupils listen attentively and work hard throughout lessons. Relationships between pupils are very good. Most collaborate very productively, discussing approaches to problems or explaining the reasoning behind their ideas with a positive effect on their understanding. Exceptions occur in a small number of lessons, where a high proportion of pupils are too relaxed about the need for consistent attention and sustained effort. These lessons are characterised by factors which inhibit learning, such as having insufficient equipment, making poorly disciplined contributions to discussion or obeying the teacher for only short periods of time.
110. Teaching is of good quality overall but with considerable variations. During the inspection about one third of teaching was very good but one sixth was unsatisfactory. Most teachers use competent subject knowledge to make well-structured presentations, with a beneficial effect on pupils' appreciation of step-by-step approaches and attention to detail. Lesson planning is satisfactory; most teachers choose an appropriate level of difficulty, providing an effective challenge for pupils, but they rarely make clear learning objectives explicit. This results in most pupils being unsure of their level of achievement and being unable to take pride in achieving an ambitious challenge. Very good use of questioning to involve pupils in recapping their previous learning and extending it to new situations is a strength of the department. A strong emphasis on using investigations to explore mathematics has a very positive effect. This enables them to explain their understanding, rather than just apply techniques. This was observed several times during the inspection, for example when Year 9 pupils explored methods for solving simultaneous equations with increasingly awkward coefficients. Teachers provide good opportunities for independent learning within an interesting context. This was seen during a very effective lesson, where pupils were devising instructions for computers to generate shapes. High levels of interest and enthusiasm resulted in rapid gains in learning, with pupils quickly recognising the importance of carefully detailed instructions and generating increasingly complex shapes. Too many opportunities to use a wide range of resources are missed by most teachers. Many teachers have established a well-disciplined working atmosphere, but on a small number of occasions they do not make their expectations of high standards of behaviour sufficiently clear or challenge inappropriate behaviour consistently. In a few lessons the teachers' presentation is confusing and too little use is made of questioning to check pupils'

understanding. This causes pupils to be unsure about how to approach their task and delays their progress. Homework is regularly set and good use is made of worksheets to extend learning beyond the lesson. Overall, pupils respond to good teaching by learning well.

111. The department benefits from good leadership. The mathematics team meet regularly and frequently discuss improvements to teaching and to curriculum content in order to raise standards. There are good arrangements for monitoring teaching and the quality of pupils' work. The departmental plan identifies appropriate tasks for development but there are too few criteria to monitor the amount of success. The scheme of work requires more emphasis on a wider range of teaching styles and resources to meet objectives. There is a good system for end of topic testing but insufficient tracking of pupils' progress over the key stage. There is good coverage of the mathematics curriculum but insufficient use of information technology. Reports to parents are insufficiently clear in communicating specific progress in the subject.
112. Standards of numeracy are above those normally seen. Pupils demonstrate accurate and appropriate methods of displaying data, for example in geography, where they produce clear pie charts and high quality bar charts with consistently labelled scales. Pupils often show good skills in manipulating numbers during mental warm-up activities in mathematics lessons. There is insufficient co-ordination of numeracy across the curriculum, resulting in fewer examples of the use and application of number than is normally seen in different subjects. The lack of teaching aids, such as number lines and number squares, occasionally has an adverse effect on numeracy skills, as when pupils are calculating with positive and negative numbers.
113. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in the standards achieved, the quality of teaching, the level of challenge for pupils and the monitoring of the department. There is still too much variation in the quality of lessons with some not promoting a strong enough pace. National curriculum levels are still not used fully in the planning of lessons.
114. The mathematics department contributes well to developing literacy skills with extensive displays of key words and strong encouragement of students to make articulate use of technical vocabulary.
115. In order to continue to improve the department should:
 - raise standards further so that more pupils achieve higher levels and increase their rate of progress;
 - continue to support and monitor teaching with more sharply focused feedback to teachers;
 - increase the use of information technology;
 - improve assessment to inform pupils of their strengths and weaknesses, to monitor performance and to inform curriculum planning.

SCIENCE

116. Pupils attain very high standards in science compared with national averages. The department is very effective and has a forward-looking approach to raising pupils' standards. However, standards are well below those in schools with a similar intake of pupils.
117. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are well above average. In 1999, in the national tests at the end of Year 9, the percentage of pupils attaining the

national expectation was above average, and the proportion attaining high levels was well above average. Over the past three years the results have been consistently well above the national average and have followed the national trend. Girls do better than the boys and are generally ahead by about one term's work. There are clear signs of improvement. Class work indicates higher achievement in Year 9 than in test results in 1999.

