

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE NOTLEY HIGH SCHOOL**

Braintree

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115227

Headteacher: John Hartley

Reporting inspector: John Rowley  
Inspector number: 18648

Dates of inspection: 31 January – 4 February 2000

Inspection number: 186997

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Notley Road  
Braintree  
Essex

Postcode: CM7 8JX

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Robert Smith

Date of previous inspection: 5 February – 9 February 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Rowley	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
John Duncan	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Garry Bignell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Melanie Foster	Team inspector	Special educational needs The Speech and Language Unit	
John Hickman	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
Geoff Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Brian Moroney	Team inspector	Science	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Kate Moore	Team inspector	Geography History	
John Stewart	Team inspector	Physical education	
Jo Balcombe	Team inspector	Drama Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
Mike Bostock	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
Roy Knowles	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Jenny Parsons	Team inspector	Art	
Leonora Davies	Team inspector	Music	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Notley High School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-16. In recent years the school has grown from 700 pupils to 889 pupils and is now over-subscribed. It is larger than most comprehensive schools without a sixth form. Most pupils come from Braintree or the surrounding communities, but a growing number come from outside the catchment area. The school loses a small number of children to grammar schools and comprehensive schools with sixth forms. In recent years, the number of pupils entitled to free school meals has been about one in ten. This is in line with most comprehensive schools. Less than 2 per cent of the school's pupils are not from a white UK background. The level of attainment of pupils entering the school is slowly improving and is now just below the national average. In the past, the attainment of pupils on entry to the school has been significantly below the national average. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is about the same as in most schools, although the number on the higher stages of support is greater than normal. The school has an attached unit providing places for 15 pupils with speech and language difficulties.

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

The Notley High School is a good and improving school. Pupils' academic achievements are good and their attitudes, values and personal development are very good. This is a reflection of good teaching; of the good quality and range of opportunities provided within the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities; of effective arrangements for the care of pupils; and of the strong leadership provided by the headteacher and the management team. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils' achievements are good. They make good progress as they move through the school. Although the attainment of pupils entering the school has been below average, they have left the school with results that are at least in line with the national averages. There has been a steady improvement in the proportion of pupils leaving with five or more higher grade GCSEs and these results are now above national averages and the averages for similar schools. The standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs are also good.
- There is a commitment to the achievement of high standards. The school is very good at monitoring academic performance. It uses this information to set itself challenging targets for school improvement.
- Standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils respond very well to the positive climate for learning.
- There is a strong ethos. There is a sense of identity and belonging in all parts of the school community. The quality of relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, is very good. The school cares for its pupils well and provides a safe environment in which all can learn.
- The school provides very well for the moral and social development of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is good, particularly in GCSE classes. Two thirds of teaching is good or better.
- The Speech and Language Unit is a great strength of the school.
- The school offers a rich programme of extra-curricular activities that is well supported by the pupils.
- The school has very good links with partner primary schools, with Braintree College and with the wider community. Careers education and the management of work experience are very good.

- The leadership of the headteacher and senior management team is very good.

#### What could be improved

- The difference between the performance of boys and girls is greater than that found in most schools.
- There is insufficient provision for spiritual development and multicultural education.
- The school is failing to provide a daily act of collective worship.
- The changing needs of the growing and developing school are not fully reflected in the management structure.
- The school is not monitoring and evaluating non-academic aspects of school life as rigorously as it does academic performance. For example, it can improve the way in which it:
  - collects and uses information on attendance, behaviour and special educational needs; and
  - judges the outcomes of new initiatives.
- Complaints from parents are not always dealt with to their satisfaction.
- The Governing Body is not meeting all of its legal requirements. It does not fully monitor the curriculum, particularly with regard to special educational needs.

