

INSPECTION REPORT

ARTHUR TERRY SCHOOL

Sutton Coldfield

Birmingham

LEA area: City of Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103523

Headteacher: Mr I P Lancaster

Reporting inspector: Mr W K Baxendale
02928

Dates of inspection: 24th - 28th January 2000

Inspection number: 186920

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Kittoe Road Four Oaks Sutton Coldfield West Midlands
Postcode:	B74 4RZ
Telephone number:	0121 323 22 21
Fax number:	0121 308 80 33
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Thompson
Date of previous inspection:	5 th – 9 th February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Mr W K Baxendale		The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements How well pupils and students are taught
Mrs J Goodchild (Lay Inspector)		How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
Mr R Parker	English Special educational needs	
Mr T Howard	Mathematics	Curriculum Non-statutory and vocational courses at Key Stage 4 Assessment
Mr J Creedy	Science	
Mr V Harrison	Design and technology	
Mrs C Orr	Equal opportunities Modern foreign languages	
Mr J G Knight	Geography	How well the school is led and managed
Mr M Roberts	Information technology	
Mr P Harle	Music	
Mrs J Boulton	Physical education	
Mrs D Kay	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.
Mr A Allfree	Art	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
Mr R Catlow	History	
Mr W Stoneham	Business studies GNVQ courses	The sixth form

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited
National Westminster Bank Chambers
Victoria Street
Burnham-on-Sea
Somerset
TA8 1AN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its previous inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	22
COMMUNITY LINKS	23
SIXTH FORM	24
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	32

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Arthur Terry is a much bigger than average secondary school educating a total of 1446 boys and girls, of whom 238 are members of its sixth form. Overall attainment on entry is about average, but due to 11+ selection most top attainers at this stage go to local grammar schools. The pupils come from just above average social circumstances and the percentage eligible for a free school meal is broadly in line with the national average. The roll has risen since the previous inspection, as have the numbers and ranges of pupils with special educational needs, although proportions remain below national averages; 25 have a statement of special educational needs. Though there are few with severe literacy problems, there are pupils with complex combined difficulties, including some with very challenging behaviour. There are 96 pupils from an ethnic minority, well below average for schools in metropolitan areas. Of these pupils, 16 have English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good, effective school that is heavily over-subscribed. Through excellent leadership and consistent commitment to school improvement it provides a very good quality of teaching and learning. Effective governors and a dynamic school staff make a very positive ethos for learning in which, given the intake, standards are generally as high as could reasonably be expected in nearly all subjects at each key stage. The school clearly provides good value for money and provision for the thriving sixth form is also cost-effective.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average and are rising at each key stage.
- A very high proportion of teaching is very good or excellent. It raises standards and the quality of learning; the way teachers keep pupils informed of what lessons are about and how well they are doing in them is particularly effective. The overall quality of teaching is very good.
- Drama contributes significantly to the excellent provision for social and moral development.
- Clear targets for improvement and comprehensive assessment of progress raise standards.
- The pupils' very good overall attitudes and personal development help substantially to raise attainment and contribute to the school's very good ethos.
- The school's relationships with parents and the community are excellent: this raises standards.
- The school cares very well for its pupils and its range of extra-curricular activities is excellent.

What could be improved

- The pupils' standards, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of management in business studies.
- The quality of some teaching in modern foreign languages and the effectiveness of how teaching is evaluated in this subject.
- The length of time spent teaching pupils each week and the amount of time allocated to information and communication technology at Key Stages 3 and 4; to religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and to some sciences at Key Stage 4.
- The provision of textbooks in science to reduce an over-reliance on worksheets that stop the flow of lessons and are hard for some pupils to manage when they wish to revise.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Arthur Terry School has continued to improve since its first inspection in February 1996; well-established practices underpin its strong commitment to do even better. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector selected it, in 1998, as one of the most improved schools nationally. The school has responded effectively to most of the seven key issues by implementing policies to raise standards, revising the school's aims, improving cost effectiveness and the provision for special educational needs. There is very good monitoring of teaching performance, with help given as needed. Target setting has improved and the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now very good. Matters not fully resolved from the first inspection are in the availability of books in some subjects, the length of the school week and the detail of the Key Stage 4 curriculum: these remain amongst the issues for improvement. The school recognises its weaknesses and is in a very strong position to rectify them.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	B	

Key	
Well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Despite a dip in the 5 or more higher grade, A*-C, passes in GCSE in 1999 compared with the year before, close scrutiny shows the pupils made better progress overall from age 11 in 1999. The results were above the national averages in both years and well up to those of pupils in similar schools. The school exceeded its own realistic targets in each of the previous four years both for the proportions gaining higher grades and those gaining 5 or more grades A*-G. The percentage of pupils gaining A*/A grades in 1999 was very close to the national average; this is good considering the effects of selection at 11+. Results in English literature, drama, electronics, graphics, food technology, German, geography and music were well above average. All other subjects were above or just above average, but results in business studies were well below and not good enough. The girls did better than the boys, but the difference was less than the national one. Pupils with special educational needs did well in some GCSE and Certificate of Achievement courses and in a Diploma of Vocational Education course, devised to give them relevant work-related experiences. All 232 candidates entered for a certificate in basic computer skills received recognition.

The effects of selection are still seen in A/AS-levels where average point scores are nevertheless near to the national average for those taking 2 or more subjects (the vast majority). A continuous upward trend in the pattern of results over four years has been at a faster rate than the national one. The strongest subjects in 1999 were English literature, mathematics, physics, art, geography and history, where large entries gained very high pass rates. The boys did slightly better than the girls at this stage. Attainment in GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) courses was at the national average for rates of course completion and certification.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: the pupils have general affection for and loyalty to the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: generally, behaviour does not undermine standards. Effective support measures help staff to overcome problems.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: the pupils gain substantially in maturity.
Attendance	Good: above average. The school is vigilant and consistent in its attempts to ensure full attendance. A small minority has too many absences, often condoned by parents. Standards suffer as a result.

The general contribution to pupils' standards of each of these aspects is very good. The school has a positive learning ethos, but there are pockets of misbehaviour that undermine standards in business studies and some modern foreign languages lessons. The pupils' personal development, helped particularly by the personal, social and moral education very effectively taught through drama, is very good. Most pupils have a real affection for the school, they attend regularly; this raises standards. The school's excellent range of extra-curricular activities also improves personal development.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Well over 40 per cent of teaching is at least very good and a further 34 per cent good, with the rest satisfactory, except for 4 per cent that is unsatisfactory. Teaching is slightly better in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form than in Key Stage 3. The teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their subject, effective planning, management of pupils and assessment of progress lead to many lessons in which the craft of teaching is at a very high level, so good learning occurs. Specialist teaching to improve basic literacy and number skills is very good. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is some of the best in the school. Demands on the pupils are high, work is well tailored to different levels of attainment and the pupils respond well, knowing clearly what is expected of them and appreciating the regular feedback on how they are doing and how to improve. Pupils are prepared to experiment and, in the best lessons, many brim over with good ideas. Teaching in religious education and geography is also very good; it is good in most other subjects. In the comparatively few unsatisfactory lessons, higher attainers are not stretched enough and there is not enough use of information and communication technology. There are some weaknesses in business studies where teachers sometimes fail to exploit the pupils' good ideas and in modern foreign languages where, sometimes, teachers' accents and use of the foreign language in class are not good enough. Some misbehaviour due to weak control and methods sometimes slows progress, mainly in these subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: provision goes a long way to meeting current thinking and offers very good equality of opportunity. A few weaknesses – see below.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: provision to improve basic literacy and number is very good. Well-planned support helps them make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Thorough: the school buys in extra help to identify the nature and extent of the problems a few pupils have.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: provision is a hallmark of the school; contributions of extra-curricular activities, drama, music and personal, social and moral education are very strong. Moral and social development is excellent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: welfare and guidance are strengths of the school. Considerable progress in setting pupils clear targets to improve.

The school has a good, relevant curriculum, matching current thinking. It includes strong drama, work-related activities, the benefits of effective community education and excellent links with primary schools. Collaboration with other partner schools gives good breadth to sixth-form provision. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities complements the curriculum. Non-compliance with the provision of a daily act of collective worship persists from the previous inspection. Other weaknesses affect science, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school works particularly well with parents who lend it very strong support. They get very good information, though some claim to need more, and it treats them as full partners in educating their children. The standard of care given to pupils is also very good. Procedures for assessing attainment and setting targets are very good, though less effective in the sixth form. Arrangements for child protection are very good, as are those for eliminating oppressive behaviour through the very effective personal, social and moral education programme and the highly effective management structure.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent: there are clear, effective practices that raise standards. Outstanding leadership motivates the staff and pupils to do well. Some weakness in middle management in business studies and modern foreign languages.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Assiduously: they hold the school fully to account, provide relevant expertise and they do not shrink from taking hard decisions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: there is a very thorough analysis of all aspects of performance and relevant planning is directed clearly to improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very effective: staffing costs are high, but put to very good use. Means of ensuring best value for money are excellent. Good value for money.

These aspects are the real strength of the school. The very good leadership and management contribute significantly to the pupils' rising standards. Outstanding leadership on the part of the headteacher makes sure that everyone is fully involved and that channels of communication are clear. Line management is generally very effective, but there are some weaknesses in middle management in business studies and in the monitoring of teaching in modern foreign languages. The school's procedures for evaluating its performance and setting realistic targets for improvement are effective and thorough. The school is held well to account by both governors and many demanding parents. Accommodation and resources are adequate; staffing costs are high, but deployment is very effective. Considering the quality of the pupils' education and the above average standards they achieve against above average costs nationally, the school provides good value for money.

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 school expects their child to work hard and to achieve his or her best. • The teaching is good. • Their child likes school. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amounts of homework. • The information on how their child is getting on. • The closeness of the way the school works with parents.

The inspection team is in full agreement with the parents in each of the aspects that please them. Inspectors found the returns to the governors' questionnaire to be surprisingly few, but the message they contained was very supportive of what is clearly a very good school that has improved since the previous inspection. Homework generally helps to raise standards and much of the marking that accompanies it is of a very good quality in giving advice for improvement. Many parents saw the diary/planner as an effective means of communication and the school complies fully with legal requirements in keeping parents informed. Inspectors also found the partnership with parents to be very good. It is clear from the weight of positive response on the school's openness to parental approaches and its leadership that, if any are troubled by a lack of information or about the nature and consistency of homework, they only need to seek advice from the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The attainment of pupils at the start of their secondary schooling is about the national average. The range of attainment is, however, adversely affected by the annual loss of more than one-quarter of the highest attainers at age 11, due to the local selection procedures for grammar schools. On the other hand, the proportions of pupils starting the school unable to read and write well enough to cope with the secondary curriculum are also comparatively small. The pupils make good progress at each key stage and standards overall rise to above average at Key Stages 3 and 4 and they are close to the national average point scores at A-level. Clear improvements have been made in teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Although there are differences between standards in given subjects, the overall pattern is that of a school in which, given its context of a skewed intake, standards are well up to what could be reasonably expected. Inspection evidence suggests that secure structures are in place to continue its current upward progress.
2. In 1999, pupils' results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average for the percentage reaching the nationally expected Level 5 in English and were above the same average in mathematics and science. In English and mathematics, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 or higher was well above the national average and was close to it in science, where staffing problems had been met.
3. Work of a well-above average standard is seen at Key Stage 3 in geography and religious education. Standards in other subjects are at least average, except in information technology where they are below average due to the fragmented way the subject is organised at this key stage. Most average attainers are achieving in line with expectations and the pupils with special educational needs make good progress to reach nevertheless still below average standards. Work in mathematics is a strength with one-third of the pupils achieving at a well above average rate. The achievement of half of the pupils in geography and physical education is above average and there is no achievement that is below expectation in these subjects and in design and technology, history and music. There are weaknesses in French, as some teaching lacks appropriate impact and the current arrangements for introducing a second language in Year 8 undermine the achievement of average attainers in their first language. The girls reach higher standards than do the boys at this key stage.
4. As a result of the very good quality of teaching, the pupils achieve above average standards in public examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. These results are in line with those achieved in similar schools, most of which do not lose the higher attainers at 11+. Of particular note, considering the intake, is the distinct rise in 1999 in the number of pupils gaining at least 8 higher grade GCSE passes. Over the period since the previous inspection, the average GCSE point score has risen broadly in line with the national trend of improvement. In 1998, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector acclaimed the school as one of the top 100 most improved nationally over the previous four years. In 1999, there were particular strengths in English literature, drama, electronics, graphics, food technology, German, geography and music, where results were well above the subject average nationally. There were improved performances in geography, French, food technology, mathematics and music; other subjects remained more or less as before or dipped compared with the year before. A careful analysis of progress indicates that candidates did better in 1999 than the year before when their relative attainment on entry is taken into account. Only in business studies were the results well below the national average for higher, A*-C grades. The percentage of pupils gaining A*/A grades was very close to the national average for all maintained schools: this is good considering the substantial loss of the highest attainers to selection. Results were good in vocational courses at Key Stage 4, with all candidates, mainly pupils with special educational needs, qualifying in a City and Guilds foundation programme and all pupils in the year group obtained a certificate of basic competence in the use of computers. The performance of the boys reflects the national pattern and lags behind that of the girls, but the difference is slightly less marked. Pupils from an ethnic minority attained very well: they gained a much higher GCSE average point score than the school average in 1999.
5. Achievement in the lessons seen reinforces the above average picture of attainment given by the examination results, but promises some improvements in science and history especially, and, to a degree, business studies but here, the probability of improvement is more fragile, as the quality of teaching is too

variable. Standards of attainment in this subject are currently in line with expectations, the pupils showing, for example, good understanding of related terminology. Higher attainers are achieving well up to expectation in English, mathematics and science: some pupils do especially well in mathematics, working at exceptional levels in some topics. Achievement that promises average to above average standards is found in most of the subjects for which the pupils opt. Very good science teaching is leading to rising achievement and, in English, the high and average attainers are able to explore character effectively and find evidence to support ideas. In geography, high attainers produce very good coursework, but lower attainers find it hard to write well at any length, although they do achieve satisfactorily in relation to prior attainment. Above average standards in drama come from the pupils' effective use of gesture, intonation and careful pacing in closely observed performances. In design and technology, design folders show a good range of presentation skills and the pupils' practical skills, including pupils on the GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) manufacturing course, are good. Pupils make clear progress in improving their problem-solving skill in history and in information technology, where standards remain below average, however. There have been substantial improvements in standards in modern foreign languages since the previous inspection. High attainers now take full parts in conversations and try, though not very successfully, to use a variety of tenses. Others are more diffident and the range of achievement in writing is very wide. Pupils develop individual compositions well in music. In physical education, the pupils' practical skills are good: the girls, for example, choreograph good dance performances and the boys have improving body control when trampolining. The prior attainment of pupils on the religious education course is below average. Most pupils, due to effective teaching, gain good knowledge and understanding of relevant beliefs and practices in different religions.