118. Standards of attainment are even across all aspects of work, including experimental and investigative science. Standards are high on entry in Year 7, and pupils' knowledge and understanding is well developed. For example, in a Year 7 lesson the pupils could read the scales on an ammeter correctly, use the correct units and spot the pattern that, as more current flows in an electrical circuit, the brightness of a bulb increases. The most able were able to identify anomalous results and use abstract ideas in their predictions, whilst the pupils with special educational needs, who were very well supported, could carry out the experiment competently, record their results with care and make good generalisations about the experiment.
119. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have made sound progress and maintained the high standards evident on entry in Year 7, when compared with national averages. The higher attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented pupils, who are taught in sets, are being given work, which prepares them very well for their future GCSE course. For instance, they have gained a good introductory grasp of electromagnetic induction, can successfully write balanced word and symbol equations, and undertake investigations with confidence. Their written work is very often well presented but there are relatively few examples of extended writing. They can talk confidently about science and have a mature understanding of how science affects people's everyday lives. For example, in a Year 9 class seen, the pupils understood the concepts of how competition, the environment and genes influence how species adapt over time. They can use mental methods of calculation quickly and draw scientific graphs accurately. The average and lower attaining pupils also make solid gains in knowledge and understanding. They can, for example, understand why glucose can travel through the wall of the small intestine but starch can not, and they can carry out the test for starches and sugars well. Pupils with special educational need also make sound progress, especially when given extra help in lessons and by being given work which is well matched to their learning needs.
120. However, there are more weaknesses in pupils' attainment, when compared with similar schools, which are in the main being addressed. As a consequence, there is room for standards to be higher. For an intake of this kind, more pupils should be attaining Levels 6 and above at the end of Year 9. Standards attained by the boys, although higher than the national average, should be much closer to those of the girls. Some pupils experience difficulties in the mathematical calculations involved in physics in Year 8. Although there is a developing emphasis on scientific literacy, more should be done to systematically emphasise key vocabulary and sentence structures, which are commonly used in science. More opportunities for extended writing, research and the promotion of discussion in lessons should be given. The extent to which information technology is used for collecting and presenting experimental results is better than normal, but a lack of appropriate hardware prevents pupils having sufficient opportunities to develop data logging skills.
121. Pupils approach their work with relish. They generally come to lessons prepared to work hard and apply their previous learning to the new tasks. Their teachers prepare stimulating learning environments. Display is of a very high quality and is used very efficiently for key vocabulary, three-dimensional structures, celebrations of pupils' work and good models. Most pupils are able to maintain high levels of concentration in lessons, they listen carefully to their teachers and have due regard to their own and others' safety. They take good care of the equipment and materials they are given to

use. However, there are some instances in which boys are inattentive and restless. Although this is well managed by the teachers, it does slow down the rate at which these boys learn. The extent to which pupils are given opportunities to shine and work with initiative is limited in a minority of lessons.

122. The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the last inspection and is much better than normally seen. It is now good, with about one half being consistently very good or excellent. The teachers' understanding of the requirements of the current National Curriculum and their own subject is very well developed. The pace of teaching is often good or better. Teaching is very well rooted in ensuring that knowledge and understanding is developed and consolidated through first hand practical experience. A key feature of teaching, which often works well, is the department focus on lesson planning. This makes objectives clear to pupils at the start of the lesson and states precisely what they all must, should or could learn and ends the lesson by checking whether the objectives have been achieved or not. When this is done very well, it has a marked impact on pupils' standards. For example, in two Year 8 lessons on microbes this technique was used, time was used to the full for learning, time targets were used very well during the lesson and, at the end, the teacher asked pupils for three new things which they had learnt. The challenge for the department is for this model to be consistently applied, for the objectives to be made explicit in schemes of work and linked more closely to the National Curriculum level descriptors. Homework is regularly set and the department is appropriately reviewing this to improve its quality. Pupils' books and assessed investigations are regularly marked but teachers should give a better indication of what the pupils need to do to improve standards.

123. The department is very well led and teamwork is clearly evident. Much has been done in the last year and the time is now right for departmental management to focus more scrupulously on monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' standards of attainment to root out weaknesses. The curriculum is broad and balanced, fully meets statutory requirements and is being updated to give more attention to historical and social applications and the inclusion of information technology. The inaccurate assessment of pupils' performance in knowledge and understanding has been looked at and the improved systems, which are now in place, are working well and pinpointing individual pupils' levels much better. However, there are no portfolios of assessed investigations to help identify pupils' achievements in this attainment target. Assessment is extremely well used to identify those pupils who are making slow progress and clear action is taken to address this. Most of the laboratories have insufficient services to allow some essential practical work to be undertaken effectively and their design is dated. There is excellent technical support and appropriate health and safety measures are in place.

124. Action to raise standards further should include:

- closer monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' standards;
- developing approaches which further improve pupils' scientific literacy.

ART

125. Art is a strength of the school. Pupils are driven to work at a rapid pace, achieving very high standards across a wide range of art media. The high and very high standards reported in the previous inspection have been maintained.

126. The very good progress of boys and girls in the subject enables the majority of pupils to achieve standards well beyond the expectation of the national curriculum at the end of the key stage in both two and three-dimensional work. All abilities demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a wide range of artists, movements

and cultures. For example, a Year 7 group making masks were able to explain the meaning of symbolism and colour in Chinese masks. Pupils enjoy discussions as an opportunity to apply subject knowledge and respond well to projects which reinforce their understanding independently, for example, Year 9 pupils presented research into Matisse to complement a class work painting, interpreting contemporary interior views in the character of the artist's work.