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

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

The Notley High School was last inspected in February 1996. Since then, the school has kept pace with national improvements in academic standards and has exceeded them on some measures. Teaching has improved. The amount of teaching that is good or better has risen from nearly half to two-thirds of lessons observed. There has been a noticeable improvement in teaching in those areas identified as weaknesses in the last inspection. The school has addressed most of the key issues identified in the last report. Monitoring and target setting have reduced the inconsistency in standards between subjects. The curriculum in physical education and the humanities has been improved. The school has reviewed its aims and developed management roles, although it recognises that there is more to be done in these areas. The school is still not fully meeting some of the legal requirements identified as issues in the last report, most noticeably in providing a daily act of collective worship.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year-olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C

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

In 1999, overall GCSE results were in line with national averages and those of similar schools. This represented good achievement for pupils who entered the school with below average levels of attainment. Last year, and over the last three years, girls' results at GCSE have been above average, whilst boys' results have been close to the national average. The difference between the performance of boys and girls is greater than that found in

most schools. In 1999, for the first time, the school broke the barrier of more than half of pupils gaining five or more higher grade GCSEs. On this measure, it is now above the national average and the average for similar schools. There has been a steady improvement in higher grade GCSE results in recent years and current work in Year 11 suggests that this will continue. In 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE passes at any level was in line with the national average, but it has been above the national average in recent years. Similarly, the proportion that left school without any qualification in 1999 was much higher than the national average, but it has been well below national averages in the previous years. The untypical results in 1999 on these two comparisons can be explained by a small group of eight pupils who did not obtain any qualifications for a variety of reasons within a very small year group.

The school has completed a careful analysis of past examination results and information about the potential performance of the pupils and has used this to set appropriate targets. Targets were exceeded in 1999 and those set for the future are challenging, but achievable. These targets have been agreed with the Local Education Authority.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to come to school and participate in all that the school has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and around the school without the need for close supervision. The small minority of less well behaved pupils responds well to the school's firm discipline code.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils have a strong sense of identity with the school. Respect for each other and a willingness to listen are particularly strong features.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance rates are well above the national average and unauthorised absence is well below the national average. Punctuality is good.

A particular feature of the school is the way in which boys and girls work together. This is a reflection of the school policies that encourage mixed groups. Another strong feature of the school is the way that the oldest and youngest pupils work together in the paired reading scheme and other contexts.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>aged 11-14 years</b>	<b>aged 14-16 years</b>
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good. It is the main contributory factor in the rising standards, both academic and personal, across the school. As a result of good teaching, pupil learning is good or better in six out of ten lessons and is only unsatisfactory in about one lesson in

twenty.

During the inspection week:

- 7 per cent of teaching was excellent;
- 31 per cent of teaching was very good or better;
- 66 per cent of teaching was good or better;
- 94 per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better; and
- 6 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory.

Only one poor lesson was observed and there was no very poor teaching.

The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is less than that found in most schools, whilst the proportion of teaching that was good or better is significantly higher. Standards of teaching are strongest in GCSE classes where three quarters of teaching is good or better and more than four in ten lessons are very good or excellent. A noticeable feature of the quality of teaching is the consistency across the curriculum. Whilst there are some variations between subjects, there are no weak subject areas.

The quality of teaching in English is very good. The quality of teaching in Maths and Science is good. The greatest proportion of good or better teaching was in English, science, art, drama, information and communication technology and physical education. In drama, teaching is always good or better. In English, one in five lessons was excellent and three in five lessons were very good or better. In English, the impact of the Advanced Skills Teacher who provides a model of good practice is evident. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in English, science, art, drama, geography, history, music and religious education.

Whilst good overall, the quality of teaching was less consistent in mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broadly based and well balanced in both key stages. The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are major strengths.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Provision for pupils in the Speech and Language Unit is very good. Provision for other pupils is generally good, although there are aspects that need improvement.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has only eight pupils with English as an additional language and only one of these is at an early stage of English acquisition. The level of provision is appropriate.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Mixed. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is poor. Moral and social development are areas of strength. There are good opportunities for pupils to visit places of culture, but the multicultural dimension of the curriculum is weak.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. The monitoring and support for academic progress, and personal support and guidance are particular strengths.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good overall. Communications are a strength. However, the school does not always deal with complaints to parents' satisfaction.

The curriculum makes a substantial contribution to the school's aims for promoting pupils' intellectual, personal and physical development. Overall, the curriculum allows all pupils to have equal opportunity to make progress, although some improvements could be made in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. In large measure, the curriculum meets legal requirements. In Key Stage 4, there are some deficiencies in content and time allocations for information and communication technology, physical education and religious education.