6. Students' attainment in GCE A-level examinations is close to the national average, with the boys attaining slightly more highly than do the girls at this stage. Standards have risen faster than the national improvement rate since the previous inspection. This reflects the very good quality of teaching and improving value achieved as the students move from examination at 16 to examination at 18. In only a very few subjects is the A-E pass rate below the national average. The effects of the missing high attainers, noted at Key Stages 3 and 4, persist as the real weakness in the school's performance is in the below average rate of high A/B grades, except in mathematics, where they are well above. The strongest subjects are English literature, mathematics, physics, art, geography, history and physical education, in which comparatively high numbers of candidates returned well above average results in the A-E range. There were strong performances in theatre studies and in business studies.
7. The proportions of students achieving certification in the GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) courses, both intermediate and advanced, were about average in 1999. These students' attainment is clearly enhanced by the work-related nature of the work they do. It provides them with relevant knowledge of and insights into life in the world outside school, preparing them effectively for their next steps in education or training.
8. The school has comparatively undemanding admission requirements to the sixth form; there is no previous attainment condition for any but a few A-level courses, as seen in the variety of achievement in class. Inspection evidence confirms the sixth-form results. Weaker students' reading undermines their standards in English, whilst others extend their skills of character analysis and logical writing to a high level. Students in mathematics have a thorough understanding of the course topics and in science they are able to improve their learning through effective use of information and communication technology. Achievement in other subjects is at least up to the course expectations, except in A-level computing and religious studies. Results in both these subjects are below average. This is because the students' grounding in computing is weak in the one and the prior attainment levels in religious education of many of those in the other are too low for them to be able to assimilate the nuances of a comparatively difficult syllabus. The school is set to alter this syllabus.
9. The school has set challenging annual targets for improvement since 1994, well before the previous inspection. These are based on thorough analyses of past performance by both the school's and commercial assessments. These challenging targets have been met and generally exceeded each year, showing substantial value achieved by the pupils at each stage and success in the planning and execution of initiatives to reach the targets.
10. The level of attention paid to the achievement of various groups is very high. Analyses are rigorous and information is passed on effectively to departments. The performance of pupils from an ethnic minority is carefully evaluated and shows their standards in public examinations to be well above the school average. The school employs a specialist to monitor the needs of bilingual pupils. A detailed study has

compared their learning with that of other pupils in the school. Currently no special difficulties have been identified.

11. The influence of an effective policy to improve the pupils' literacy can be seen in all subjects. There is effective teaching of important terminology and pupils receive clear examples of the best way to communicate with different audiences in mind. As a result, they are confident and standards of literacy are improving across the school. Many A-level students write clearly about complicated ideas, with a clear notion of what their target readership needs. Pupils with learning difficulties use the prompts and support, including integration assistance, that are available to express their own thoughts and ideas. Teachers provide careful guidance to let the pupils build their work up methodically. There are many chances to improve reading: in many lessons; with form tutors; with subject specialists and in the library. Most pupils are confident to cope with all sorts of written text.
12. Because of the very effective emphasis on drama, pupils talk with great purpose, poise and spontaneity; they also listen to each other well. They are often given rules within which they become confident and very competent as talkers, starting early in Key Stage 3. The very good quality of teaching is characterised by how teachers understand the importance of talk as a way of learning.
13. The mathematics' department recognises its major role in developing a whole school numeracy policy and is part of the Birmingham numeracy pilot scheme. Good practice for improving numeracy amongst under-achieving Year 7 pupils is seen in very successful special lessons. Teachers have taken these strategies into their other lessons, developing a range of teaching styles to suit all attainments. Other subjects use, or make significant contributions to the numeracy skills of pupils. In geography, pupils collect and tabulate data, make use of grid references and use graphs to demonstrate differing forms of information. In design and technology, the pupils use a variety of units for measuring lengths, weights and volumes and are required to collect and present data during project work, often making use of information and communication technology. Physical education lessons provide opportunities for pupils to use measurement in time and distance. In science, pupils use a variety of specialist units, including compound units of density, velocity and pressure. They can interpret and produce graphs representing scientific occurrences. Other subjects reinforce numeracy effectively through practice using graphs, tables and spreadsheets. Pupils' proficiency increases as they progress through the school. In the sixth form students use statistical presentations when reporting findings of surveys in GNVQ courses. In business studies lessons, students display proficient skills but are often confused by financial accounting procedures. A-level science courses use and develop high levels of mathematical skills when investigating exponential decay. In geography they use advanced statistical techniques for correlation and analyses.
14. Pupils with special educational needs make generally good progress but, for those who have them, some statements in their individual education plans are not explicit enough to allow accurate measurement of how they are doing.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' attitudes towards school are very good and they display a keenness and eagerness to work. They have an affection and loyalty towards the school, holding it in high esteem. Most pupils work hard, are co-operative and make good use of their opportunities for learning. During lessons most pupils are interested in their studies, motivated to learn and respond well to frequent challenging tasks. Most pupils settle quickly to written tasks when requested to do so. They work well together in pairs and in small groups where they actively encourage and support each other. This is particularly evident in drama and physical education lessons where peer group evaluation encourages improved performance through constructive feedback. Given the opportunity, pupils share their knowledge and actively support the less confident when using computers. Pupils are confident in talking about their work; they readily answer questions and participate fully in discussions. They are proud of their achievements and produce work that gives them personal satisfaction for their efforts. A few pupils take little responsibility for their work, rarely take a positive stance in lessons and, on occasions, they disrupt the learning of others, mainly in some business studies, modern foreign languages and design and technology classes, mainly at Key Stage 4. The participation of pupils of all attainments and age groups in a wide range of extra-curricular activities is very good. Roles and responsibilities, such as membership of the school council, or house captaincy are carried out effectively. Pupils with special educational needs are interested in their work and are able to maintain their concentration well and are fully integrated into the school community.
16. The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is good and this has a positive impact on their progress and achievement. There are clear expectations of good behaviour that the majority of pupils respect. The

standard of behaviour in lessons is rarely less than good. On occasions, where behaviour is less than satisfactory it is related to the negative attitudes displayed by some pupils towards their work. This also restricts the range of activities that can be undertaken in a few lessons. These incidents have a detrimental impact on the learning and progress of others within the class. The school is an orderly community and pupils are courteous and welcoming towards visitors. Great emphasis is placed by the school on encouraging pupils' understanding of the importance of living in a socially harmonious community that respects and values the individual. Pupils are encouraged to understand the impact of their actions on others. Pupils are aware of the school's anti-bullying policy and of the procedures to follow. Incidents of bullying are taken seriously and effectively dealt with. Appropriate procedures involving the governing body are followed for the exclusion of pupils and this sanction is reserved for those pupils who fail to respond to other measures the school employs for serious breaches of its code of conduct. The number of exclusions has reduced significantly since the previous inspection. Generally pupils with special educational needs behave well. They have positive attitudes to learning because they are well supported and feel that they are included in all the activities within school. Their concentration in lessons is very good. Other pupils respond well to pupils with special educational needs, and learn a lot from working alongside them.

17. The personal development of pupils is very good. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to accept responsibility and demonstrate initiative as they move up through the school. Sixth-form students have a high profile within the school and act as positive role models. They have responsibility for running lunch time clubs, supporting younger pupils in lessons and tutorial periods. A team of pupils created the choreography for the school's production of 'West Side Story' and there are many positions of responsibility within the house system. Pupils frequently represent the school in the wider community: as, for example, British Youth in the annual Armistice Day in Ypres and as community sports leaders. Opportunities are sometimes restricted for pupils to develop their independent study and learning skills and this impedes their overall levels of attainment and progress.
18. Generally, the parents support the school well in sending their child to school. Attendance is good overall and above the national average of 92 per cent. Unauthorised absence is very low compared with the national average. There is a minority of pupils whose attendance falls below 90 per cent and this is particularly evident in Key Stage 4. This has a detrimental impact on their attainment and progress and ultimate success in, for example, business studies GCSE examinations. The school actively monitors the attendance of these pupils and has a range of strategies in place, such as a work-related curriculum for disaffected pupils, to encourage a higher level of attendance. The school is effectively supported by the education welfare service. Most pupils are punctual arriving at school for morning and afternoon registrations and lessons start promptly. The school complies with the statutory requirements for the registration of pupils. There is no significant over-representation of girls, of boys or of different minority ethnic groups in relation to exclusions and attendance. In the previous two years, exclusion rates were low, all the fixed period exclusions, except one, were boys, with one from an ethnic minority group.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. The now very good quality of teaching is a strength of the school: it represents a clear improvement since the previous inspection, when teaching was good. This is due to the very effective monitoring programme, some good recent appointments, purposeful training and the governors' and senior managers' actions to improve the quality of both teaching and learning. The quality of teaching has a direct impact on the pupils' above average standards. Teaching in well over 40 per cent of lessons was very good or excellent, a much higher proportion than is normally the case. In a further 34 per cent, teaching was good and it was satisfactory in nearly all the rest. Teaching is unsatisfactory in 4 per cent of the total observations. Teaching is slightly better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, but it is also good at Key Stage 3. Teaching is particularly good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science where at Key Stages 3 and 4 combined, more than half is very good and some excellent. This quality continues in the sixth form. Teaching is equally good in religious education and geography, with history and physical education not far behind. Teaching is good in all other subjects except modern foreign languages and business studies where it is inconsistent. The quality of pupils' learning has also improved: it matches closely the quality of teaching and is very good overall. In many lessons, the pupils work together very effectively.
20. The teachers' generally very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects help them to stimulate the pupils to try hard. In an imaginative interpretation of the role of fathers in a Year 10 English study of 'To Kill a Mocking Bird', the teacher's passion and knowledge of both text and examination requirements led to lively and challenging learning through imitating a popular television chat show format. Complex

technical language was built onto what had been learned before, helping the pupils to use pertinent vocabulary in different types of writing and speech. This was also evident in mathematics when, for instance, the teacher's knowledge covered both the theme of the lesson and the pupils' learning needs to get the mathematical ideas over to them most effectively. On occasion, in French, the teacher's accent is not good enough for the pupils to copy and the use of the foreign language as the means of general communication is insufficient to allow them to get practice in understanding. Learning and progress are inhibited as a result. This contrasts with some very good, fluent challenge that inspires higher attainers in particular in German.

21. The specialist teaching to improve basic reading and number skills is very good. Teachers collaborate well so the pupils with special educational needs make good gains in learning alongside other pupils in the school. Extra teachers and integration assistants support children with special educational needs very effectively in most subjects. They plan together with the class teacher, and help to develop learning materials so that the work is easy to understand, and presents pupils with manageable challenges. There are occasions, however, when the integration assistants are not used so effectively, for example in modern foreign languages when the teacher is talking at some length. The special educational needs teachers also work alongside staff in other lessons, and this has led to a good understanding of appropriate teaching methods. The school has developed well in this respect since the previous inspection.
22. An effective equal opportunities policy requires particular attention to teaching methods, styles, organisation and pupil grouping arrangements, expectations and resources to avoid any inequality. Very effective work is helping teachers to understand the learning needs of pupils from an ethnic minority, especially those with English as an additional language. Since 1999, teaching in English has focused particularly on the access and achievement of boys. In geography, teachers select materials that avoid stereotyping and bias. The teaching of personal, social and moral education through drama at Key Stage 3 is particularly effective in developing all pupils' confidence and oral skills. The programme extends the pupils' learning effectively through collaboration and research to come up with responses to some everyday imponderables. Although not completed, an amount of work has raised further the standards of the most gifted pupils: teachers keep up-to-date records of those performing particularly well in their subject and provide suitable extra work. An outcome is the distinct rise in 1999 in the numbers of pupils gaining at least eight grades, A*-C, at GCSE.
23. The effectiveness of nearly all teachers' planning is very good at each stage. This is a direct outcome of the effective monitoring and evaluation carried out by senior and most middle management. Lessons are suitably varied in most cases and the pupils learn well as a result of work that is presented coherently and interestingly. Teachers share the lesson's purposes clearly with the pupils and make regular reference to how they are being met during the lesson. This general good practice is interpreted especially well in history, religious education and geography. Most science lessons are interestingly devised, demanding and conducted at a good pace whether in creating pinhole cameras, studying the origins of species or radioactive decay. In this subject, as in others, teachers use the pupils' prior knowledge efficiently to lead, for instance, into practical work. Good planning in physical education is effective in improving the pupils' low levels of attainment in gymnastics at the start of Key Stage 3 so that they quickly learn to create smooth sequences that are effectively evaluated to give the basis for further improvement. On the other hand, in some business studies lessons, the planning can be too rigid, with chances missed to exploit pupils' responses, as when a Year 11 class wished to link inflation to wage demands yet the teacher failed to grasp the issue's relationship to price rises.
24. Teachers' expectations of pupils are good at Key Stage 3 and very good thereafter. In English, there were numerous examples of significant progress occurring as the teacher used a wide range of demanding strategies to extend the pupils' use of critical language in a creative task replying to an imagined parental complaint. Questions are spread effectively to involve all the pupils or sixth-form students; video and computers are used efficiently to make clear impacts on learning. In Year 9, for example, lively methods, pace, praise and good use of a special educational needs teacher promoted clear enjoyment and carried pupils with challenging behaviour along well. In geography, sixth-form teachers made good use of the students' knowledge of biology to reinforce the theme of the lesson and mathematics teaching drew similarly on the pupils' knowledge of the Doomsday Book. In A-level business studies, a teacher was able to ask questions that required considered lengthy answers, reinforcing literacy and numeracy at the same time.
25. The effectiveness of the teaching methods reflects the very good teachers' planning. In the best lessons, of which there are many, the success of the school's emphasis on improving the pupils' learning experiences is easy to see. In art at Key Stage 4, very good teaching of craft skills gives the pupils

confidence to work effectively on their own on ceramics projects. In English, imaginative flowcharts, imitation of gossip columnists and meticulous annotations typified very good A-level teaching techniques. Work that is modified to suit different levels of attainment is commonplace in subjects such as information technology, religious education (where artefacts and displays are also used to good purpose) and in science: collaboration with special educational needs is increasingly effective in this respect. Over-use of prepared worksheets reduces the impact of some lessons, in science especially. In most subjects, the teachers ensure there is enough time to discuss what has been learned and to evaluate progress before the bell goes. This is not always so in modern foreign languages, so the pupils are unclear as to what they have achieved, mainly at Key Stage 3. In some business studies lessons, there is too lax an attitude to standards and poor teaching techniques let, for example, the pupils get away with unlabelled graphs. Some sixth-form teaching in psychology is characterised by over-long talks by the teacher. This reduces the students' chances to reinforce their own thinking and to express their own ideas. There was some evidence of the highest attainers not being stretched enough in a few science lessons at Key Stage 3.