127. Making skills show a high level of technical skill, reflecting the quality of examples prepared by the teachers. For example, a Year 8 group were observed using precise designing skills in the style of "Art Nouveau". Evidence of work in ceramics is craftsmanlike. The same pupils also demonstrate a high level of expressive skills. For example, in representing their ideas about 'Futurism' and 'Vorticism', pupils created imaginative portraits composed from different machine parts. The Year 9 'shoes' project also inspires a wide variation of stunning creations. Where pupils experience physical challenge with materials, particularly effective work results. The Year 8 large-scale pastel studies of gargoyles illustrate this.
128. Investigative skills are good, but not all the time. There are good examples of themes explored in sketchbooks, for example to support the shoe project. Sketchbooks have much greater potential, however, to reflect exploration of visual concepts. Pupils demonstrate the skills necessary to present research creatively, although these are inconsistently applied in artists' sketchbooks.
129. Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well. Pupil's attitudes, values and personal development are very well developed through the subject. They respond well to the supportive structure of the teaching and adapt quickly to a rapid succession of varied learning environments. Pupils work co-operatively in the variety of groupings planned and are positive when reviewing each other's work. One group was seen successfully observing a pupil in the role of demonstrator. Their good pace of work is responsive to the characteristically brisk teaching style. Pupil self-evaluations reflect their progress within projects, although their realisation of links between projects and work with different art teachers is limited. When pupils are responsible for preparing for or following up lessons, they often respond well. The consistency of these opportunities is an area for development.
130. The teaching of art is good and the most effective teaching is passionate, thoroughly researched, well illustrated and confronts individual responses in a challenging but informative style, which extends learning at every available opportunity, including the unexpected.
131. Examples of the subject are conscientiously prepared by all teachers and displays are used well to set high expectations and illustrate the objectives of current schemes of work. These are most effective where labelling enables pupils to recognise specialist words in their correct context.
132. Teaching is enriched by the use of personal book resources and artefacts due to a budget which is predominantly used for consumables.
133. Pupils' art is skilfully used alongside that of famous artists, for example slides of Elizabeth Frink's work were shown to a group alongside a display of drawings by pupils inspired by her work. Constructive questioning enabled pupils to start their practical work, fuelled with a clear personal intention. Another teacher had her own portfolio of work available for reference, while in one lesson the teacher completed the same project, showing the pupils possible steps to take. These techniques accelerate the learning.
134. Assessments are frequent and involve the pupils effectively at the end of each

project. However, assessment criteria are not directly related to lesson objectives or the strands of the National Curriculum and need to record progression across the key stage more effectively. Planning for the progression of skills, including information technology, also needs to be developed, in order to match the good structuring of knowledge and understanding.

135. The art curriculum is broad and balanced and prepares pupils very well for success in the next stage of education. A bridging project has effectively stimulated dialogue between schools.
136. The current organisation gives all pupils access to the different qualities of teachers working to their strengths. While exposing pupils to this range of experiences, the teaching team need to achieve greater consistency in the role of sketchbooks, home work and portfolios, in order to enable pupils to recognise their art experience as a whole. Pupils do, however, work energetically and creatively. They particularly enjoy their learning, where its relevance to themselves is apparent, for example, using the observational techniques of Georgia O’Keefe in Year 9 to look at everyday plants or when applying ideas about contemporary fashion to shoe design.
137. Opportunities for pupils to encounter original art and artists are restricted to the art collection in school, which is not explicitly used in the curriculum, and the small minority of pupils able to visit the Musee D’Orsay during activities week.
138. The vision and direction for the subject is most evident in the teaching area of the current co-ordinator, which presents inspirational leadership by example. Displays make a significant contribution to the learning in the art rooms. There is a need, however, to clarify roles in relation to the management hierarchy, in order to maintain and develop consistently the very high standards achieved.
139. Action to improve standards further should include:
- developing the role of sketchbooks, particularly in relation to investigative and independent research;
 - improving the continuity and progression of skills between teachers and across the key stage, relating this to assessment;
 - increasing the opportunities for first hand experiences, particularly of original art, artefacts and artists.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

140. In design and technology, pupils benefit from a broad curriculum experience. They enjoy their work in the subject and achieve sound standards.
141. Recent statutory teacher assessments of 14-year-olds have been just above those recorded nationally at level 5 and above. However, these results were not subject to moderation. By the age of 14, the attainment of current pupils is in line with national expectations. From ages 11 to 14, girls and boys, and those of differing prior attainment, make good progress. They develop a broad range of basic knowledge, skills and understanding working in food, graphics, resistant materials, systems and control and textiles. When designing, pupils use design briefs, undertake research, produce ‘mood boards’ to stimulate ideas and propose their own ideas, using suitable graphic techniques. When making, pupils use a good range of tools and equipment with increasing confidence. For example in Year 8, pupils in textiles sketch and develop mock-ups in card to accurately model a range of ideas for wallets. In Year 8 in systems and control, pupils combine resistant materials and mechanical components to assemble successful animated nursery rhymes. In Year 9, pupils in food work

confidently and efficiently to make novelty cakes. In Year 9 in resistant materials, pupils analyse existing clock designs, model their own ideas and produce a variety of clocks using a range of different materials and processes. At present, the limited time available for design and technology does not provide the opportunity for pupils to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding within each material in sufficient depth, for example, to work independently on more challenging tasks. This is restricting pupils' attainment in these years. Pupils with special educational needs integrate well into the mixed ability groups, and make good progress in developing their designing and making skills.

142. Across all years, pupils respond well and show a good level of interest in the tasks set. They settle down quickly and sustain concentration throughout lessons. Pupils work well together and relationships between pupils and their teachers are good. They use the equipment carefully and responsibly, with due regard to safe working practices. Pupils listen well, but there are insufficient opportunities in lessons for them to participate in discussion, in which they are required to talk about their own work or to listen to the views of others. Projects provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, such as researching different ideas for clock designs in Year 9.