Teachers know pupils well, recognise their individual needs and are responsive and caring towards them. The tutorial system makes a valuable contribution to the support and guidance of pupils.

The school has strong links with parents and values their support and co-operation. The school listens to parents and responds to their concerns. Since the last inspection, the school has made 'effort' grades consistent across the school; has involved parents in the initiative to raise achievement and has put in place both a home/school agreement and a homework policy. Unfortunately, a minority of parents have expressed concerns about the way in which their complaints are dealt with, and the inspection team agrees that the school must review the complaints procedure at the earliest opportunity.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. Leadership is very good, providing clear educational direction. Whilst working well as a result of the calibre of the people concerned, the management structure does not fully meet the changing needs of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. The governing body provides a sense of direction for the school; supports the school as a critical friend; and holds the school to account for the standards it achieves. However, it is not meeting all requirements with regard to: the curriculum, particularly special educational needs; collective worship; and the annual report to parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. There is good monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. Academic performance is fully monitored and evaluated, but non-academic aspects of the school's performance are not judged so rigorously.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Development planning is strong and is supported through careful financial management. The school is applying the main principles of 'Best Value'.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate. Pupil:teacher ratios and spending on resources are average for comprehensive schools. The effectiveness of the school is good and costs are slightly below average. Therefore the school is providing good value for money.

The management team has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what needs to be done to improve further. Development priorities and plans are clear and appropriate. The present management structure was introduced when the school was smaller and at a different stage of development. It has many strengths and has successfully bridged the divide between academic and pastoral concerns. However, the management structure is facing strain as the school grows and changes and only functions successfully as a result of the calibre of the people in the team.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The attitudes and values that the school promotes.</li><li>• The standards the school sets for behaviour and attendance.</li><li>• Improvements in standards and the profile of the school in the community.</li><li>• Newsletters and communications through the school journal.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some parents would like to see more consistency in the amount of homework set.</li><li>• Some parents are dissatisfied with the procedures, and the sensitivity, with which complaints are dealt.</li></ul>

In the main, the inspection team agrees with parents' views of the school. The school has many strengths. Whilst being addressed in recent initiatives, inconsistency in homework remains an issue in some parts of the school. The school's complaints procedure needs to be reviewed.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In 1999, overall GCSE results were in line with national averages and those of similar schools. This represents good achievement for pupils who entered the school with below average levels of attainment. Last year, and over the last three years, girls' results at GCSE have been above average, whilst boys' results have been close to the national average. The difference between the performance of boys and girls is greater than that found in most schools.
2. In 1999, for the first time, more than half of all pupils gained five or more higher grade (A\* to C) GCSEs. On this measure, the school is now above the national average and the average for similar schools. There has been a steady improvement in higher grade GCSE results, which were in line with the national average, in recent years. Current work in Year 11 suggests that this trend will continue.
3. In 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE passes at any level (A\* to G) was in line with the national average, but well below the average for similar schools. The proportion that left school without any qualification in 1999 was much higher than the national average and that of similar schools. These poor comparisons are a concern. However, the results on these two measures were not representative of recent years where Notley has typically been above average on the number obtaining five or more GCSEs at any level, and well below the national averages of those leaving without qualification. The untypical results in 1999 can be explained by a small group of eight pupils who did not obtain any qualifications for a variety of reasons within a very small year group. The indications are that this will not happen again in 2000 and the school is taking active steps to ensure that all pupils complete their courses.
4. GCSE results in 1999 varied between the core subjects. GCSE results were above average in English and science. In mathematics, results were below average for pupils gaining higher grade passes, but in line, or better, with averages on other measures.
5. In other subjects, GCSE results were above average in: art, drama, history, modern foreign languages and music; close to national averages in business studies, design and technology, geography and physical education; but below national averages in English literature and religious education.
6. In recent years, there have been differences between GCSE results in different subjects, but in most cases no consistent pattern. However, performance has been consistently good in science, history and drama.
7. Whilst below national averages, the standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs are in line with their potential. Pupils with a range of needs are making good progress towards the targets set for them in their Individual Education Plans. In science, drama and information and communication technology, pupils with special educational needs exceed expectations as a result of the effective support that they receive. Some pupils, for whom GCSE examinations would not be appropriate, are entered for Certificates of Achievement. Their performance on these courses is in line with their ability.