26. The way the teachers manage the pupils is very good at all stages, although there were occasional indications of expected challenging behaviour conditioning the organisation of, for example, a Year 9 drama lesson and some unruly behaviour in Year 11 business studies that inhibited learning. There were also some instances in modern foreign languages where a lack of firm control reduced progress. Generally, however, learning was not impeded by the need to control miscreants. Nearly all pupils are self-disciplined and keen to learn, making the teacher's job easier; some, however, do need control and generally, the teachers' classroom management is up to the task. The school's system of positive intervention, if there are problems, is clearly effective. The teachers are confident enough to give the pupils responsibility to get on with the set tasks and to act as commentators on the quality of what is being achieved. There were frequent good examples of this in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, religious education and design and technology. The change from one activity to the next occurs smoothly and the expectation of good behaviour is widely respected. For example in a Year 8 science lesson, carefully selected groups of four pupils used several information sources, including computers, to prepare engaging, informed lectures on the dangers of abusing harmful substances. They gave each other relevant jobs to do, whilst the teacher advised and, at the end, provided very helpful criticism of behaviour, how the groups had done and what they could do to improve. Most pupils are responsible, organise themselves very well in many drama lessons, for instance, and make good progress as a result. The very good management of pupils allows good rates of productivity and pace of working, as the pupils nearly always understand what they are doing and concentrate diligently. This raises standards: the effect of teaching on the way pupils gain knowledge, understanding and skills is very good at Key Stage 3 and good thereafter, as sometimes necessary focus on examination requirements restricts the range of learning activity.
27. The use of limited time and of resources is good at each stage, as the very good planning is carried out smoothly. There is effective use of physical resources, including CD-ROMs and other computers in science, information technology and design and technology. There are some weaknesses in the way information technology is used in other subjects. In modern foreign languages, for instance, it was not clear how much it helped the learning of the subject: Year 10 pupils failed to exploit the possibilities of an interesting programme, but improved their control skills in using the computer. The teachers' use of the very good accommodation for physical education and drama especially, raises standards. The imaginative use of often unsuitable temporary classrooms also ensures that these poor resources do not undermine learning.
28. Very effective on-going assessments inform most teachers of the impact of their lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4. This is also a clear improvement since the previous inspection and its contribution to progress and the setting of targets for improvement is substantial. It makes sure the pupils know how well they are doing against the criteria of the National Curriculum and, for example in Year 11 mathematics, the outcome of assessments helped the teachers to make appropriate changes to the curriculum to help the pupils to improve. The pupils readily assess their own performances in music and most physical education. Whilst the quality of marking is good generally, it is outstanding in religious education: the pupils' progress at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is clearly helped by the many constructive comments the teachers provide and follow up. Assessment in the best business studies lessons is well interpreted to provide extra recaps where learning is fragile. Assessment in the sixth form, although satisfactory, is not as effective as at Key Stages 3 and 4, largely because direct comparison to the stages of the Programmes of Study is more difficult to establish. There is good use of homework in all subjects: its contribution to learning is effective, as most pupils complete conscientiously work that makes suitable demands on them. Evidence of unsuitable homework matched the balance of the parents' responses where some 15 per cent had reservations, but the rest thought homework to be helpful to progress.

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

29. The school provides a generally good, broad and balanced curriculum. However, there are weaknesses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and the curriculum time is one hour below the recommended 25 hours. Too much tutor time does not focus on pertinent issues or the published areas of thought. Senior management and the governing body have given due consideration to the aspects raised in the previous inspection and took decisions to protect the high quality of the provision offered by the school at that time. The governors provide pertinent critical support in the school's constant re-evaluation of curriculum provision in the light of national legislation and local economic characteristics.
30. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has good breadth and balance. All pupils study the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. All pupils follow a well-planned PSME (personal, social and moral education) course, which is very effectively taught through drama at Key Stage 3, adding to the school's very good ethos. Information technology is provided in Year 7 through specific lessons and contributions from the mathematics department. In Years 8 and 9 the school's attempts to cover National Curriculum requirements in this subject, through other subject areas, are not clearly co-ordinated: there are too many lengthy breaks between lessons in a programme that contains many different aspects of general education. Time allocation to National Curriculum subjects is in line with national averages, although the introduction of a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9, without extra time, adversely affects progress in some pupils' first language: this impedes progress into Key Stage 4.
31. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a good breadth and balance of subjects. The school offers a wide range of options, including a new course in GNVQ manufacturing. The curriculum is devised to ensure that all the pupils follow an aesthetic and a humanities subject in their choices, as well as at least one modern foreign language. Pupils have a high success rate in obtaining their chosen combination of options. However, following the thoroughly debated decision of the governors, design and technology is not taught to all pupils. Information and communication technology, religious education and elements of the personal, social and moral education programme are offered in rotation, but there are weaknesses associated with this system. The locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education cannot be taught in sufficient depth, as there is not enough time given to it: this breaches statutory requirements. Information and communication technology modules can be up to four terms apart for certain pupils, adversely affecting progress in learning. Group sizes are too large for the available resources in the health and fitness module. Pupils are able to study double science award or study physics, chemistry and biology as separate subjects. Those studying the three sciences separately experience some imbalance in the rest of their curriculum: the governors have now taken appropriate decisions, which will resolve the problem: the arrangement is to be discontinued. Equality of opportunity is part of the rotating programme taught to all pupils in early Year 11. There is a particular focus on the work place, as pupils go on work experience for two weeks at this time. This is very good, constructive thinking by the school in collaboration with the community.
32. At Key Stage 4, there are separate lessons in which good use is made of specialist support staff, for the clearly effective continuing careers, health and sex education programmes. Effective use is made of outside specialists including the police liaison officer who teaches drugs education and rights and responsibilities. Input from the careers service is mostly limited to interviews, which are organised in response to pupils' questionnaires completed early in Year 11. Support is also provided in the way of work-related curriculum leading to the Diploma of Vocational Education and extra work experience for disaffected pupils.
33. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and meets the requirement of those on the special educational needs register. The use of individual education plans is well developed, though some need to be clarified to give greater detail as to what is to be done to help the pupil to improve. The full curriculum is available to almost all the pupils with special educational needs. Pupils with hearing difficulties can enjoy drama, and those with physical disabilities can be active in the fitness centre. In addition, there is a range of specialist help available. Individuals who do not study all of the National Curriculum subjects are taught effectively to improve their basic skills.
34. The national literacy initiative has been adopted throughout the school and subject departments make good contributions, following a strong lead from a working party. Classrooms have key

words on display and the pupils receive close guidance on how to write. A whole-school numeracy policy is being introduced through a pilot project in Year 7. There is no formal teaching of basic skills in the sixth form.

35. Broadened by an effective sharing of provision with partner schools, the sixth-form curriculum provides a good number of A-level, A/S level and GNVQ courses. Re-sit GCSE courses are offered as well as a GCSE mathematics course providing accreditation for GNVQ students. There are effective extra courses, for instance in psychology, which the students appreciate. The courses in physical education and theatre studies attract new students to the school. The absence of religious education constitutes a breach of statutory requirements.
36. The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. There are excellent opportunities to promote pupils' moral and social development and very good opportunities for their spiritual and cultural development. In spiritual, moral and social provision there is a good improvement since the previous inspection through improved teaching and broadened community provision. The very good arrangements for cultural opportunities are sustained.
37. There is still no specific policy for the management of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as at the previous inspection, but provision is very good. There is now a well-considered assembly policy, which relates well to the school's aims in planning to share the school's values and to develop pupils' self-worth and a sense of community.
38. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. A planned programme for assemblies includes regular identified spiritual content through visiting speakers. A thought for the day is shared in some registrations, but all tutors do not grasp the opportunities for reflection. In some assemblies visited during the inspection, there was a very good emphasis on moral and social values, such as the sixth-form assembly on philanthropy where there was an excellent atmosphere in which students were very attentive and thoughtful. Assemblies contribute very well to pupils' personal development, although they are still not meeting the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Across the curriculum there are consistently very good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and other people's lives and beliefs. In subjects such as English, drama, music, religious education and PSME (personal, social and moral education), there is a good emphasis on developing pupils' self-respect and respect for the views of others. Inspirational displays in mathematics stimulate awe and wonder, also the teaching of poetry is awe-inspiring to pupils with special educational needs and artwork, created after a visit to a regional Sea Life Centre, shows a genuine sense of wonder.
39. The school's promotion of moral development is firmly embedded in its aims and key documentation. Provision is excellent. The classroom focus on the 3 C's of courtesy, consideration and co-operation is reflected in the whole life of the school community. Most staff are excellent role models in their promotion of very high standards and pupils and parents are obviously very supportive of the school's values and ethos. Respect for all pupils is manifest and there is a good focus on equal opportunities in naming science laboratories after female scientists. There are very good examples of a specific emphasis on moral and ethical issues in studying the exploitation of natural resources in Alaska and in studies of prejudice, bullying, rights and responsibilities in PSME. Throughout the religious education programme, provision for moral education is outstanding, such as imaginative and sensitive discussions in Year 9 on choosing a partner, world poverty and Jubilee 2000 in Year 10 and evil and suffering in Year 12. The presence of seriously disabled pupils in the school, and the tolerance their presence creates, serves to make staff and pupils alike extremely aware of physical diversity. This in turn promotes very good personal, community and race relations in the school.
40. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. Relationships in the school and in the wider community are excellent. Very good community work includes joint extra-curricular activities with primary schools, visits by sixth-formers to primary schools and third-age centres and support for a range of charities. Theatre and education specialists, for example, contribute well to personal, social and health issues and an inspirational Year 8 pilot programme to work with a visiting architect in building a gurdwara is being extended to the whole year group. Year 7 had a very productive learning day with the University of the First Age, Year 9 benefited from working with employers on an industry day and all GNVQ students have industry links, which develop their self-confidence and esteem. There are excellent opportunities to develop co-operative, competitive, team and leadership skills through a wide range of sports, including regional and national successes, the house system, residentials such as Outward Bound for Year 9 and the sixth form, the Duke of Edinburgh award, the school council and musical productions. There is no prefect system, but an elected head boy and head girl lead well in representing the school. Sixth-formers help pupils in Key Stage 3 lessons and generally there are very good opportunities for

pupils' personal development through group work and supporting each other in class activities such as in mathematics, information and communication technology, English, religious education and geography. There is a very good range of clubs to enhance personal development including music, mathematics, sport, a newspaper, Intranet and other subject-based activities.

41. Cultural opportunities are very good. Religious education, art, music and English make a significant contribution through encouraging pupils to appreciate their own cultures and to develop a multi-cultural perspective. There is also a good focus in history and geography. Some outstanding displays in mathematics, religious education, art and music are inspirational, stimulating pupils to reflect on the contribution of other cultures to the development of numbers, beliefs and values and world art and music. A very dedicated and hardworking staff also give unstintingly of their time in organising high quality trips in science, mathematics, art, religious education, careers, history, theatre, geography field trips, visiting France and a German work experience.
42. The school has been very successful in forging links with the local community, which have a beneficial effect on pupils' intellectual and personal development. A member of staff acts as a co-ordinator promoting links between departments and outside organisations, often arranging teacher placements. Some links result in sponsorship for educational development within the school. The school works closely with an education-business partnership, which supports the work-related curriculum and helps organise work experiences for pupils and students. They help organise many one-day events in school, focusing on pupils' awareness of themselves and the world of work. Sixth-form students have worked with a variety of local companies and industries organising conferences, enhancing course work with real projects from the workplace and participating in 'challenge' activities organised by the army. The University of the First Age offers pupils opportunities to develop their learning potential. Links to the world-wide community have been inhibited by technical problems encountered connecting the school's computer system to the Internet.
43. The school's links with its partner institutions are excellent and contribute to the welfare and academic progress of pupils and students. Links with primary schools are formalised on a financial basis with effective sharing of training opportunities and of teaching in mathematics, English, science and modern languages. The special educational needs teachers also work well with primary schools to ensure pupils' needs are fully understood before they come to the school. They add this knowledge to information gathered in a range of tests when pupils enter the school. They study all this data carefully so that they can give class teachers clear information about individual needs and targets for each pupil. These individual education plans are carefully reviewed each term to get an up to date picture of each pupil's learning. Pupils help to set new targets. The headteacher acts as chairman of the regional secondary heads forum. Preparation for progression to further and higher education is purposefully enhanced by links with universities.
44. The school's provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent: parents express strong support and approval for this provision. Of particular note are the music and drama activities, involving about one-fifth of pupils together with many parents and teachers. There is a complete array of sporting and fitness activities enjoyed by pupils in all years. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme offers pupils the opportunity to take part in a variety of challenges that teach them resourcefulness, responsibility, self-reliance and tolerance of others. Many subjects use the local area and various places in Britain and abroad for special studies. There is a good range of school clubs and societies associated with different subjects.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The standard of care given to meeting the pupils' personal and academic needs is very good. The school provides a caring, supportive environment where there are very good relationships between pupils and adults and between the pupils themselves. Tutors stay with their tutor group throughout, getting to know their pupils well. Tutors are responsible for monitoring the personal and academic progress of their class, effectively using data based on prior attainment. Pertinent targets to raise pupils' level of attainment are set twice a year during tutors' one-to-one interviews with their form. These procedures are good at Key Stages 3 and 4, but less so in the sixth form. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good and the school works hard to continually raise attendance rates. Several effective strategies encourage improved attendance; some disaffected pupils, for example, benefit from a work-related curriculum. Pupils who have a lengthy absence receive home tuition, organised by the school, and individual re-integration programmes help them settle upon return. Doctors, psychologists, counsellors

and language specialists support pupils with special educational needs, where necessary, to ensure that every one has an equal opportunity to learn appropriately.

46. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and using that data to guide curricular planning are very good. Information from primary schools on Key Stage 2 test results enables a fairly accurate profile of their prior attainment to be drawn up: Key Stage 2 science test results appear from inspection evidence to be inaccurate for some. The school carries out its own entry-time assessment tests: computer-based information is then readily accessible to all subject staff helping them to plan pupils' future work and to set challenging targets to raise attainment. All departments have assessment policies that are in line with whole-school policy. Pupils are kept informed by subject staff about their progress and understand the criteria against which their work will be assessed. Assessment is used most effectively to improve attainment and in mathematics, English and geography: for example, day-to-day assessment helps to identify and rectify weaknesses and set targets for improvement. These assessments also make an effective contribution to the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs. Annual reports to parents meet statutory requirements.
47. The arrangements for child protection are very good. The child protection officer is well qualified and experienced and has very good liaison with the external support agencies. Guidelines for staff are clear about the procedures to follow. All staff have received training on recognising possible signs of child abuse and it is part of the school's effective induction programmes for new members of staff. The overall procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils are satisfactory, but not all departments, including physical education, have carried out risk assessments.
48. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. There are clear expectations of good behaviour based on self-discipline and respect for others, which are clearly understood by pupils. Many teachers benefit from a Framework for Intervention, which supports them effectively in managing challenging behaviour and also enables the pupils to benefit from extra help from a behaviour support team. There is a consistent approach towards behaviour management amongst nearly all staff: both pupils and parents value this. Oppressive behaviour is addressed through the very effective personal, moral and social education programme and pupils are clear about what action to take if incidents occur. There are systematic monitoring procedures for sexual and racial harassment: school records show very few occurrences. Bullying and hostile behaviour are also rare and the school and pupils confirm that any related matter is dealt with immediately and effectively, through exclusion.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The parents view the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves to be very good. The impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school is excellent. There is an effective open door policy: parents feel they can approach the school if difficulties arise and their concerns are always listened to and resolved. The Parent Teacher Association actively supports the school in its work in a variety of ways such as providing refreshments at school events as well as raising substantial funds. Parents are actively involved within the school, at present, for example, with 'West Side Story', making costumes and scenery and helping with lighting and makeup. Very recently they have been involved in drawing up the home-school agreement. Many parents volunteer their services to transport pupils to sporting competitions and accompany school visits. The school is well served by its parent-governors who take an active part in all its activities.
50. The information provided for parents is very good. They are, for instance, informed about the daily life of the school through high quality newsletters. Homework diaries are a valued means of communication between home and school and of checking what homework has been set. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in monitoring the completion of both homework and coursework: many do so assiduously. If problems occur parents are contacted and expected to work in partnership with the school to resolve them. At the beginning of each school year, curriculum information is sent to parents about what their child will be studying. Consultation and information evenings are held throughout the year, providing guidance for parents at the end of a key stage and enabling them to be clear about the progress and attainment of their child. There is a high level of attendance at these evenings as at other school events such as concerts and drama productions. Even so, a few parents think the school could do more to keep them abreast of how their child is doing. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory, but there is a small omission of detail on training for special educational needs provision. The information they contain is clear about the pupils' attainment and progress. The school works well with parents of pupils with special educational needs. The partnership often starts many months before they enter the school. It continues through routine contacts and formal reviews. It ensures that both families and the school share all the necessary information to collaborate effectively.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher's leadership of the school is outstanding. This leadership, combined with good management by the key personnel in an effective, imaginative management structure, with particular strengths in effective line management, has resulted in substantial improvements in most areas of the school's work since the previous inspection. There are examples of strong management at all levels, although there are some inconsistencies.
52. A key feature of the current leadership and management of the school is the successful way in which the headteacher, who is about to retire, enables the school to move forward through building on those areas of strength identified during the previous inspection and tackling areas for development. The school is invigorated by this leadership, which receives backing from staff of all levels. Clear, relevant priorities and targets are identified through development planning that now covers a three-year period and includes sections on monitoring and evaluation to ensure that monitoring strategies are open and designed clearly to raise standards. Departmental development plans are now more closely tied to the overall school development plan and careful evaluation of the whole planning process culminates in effective annual staff training days devoted to planning review.
53. The school's relevant aims and values are clearly expressed in its mission statement, rewritten in 1997 and prominently displayed so that pupils and parents are familiar with it. Its commitment to good relations and equality of opportunity for all is palpable in all that the school does, and is reflected fully in departmental policies and aims.
54. Rigorous monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are in place, through the strong line management. Although the school no longer adheres to conventional models of staff appraisal, its well-established lesson observation scheme and systematic evaluation procedures have resulted in recognition through the award of Investor in People status in February 1999. At middle management level there are some very efficiently run departments, but managers of business studies and modern foreign languages do not monitor and evaluate sufficiently what is going on in their area of the school's work. Whilst links between school and departmental development planning have improved, this is not true of all departments. Leadership and management in the business studies and modern foreign language departments have weaknesses, particularly in the monitoring of teaching to help overcome shortcomings and to disseminate good practice. The benefits of monitoring by middle management are seen most clearly in art, English, geography, mathematics, music and physical education. The monitoring of the effectiveness of tutor time is underdeveloped.
55. The rationale for the allocation of responsibilities amongst the senior management team and at middle management level is carefully thought out. Good delegation, through the school's line management procedures, ensures that staff at all levels feel involved in decision making. This feeling of ownership of policy making is reinforced by the school's 'spokespersons' document that seeks to ensure that all staff are involved in one or more areas of concern. There is an obvious shared commitment to improvement, manifest in the very good teaching, including high expectations of pupils, seen during the inspection.
56. The governing body is able and committed. It has a very good and clear vision of what it wants the school to achieve and has a strong committee structure that holds the school efficiently and effectively to account. The way in which it supports the school is impressive and it is ready to criticise positively and to recognise and applaud the efforts of staff and pupils. It fulfils its statutory duties in most areas, but fails to ensure that religious education is delivered according to the locally Agreed Syllabus at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. It also does not ensure that the school follows statute on the provision of a daily act of collective worship. The governors have yet to ensure that the length of the taught week at Key Stage 4 satisfies the non-statutory, nevertheless strong, official recommendations.
57. The special educational needs team is well led by a co-ordinator who sets clear aims and, with meticulous administration, enables the team to achieve them. The governors understand what needs to be done, and give the teachers good support. The links with other subject teachers are very good, and the support staff are well trained. Parents, teachers and visiting specialists are very happy to work with the team. However, individual education plan targets in some subjects are difficult to measure, so it is unclear just how well each pupil is progressing. It is, therefore, hard to assess the success of all special educational needs support.

58. Through its very clear mechanisms for financial control, the school supports effectively its educational priorities. The above average share of the school's budget spent on staffing costs results partly from a line management scheme that is expensive in terms of teachers' time. This expense is justified fully by the outcomes, which include significant improvements in teachers' effectiveness and pupils' performance. It does, however, result in a lower than average budget allocation to expenditure on supplies and services and to property costs. The members of the school's administrative staff are very thorough in terms of their day-to-day financial management, aided by good support from governors. They are very effective and active in seeking avenues for cost saving. The school seeks and efficiently achieves best value through the work of its property and contracts committee. This committee establishes very tight contractual arrangements and terms, as exemplified by the cleaning, catering and Arthur Terry Sports Centre contracts. Further savings are achieved through the caretaking staff undertaking minor works. In seeking to make its administration more efficient, the school makes very good use of new technology. The use of computers has already led to a reduction in clerical work and the associated salary costs. It also releases administrative staff time so that they can give more direct support to teachers. This sensible use of staff skills allows many cost savings to be made. The school has also augmented its budget by successfully seeking funding from local charitable trusts, from various government initiatives, including city regeneration funding and by a successful, high-profile bid for National Lottery funding. These shrewd efforts have allowed facilities to be enhanced to the benefit of the pupils and students. Other improvements have occurred as the result of patient negotiations. For example, the school succeeded in having improved security fencing installed by an interested company along the length of one side of the school.
59. The demands of the curriculum are met well by the number, qualifications and experience of the teaching and support staff. Budgetary constraints and timetabling difficulties have resulted however, in a few classes being shared between two teachers in English and mathematics. The pupil-teacher ratio and the proportion of time teachers spend teaching are below the national averages for similar schools. This is partly because of the time-consuming but effective system of line management. There is a good range of technical, administrative and other support staff whose effectiveness is a strength of the school. Support staff for pupils with special educational needs provide effective in-class support. There are very effective arrangements for the induction and support of new staff. The school is an effective provider of Initial Teacher Training.
60. The accommodation on a cramped site is satisfactory overall, allowing the curriculum to be taught effectively in most respects. There has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection, enhanced by a successful bid to the National Lottery for improvements to indoor sports facilities. The library, which provides excellent facilities, has benefited from a refurbishment programme that has also improved the outside appearance of several buildings. There are still several shortcomings in the accommodation. These include inadequate corridor space, toilets, dining facilities, private study rooms, sixth form, art and business studies accommodation. Three classroom blocks await refurbishment and there are still 18 mobile classrooms on site, many of them in poor condition. Scattered rooming for the humanities subjects inhibits effective co-ordination and some rooms used for music teaching are inadequate for that purpose. Despite these shortcomings, they affect standards only minimally because very good teaching and management counteract them.
61. Learning resources are at least adequate in most subjects, but a shortage of textbooks persists in some areas, although there has been an improvement since the previous inspection. In science this shortage results in an over-reliance on worksheets, which has the effect of inhibiting teaching styles. In modern foreign languages a shortage of textbooks at Key Stages 3 and 4 has repercussions on the setting of homework for some pupils.
62. There is a good balance of expenditure across the three key stages for which the school caters, the sixth form is not imposing a drain on resources and a suitable provision is made for funding special educational needs. In considering educational standards achieved, particularly the quality of education that the school provides in relation to its context and budget, the school provides good value for money: a clear improvement since the previous inspection report.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. The following areas of concern coincide largely with the school's own identification of its main weaknesses and should form the basis of the governors' post-inspection action plan for further improvement.

- (1) Improve the standards pupils and students achieve in business studies by:
- implementing a more rigorous evaluation of teaching in the subject to help it to concentrate upon the fundamental issues and underlying ideas to be learned and to increase precision and challenge to pupils and students;
 - sharing identified good practice;
 - improving the effectiveness of management in the subject to provide better focus and more rigorous evaluation of performance, both of pupils and teachers;
 - improving the behaviour of a small number of boys, particularly at Key Stage 4.

See paragraphs: 4, 5, 13, 19, 23, 25, 26, 54, 159, 160, 161.

- (2) Improve the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages by:
- requiring all teachers to use the foreign language as the means of communication in the classroom so that the pupils get more practice in understanding and responding;
 - improving the accent and fluency of some teachers to give the pupils more suitable role models to imitate;
 - widening the range of some teachers' techniques to include better use of information and communication technology, overhead projectors, teaching techniques of having the pupils repeat phrases as a group and individual pronunciation practice;
 - strengthening the monitoring of teaching so that the above happen.

See paragraphs: 3, 5, 15, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 54, 141, 143.

- (3) Extend the length of teaching time each week to help remove the distortions and anomalies that occur. The issues to rectify are:
- increasing teaching time and its organisation to improve the pupils' experience of information and communication technology at Key Stages 3 and 4;
 - reducing the incidence of classes shared between teachers in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 for some pupils;
 - providing enough time for all pupils to reap sufficient benefit from the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form;
 - stopping the provision of three separate sciences for some pupils;
 - making sure that the introduction of a second modern foreign language does not undermine some pupils' progress in their first foreign language unduly at Key Stage 3.

See paragraphs: 3, 30, 56, 132, 138, 156, 157.

- (4) Improve the provision of textbooks, especially in science, so that the teachers and the pupils do not have to rely so heavily on worksheets.

See paragraphs 61, 104, 105.

Other matters requiring attention:

- (5) The provision of a daily act of collective worship.
- (6) The allocation of enough time to the study of religious education to allow all pupils to benefit from the detail of the local agreed syllabus at Key Stage 4 and that all sixth-formers receive their entitlement in the subject.
- (7) The development of a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- (8) Accommodation defects.

See paragraphs 31, 35, 37, 38, 56, 60, 106, 111, 147, 149.

COMMUNITY LINKS

64. The school plays an important role in the community, with members of the general public having access to some of the school's facilities, including the excellent indoor sports facilities. Strong community links are fostered in other areas of the school's work. Good working arrangements exist with the local careers service, the local education business partnership and with a number of commercial and industrial enterprises located in the vicinity of the school. These links provide good enhancements to the curriculum. All Year 11 pupils benefit from a work experience placement and the education business partnership offers opportunities for GNVQ students to undertake work placements and to enliven their

assignments with real life situations. For example, Year 12 GNVQ advanced business students have accepted the responsibility of arranging a major careers convention for Birmingham schools. This necessitates the students working in harmony with the education business partnership and with the sponsoring firms.

65. The quality of community links improves other parts of the school's curriculum. A growing number of pupils, especially at Key Stage 3, are becoming involved with the University of the First Age. This initiative allows pupils to examine their own learning styles, to attend summer schools and seek ways of learning that extend beyond traditional classroom boundaries. Improvement is also offered via a host of other opportunities available to pupils in the school including the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and participation in outward-bound ventures. Music students from the school have also appeared at a major jazz venue in Birmingham. The school is also successfully augmenting its funding through charitable and other funds available in the locally.
66. Opportunities for pupils to develop skills and understanding by linking with peers throughout the world are limited, as full access to the Internet was unduly delayed. This shortfall in provision, though outside the school's control, has impeded developments in some subjects.
67. The school is keen on continually developing its community links. The benefits to pupils and students are clearly understood and monitoring of outcomes is undertaken. The careers department undertakes follow-up activities on work experience, there are clear short-term and long-term success criteria associated with the University of the First Age and GNVQ assignments are assessed. The school's financial managers have also ensured that community links are not a drain on the school's finances. Though the sports centre is rightly seen as a valuable resource, the school has been astute to ensure that it does not have to bear all the running costs. A pragmatic working relationship has been negotiated with a private contractor. This has successfully avoided an unnecessary drain on the school's finances.

SIXTH FORM

68. The school's admission criteria are relatively undemanding, although given grades at GCSE are required for certain A-level courses. The average A-level point scores have been consistently below the national average, but they are improving. A-level results have continued to improve since the previous inspection: the pass rate is just below 90 per cent and slightly less than 20 per cent of candidates score A and B grades, reflecting the effects of selection at 11+. Standards of attainment vary between subjects and, in some cases, small entry numbers make comparisons with national figures difficult. Nevertheless, an analysis of results suggests that attainment is well above national average expectations in design and technology, English literature, geography, history, mathematics, physical education and physics. Many of these subjects are recording 100 per cent pass rates and geography and mathematics are recording results at grades A and B that are above national expectations. Other subjects, notably computing, German, psychology and religious education, are returning results that are below national expectations for grades A to E. In 1999, just over 75 per cent of students who commenced GNVQ courses, gained accreditation. The attainment of present sixth-formers is variable, but it is at least good in history, geography, mathematics, music, physics and physical education. Many sixth-formers show a capacity for independent study, they speak and write well: they are emerging as confident learners. The standards of many are, however, inhibited by conflicting outside income-earning interests.
69. Many students make good progress in their sixth-form studies whether following A-level or vocational options and academic standards achieved at GCSE are at least maintained. The school is investing in a commercial package to define how much progress the students make, but the use of this data is under-developed. The monitoring of progress at present lacks cohesion and more work needs to be done in terms of target setting and involving both students, and their parents, in systematic reviews of academic progress. Little information about target grades is available on an individual basis.
70. A broad sixth-form curriculum is offered, consisting of both A-levels and a range of GNVQ intermediate courses including business, health and social care and leisure and tourism. The former is also available at advanced level. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects, additional A-level subjects include business studies, general studies, law, politics, psychology and theatre studies. The breadth of the sixth-form curriculum is enhanced by successful consortium arrangements within the local area. The curriculum matches the needs of the students and offers suitable opportunities for building up skills and knowledge. Many students go on to higher education, but the option of intermediate vocational courses allows students to achieve academic success via an alternative route and enhances these students' chances

of employment, or pursuing their formal education further. The curriculum is enhanced by the availability of many extra-curricular activities. The opportunities to pursue interests in the performing arts are excellent. The school has a strong tradition in music and drama. Sixth-form students have accepted much responsibility for a forthcoming production of West Side Story and the school's soul band has appeared at a major jazz venue in Birmingham. Opportunities for sport, both recreational and competitive, are good and many students derive benefit from the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, which is offered, and from the outward-bound programme, which is popular with many students.