143. Teaching is good in three-quarters of lessons and in the remainder is satisfactory. Teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and have planned a suitable range of projects to establish a foundation of designing and making skills in each material. Projects are discussed with colleagues at the local Technology College to assess their suitability as preparation for the GCSE courses. Teachers give clear introductions to lessons to clarify their expectations for the session. They usefully bring pupils together at the end to summarise the work that has been undertaken and to set appropriate homework. However, they do not take enough opportunities to check that pupils understand the tasks and to discuss with them the progress they have made. Teachers provide good, individual help and support within lessons and demonstrate skills confidently to their groups. For example in Year 8, teachers demonstrated how to vacuum form plastics and how to prepare patterns in textiles. The department has usefully started to collect products, which pupils can handle and discuss to inform their own designing and making, for example, clocks to use in resistant materials. Within each unit of work, pupils follow an analytical approach to designing. However, insufficient opportunities are taken to ensure that, as they move from one material to another, the work they are set builds upon their earlier experiences and becomes gradually more demanding. For example, within resistant materials and systems and control, staff use a common approach to designing to enable pupils to develop their skills as they move from one teacher to another. At present, however, this approach does not extend to all groups in food and textiles.

144. The head of department is providing effective leadership and management of the design and technology team, which is having a positive impact upon raising standards. Good links have now been established with the Technology College, with the aim of providing pupils with a progressive course of study as they move through the High School and onto the Upper School, for example, by the recent provision of computers and computer aided manufacturing equipment. Appropriate development plan targets are in place. However, the plan does not provide sufficient detail about the strategies that will be used to implement the targets or how they will be monitored and evaluated. The accommodation is generally adequate, but the facilities in one of the resistant materials areas are not appropriate for pupils undertaking designing activities.

145. Since the previous report, the department has made good progress. Standards have risen and are now in line with national expectations.

146. In order to raise standards further, the school should:

- review the time allocated to design and technology, to enable pupils to tackle more challenging tasks and to make full use of the new equipment for information technology;
- ensure that the teaching in all material areas builds upon pupils' earlier experiences, for example in relation to the teaching of designing skills;
- deal with the health and safety issues, identified to the school, relating to machinery in the resistant materials areas.

GEOGRAPHY

147. In geography, the pupils benefit from very good teaching and work with interest to find out about places in different parts of the world.

148. Standards are well above average. Pupils make very good progress in all three years, so that, by the time they leave the school, their attainment is much better than normally seen. They have a very good knowledge of countries at different levels of development, including Brazil and Japan. They gain a very good knowledge of the processes that shape the natural landscape and the built environment, for example, when learning about earthquakes in Year 7, and from their work on development issues in Year 9. They have a good grasp of basic geographical skills, including the ability to draw and use both maps and graphs. Enquiry skills are also well developed, as in Year 7 work on shopping patterns in the local area and, from Years 8 and 9, when they investigate environmental issues. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in class and therefore make very good progress in all years to attain standards that are consistent with their individual abilities. The gifted and talented pupils also make very good progress and gain high levels of understanding. For example in Year 9, they can begin to explain how some of the physical and cultural aspects of Japan interact to change the landscape and economy of the country.

149. The standard of teaching in geography is very good. A main strength of the teachers is their knowledge, not just of the subject and the requirements of the National Curriculum, but also of their pupils' prior attainments. This means they can set activities that are challenging and get the best out of all the pupils. For example in a Year 8 lesson, different groups of pupils were working on different aspects of the growth of Paris and therefore learning about its importance as both a regional and national capital and as a world city. A further strength of the teaching is the very good relationships that the teachers establish with their classes. These create an atmosphere in which the pupils work hard. For example in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher managed a class discussion about perceptions of Japan with great sensitivity, so that the pupils knew their ideas would be valued and that, whatever their level of knowledge, they could make a positive contribution and gain from the lesson. Lessons are very carefully planned to include a range of different activities, so that the pupils can consolidate their understanding of one aspect of geography, before moving on to tackle another. For example in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher used this technique very well, stopping the pupils at different points to explain the next stage of the work. This meant the pupils knew exactly what was required of them and could work confidently and with concentration, drawing graphs to gain an understanding of the idea of population density in different countries. There is a very well developed system of assessment, and the teachers keep very detailed and helpful records of the progress of the pupils in their classes. These are used well to help to plan lessons and to set learning targets for individual pupils. The teachers set homework regularly, although there is some shortage of books, so the pupils have to rely on duplicated worksheets to take home.

150. The attitude of the pupils is very good. They work with enthusiasm and commitment

and enjoy their lessons. The standard of behaviour is very good, although in a few lessons, where the pupils are allowed to remain too long on the same task, their concentration wavers.

151. The subject is very well led by the head of department, who provides effective guidance through example to her colleagues. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. An effective system of monitoring of progress enables the teachers to set more accurate learning targets for the pupils, and therefore standards of attainment of all pupils have been raised, including those at the higher levels. In order to maintain this improvement in standards, the teachers should continue to:

- develop the use of activities that will challenge and stretch all pupils, to gain the highest levels of understanding;
- support pupils in correcting and redrafting work which falls below the standard expected;
- develop the use of information technology to support learning in the subject.

HISTORY

152. Pupils are interested in and enjoy this subject. The pupils have a good range of learning activities, which are clearly focused so that they achieve high standards in history.

153. The standard achieved by the end of Year 9 is well above the national average. In the teacher assessments, a higher proportion of pupils reach Level 5 and above than is normally seen. Pupils have good recall and understanding of the units of work and are developing the key skills needed to study history, as in a Year 9 lesson on 'Women at war'. They can recall some of the consequences of the Treaty of Versailles and the impact this had in the years between the wars. They are able to identify the chronology of events and are beginning to identify the effect of the two world wars on the life of women. All pupils make good progress, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs.