8. The school has completed a careful analysis of past examination results and information about the potential performance of the pupils. This has been used to set appropriate targets. Targets were exceeded in 1999 and those set for the future are challenging, but achievable. These targets have been agreed with the Local Education Authority. The school is very aware of the difference between the performance of boys and girls and has set itself additional targets to reduce the gender gap.
9. The impact of whole school literacy policies is being seen in a number of areas. Standards in literacy are in line with national averages, with strengths in reading, speaking and listening. Pupils talk fluently and sensitively in a range of contexts and listen and respond to what they hear extremely well. Writing is developing well, but accuracy remains a concern in some areas. In spite of the fact that there is, as yet, no coherent whole school policy, the pupils demonstrate a good level of competence in numerical and graphical skills across the curriculum.
10. In 1999, overall results in Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests were in line with national averages, but below those for similar schools. However, available information shows that the pupils' attainment on entry to the school was below the national average, so reaching the national expectation after three years represents achievement that is at least satisfactory and, in some subjects, good. Classroom observation and the analysis of pupil work during the inspection supports this conclusion. As with GCSE, there are differences between the performance of boys and girls. In all the core subjects, boys were close to, but below national averages. Girls were close to, but above average in English and science, and above average in mathematics.
11. Overall, Key Stage 3 test results have been in line with national averages over the last four years. There have been variations between the three core subjects. Test results in English and science in 1999 were in line with national averages, whilst mathematics results were above the national average. Compared to similar schools, test results in 1999 were below average in English and science, but above average in mathematics. Within a narrow band of difference, there has been a pattern of higher performance in mathematics in recent years.
12. There are no national tests in other subjects at the end of Key Stage 3. Inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils compared to national expectations is: above average in design and technology; average in art, drama, geography, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages and physical education; but below average in some aspects of music and religious education.

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

13. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. They respond very well to the positive climate for learning, which is reflected, for example, in the high quality of work on display in corridors and on classroom walls. The school's code of practice, which is displayed in all classes, public areas of the school and in the pupil journal and staff handbook, translates the values of the school into the daily life of pupils. Pupils and their tutors discuss the code of practice and observations reveal that, for example, the principle of showing 'respect to everyone, adults and pupils alike' is thoroughly embedded within the ethos of the school.
14. Behaviour is very good. There is no evidence of aggressive, sexist or racist behaviour and pupils are consistently polite and courteous towards each other, their teachers, and

other adults in the school. The level of permanent exclusions is very low. The number of fixed period exclusions was above national averages, but has now fallen to average levels. Most of these exclusions were for short periods and reflected the behaviour of an unrepresentative minority. The school follows correct procedures.

15. The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud to contribute to its achievements. They are interested and involved; show initiative and take responsibility; and are willing to ask and answer questions. They take advantage of the opportunities offered to them. For example, the library is well used during the day and particularly at lunchtime when large numbers of pupils choose to do their homework, or make use of the available facilities. Pupils value the breadth of extra-curricular provision and levels of participation are high.
16. There are numerous occasions provided to celebrate achievements. Pupils value the challenge of high expectations and the youngest pupils particularly appreciate the range of incentives provided by the school to motivate and support all pupils.
17. Pupils are confident and at ease with each other and the staff. Relationships are good and pupils readily work in mixed gender pairs and groups. Most pupils show they are able to respect and take account of other people's views and opinions and understand the implications of individual personal action. There are a wide range of opportunities available for social interaction. The paired reading scheme is an excellent example of collaborative working between the oldest and the youngest pupils and builds relationships as much as it develops literacy. Another good example is the way in which pupils - who have special educational needs and are receiving additional support from other teachers and assistants - are integrated within the classroom. At lunchtime, the library provides a positive working atmosphere, which is heightened by the support of prefects and a well-trained group of pupil librarians.
18. Punctuality, both to school and to lessons, is good and attendance in observed lessons during the inspection was above 91 per cent. School attendance in 1998-9 was over three per cent above the national average and unauthorised absence was one per cent below. Pupils are aware of the educational benefits of regular and punctual attendance.
19. In many discussions, pupils spoke of their school with pride and were sure that they would recommend it to others.