71. Opportunities for sixth-formers to develop responsibility and leadership are likewise good. A community service programme exists and a number develop individual responsibility as they work towards the Community Sports Leaders award. Over 50 sixth-form students offer help to pupils in the lower school to develop skills in reading, mathematics, computing and sport. Some other students undertake community service in local primary schools and senior citizens' centres. Opportunities to gain enriching experiences by undertaking work experience or work shadowing are less well developed and are confined almost exclusively to students on vocational courses. During the inspection, some students lamented the absence of such opportunities. Apart from an A-level course, there is no provision in the sixth form for the teaching of religious education.
72. An analysis of the sixth-form finances suggests that good value for money is achieved. The curriculum is broad and is enhanced by the success of the consortium arrangements and by the very good provision made for extra-curricular activities. Most sixth-form students are happy, very loyal and are appreciative of the opportunities offered. They also acknowledge the strong support that is given by all staff involved with the sixth form.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

227

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

88

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	33	34	19	4	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 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1446	238
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	118	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	25	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	211	

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	16

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	140	112	252

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	102	102	88
	Girls	97	84	72
	Total	199	186	160
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (73)	74 (66)	63 (63)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (43)	49 (38)	21 (31)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	93	104
	Girls	84	80	80
	Total	163	173	184
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (69)	70 (75)	74 (67)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (31)	42 (36)	44 (29)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	123	115	238

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	47	113	118
	Girls	70	114	114
	Total	117	227	232
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (54.8)	95 (93.9)	97 (99.1)
	National	46.3 (44.4)	90.7 (89.6)	95.7

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39 (39)
	National	37.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	27	100
	National		73

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	50	66	116

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.4	16.9	17.1 (16.2)	8	1.3	3 (2.8)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.5)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	21	76
	National		73

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	21
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	21
Pakistani	12
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	1350
Any other minority ethnic group	39

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	90.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	627.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
---	----

Average teaching group size: Y 7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	22
Sixth form	18

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	15	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	3,529,866
Total expenditure	3,510,375
Expenditure per pupil	2,401
Balance brought forward from previous year	77,309
Balance carried forward to next year	96,881

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1446
Number of questionnaires returned	187

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	45	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	44	6	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	57	6	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	57	14	2	0
The teaching is good.	32	63	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	48	17	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	33	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	32	8	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	33	48	15	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	59	32	3	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	43	6	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	37	5	2	5

Other issues raised by parents

Some thirty parents added extra comments. These were split evenly between those who wished to emphasise strengths and those who saw weaknesses.

A number found the school to be highly approachable and responsive. In common with those at the parents' evening, they found clear improvements in examination results and in the accommodation since the previous inspection. The parents felt the school to be confident in its own strengths: it had a good ethos, very strong leadership and strong support structures for the pupils. It took bullying very seriously, had values that were an extension of the home and it developed the pupils' talents very effectively in other than academic ways. The parents were happy with the code of conduct, found the school kept them well informed and stated themselves very pleased to have obtained a place for their child(ren) in it.

Others listed issues that concerned them. Principal amongst these was some lack of information at important points in a child's career through, for example, mis-timing the parents' evenings. Others found arrangements for homework to be unsatisfactory, some saying there was insufficient and others too much, with inconsistency in its setting a more general concern. The lack of storage was a concern of a few and individuals found staffing changes and absences, the attainment of boys, poor funding compared with other Birmingham schools and lack of immediate response unsatisfactory. Misbehaviour in lower attainment classes was emphasised by some parents and a lack of challenge for the higher attainers by others. A few felt that a lack of rewards in physical education deterred their child from trying in the subject.

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

ENGLISH

73. Inspection evidence shows that standards of work are above average and are generally at levels that could reasonably be expected at each key stage, considering the intake. They have continued to improve since the previous inspection. From the pupils' just above average levels of attainment on entry as 11 year-olds, attainment rises substantially. At Key Stage 3, well above average proportions of pupils attain the expected Level 5 or above in the National Curriculum tests. This is also above average for similar schools. Girls perform better than do boys at Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at this stage and their reading and writing improve but, for a number, are still below the standards expected.
74. At GCSE in 1999, above average proportions of pupils gained higher grade, A* to C, passes, in English language, and in English literature. This exceeded the average for similar schools. Girls also performed better than boys at GCSE. Pupils can explore character in an adopted role, and sustain their discussion with a range of details. They can find evidence to substantiate their ideas about the books they are reading. They work well in groups because they are prepared to listen to each other. The good progress made by pupils with special educational needs continues so that most obtain a grade in the GCSE or Certificate of Achievement examinations.
75. Point scores at A-level were in line with the national average last year and all candidates gained a pass grade in English literature, and nearly all did so in English language. However, the proportions reaching higher, A-B, grades were below the national average, reflecting the creaming off of higher attainers at 11+. Standards have continued to improve over the period since the previous inspection. Weaker students have difficulty when they first encounter a new text because their reading skills lack sophistication. They do not readily identify the main ideas within a poem, and their experience of literature is very narrow.
76. The department has been strongly involved in demonstrating how pupils can be helped to read, write, speak and listen more successfully, through a shared, effective literacy initiative. The influence can be seen in all subjects. Pupils are taught the correct technical vocabulary, and given clear examples of the best way to communicate in each different context. As a result, they are confident and standards of literacy are improving across the school. A-level students write at length about complicated ideas, with a clear notion of what their target readership needs. Pupils with learning difficulties use the prompts and support that are available to express their own thoughts and ideas. Teachers offer models of appropriate writing, and offer step-by-step guidance so pupils can build their work up methodically. There are many opportunities to develop reading skills – in English lessons, with form tutors, with subject specialists and in the library. This is making pupils confident to cope with all sorts of written text.
77. There is a heavy emphasis on organised discussion throughout the school. Pupils are given clear targets and boundaries. They talk with great purpose and they listen to each other well. Within these rules they have become confident and very competent as talkers. Teachers across all departments understand the importance of talk as a way of learning, with drama playing an important part in developing the pupils' poise and spontaneity in oral work.
78. Teaching standards are good, and in more than half of the lessons seen the teaching was very good or better. Where it is best, careful planning ensures that pupils are challenged - whatever their ability. Teachers offer a wide range of chances to succeed: activities are varied and very imaginative. This motivates pupils who work hard; they are prepared to experiment - whether inventing advertising slogans, or interviewing controversial characters from a novel. The pace and originality of the work excite pupils. They sometimes leave the classroom with their heads spinning with ideas. Less successful lessons rely on more conventional approaches, and pupils occasionally respond with conventional indifference. There are exciting plans to use information and communication technology to add more variety and challenge to the learning. There is little evidence of this type of work at present.
79. The curriculum is well organised. Pupils are taught, for the most part, in groups of mixed attainment in the first two years: successful small groupings allow pupils with learning difficulties to make good progress. They follow the same scheme as other pupils, but every chance is taken to develop their basic skills in spelling and reading. Pupils in Year 9 are effectively grouped by attainment. In Key Stage 4,

lower attainers are offered work which will enable them to enter for GCSE, or to achieve a Certificate of Achievement if this should prove too difficult.

80. The work in English gives wide scope for personal development. Studying poetry enables pupils to consider spiritual questions, and many texts raise complex moral issues. Across all the years pupils are introduced to text from different cultures as well as their own, and the emphasis on group and oral activity develops social awareness effectively.
81. Teachers pay great attention to the work which pupils produce. They record the results, and compare these with information collected across the curriculum and over a period of time. This helps them to work with pupils to set targets for future progress. It is also helping to see who is working as well as they can, and who might do better.
82. A team that has changed substantially over the last twelve months, due mainly to promotions, teaches the subject. They work well together, with each member contributing relevant skills and ideas. The department is well led, so they are interested in developing new techniques and strategies. They use the data from a range of tests to assess whether pupils are doing as well as they could. They find teaching approaches which have succeeded elsewhere so that they can improve the performance of boys, low attainers, and the most successful students too. They have clear plans to sustain further improvement.

Drama

83. Standards are above average at each key stage. The emphasis the school places on drama has a clear impact on the pupils' confidence and above average standards of speaking and awareness of moral, social and some cultural issues. This provision is the kernel of the school's justified submission for specialist school status in performing arts.
84. At Key Stage 3, where the personal, social and moral education course is very effectively taught through drama, most pupils are able to organise themselves efficiently to explore matters such as friendship in Year 7 and to produce imaginative sketches. By the end of the key stage, some pupils in Year 9, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, have good presentation skills, producing very good performances in small groups. Others show some immaturity and, mainly boys, resort too rapidly to violence, irrespective of the theme studied. Standards have, nonetheless, been at least maintained since the previous inspection.
85. The pupils are keen to work and above average standards at Key Stage 4 are seen in the ways the pupils collaborate effectively in role, without scripts. The highest attainers can use gesture and intonation well to produce good, closely observed and improvised performances. Lower attainers act effectively alongside their peers, but rely on a script and moves to help, although their main weaknesses are in writing exercises. In Year 10, for example, they participated on an equal footing with others in work that showed good oral standards through which the class debated and argued strongly. GCSE results in 1999 were well above average for the proportions of pupils gaining higher grades, A*-C.
86. In the sixth form, the students use a good range of dramatic techniques to express feelings and ideas in the preparation of productive short scenes. A-level results in theatre studies have been above average and a real strength of the school's sixth-form provision. As at Key Stages 3 and 4, the students' self-motivation and desire to do well both in class and in productions help to raise standards and the good quality of teaching complements this very effectively.
87. The good quality of teaching reflects the pattern in the school in general: it is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3, where it is, nevertheless, good. At Key Stage 3, planning and preparation are good and relationships are mainly so, although there are obvious indications in Year 9 of pupils' immaturity and abuse of responsibility adversely affecting teaching methods on occasion. Except in these lessons, teachers organise appropriate stages, throw the burden of learning upon the pupils and use constructive criticism to help them to improve. They introduce techniques such as freezing the action and this increases the pupils' enjoyment, challenges and stimulates them to do well. The teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding and ask pertinent questions to keep the pupils on their toes. At Key Stage 4, the very good teaching is characterised, for example, by inventive use of video that produces humorous, confident manifestos for a simulated party political broadcast. Teachers ensure the purposes of lessons are clear to all. Regular assessment is effective in raising awareness and standards and often, the pupils are confident enough to provide helpful criticism to their peers so that, for instance, good performances in the Birthday Party are the outcome of intense concentration. At this stage and in the

sixth form, the teachers detailed knowledge of the requirements of the examinations is used effectively to prepare pupils and students to do well.

88. Improved accommodation helps to raise standards. The subject's contribution to the pupils' wider education and the school's learning ethos is substantial.

MATHEMATICS

89. The pupils' attainment in mathematics is marginally above the national average when they start the school as 11 year-olds.
90. Attainment rises at an above average rate: it is at least above average by the end of Key Stage 3. The 1999 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 showed the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was above the national average and the percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 or above was well above it. Results were well above average when compared with those for pupils from similar schools. Since the previous inspection, results have remained above the national average. Inspection evidence and teachers' assessments support this. By the end of Year 9, high attaining pupils are able to work with quite complex graphs, use ratio and proportion to solve problems involving similar solids and apply Pythagoras' theorem to a variety of situations, all at above average standards. Most pupils work successfully when determining rules governing sequences of numbers, calculating angles within various shapes and manipulating directed numbers using the four rules. Pupils, in a Year 9 average attainment class could, for example, derive rules for sequences of numbers that involved squared terms. Low attaining pupils effectively produce bar charts from tables of data. They can plot simple shapes using co-ordinates and understand the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. All pupils are comfortable using investigation processes to determine results. This was observed in several lessons, including one in Year 9, when they were discovering patterns of relationships in triangles, leading to determining Pythagoras' theorem. Progress is very good throughout the key stage. Local education authority data analysis indicates over 60 per cent of pupils improve by two or more levels in the National Curriculum levels of achievement for Key Stage 3.
91. At the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is above average. In 1999, GCSE results were above average for higher grades, A*-C, and have been above average in each year since the previous inspection. Girls outperform boys in the A*-C grade by about eight per cent. The trend since the previous inspection indicates a narrowing of the gap. Results for A*-G grades have been well above the national average: nearly all entries achieve a grade each year. Pupils' achievement has remained above the predicted levels for their attainment group. Pupils in Year 11 work at appropriate levels to their prior attainment. Pupils' books show high attaining pupils working at levels of exceptional performance in some topics, using trigonometry, for instance, in compound triangles and three-dimensional shapes. Average attaining pupils use basic trigonometry in two dimensions, they have good graphical skills and are able to plot and sketch graphs of quadratic equations and calculate areas and volumes of compound figures. Most low attaining pupils achieve GCSE grades at foundation level, while some successfully study for a Certificate of Achievement. When comparing pupils' results in mathematics to other subjects they take, their performance is average.
92. At both key stages, low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make very good progress, in line with others. This was seen in a Year 11 class who had shown difficulty with pie charts in a previous lesson. Their understanding of angles and fractions was developed to enable them to present given data in tabular and accurate pie chart form.
93. At the end of the sixth form attainment is well above average. The percentage of students achieving A-B grades at A-level is well above the national average. The variation in student numbers within the courses since the previous inspection makes statistical comparisons difficult. Year 12 students are successful in developing their understanding of pure mathematics and the content of their differing modules. In a lesson observed, Year 13 students worked successfully and with understanding using parametric equations and calculus to determine aspects of projectile and other types of particle motion. Students' files show comprehensive coverage of all aspects of their course requirements and an understanding of topics; ranging from sampling of normal distributions to applying calculus and trigonometric methodology to practical problems. The progress students make in their A-level course is very good: most exceed the grades predicted from analysis of the GCSE results.
94. Presentation in exercise books is neat and tidy, reflecting a positive attitude to the subject and raising standards. Learning is very good because the pupils co-operate readily in groups or in pairs,

demonstrated clearly in a Year 12 lesson when students, collating data collected from various sources, worked in various sized groups to display their information. Pupils are considerate of one another's points of view and are prepared to share their own findings with others. In a low attainment Year 10 lesson, pupils readily discussed their findings when analysing data from football league tables.