154. Teaching in history is very good. The main strengths of the teaching can be seen in a Year 7 lesson, looking at the causes and consequences of Henry VIII's break from Rome. At the beginning of the lesson the pupils were given helpful feedback on their homework tasks and examples shown which deserved special mention. The objectives for the lesson and the possible levels that could be reached were explained and understood. The pupils were challenged to meet the highest level possible and they responded enthusiastically. The introduction and tasks set were clear and interesting, with time being allocated, so that the pupils worked at a good pace. The teacher was very enthusiastic and gave positive encouragement to the pupils. The very good relationships between the pupils, and between teacher and class, meant that pupils were willing to volunteer answers and ideas and ask for help when needed. Where teaching is good, there are many good features, but the questioning does not always include all of the pupils. A set time is not always allocated to tasks and this reduces the pace of work.

155. Teachers understand the special needs of individual pupils and help them to make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the subject by providing additional individual help. Pupils are given resources and tasks, which are appropriate to them. Different homework tasks are also given when necessary. Those pupils who are able to reach the higher levels are given tasks, which enable them to develop and demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Work is assessed accurately against national curriculum levels and is used to help individuals know how they can

improve in the future.

156. The pupils are well behaved and respond positively to teachers. They maintain a high level of concentration and are well focused on their tasks. Pupils take their work seriously, with many taking an active part in the lesson. There is a positive working atmosphere in the classroom, with pupils working sensibly and well in pairs or independently.

157. The history department has made good progress since the last inspection and the department is very well led and managed. The head of department has a clear view of the aims and direction of the department. Teachers work very well as a team. The department's ethos is one of continuing to strive for the highest possible standards.

158. In order to raise standards further the department should:

- make more systematic use of data from the contributory schools;
- monitor overall performance of the pupils at National Curriculum levels;
- include in reports to parents information on the progress of pupils in history.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

159. All pupils are able to use computers on a regular basis through a taught IT (information technology) programme and within subject areas. At the time of the inspection, the head of IT, who teaches the large majority of the taught programme, was absent. Judgements are based on lessons observed, supported by the evidence of pupils' work and school documentation.

160. Recent statutory teacher assessments for the attainment of 14-year-olds have been well above those recorded nationally at Level 5 and above. However, these results were not subject to moderation. By the age of 14, the attainment of current pupils is broadly as expected nationally for pupils of this age. From ages 11 to 14, girls and boys and those of differing prior attainment, make sound progress within the taught IT lessons. In these, they demonstrate a good range of basic skills, including word-processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases and the use of the Internet. For example in Year 8, pupils organising an activity week trip use desktop publishing to successfully generate, amend, organise and present their ideas. They use the Internet confidently to research relevant topics, but have not yet developed the skills required to search for information in a systematic way. In Year 9, pupils undertake a project on promoting the physical education department and accurately enter data on student performance into a spreadsheet, displaying the results as different charts and graphs. Within these taught lessons, pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in all years. Gifted and talented pupils and other pupils make satisfactory progress.

161. Pupils are now able to extend their IT skills in a good number of subject areas. For example in mathematics in Year 9, they successfully use IT to control events, creating sets of instructions to draw geometrical shapes using LOGO software. In English, pupils in all years develop their desktop publishing and word-processing skills to draft and present coursework tasks. In geography, pupils in Year 7 use a spreadsheet to analyse data collected as part of a local shopping survey. In history, pupils in Year 9 incorporate text, graphics and information from the Internet into their historical biography project. In art, pupils in Year 9 use the Internet to research information for a project on Matisse.

162. Pupils' response to IT is good. They settle down quickly, access the software

efficiently and show a good level of interest in the tasks set. Behaviour in IT is good. Pupils use the equipment carefully and responsibly, both in and out of lessons, for example during lunchtimes in the IT room and the library. Relationships between teachers and their groups are good. Pupils are required to share the computers and work well together. IT provides good opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their initiative and the large majority are able to proceed well with the work set, with minimal support and guidance from their teachers. A minority of pupils find this difficult and need to be constantly reminded to focus on the task set.

163. Teaching in IT is never less than satisfactory, and is good in one half of lessons. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the software and set relevant activities for their groups. Where teaching is good, questioning is used effectively at the start of lessons to recall previous learning and confirm pupils' understanding. In a Year 9 group using spreadsheets, the teacher demonstrated effectively using a prepared set of data to illustrate, on each student's screen, the advantages and disadvantages of different styles of charts and graphs. Good, individual help and support is provided in lessons, which keeps pupils on task and makes good use of the time available. In a Year 8 group using LOGO, the teacher provided a useful worksheet, summarising the main commands required, so that pupils were able to make good progress without constantly referring to him to know how to proceed. At the end of the session, the teacher usefully concluded the lesson by clarifying their understanding of LOGO and the progress they had made. Appropriate assessment procedures are in place for the taught IT course, to maintain a record of pupils' work matched to National Curriculum levels. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities to print their work in order to build up their own record of the software they have used and the skills they have developed. When work has been printed, insufficient opportunity has been taken to mark and annotate pupils' work, so that they know how well they have done and how they can improve. The assessment of pupils' capability in IT within subjects is the responsibility of individual subject areas. At present, there are no central records to chart an individual student's use of, and capability in, IT across the school.
164. The responsibility for the delivery of IT is shared between the head of IT and heads of departments, who are responsible for the development and application of IT within their subject areas. In particular, mathematics, science and design and technology are responsible for the delivery of specific aspects of the IT Programme of Study. At present, there is no overall co-ordination and monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject. The scheme of work for IT does not provide sufficient detail of the knowledge, skills and understanding of IT that will be covered in either the taught lessons or in subject areas. Appropriate development plan priorities are in place, but these are not sufficiently detailed in relation to the targets to be achieved or the success criteria against which they can be monitored.
165. Since the previous report, the department has made steady progress to bring standards broadly in line with national expectations.
166. In order to raise standards further, the school should:
- ensure that the IT programme provides pupils with a more continuous and progressive course of study;
 - develop portfolios of work to exemplify expectations for each unit of work and to support the accurate standardisation of teacher assessments;
 - provide pupils with the opportunity of developing individual portfolios of their developing capability in IT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