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

20. The quality of teaching is good. It is the main contributory factor in the rising standards, both academic and personal, across the school. As a result of good teaching, pupil learning is good or better in six out of ten lessons and is only unsatisfactory in about one lesson in twenty. Good teaching motivates and challenges pupils. In most classes, they work with sustained interest consolidating their previous work or acquiring new knowledge and understanding.
21. Two thirds of the teaching observed during the inspection week was good or better and nearly one third was very good or excellent. The teaching in about one lesson in twenty was judged to be unsatisfactory, but only one poor lesson was seen during the week.

The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is less than that found in most schools, whilst the proportion of teaching that was good or better is significantly higher. A feature of the school is the uniformity of teaching. The school has developed good teaching policies and practices which are applied in very nearly all classrooms and pupils respond well to this consistency of approach and to the high expectations. In general, pupils know what they have to do.

22. Whilst there was little difference between the amount of satisfactory or better teaching seen in different key stages, the amount of good or better teaching was significantly higher in Key Stage 4. In examination classes, nearly three quarters of teaching was good or better and more than four in ten lessons were very good.
23. The greatest proportion of good or better teaching was in English, science, art, drama, information and communication technology and physical education. Drama teaching is always good or better. In English, one in five lessons was excellent and three in five lessons were very good or better. The impact of the Advanced Skills Teacher who, in English, provides a model of good practice is evident. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in English, science, art, drama, geography, history, music and religious education.
24. Whilst good overall, the quality of teaching was less consistent in mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education. It is important that the good practice that exists in all three subjects is shared, particularly with inexperienced teachers.
25. Where teaching is good or better, it is characterised by careful short-term planning, based on detailed schemes of work. These take account of the different needs of the pupils in the class, including those with special educational needs, so that all can make the maximum progress. In general, learning support assistants are used well to support pupils with learning difficulties in meeting their targets. Classroom organization is a strength. The school's policies of deciding where pupils will sit and how they will be grouped for different activities are very effective in ensuring that all pupils remain on task and benefit from each other. In good lessons, a brisk pace is maintained with a mixture of activities and resources so that pupils feel stimulated and challenged.
26. In general, the teaching of the skill of literacy across the curriculum is good. There are displays of specialist vocabulary in every subject area. A Year 7 study skills programme is developing well and there are a range of intervention strategies to support inexperienced readers. One particularly effective strategy is the matching of Year 7 pupils with Year 11 mentors whom they meet for 20 minutes every week in order to follow a structured programme that encourages reading for meaning. Frames to help with the writing of a variety of texts are also in evidence in a number of subject areas.
27. Across the curriculum, some good examples of teaching numeracy skills can be found. For example, good practice was observed in French where teachers reinforced the principles of how numbers can be built up by reference to compound numbers in French such as quatre – vingt – cinq. This was very effective. However, there are too few examples of this sort. There is much work to do if the school is to be successful in building on the foundations of the national numeracy strategy in primary schools. A start should be made on implementing a whole school policy for numeracy.
28. Information and communication technology is used well in some subject areas. In the teaching of geography, for example, pupils evaluate information from the Internet in order to explore environmental issues to do with siting an oil pipeline. However, information and communication technology is not sufficiently used in all subjects and is

an area for development.

29. In the few cases where teaching is unsatisfactory, the most common reason is weaknesses in planning, so that all pupils are not able to show what they know, understand and can do. This is either because of a lack of attention to the different abilities within the class, or a poor balance between different elements of the lesson, so that pupils are passive for too long and do not have enough opportunities for activity. In some subject areas, the needs of pupils with special educational needs are not fully met as teachers are not taking account of their Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and liaison with the special educational needs department is not as good as it should be. In these lessons, classroom assistants are not properly used.
30. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was described as 'good in both key stages', with almost half the lessons being good or very good. The use of IEPs, a lack of differentiated teaching for different abilities in some subjects and teaching in physical education were identified as issues. Teaching in physical education is much improved. The use of IEPs and a lack of differentiation remain as issues in a few classrooms, but have been addressed in most. Whilst direct comparisons are not possible because the method of grading lessons has changed, it is evident that there has been improvement overall, particularly in the amount of teaching that is judged to be good or better.