95. Since the previous inspection there have been many effective developments. Information communication technology has been fully integrated into the schemes of work in Years 7 and 8, and is developing in Key Stage 4. Mutual lesson observations and other training programmes have led to a broadening of teaching styles. Pupil grouping arrangements in Year 7 provide effective learning opportunities for both high and low attaining pupils. Changes to the syllabus, which make the work match the pupils' stages of achievement the better, help them to succeed. There is a positive response to the literacy initiative and the department is part of the Birmingham numeracy pilot project, which has led to the development in Year 7 of specific teaching skills to improve numeracy. To support improved teaching and learning, a new central recording system for pupil data improves the way pupils' achievements are identified and for help to be given when needed.
96. Teaching is very good at all key stages. All lessons observed, of full-time members of the department, were satisfactory or better and 90 per cent were good or better. Teachers are suitably qualified and have very good subject knowledge. Good organisation, high expectations of pupil behaviour and a respect for the individual help maintain good discipline and a brisk pace to lessons. Prolonged interest and application from pupils is maintained by careful planning: lessons contained a good variety of activities. Pupils' attitudes are, consequently, very good, with an effective learning atmosphere, in all stages. Teachers focus efficiently on what is to be learned and understand the pupils' needs often, for example varying the use of language. While very good use is made of single lessons for investigations and extension tasks, teachers who only teach the group for the single lesson find it more difficult to maintain progression of work. Assessment is very good during lessons and during regular thorough and developmental testing. Homework is used efficiently to consolidate learning or to allow pupils to prepare data for use in following lessons. The department provides thorough out-of-hours support lessons in response to pupils' revision needs.
97. The department is very effectively led and managed, planning is coherent and matches that of the school, so raising standards. The atmosphere for learning expects very high standards, with a focus on improvement. Strategies for improving the quality of teaching and learning are effective for all pupils and students.
98. The department has adequate resources but some textbooks are in need of replacement to better match courses being followed. The library contains an extensive selection of stimulating mathematics books suited to a variety of ages and attainments. Staffing of the department utilises teachers from other subject areas and part-time teachers. This, together with the effect of several of the full-time mathematics teachers having responsibilities beyond the subject, militates against cohesion in teaching mathematics, as do classes that are shared between two teachers and excessive gaps between lessons.

SCIENCE

99. The attainment profile of pupils upon admission to the school is suspect, as results of national tests in science place some pupils at higher levels than subsequently inspected work suggests. Standards of attainment overall have risen since the previous inspection. At Key Stage 3, national test results have shown a steady improvement and over the four-year period, 1996 to 1999, they have reflected the national trend. In every year the school is slightly above the national average for the expected Level 5. Both boys and girls are above the national average in all four years. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 is close to the average. The disparity between teacher assessments and national tests in 1999 was due to staffing difficulties. In the classes seen in Key Stage 3, attainment was good in five classes, average in two and just below average in a Year 7 group that had three temporary teachers in the Autumn term.
100. At Key Stage 4, standards are above average and a lower-attaining Year 11 group seen was at the national average. In the GCSE examination, results have improved since the previous inspection, but with a dip in 1999. Although the proportion of pupils attaining higher grades, A*-C, in double award science is below the national average, this must be seen in the context that a number of pupils take three separate sciences where they slightly outperform the national averages. Overall the proportion of pupils attaining a science result at higher grades, A*-C, is around the national average. Current teaching quality clearly indicates further improvements can be expected.

101. Pupils at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4 show very good motivation and are capable of carrying out practical investigations safely, making appropriate measurements and recording their results. They are less strong at planning experiments for themselves.
102. Sixth-form standards have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Chemistry and physics both had a 100 per cent pass rate in 1999. Biology had a pass rate of 71 per cent, possibly related to the high proportion of pupils who did not take another science or mathematics. All three sciences attained some higher grades, indicating that the provision is appropriate, but the proportion of very able students is still affected by selection. Attainment in the classes seen ranged from average to excellent.
103. Since the previous inspection, the staff has changed considerably. Twelve teachers have three years service, or less, in the school. Seven of these teachers, including three part-timers, have joined since September 1999. A significant change is the recent decision to discontinue separate sciences, which will make departmental organisation less complex. Risk assessments for all lessons are now in place and safety procedures are good. Library provision and its use by science has improved. The excessive use of worksheets to compensate for the lack of textbooks, remains unchanged and is a serious constraint to teaching and learning.
104. The overall quality of teaching has improved considerably and is now very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In 80 per cent of lessons teaching ranged from good to excellent. Teachers are well qualified, structure and prepare their lessons well, sharing clear objectives with their classes. Work suitably tailored to group and individual discussion is good and many worksheets have been rewritten for this purpose. Pace is invariably brisk, with the lesson broken into a number of suitably inter-related sections. Ongoing assessment in the best lessons enables teachers to adapt the work at short notice; for example in a physics lesson on radioactive decay, the teacher introduced an extra experiment to clarify a graph. Most lessons are demanding and pupils respond well. In a low attaining Year 11 group, the pace was considerable, all pupils wrote their own notes without fuss, and showed a remarkable understanding of atomic structure. Teachers are inventive in making the work both interesting and demanding. For example, a Year 7 lesson on pinhole cameras involved making one, two, ten pinholes and a finger-sized hole in turn and explaining the changes in the image. In another lesson, homework was set to produce a balanced view of Darwin and his opponents for a contemporary newspaper. Humour is often well used. Some teachers recognise the constraints of a lack of textbooks and try to develop independent learning by giving the opportunity for pupils to make presentations to the class. Science makes a good contribution to information and communication technology in Years 7 and 8. Some good use was seen in a sixth-form chemistry lesson and in Year 13 data logging in physics. A science for public understanding lesson in Year 13 made very good use of CD-ROMs. In many lessons, teachers make good use of pupils' prior knowledge: a Year 7 class brainstormed shadows and the teacher brought together all their ideas with an excellent demonstration to reinforce knowledge. Pertinent homework from this lesson was clearly going to stretch all levels of achievement - to try to explain a demonstration of Pepper's Ghost. Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good, they do not fully stretch the highest attaining pupils in the class. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and they make good progress.
105. Pupils respond well. Behaviour is very good and pupils are very motivated in their lessons working at a good pace with talking limited to the needs of the lesson. Knowledge and understanding are usually good and pupils are willing to talk about their work. The dependence on worksheets to convey information reduces the amount of independent reading and writing and gives insufficient opportunities to design experiments and make hypotheses for themselves. To transform very good teaching into very good learning there is a need to review and to reduce the number of worksheets, as their distribution stems the flow of lessons and the pupils find them hard to manage. Worksheets used for practicals are too prescriptive.
106. Science is well organised and documented with appropriate policies. Assessment and recording are well planned and much effort has been put into monitoring, staff training and raising standards. The three technicians work very hard to give the department excellent support in a building which is difficult to service. Accommodation is adequate but some rooms need refurbishment and one is isolated from the rest of the department. Biology needs an autoclave to replace the domestic pressure cooker used for the sixth-form biotechnology option.

ART

107. Standards recorded at the previous inspection have been maintained: teachers' assessments in 1999 found above average attainment with three-quarters of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 meeting or exceeding national expectations. The work of pupils who are currently nearing the end of this key stage shows similar levels of attainment. Similarly, at Key Stage 4 attainment has kept pace with overall school improvement, and is in line with improvements nationally, and is just a little above the national average. When comparing the GCSE attainment of boys at higher-grades, A*-C, with that of girls, girls do significantly better. However, when the attainment of both boys and girls is compared with the levels of attainment in the other subjects they do, there is no significant variation. In the sixth form attainment too is similar to that at the previous inspection. In 1999 all students who entered the A-level examination, passed: this is above the national average, but the numbers of those attaining highest grades, A/B, was below the national average, due to selection at 11 years of age.
108. The overall quality of teaching is good. In just under half the lessons at Key Stage 3 teaching was good and was never less than satisfactory. Due to the effective teaching, pupils at Key Stage 3 enjoy art; most are enthusiastic and well motivated, sustaining interest during lessons and throughout projects. Even when enthusiasm is modest, behaviour is always good. The effect of the mostly good teaching is that pupils of all attainments make good progress, becoming effective learners. Good teaching, for example, investigating the qualities of abstract art had a brisk introduction, which focused on the lesson's purposes. Pupils were challenged by good questioning, probing their understanding of what abstraction might be. During the practical session pupils linked the points of discussion with their own work. The impact of this good teaching is that all pupils increase their understanding about the different ways of expressing ideas through art. Whilst teaching at this key stage is never less than satisfactory overall, there are less good aspects. For example, the restrictions of learning opportunities because photocopied visual resources lack the impact of the real objects. However, effective use was made of resources available in the locality, such as a Sea Life Centre where the fantastic creatures of the sea inspired good creative work. Sketchbook work done on location promoted high quality work, which conveyed genuine wonder, in the classroom.
109. At Key Stage 4 two-thirds of the teaching was good, with some very good and the remainder satisfactory. Sixth-form teaching was always good, with some very good. There is an expectation by the teachers at Key Stage 4 that pupils take some responsibility for their own learning. In a Year 11 ceramics lesson the very good teaching of craft skills formed the basis of the pupils' confidence, going quickly to work. Supportive teaching focused on individuals' needs, interspersed with effective whole-class teaching. The work produced reflected both the quality of teaching and the pupils' commitment, with the result that the hand-built ceramic work based on natural form was very good. Effective use of sketchbooks continues to be a good feature of both teaching and learning. At this key stage, teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of the GCSE examination. The well-planned course provides a good range of experience in different art forms. Pupils' work, regularly assessed by teachers, shows they understand the requirements of the examination and marking arrangements.
110. The work done in the sixth form was of a good standard and reflected the good and very good teaching. There is a good balance between teacher direction, and students being encouraged to develop their own creative ideas. Each project is supported by good sketchbook work, with evidence of experimentation with both ideas and materials used. There is a strong emphasis on observation drawing developing appropriate competence in line and tone, for example in Year 12 drawings of garments, considering form and shape in folded clothes. Purposeful lessons motivate the students well. Some have high levels of commitment: a deepening understanding of art is evident in discussion about their personal studies. Students are well informed about how they are doing, and have a good understanding of the A-level examination.
111. The accommodation poses limitations, particularly in the sixth form. The small classrooms and limited storage and display space restrict the opportunities for larger-scale, two and three-dimensional work.
112. At the time of the previous inspection there was little or no work in art using information and communication technology. This is still the case. Also the resources to support the teaching about art, books and reproductions, for example, were limited. This has improved, particularly in the library. Good use is also made of resources provided by the local authority library service. There has been no in-service training specifically related to art teaching for some time: the relatively new teachers clearly miss this.
113. There are good procedures in place for monitoring the work of the department and the clear lines of communication with the senior management of the school are effectively used. This is a good, effectively

led and managed department making an effective contribution to the education of pupils and valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

114. Inspection evidence shows that attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 meets the national expectation, matching recent teacher assessments. Girls perform better than boys particularly at the higher levels. An improving trend is seen with more pupils achieving the higher levels since the previous inspection. Design folders show a range of good and sometimes weaker graphical skills, research and analysis. The better folders show good use of colour, shading techniques, commercial material and use of information and communication technology. The weaker folders often lack a range of initial ideas, and show little evaluation. Graphical skills are sometimes less well developed and lack quality of line work. Good investigational skills are seen in resistant materials where pupils were involved in designing a desk tidy and in a graphics lesson where pupils were looking at mobile phone designs and shapes. A food technology lesson on healthy eating also showed good standards of research into food choice.
115. Current attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above national averages. Achievement in work seen is good and very good where pupils express ideas using a range of presentation skills including photographs, freehand sketching, use of colour, shading techniques, commercial material and information and communication technology to illustrate research evidence in graphical form. Only rarely do design folders not meet these high standards. Practical skills are usually good including pupils on the GNVQ manufacturing course. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriately and their work is of a sound and often good standard overall. The 1999 GCSE examination results showed above the national average for A*-C grades when compared to all maintained secondary schools for electronics, graphic products, resistant materials, food technology and child development. The results were also above national averages in 1998 and in 1997. All pupils achieved passes at A*-G grades.
116. Current attainment in the sixth form is up to the course expectations. Students produce a good standard of graphical skills including detailed shading techniques to improve presentation. Practical skills are good as seen in a casting project and a vacuum forming exercise. The use of Auto-sketch as an alternative means of presenting work was being investigated and the students then applied this learning to their own projects. At A-level, all students entered for design and technology in 1999 were successful with seven out of nine candidates obtaining grades A to C. Results in 1998 and 1997 showed that students were not as successful at the higher grades, but most passed with grades between A and E. Low entries in home economics in 1998 and 1997 make comparisons difficult, but candidates were successful mainly at the lower grades.
117. The quality of teaching is good overall with a minority of satisfactory and some very good teaching. The good and very good teaching is seen in lessons that have good pace, careful questioning used and where lesson objectives are clearly stated. This improves learning, as in a manufacturing lesson where pupils were making card models; in an electronics lesson where pupils were making a simple circuit board; in a resistant materials lesson when pupils were studying modelling when designing and in a lesson where students were involved in a plastics project. Where teaching is satisfactory the learning is sometimes inhibited due to the lack of urgency in the lesson and some inattention and distraction during teacher explanations or demonstrations. On occasion, some lessons do not involve the pupils sufficiently and lengthy talk sessions limit the amount of work done. However, pupils' attitudes are usually positive: they complement the effective teaching. They work well together and share workplaces co-operatively. Most can sustain interest and concentration. Behaviour and relationships are usually good and very good in the sixth form. The teachers and pupils use information and communication technology as a learning resource to very good effect, as seen in the work produced.
118. Consistently implemented assessment procedures are suitably linked to National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3 but only in Year 9 at present. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, assessment is linked to examination board criteria and pupils and students are aware of what is expected of them. Marking is consistent in all areas and the supportive comments used show pupils how improvements may be made. Homework is regularly set and marked: it contributes effectively to the standards the pupils achieve.
119. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not meet the statutory requirements, as less than half the pupils choose a technology subject under the present option system.
120. Whilst some improvement in cohesion is seen since the previous inspection, there is room for further development in establishing a collegiate team approach. Departmental documentation is thorough and

well planned with clear guidelines on policies and practices. Monitoring and evaluation of pupils' work and teaching standards feature prominently in the department. The department supports the school's literacy and numeracy policies and the development of these skills. Since the previous inspection, improvements have been made by introducing GNVQ manufacturing at Key Stage 4, changing to food technology, refining the Key Stage 3 modules of study, reviewing the reporting system and increasing the A-level student numbers.