167. All pupils study French for three Years. Two groups also study German in Year 9. Pupils reach good standards.
168. In recent years, the attainment of pupils as assessed by teachers at the end of Year 9 has been consistently and significantly above the national pattern of results. This is reflected in lessons, where most pupils reach the expected standards, and many exceed them. In German lessons, pupils achieve average standards within a very small time allocation, and they write and speak with better than usual accuracy. In French, most pupils can pick out information from printed and audio texts related to current topic areas. During independent reading sessions, using magazines, sheets and booklets, they show that they can understand more complex and unusual language, and use dictionaries confidently. When speaking, pupils can produce substantial conversations and developed answers to questions, for example, when making arrangements for leisure activity or describing what they do and have done in leisure time. The promptness, confidence and accuracy of their spoken responses are of much higher quality than is usual. In their written work, most pupils maintain a good level of accuracy. Throughout Years 7 to 9 they display the ability to write compositions and reports, often using word processing, on topics such as personal information, family, daily routine and leisure activity. By Year 9, the use of the perfect tense is well established.
169. Pupils display very positive attitudes to their work. They contribute confidently and willingly to class work, and usually behave very well.
170. Teaching is good, and in about one third of lessons observed during the inspection it was very good. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils, particularly those who are talented and gifted. In return they receive a high quality and quantity of work. Objectives of lessons are clear, and often focus on features which promote high standards, but the underlying expectations of quality or quantity are not so clearly explained for other groups of pupils, nor do pupils receive enough specific feedback during lessons about their performance. The style of teaching is brisk, incisive, urgent and commanding, so that pupils receive a confident, highly organised and positive experience, and complete a significant amount of work during lessons. Instructions, explanations and demonstrations are very clear, enabling pupils to engage efficiently in their work without wasting time or effort. Visual aids such as pictures and symbols are used regularly and effectively. New areas of grammar and vocabulary are introduced and practised in a methodical and intensive way. Because of these features, the quality of pupils' learning is good: they make good progress in their ability to understand, compose and communicate confidently in French and German. On the very few occasions when teaching and learning are less effective, long sessions of whole class oral work tax pupils' concentration, and slow their progress in active use of the language. In some groups with a profile of lower attainment, and for some lower attaining pupils in mixed ability groups, expectations are too high, although the progress of pupils with special educational need is satisfactory.
171. The leadership and management provided by the head of department are of very good quality, and are matched by the professionalism of all colleagues in this well co-ordinated team. Policies and schemes of work are thorough. There is a very clear view of the high quality that is expected, of what needs to be done in order to attain this quality, and of the strategies that will be used to this end.
172. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Assessment systems have been refined, and are very thorough. The curriculum has been extended by the introduction of German. This provides an added and valued challenge. Higher

attaining pupils are now appropriately challenged. Written work now displays a good level of accuracy. In other areas, sound progress has been made, but not enough to resolve fully the issue identified in the previous report. Grammar is well understood by pupils, and sentence patterns are studied, but grammar patterns and explanations are not yet regularly and explicitly used for reference and learning. Provision for reading practice has improved, but tasks and desired outcomes are not clearly enough defined, and pupils' performance is not systematically recorded. Significant development has taken place in providing for a variety of needs in mixed ability classes, but lesson planning still does not fully address the needs of lower attainers.

173. In order to maintain and improve standards, the department should:

- give pupils clear and measurable expectations for their tasks in lessons, and give them clear feedback on their performance;
- complete the development of strategies and tasks which specifically target the needs of lower attaining pupils.

MUSIC

174. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are below national expectations. Last year, the teachers' end of key stage assessments showed standards were close to the national average, but inspection findings show the current Year 9 is not attaining as well as this.

175. It is not possible to judge singing because none occurred during the inspection. Standards on entry to school and in Year 7 are in line with expectations, but, as they move through the school, pupils fall behind. The main reason for this is the lack of time allocated to music for each year group. Pupils use keyboards competently for performing and composing. Some pupils recall musical terms associated with their current unit of work but, on the whole, average and lower attaining pupils find it difficult to remember important terms, even though they may have heard these earlier in the lesson. When pupils perform in small groups or as a whole class, they listen carefully and keep together well. When given the opportunity, most pupils can suggest how their performance might be improved. The main weakness is pupils' lack of knowledge of the main elements of music, such as texture, structure and dynamics. This means that their compositions and improvisations are often simpler than one would expect at this age and they lack ideas on how to refine and develop their initial ideas to produce more extended work. Some gifted and talented pupils do not do well enough in lessons. Pupils who learn instruments attain the expected levels because they apply their knowledge of music to their practical work. However, few exceed the expectations for composition because their pieces tend to be limited in scope. Some instrumentalists perform to a high standard in the extra-curricular music groups. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory.

176. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory overall and, in instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities, they are good. Pupils are well behaved and they respond positively when talking about their work. In lessons, pupils work together well. Most are quick to organise themselves and all pupils handle instruments with care and respect. However, in many lessons, a small number are inattentive when the teacher is addressing the whole class, which affects their learning. Instrumentalists work hard in instrumental lessons, wind band and string group, and many show good levels of musical discipline when rehearsing.

177. Teaching is satisfactory overall and a third of lessons are good. Teachers have

good subject knowledge and use this effectively to develop the pupils' understanding. For example, in one lesson, the teacher used her expertise to help a group of pupils play a slow, sustained Gamelan part at a steady speed. In many lessons, a few pupils talk during lesson introductions and this is allowed to go unchallenged. Lessons are well organised and the changes in activity are managed effectively. However, there is frequently not enough time for pupils to work in sufficient depth on practical tasks. Pupils are developing their knowledge of different styles of music but they have few opportunities to evaluate and appraise their own work and that of others. Teachers plan additional tasks to stretch higher attaining pupils but these vary in their effectiveness. Sometimes they provide a good level of challenge; at other times these pupils are given too much choice and some opt for an easier part which is too easy. Learning and the rate of progress for these pupils are too slow. The quality of instrumental teaching is good overall. Teachers focus carefully on developing pupils' technique and often demonstrate themselves, to help pupils learn about aspects such as intonation or expression. In one lesson, the teacher talked for too much of the lesson, which restricted the pupils' opportunity to play.

178. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The head of department has worked hard to address the serious weaknesses highlighted in the last report, but standards are still below average. She has a clear view on how she sees the department developing and her current targets are highly appropriate. For example, there are three main weaknesses which currently affect standards: the partially completed scheme of work, the lack of IT hardware and software to support pupils' learning and insufficient time being devoted to this subject. References to the completion of the scheme of work and to improving IT resources appear in the department's development plan. Scrutiny of planning and discussions with pupils show that pupils do not sing regularly enough during the key stage. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards are much higher than they were at the last inspection, when pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding were described as 'very low'. Pupils now perform and compose regularly as an integral part of lessons and they have more opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities. The quality of teaching has improved considerably and this has had a marked effect upon standards; pupils' attitudes are now much more positive.

179. In order to improve standards the department should:

- increase the amount of time for the teaching of music throughout the key stage;
- complete the scheme of work, including an overall curriculum plan, which plots how pupils will build progressively upon their previous learning for each strand of the Programmes of Study;
- ensure pupils have regular opportunities to develop their singing skills;
- improve the quality of teaching in order to increase the proportion of good lessons.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

180. This department is well-led and committed to improvement. During the inspection, lessons were observed in basketball, gymnastics, hockey, football, indoor athletics, problem-solving rugby, swimming, table tennis and water polo. Extra-curricular football and netball sessions were also seen.

181. At age 14 pupils' planning, performing and evaluation skills are in line with national expectations, with several pupils achieving high standards in swimming and very high standards in football. By the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments in 1999 showed three-quarters of pupils meeting the national expectation in physical education, which is in line with national figures.

182. In gymnastics most pupils show good observational skills. They are imaginative in creating sequences of movement. Their performance of rolls is in line with that normally seen. Standards in swimming are good. Most pupils know, understand and can perform the front crawl well. In water polo they can all swim, whilst keeping possession of the ball. Most can give general feedback to their peers, using criteria given by the teacher. Knowledge and understanding of rules relating to the high jump is in line with that normally encountered. In the one hockey lesson seen, pupils' performance of basic skills and their knowledge and understanding of the principles of the game were below those normally seen. Pupils' handling skills in rugby are in line with usual levels, but their knowledge and understanding of set moves and tactical play in the lesson was below that normally encountered. In table tennis, most pupils can carry on a short rally, and pupils' basic skills are in line with their limited experience of the game. Pupils' hand and eye co-ordination is in line with expectations. Pupils' passing and throwing skills in basketball are better than usually seen and their shooting skills are similar to typical levels. Pupils move well into a space to receive the ball. In football, pupils show very good dribbling, passing and shooting skills. They understand the importance of creating and moving into a space to receive the ball. Pupils do very well in extra-curricular football, achieving very good results in the South Leicestershire League. The Year 8 team has qualified for the final of the County Cup for the second year running. There were some very good individual results in the cross-country in 1999 and 13 pupils represented the South Leicestershire area in athletics and two Year 8 pupils in netball.

183. Pupils show very positive attitudes to their work. They are always very punctual to lessons and most pupils enjoy them. They usually expend a great deal of energy. Most pupils behave well and can work without close teacher supervision. They co-operate well in small groups and teams. They are usually willing to answer questions and accept constructive criticism well.

184. The quality of teaching and learning is good and in half of the lessons seen it was good or better. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, especially in swimming and football and usually have a good working relationship with their classes. When teaching and learning are good, pupils are made aware of how their knowledge, skills and understanding will have improved by the end of the lesson. Tasks are well chosen, set clearly and built up in logical, manageable stages to bring about the desired learning. Skills are broken down, specific coaching points made and individual feedback is given with reference to these points. Pupils are given time to practise and refine their skills. A good range of teaching strategies is used, including teacher and pupil demonstrations to clarify tasks or show correct techniques. Particularly good use was made of pupil demonstration to show the correct technique for front crawl in a Year 7 swimming lesson. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to observe, describe and evaluate the effectiveness of their peers' performance. Good use is often made of question and answer to check and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding and to challenge pupils to make decisions about the effectiveness of different techniques. When teaching is less than good, however, there is a lack of depth to the questioning, with pupils merely reciting the required answers without understanding what they mean. This was especially evident in a Year 8 rugby lesson when pupils said that they had learned about teamwork, communication and accuracy, but there was no evidence to support this in the lesson. Insufficient specific coaching points are given to enable pupils to learn or improve their skills. This was seen in a gymnastics lesson, when the emphasis was on making a sequence of different types of rolls, but no coaching of rolling activities was given. Feedback is of a general nature, such as "well done" or "bad luck", and does not clearly indicate what pupils should do to improve their knowledge, skills or understanding. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred in one lesson during the inspection and this was as a result of poor management of pupils' behaviour. Non-participants are given relevant written work to do, but are not usually involved by the teachers in discussion or question and answer sessions. Pupils, including those