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

31. The curriculum is broadly based and well balanced. It substantially contributes towards the school's aims for promoting the intellectual, personal and physical development of pupils. A good degree of challenge is presented to the majority of pupils by the curriculum as a whole and many subjects plan well for continuity and progression from ages eleven to sixteen. The development of language and numeracy skills is supported through several subjects, including drama and modern foreign languages.
32. Overall, the curriculum provided is accessible to all pupils who have equal opportunity to make progress and achieve. For the most able, an impressive programme of activities is offered in conjunction with other Braintree schools and the local college. Those pupils with special educational needs benefit from good levels of support in the classroom. Lunchtime and homework clubs provide opportunities to re-explain course content and give guidance to support special educational needs pupils with homework.
33. The arrangements for setting by ability in most subjects and for mixed-ability grouping in others are generally helpful in promoting good learning. They allow teachers to provide a closer match between the demands of the curriculum and the needs of individual pupils. A recent innovation of seating arrangements in a boy/girl formation encourages better concentration from individuals and more productive pairings for group work.
34. A particular strength of the curriculum offered is the emphasis on older pupils enhancing their own learning by working with younger children. In English, Year 11 pupils regularly engage in paired reading with Year 7. In physical education Year 10 pupils give lessons to pupils from the local primary school as part of the Junior Sports Leader Awards. Both programmes benefit older and younger pupils alike.
35. The quality and range of extra-curricular activities offered are major strengths. Virtually every curriculum area is represented and there are many opportunities for pupils to learn new skills, these include sailing, public speaking and chess. Pupils and parents speak highly of the programme and participation rates for many clubs are good. Full

use is made of the school's four computer areas during break and lunchtime. A range of applications are used including desktop publishing, word processing, graphics and exploration of the Internet. These activities enhance pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

36. In large measure, the curriculum provided at the school meets statutory requirements. All subjects required to be taught in each key stage are included, though there are some deficiencies in terms of content or time allocation at Key Stage 4 in ICT, physical education and religious education. Some of these weaknesses were also present at the time of the previous inspection, although some progress has been made. The recent appointment of an ICT co-ordinator and the anticipated appointment of a religious education subject leader will go some way to ensuring that remaining issues are addressed. The school development plan has a strong curriculum focus and there is a clear intention to keep the curriculum, and how it is delivered, under review.
37. A sound programme aimed at promoting many aspects of pupils' personal development is organised within personal, social and health education (PSHE). This takes place during afternoon registration and assembly time, tutor periods and in PSHE lessons. The programme includes careers, health (including sex and drugs education), ICT and work experience. Although not yet part of the national curriculum, some elements of citizenship have been introduced as part of PSHE in Key Stage 3. The school deserves credit for responding positively to new initiatives and for forward planning to ensure the curriculum continues to meet the needs of its pupils.
38. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is poor. There are few examples of creative practice within the curriculum and neither assemblies nor tutor time provide for an act of collective worship for all pupils. Opportunities to experience awe and wonder are not made explicit within curriculum planning and, consequently, any attempts to encourage curiosity, share experiences of a spiritual nature or to reflect on the human condition are erratic and haphazard.
39. Moral development is supported by expectations of high moral standards including the importance of respect for others. Pupils have a well developed sense of right and wrong and the staff provide excellent role models. The school has a code of practice which includes statements about what the school values and how its members should behave towards each other. Parents express support for the ethos promoted by the school. The discussion of moral issues occurs in many lessons, notably in religious education and other humanities subjects, English and drama.
40. Social development is a strength. There is good social interaction in lessons when pupils work in pairs or groups to solve problems or produce collaborative work. Sharing of books and equipment is done sensibly and pupils respect each others' property. The school council, together with many other opportunities to demonstrate responsibility, initiative and leadership, promotes a strong sense of community and social coherence.
41. There are good opportunities for pupils to undertake visits to places of culture, such as museums, art galleries and the theatre. There are also some references to other cultures in some subjects e.g. religious education (aborigine creation stories) and the creative arts (african art project). This apart, the multicultural dimension to the curriculum is weak. With very few representatives of other cultures amongst its pupils, the school recognises that more needs to be done to raise awareness and promote appreciation of cultures from around the world.