GEOGRAPHY

121. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations for most pupils, with some well above. Higher attaining pupils compile accurate annotated maps and diagrams, sometimes using them together with good quality writing in their enquiry work. They extract relevant information from a range of sources, such as textbooks, CD-ROM and video recordings. In a lesson on water supplies, Year 9 pupils described and explained the link between relief and rainfall in Great Britain. They recognised that many densely populated areas have low rainfall, thus causing problems of supply and demand. Lower attaining pupils described, but had more difficulty explaining, relief-rainfall links. A small number of lower attainers had difficulty with any tasks requiring writing of any length. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
122. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average, and is well above for some. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades, A* to C, in GCSE has been above the national average in recent years and was well above in 1999 for both boys and girls, although girls outperformed boys by a wider margin than the national gender gap. These results represented a marked improvement since the previous inspection. Higher attaining pupils produce high quality course work, testing hypotheses with the aid of statistical analysis of collected fieldwork data. They have a good understanding of the conflicts between interest groups in areas of environmental fragility, as shown in a lesson about the Alaskan pipeline, and a good command of the associated technical terminology. All pupils handle Ordnance Survey maps confidently, using their map reading skills in a variety of contexts. As at the previous key stage, some lower attaining pupils find writing at any length difficult.
123. The overall attainment of students in Year 13 is above the national average and for the remainder is at least average. Since the previous inspection results at A-level have been at the national average, and in 1999 were well above. There has been no consistent pattern of boys' or girls' superiority over this period. Evidence from completed work suggests that several students are working at levels consistent with grades A and B at A-level, but that the remainder has yet to reach a sufficient fluency in essay writing to achieve these grades. Students have a good understanding of geographical models and their limitations, as seen in a lesson on tourism in Kenya when, in a role-play exercise, they compared their predictions of future trends against a theoretical model. In the same lesson they displayed a very mature level of discussion, their opinions being founded on thorough research. Their folders of work are well organised with clear, detailed notes to form a valuable source of revision material. Most students make skilful use of advanced statistical methods to analyse their collected fieldwork data. As in earlier key stages, there is no significant gender difference in attainment.
124. The overall standard of teaching is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed; in over two-thirds of observed lessons it was very good or excellent. Teachers provide geographical content that is accurate and reflects current information, knowledge and understanding about places. They inspire pupils with descriptions and explanations of places, showing how physical and human processes have particular outcomes. They ensure that pupils become increasingly independent in their geographical enquiries and investigations, capable of organising and managing the individual coursework and projects in public examinations. Many of these qualities were displayed in a Year 12 lesson, when students responded well to the challenge of simulating a public enquiry into the causes and effects of a serious flood along the Colorado River. This lesson is an example of several where teachers act as facilitators, enabling pupils and students to organise their own learning. In comparatively less successful teaching, the allocation of time to different aspects of the lesson is awry, with the teacher talking too much and leaving insufficient time for pupils' activity. In some of these lessons tasks are not matched sufficiently to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are overwhelmingly positive in most lessons. They respond particularly well to practical tasks as when using Ordnance Survey maps and on the frequent occasions they are asked to work collaboratively. Teachers' recapitulation of recent work at the beginning of lessons assists pupils to both recall and consolidate earlier learning and to make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, especially when integration support assistants are in attendance. Their teachers know them well and recognise their needs. Teachers ensure that all pupils receive good guidance in improving their writing and oral skills, and

ensure that they have several opportunities to develop their numeracy skills and their facility with computers. Teachers' marking is completed regularly and is usually accompanied by constructive comment, pointing the way forward for pupils.

125. Effective teamwork and leadership assist the work of the department. All issues raised in the previous inspection report have been resolved. The department has not yet extended its excellent fieldwork programme to Year 9 pupils.

HISTORY

126. Standards in history are satisfactory: they are rising and are above those reported in the previous report. At Key Stage 3, pupils are working well up to national expectations. They amply display appropriate knowledge and understanding and use their skills to carry out a range of historical enquiries and organise historical information both verbally and in writing. National Curriculum levels at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 have improved and are above average for the proportions reaching Level 5 and above.
127. At Key Stage 4, most pupils are working in line with national expectations, clearly developing their problem solving and enquiry skills. The attainment of sixth-formers is above average: the students have good use of research and discussion skills, for example, when a Year 13 group prepared presentations on women in Nazi Germany. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress and meeting their targets as set out in their individual education plans. GCSE results have improved, but are still slightly below the national average for the proportions gaining higher grades, A*-C. The results of girls are at a higher level than are those of the boys. Pass rates in the Certificate of Achievement were very high.
128. At A-level in 1999, all candidates gained a pass in the range A to E, with one in ten gaining a high grade, A or B. The former figure is above national averages the latter is below, indicating the continuing effects of selection at 11+.
129. Most teaching at both key stages and in the sixth form is good with many very good lessons. Teaching makes a positive contribution to the standards achieved. Teachers plan their lessons well and use a range of activities and resources: this was clearly demonstrated in a Year 11 lesson on the Wall Street Crash. Learning is greatly enhanced by clear aims, tasks set and use of various resources. Teachers have a good command of their subject and set high expectations for their pupils. Very occasionally, a higher attaining student may not receive appropriate challenges. Standards have improved due to the planning of lessons, a new scheme of work and good relationships between teachers and their pupils. These, together with high expectations, positive attitudes and good behaviour from pupils, have brought clear improvements. Tasks are matched to the learning needs of pupils and the requirements of the National Curriculum or examinations followed. Teachers are increasingly providing appropriate work for pupils with special educational needs. Homework makes a positive contribution to the standards achieved. Teachers' marking is regular with constructive comments. Oral assessments given during lessons greatly enhance pupils' learning. Both enable pupils to see what their strengths and weaknesses are and how to improve. As a result, pupils' attitudes to history are good, very nearly all come prepared and equipped to work and concentrate on the tasks they are set. Their behaviour is good and any minor incidents are quickly dealt with and do not inhibit learning. Pupils work well together in groups and show initiative with individual work. A visit to the trenches provided valuable insights for those pupils who travelled to the Somme and were skilfully used in lessons to bring benefit to all.
130. The recently appointed head of department has made a significant impact in a short period in completing revision of schemes of work and in evaluating the quality of teaching. She has a clear vision of the development of the subject and raising standards. There are sufficient resources, which are used well to provide for all pupils.
131. The department has addressed the items for development mentioned in the previous report. Underachievement at Key Stage 4 has been targeted resulting in provision of extra work and further opportunities for research: it has improved, but there is some underachievement by boys. Greater use of enquiry, research and use of discussion skills has led to better teaching. The use of worksheets has been reduced as more textbooks have become available and there is less use of non-specialist rooms. Teaching is not adequately enhanced by the use of information and communication technology.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

132. Attainment on intake is below the national expectation. By the end of Key Stage 3 it is still below the national expectation for most, as the school's teacher assessments confirm and by the end of Key Stage 4 it is still below, although it is improving compared with Key Stage 3. The pupils achieve high standards in basic competence certificate tests. The allocation of time is insufficient to meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum. This is exacerbated by the fragmented way the subject is organised. The large gaps between 'rations' of information and communication technology disrupt the continuity of learning and reinforcement is lost, particularly for lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs.
133. In Year 7 pupils are introduced to basic skills in word processing, the use of spreadsheets and desk-top publishing. Because the courses are well organised and teaching is good, pupils become confident in tackling this work and most develop competent keyboard skills. Almost all will type quite efficiently with two hands and by the end of the key stage are able to compose at the keyboard, although some with special educational needs, even in Year 10, type with only one finger. In Years 8 and 9 they construct and interrogate databases and use computer graphics to illustrate their work so that by the end of the key stage, most pupils have become self-proficient in the use of computers. They use the school's system easily and are competent at the multi-tasking assignments set to test their skills. They can access information from a variety of sources and import that information into their own documents. Their skills are further extended in Key Stage 4 by the introduction of more demanding assignments that challenge pupils' understanding of these resources and develop the competence with which they co-ordinate their use and enhance the presentation of their work. In the sixth form additional studies programme students use multimedia resources very competently. They create presentations that use graphics, animation and music to enhance text.
134. GCE A-level results in computing in 1999 at grades A-E were below the national average for all maintained schools. The pass rate was significantly better than the previous year. There were no passes at the higher A/B grades. Many students choosing computing do so on the basis of their information and communication technology skills, which are an insufficient preparation for the disciplines of the A-level course in computing. For some, it is very much their third subject or an add-on to their main studies for a GNVQ course. Students currently in Year 13 appear, despite this, to be on course to improve on last years' results. They are designing and coding programs very effectively to resolve practical problems within a commercial environment. One is designing an accounting system that generates income, expenditure and profit and loss accounts. This system is linked to the firm's customer database from which invoices, receipts and letters to customers are generated using mailmerge. The owner of the firm periodically reviews the progress of the program and suggests pertinent amendments. Another is designing a database to assist a local hospital staff to gain ready access to data relating to patients, their doctors and their scheduled surgical lists. All these programs include check data and with screens that are user friendly, working economically on push button access to information, they efficiently reflect business applications software.
135. Pupils' learning is good in many lessons and very good in over half of them and that reflects the quality of teaching, which in all lessons is good and very good in over half of them. Teachers' relationships with pupils are very good and this establishes the basis for good behaviour and positive attitudes on which the teaching can build effectively. Work is thoroughly planned in consultation with support staff, which accounts for the good progress of pupils with special educational needs. Assignments are challenging and teachers set high standards and have high expectations of attitude and performance. Many of the assignments reflect the real world, priced sample menus to be tendered by a catering company for example, and they stimulate interest and often enthusiasm. Teachers' knowledge and subject competence creates confidence and develops pupils' own learning and development. Day-to-day marking and information on progress are thorough and help pupils to know what they have to do to improve. Assessment generally is good, but is not monitored across all subjects. National Curriculum levels are not generally recorded on pupils' work or on reports to parents.
136. Information and communication technology is developing well across the curriculum, particularly in design and technology, drama, geography, music and science but progress in all subjects has been hampered by disputes between cabling contractors. In consequence, pupils and students have been denied access to a major resource for all subjects.
137. The department is well managed and led. Planning is strong and under constant review. The department's work and its teaching are monitored regularly and teachers consistently improve the schemes of work. Computer clubs are well attended and the pupils there are developing quite advanced skills in a light-hearted but controlled atmosphere, where most are sharing their skills with each other.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

138. Many pupils on entry to the school have had a year's French in their primary school. About one-third have been taught in their Year 6 by Arthur Terry School's liaison teacher and they arrive with some knowledge of and good attitudes towards the language. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in French in the lessons and work seen is in line with national expectations. This level of attainment is reflected in the 1999 teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, which also showed standards to be in line with national averages. Pupils make good progress in reading and in listening, because most listen carefully in class and behave well. However, their speaking skills are not as well developed as they should be because a significant number of teachers do not concentrate on using the foreign language consistently enough to make French the language of the classroom. Nevertheless, pupils in one Year 7 class had very good accents and told each other enthusiastically in French what they were going to buy for a picnic. A very few lower-attaining pupils in the key stage, though, do not concentrate hard enough, either on listening carefully, or on developing their own speaking skills in French. There is a wide range of attainment in writing by the end of the key stage. Although the higher attainers write with good accuracy and have some knowledge of the past and future tenses, they do not write as extensively as they should and they are insecure in using tense forms. To some extent, this underdevelopment in writing can be accounted for by the reduction of time allocated to French for some pupils who take German, currently the top sets in Year 9 and 50 per cent of pupils in Year 8. Pupils make good progress in German in speaking, listening, reading and writing skills and the attainment of pupils by the end of the key stage is above expectations. For example, all pupils in a Year 9 class were able to practise very fluently the new language of a role-play, previously acted out very well by a boy pretending to be a waiter in a restaurant. Literacy skills are embedded in the schemes of work, but pupils do not write follow-up corrections to help in developing accuracy. Pupils practise their skills in information and communications technology, but improvement in their command of the foreign language is relatively small from these experiences. Pupils with special educational needs are mostly in classes with smaller numbers, where they generally make satisfactory progress. They make satisfactory progress when they have effective support of classroom assistants.
139. At Key Stage 4, most pupils in French and in German follow a course with an examination at the end of Year 11. Some pupils in French follow a GCSE modular course and a small number, mostly with special educational needs, prepare for an appropriate Certificate of Achievement. In 1999, GCSE results at grades A*-C in French were just above the national average. These results were a considerable improvement on those gained at the time of the previous inspection. The trend of improvement has been continuous over the previous four years. In 1999 pupils performed better in French overall than in the other subjects they took and, in comparison with girls, boys performed better than they do nationally. Of the small number of pupils entered for the Certificate of Achievement two-thirds gained a distinction. GCSE results in German at grades A*-C for a small group of higher attainers were well above the national average. In the lessons and work seen, attainment was in line with national expectations. Many pupils still lack confidence in speaking, but the middle attainers are encouraged more to see the relevance of this skill, when they make a tape about themselves for the modular course. Even so, a few pupils do not behave well enough and show little interest. The highest attainers make a real effort to take part in conversations and they show familiarity with using a variety of tenses. The textbooks provide good opportunities for extended study and, overall, pupils develop their reading and dictionary skills satisfactorily. The range of attainment in writing is very wide. Whereas the lower attainers use a very narrow range of vocabulary, the higher attainers explore, with close guidance from the teachers, more complex structures and expressions. Pupils do not use tenses very accurately in the majority of cases, but they produce reasonably accurate accounts and descriptions of some length. Middle attainers, with much help from their teachers, usually fulfil the assessment tasks of the modular course satisfactorily.
140. Results at A-level have fluctuated over recent years. In 1999, they dipped after high results in the previous year. In 1999, out of fifteen students taking French and German, four gained a grade C and six gained a grade D. Students' performance was broadly similar to their performance in their other subjects. Numbers of students in the separate language groups are too low to make valid comparisons with national averages. In the lessons seen in the sixth form, students performed well up to the expectations for the course. The best students develop good accents and fluency with the very good support from the language assistants and the opportunities for exchanges and work experience abroad. Students learn to express their ideas and opinions well in both spoken and written form. Year 13 students in French enjoyed discussing the pretentious nonsense of Monsieur Jourdain in a Moliere play and, in German, students were interested to learn from a video about the efforts Germans make to re-cycle their rubbish. Less

talented students work hard with the good range of resources provided, but they do not benefit from a closely monitored programme of private study to support their achievement.

141. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. Half the lessons seen were good; a small number were very good or excellent, and the other half were satisfactory, with a small number of unsatisfactory lessons. Weaknesses in these unsatisfactory lessons included inappropriate methods and materials to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills, and a lack of firm control of pupils' behaviour. Some teachers' accents and use of French in class are too weak. In general, although there is some good practice, teachers in a significant number of French lessons do not require enough pronunciation practice, for example having the pupils repeat work aloud together, nor do they give classroom instructions consistently in the language. Teachers' expectations that they can raise standards of learning through brisk, challenging teaching is not evident enough. Teachers plan their lessons well, but the range of resources and teaching activities is narrow. There is insufficient use of overhead projectors and too little involvement with information and communications technology. Because of the lack of variety, pupils' interest and concentration is not always maintained throughout the lesson.
142. Since the previous inspection, the GCSE results have improved greatly. There is a better range of teaching materials for both languages, in the main school and the sixth form. Teachers in the sixth form now use the foreign language very well. A good club for information and communications technology is flourishing. Teaching has improved, but a number of shortcomings persist.
143. The management of the department is generally satisfactory, but there is not enough monitoring of teaching. Other contributory factors that affect standards include the reduction of time for French at Key Stage 3 when some pupils begin German. Whereas the higher attainers can cope satisfactorily, others have more difficulty keeping up. At Key Stage 4, the sets for French contain pupils of a wider range of attainment than at Key Stage 3. These arrangements affect standards adversely.