with special educational needs, make good progress in planning, performing and evaluating physical education activities. Most pupils expend a great deal of physical energy in gymnastics and they use high levels of creative effort in the problem-solving module.

185. The department has strong, enthusiastic leadership with a clear educational vision for the subject, showing commitment to improvement. Procedures are well documented and put into practice. Effective monitoring of teaching takes place with a specific focus at present on improving provision for the more able pupils. Research has also taken place into pupils' participation rates and effective changes have been made to improve this, including provision for single sex teaching in swimming and health-related exercise. There is a good department development plan, but success criteria for some priorities need to be more clearly defined. The curriculum is broad and offers a range of activities, with a particular emphasis on games and swimming. The amount of time for gymnastics is limited, with long gaps between units of work. Liaison takes place with the Upper School, the 'sister' High School and with contributory primary schools, but no liaison has taken place about the content of the curriculum. Assessment procedures are in place and are carried out regularly but the criteria used are not linked specifically to the end of key stage description. Reports to parents show what activities pupils have undertaken and give a clear indication of pupils' response to the subject. However, they do not give a clear statement about the progress that pupils have made since the last report in their knowledge, skills and understanding or about specific ways for each pupil to improve further.

186. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Whilst there have not yet been any significant changes in standards achieved by pupils, the quality of teaching and learning has improved so that it is now good overall. Monitoring of teaching now takes place systematically. An additional specialist female member of staff has been appointed who acts as another good role model in the department. Pupils are motivated well and enthusiastic about the subject.

187. In order for further improvement to take place, the department should:

- ensure that specific whole-class and individual feedback is given to pupils in all lessons;
- make targets in reports more specific for what pupils can do to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding;
- ensure that non-participants are more involved in lessons by including them in discussion and question and answer sessions;
- improve continuity and progression through tighter liaison with contributor primary schools over curriculum content.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

188. In religious education, pupils concentrate well and are keen to ask and answer questions. They are widening their knowledge and understanding of a range of religious practices and beliefs through following a curriculum based on Leicestershire's local syllabus for Religious Education.

189. On entry, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with, and sometimes slightly above, those expected by the local Leicestershire syllabus. Their knowledge of Christianity is better than that of other faiths, but some do have a basic understanding of some Hindu and Muslim beliefs and practices when they come into the school. They can make limited comparison across and between religions. They are able to put forward their own viewpoints. By the end of the key stage, pupils achieve levels of attainment that

are within the expected range, some at higher levels. They have a good understanding of what it means to belong to a faith community and how that affects the way people live. They can compare and contrast beliefs and practices a little more confidently than when they arrived. For example, they discuss how different festivals are celebrated and are able to share ideas on difficult issues such as 'life after death'. Oral responses to questions and issues raised in lessons are generally of a higher standard than the written work seen in exercise books, some of which is not sufficiently challenging for the age group. For example, there is some unnecessary copying out of text rather than using text to identify and analyse key points and there are few opportunities given for more extended or reflective pieces of writing. Satisfactory progress is made by all pupils, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs.

190. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with mostly good and very good teaching seen in Year 7. The teaching team are mainly experienced members of staff, who are committed to improving the quality of religious education provision within the school. Teachers' relationships with pupils are positive, they manage pupils very well and have high expectations of good behaviour. Pupils know what teachers expect of them and respond well. The use of open-ended questions is sometimes skilfully used in probing pupils' knowledge and understanding and encouraging them to give reasons for their responses and opinions. In otherwise satisfactory lessons, the learning objectives for lessons are identified and almost always shared with pupils, but they are sometimes not focused sufficiently on what pupils should know, understand or be able to do and a review of learning towards the end of the lesson rarely takes place. The pace of lessons is slowed by an over-reliance on teacher led, whole class working on the same task at the same time, a weakness reported in the last inspection. Teachers' specialist knowledge is limited but they do prepare the subject matter well. Written work is marked and assessment tasks are being developed. However, assessment procedures remain unsatisfactory as they fail to focus on the standards of attainment that pupils should be achieving. As a result, assessment does not sufficiently inform teacher planning for raising standards. Homework set is varied and appropriate.

191. The management of the subject is satisfactory and good efforts have been made by the head of department, and others, to address the many weaknesses reported at the last inspection. These efforts have been effective, in that standards are now at expected levels and above in knowledge and understanding of Christianity. Teaching and its impact on learning and progress is much better, although weaknesses in the teaching remain. Too little time is devoted to religious education to cover the local Leicestershire syllabus in appropriate depth.

192. In order to improve the department further the following points for action should be considered:

- increasing the amount of time for teaching of religious education throughout the key stage;
- increasing the range of teaching strategies used;
- improving assessment procedures to focus on standards of attainment and inform teachers' planning.