MUSIC

144. Attainment at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 is close to the national average, but above this level in the sixth form. GCSE results in music are consistently above the national average. Results at A-level are well above the national average, but with few higher grades, still reflecting the effects of selection at 11+. They were among the best results in the school. The way the subject is taught enables pupils of all attainments to attain well, since work set at suitable degrees of difficulty for individuals is commonplace. Pupils' response is good at Key Stage 3, very good at Key Stage 4, and excellent in the sixth form. They get excited in music lessons, showing good co-operation and collaboration skills in group work, and listening acutely to what they were doing in spite of the high level of ambient sound, particularly in the poorer acoustics of the second and third music rooms. This led, for example, to some very good jazz-based improvisation from Year 9 pupils who were well aware of their own success. A Year 11 GCSE group was rapidly developing individual compositional skills involving melody, counter-melody and variation: much work was already of a good standard. Composition work at all levels was above average. There is also some excellent essay writing from the sixth form on, for example, Debussy and Ravel: this is enhanced by good use of word processing, desk-top publishing and graphics.
145. The quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good; it is very good with the sixth form. Staff are very competent as teachers and as musicians. Clear targets are set in all lessons and shared with pupils; criteria for success are also established at the same time. There is a strong sense of pace and urgency in lessons, and staff share their commitment to and enjoyment of music with pupils, many of whom catch the music disease in a virulent form. Working relationships are good. Teaching in one Year 9 lesson working on jazz-based improvisation was inspirational – and pupils responded appropriately and at a very high standard. A-level harmony teaching was effective and efficient. Staff make very good use of information and communication technology-based resources - in the Year 9 jazz lessons, in Key Stage 4 multi-layered composition, and in a sixth-form lesson on Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring'. Learning is good at Key Stages 3 and 4, and very good with the sixth form. The development of skills, knowledge and understanding are refined progressively. Pupils respond well and build a strong sense of pace and intensity in lessons, so producing good work. Teachers' feedback as to how well the pupils have done is a very important part of the assessment scheme. This is well supported by the more formal system, which includes a strong, effective element of pupil self-assessment.
146. There is a real commitment to quality in the very good range of extra-curricular activities, for example in the senior choir and the soul band. This very lively extra-curricular programme involves over 10 per cent of pupils (about 20 per cent when the annual musical is included) and gives opportunities for those with

specific musical talent to attain very well. Some 6 per cent of pupils receive instrumental tuition, and there is an appropriate remission scheme.

147. All the issues raised in music at the previous inspection have been fully resolved. The department is very well led: all members share common goals. The 'cluster' orchestra with local primary schools is a good feature, but curriculum links with Key Stage 2 are undeveloped. The non-specialist music accommodation, with its poor acoustics and overcrowding, inhibits the attainment of even higher standards, but the high quality of teaching minimises such problems.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

148. From below average attainment when they start the school, the pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. The girls in Year 9 play netball effectively with consistent footwork and passing skills. In dance girls choreograph their work with a good understanding of the performance elements. Boys have appropriate body control and tension in trampolining. In hockey, boys in Year 9 have good basic skills, but are not yet able to apply them consistently in the game because they have little previous experience of the activity. Boys in Year 7 play football to a standard above that expected nationally. Both boys and girls, in Years 7 and 8, have improved their quality of movement in gymnastics since the previous inspection.
149. There has been an improvement since the previous inspection and the attainment of pupils at Key Stage 4 is now above national expectations. Boys and girls have, for example, high performance skills in trampolining. Girls have an understanding of defensive and attacking strategies in netball. Pupils studying GCSE reach national expectations in hockey and badminton and exceed these levels in trampolining. GCSE results have improved over time. In 1999, just above average proportions of pupils gained higher, A*-C, grades. The results of boys and girls were very similar in 1998 and 1999. In each year fewer girls than boys entered the examination, which is in line with the national pattern. A health and fitness module at Key Stage 4 lacks some impact as the size of groups is too great to allow all pupils to make enough progress.
150. The attainment levels of students in Years 12 and 13 are above the national average. Their written work shows depth of knowledge. They answer accurately and comprehensively. A few students do not consistently contribute to group discussion, but the practical work of students is above average. A-level students have achieved 100 per cent passes since 1997. The top grade was achieved by 2 of the 14 students in 1999: a below average proportion.
151. Many individual pupils from all year groups achieve high levels of attainment. They play for school, district, county and national teams in a variety of activities which include football, athletics, netball, cricket, basketball, swimming and hockey.
152. Teaching is all at least satisfactory, with much of it good and almost half very good. Pupils' progress is mostly good and in two-fifths of lessons is very good. Teachers use many different teaching strategies. These include question and answer, which is used rigorously in A-level lessons, full group discussion, and group and pair work. These different strategies ensure that pupils are challenged, interested and motivated in their lessons. Lessons are well organised with clear progressive tasks, based on the comprehensive units of work. This thorough planning moves pupils' learning forward, by reviewing previous work and introducing new skills when appropriate. Year 7 pupils come to the school with weak skills in gymnastics. They quickly improve their movements and create fluent sequences because of the good planning by their teachers. Most, but not all, teaching addresses all areas of the National Curriculum, allowing the pupils the chance to progress in their planning, performing and evaluative skills. Teachers have good subject expertise especially when teaching the A-level students. Assessment is well used in some lessons, for example trampolining where pupils in the GCSE groups are working to clearly structured targets and have their own performance check lists. The equal progress of pupils, regardless of their different physical abilities, is well supported by teaching some Year 9 boys and some GCSE classes in attainment and gender groups. Teachers often circulate effectively, setting appropriate individual and group tasks. In badminton, for example, four different groups were taught four progressive skills. However, teachers do not use these techniques often enough. Pupils with poor co-ordination and physical disabilities are well integrated. Teachers encourage them to participate in an appropriate activity, which may not be with the main group but allows these pupils to make good progress. Pupils behave well and have very good relationships with their teachers. Their positive attitude enhances their learning. There is no opportunity for pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills. Some work cards lack quality and depth and pupils are insufficiently challenged by them.
153. The department makes a very good contribution to the pupils' social and moral development. Much pair and group work arises in lessons, the wide range of very well attended extra-curricular activities, especially competitive games, teach fair play and sportsmanship and dance and gymnastics lessons have some spirituality and cultural aspects. Sufficient time is allocated in each year group to allow a broad and balanced range of activities. The sixth-formers can participate as part of their additional studies programme and can choose a recreational option or to study the Community Sports Leaders Award, which is an excellent initiative and promotes much individual responsibility. This, and the A-level

provision, makes the curricular opportunities in the sixth form very strong. A few students join the school especially for the A-level course.

154. The high quality and very well maintained indoor accommodation and the small, now well maintained, fields clearly help to raise achievement. The department works well as a team. Since the previous inspection standards have risen, progress is more consistent, the quality of teaching has improved, GCSE and A-level courses have been successfully established and pupils are assessed in each unit of activity. There is insufficient observation of teaching by the head of department, nor does the department share its best practice, to further improve the quality of teaching.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

155. At the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils reach good standards in relation to the locally Agreed Syllabus. They have, for example, a good knowledge and understanding of world faiths, grasp of symbolism, use of specialist vocabulary and skills in reflection, empathy and debate. Literacy standards are about average with some above and a few below. Oracy tends to be better than literacy. Both boys and girls speak articulately and with confidence in some lively and stimulating discussions. However, girls are occasionally more reticent than are boys in expressing their views. Pupils generally write well for a variety of audiences, but no information and communication technology skills are taught, limiting work such as research projects and surveys.
156. All pupils follow a modular course, which includes religious education at Key Stage 4, but there is too little time to cover the Agreed Syllabus in enough depth and pupils do insufficient written work to develop skills in literacy, research and analysis and presenting an argument. Nevertheless, pupils gain satisfactory knowledge and understanding of a range of moral issues and develop their skills in oracy, reflection and empathy through often lively discussions. Nonetheless, these pupils attain below the expected standards for the Agreed Syllabus. At the end of Key Stage 4, most GCSE pupils are on course to attain about average standards for GCSE, usually well above the requirements for the locally Agreed Syllabus and often above predictions relating to pupils' prior attainment. These pupils have a sound and often good knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and Judaism and the application of these beliefs to everyday life and issues such as marriage and divorce. Written standards are about average. In 1999, the A*-C GCSE grades were just below the national average, but well above expectations in relation to pupils' prior attainment and generally in line with attainment in other subjects. A*-G grades were slightly above the national average. Since 1997, when GCSE results were outstanding, the attainment profile of candidates has declined, although the subject remains very popular.
157. Not all sixth-formers study the subject: this is in contravention of statute. The A-level students have sound knowledge of the course requirements and some have good skills in analysis and debate. But some are struggling with the demands of the difficult syllabus and the need to organise information to write high quality essays. This is particularly true in Year 13, where standards are lower overall than in Year 12. The school is aware of the problems and plans to review the syllabus. At A-level, the 1999 A and B and A to E grades were well below the national average, continuing the pattern of the previous two years. Currently, most Year 13 students are attaining just below the national average for the A-level course. At all key stages, most pupils achieve well considering their prior attainment and many do very well in this respect.
158. Teaching is very good, an improvement on the good teaching at the previous inspection. It is good overall in the sixth form and very good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and there were excellent lessons seen in Years 8 and 11. As pupils' learning is always foremost, its quality is usually very high, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4. Very good and often excellent planning sequences learning very well in building blocks, with clear aims and objectives and well-managed consolidation of learning at each stage. There is a purposeful atmosphere in which no time is wasted and all resources are skilfully planned and used. Learning is often fun, including Year 9 imaginative work on a problem page, the use of games in Year 8 and excellent use of artefacts. Learning is always challenging, reflecting the consistently high expectations of all staff. Excellent display also stimulates learning and generates pride in pupils' work. Relationships are excellent. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are usually at least very good and are consistently excellent in Year 7. However, some Year 9 lower attainers find written work taxing, particularly towards the end of lessons. Staff value pupils' contributions, placing a consistently very good focus on the needs of individuals, such as an

excellent Year 8 lesson on Ramadan and Eid. The encouragement of individuals to reflect and express their views in a multicultural context leads to very good opportunities for pupils' and students' personal, spiritual, moral and cultural development. All staff use homework very effectively to consolidate and extend learning. High quality marking of class and homework is a feature of the department. Diagnostic and developmental marking is truly impressive at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form: it clearly aids pupils' progress.

159. There is effective leadership with a clear vision for the development of the subject. The staff team provide excellent role models; they are very hardworking and very committed to excellence. A good system for lesson observations, monitoring of pupils' books and sharing good practice has helped raise teaching standards further since the previous inspection. However, the school is still not meeting requirements for religious education in either the sixth form or Key Stage 4. Good assessment procedures for Key Stage 3 were introduced in September 1999, an improvement since the previous inspection, but these are embryonic and there is no system for setting specific targets in knowledge and skills to track individual pupils' progress. Staff manage resources well, but a shortage of video recorders undermines continuity in learning.

BUSINESS STUDIES

160. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 was below average in 1999. For GCSE higher grades, A*-C, attainment was significantly below national averages and was marginally below for grades A*-G. Attainment at GCSE over the previous three years shows a deteriorating picture, with A*-C grades, in particular, falling from a well above average position in 1997. The pattern for A*-G grades is also deteriorating. Over the same period, an analysis of results, especially for grades A*-C, indicates that girls are performing significantly better than boys. For A-level students, attainment in 1999 for grades A-E was above national averages, but for grades A and B, attainment was significantly below this level, due to the effects of selection for grammar schools. The results also show a deterioration over the 1998 figures. The attainment of students following both intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses in business matched the predictions from their previous GCSE attainment.
161. The attainment of present pupils is in line with expectations at Key Stage 4, but is below these in the sixth form. Standards are variable and depend very much on the quality of the teaching. Where teaching is good, standards are higher: pupils work with enthusiasm and interest and are able to develop their understanding and their ability to apply ideas. For example, Year 10 pupils are acquiring ideas on the roles and functions of trade unions and showing a good understanding of terminology such as 'mediation', 'picketing' and 'collective bargaining'. Sixth-form A-level students are developing their understanding of financial forecasting and GNVQ students are developing their skills in information and communication technology for letter writing and for using spreadsheets to record and present data.
162. Too much learning and, therefore, attainment at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are inhibited, as lessons tend to concentrate on lightweight tasks rather than underlying ideas. For example, in a Year 11 class on trade unions, the lesson was too concerned with the production of a recruitment poster rather than enhancing the learning about the role of trade unions in the modern economy. Opportunities for reinforcement and consolidation of learning were lost, as key words were not sufficiently emphasised. Similarly, in a Year 13 lesson on investment appraisal, the students undertook the necessary calculations without understanding the underlying theory. Even the simple effect that price inflation can have on future income streams received by a business was not understood by the students. This is indicative of attainment levels below average expectations. At Key Stage 4, two further impediments to learning are misbehaviour and absences. In a Year 11 lesson, a small group of unruly boys disturbed the lesson for all. Their behaviour made it difficult for other members of the group to concentrate on the set tasks. For the same class the absence rate is over 20 per cent. Such high rates of non-attendance impede attainment.
163. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, though variable and it is marginally stronger at Key Stage 4 than in the sixth form. Eighty per cent of teaching was at least satisfactory, 50 per cent was at least good, with 20 per cent being either very good or excellent. Twenty per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. The better lessons show many strengths. Staff question well to assess and reinforce prior learning, planning and preparation are thorough and staff set high expectations and are prepared to challenge the pupils' and students' knowledge and understanding. Learning is further enhanced in such lessons by staff using broad teaching skills effectively, ensuring that

the pace of the lesson is appropriate to the needs of the class. When it is clear that the class has grasped an idea or piece of theory, the lesson is advanced, but when assessment procedures suggest that the ideas have not been understood, the more skilled teachers are prepared to recap and offer explanations in another form. The less effective teaching is characterised by insufficient challenge: learning is inhibited as explanations lack rigour and precision. For example in a Year 10 lesson on price theory, insufficient detail was given to the accuracy of labelling graphs. In a Year 11 lesson on trade unions, an opportunity arising from a pupil's response linking wages increases to inflation was lost. The teacher wanted to develop the theme of price inflation but failed to see wages either as the price of labour, or as part of a wage/price inflationary spiral. In some sixth-form lessons, students were not sufficiently challenged and, in other cases, staff were encouraging students to tackle problems even though the underlying theory had not been covered. This was especially evident in a lesson on investment appraisal. Monitoring procedures lack rigour. There is no consistency in the assessment of students' work and no setting and monitoring of individual targets.

164. A range of other factors serves to constrain progress. The school has experienced severe problems in getting on to the Internet, restricting the opportunities students have to research. Departmental assessment and monitoring procedures lack consistency. Work scrutinies showed variability in the quality of marking and little work is presently done with students on target setting. The quality of leadership is unsatisfactory. Insufficient progress has been made since the previous inspection report, leading to the current decline in results.

PSYCHOLOGY

165. Psychology is a popular A-level course, though very few boys choose it. Results in 1999 were well below average for both A and B grades and for grades A to E. The attainment of present students is in line with the course expectations, with some students displaying a good level of conceptual and analytical understanding. All students are developing their understanding of key words and terms such as 'validity', 'reliability' and 'standardisation' are understood in relation to conducting surveys. The quality of teaching, though generally satisfactory, is variable and is occasionally unsatisfactory. Where teaching is less effective, the delivery style is akin to lecturing with little opportunity for student involvement. In the more effective lessons, more challenges are presented and suitable efforts are made to engage the students in discussion, though, even in these lessons, there is a tendency to involve only the higher attainers and the more vocal students.