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

42. Teachers know pupils well, recognise their individual needs and are responsive and

caring towards them. Discussions with pupils show that they feel secure within the school environment and comfortable in taking any problems to their form tutors or other trusted members of staff. The tutor system works well. Tutors have clearly defined responsibilities and play a central role in supporting pupil's academic progress and personal welfare.

43. The behaviour and discipline policy is a coherent document that promotes good behaviour. All parts of the school community show a clear understanding of what is, and is not, acceptable. The policy includes the code of practice, which is displayed in all classes, public areas of the school and in the pupil journal and staff handbook. There is orderly behaviour both before and during the daily registration sessions with high expectations set by teachers. Good behaviour which is free from harassment and bullying is supported by the 'Emergency Backup System' which provides for a member of staff to be 'on call' to deal with discipline issues not met by the internal arrangements within subjects.
44. The working environment is safe with security-coded entry systems fitted to all external doors and pupils effectively supervised throughout the day. Closed circuit television system (CCTV) and voice connections enable the office staff to monitor and control the main entrance. Pupils may not leave the school during the day without permission from their team leader and must sign out at the main office. Late-comers must report to the main office. The child protection policy clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of all staff, together with the governing body, in safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare.
45. Teachers are aware of health and safety issues for pupils. For example, in physical education equipment is regularly checked and clear instructions given for safe techniques.
46. The school meets National Curriculum assessment requirements at the end of Key Stage 3, together with public examinations at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 4, pupils are encouraged to reflect and identify their strengths when compiling their National Record of Achievement (NRA). Pupils are able to access their NRA Statements from a computer file and are confident in their use of word-processing skills.
47. The school meets the statutory requirements relating to pupils with statements of special educational needs, but does not fulfil its full responsibilities towards the Code of Practice: pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties at Stage 1 are not recorded on the SEN register. The identification of such pupils is the responsibility of the team leaders, but there are no documented procedures as required by the Code of Practice.
48. There are some inconsistencies in the use of records of pupils' achievements to assess the progress of all pupils and identify those who are underachieving. Where practice is secure, for example in science, parents are involved in monitoring homework and tutorials are used to set academic targets. These practices need to be shared across the school. Individual Education Plans for pupils with special educational needs are assessed every six months.
49. Pupils' records and reports, including annual reports to parents and reports to school leavers, meet requirements.
50. The efforts of pupils are encouraged and rewarded through merit points, certificates of

achievement, attendance letters, annual prizes and external awards including 'Challenge Certificates' and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

51. Pupils in Key Stage 3 receive guidance on study skills during tutorial sessions. Pupils in Key Stage 4 know and can discuss their predicted GCSE grades in, for example, history, geography and science. In a Year 10 tutorial, pupils were able to discuss their individual academic achievements and what they needed to do to improve estimated grades in all subjects. At the end of each discussion, pupils signed a 'progress check' form which recorded the agreed targets for improvement. Each pupil received a copy for his/her personal files. The support provided in the homework club and the help in prioritising course-work deadlines are highly valued by all pupils.
52. The 1996 inspection report noted that not all registers were properly completed and stipulated that the 'school should ensure that all registers consistently comply with its attendance policy'. The registers still do not comply. Pupil attendance is entered in registers at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions, but only Year 11 tutors consistently enter daily and weekly totals and thereby 'close/complete' their registers daily as required by the school's attendance policy. Some pupils are marked as receiving home tuition and others are on extended work experience: the school is not fulfilling all of its statutory duties in regard to these pupils. The manual registration system, which revealed Year 10 attendance for the Autumn term at less than 90% (89.3%), needs closer monitoring to check for errors in the entering of registration marks.
53. Monitoring of attendance is inconsistent. Some individual tutors, and at least one assistant team leader, have developed efficient monitoring systems for their areas. However, spot checks of registers for the whole school for the month of January 2000 (89.8% attendance) revealed some cause for concern. While continuing to use a manual attendance recording system, the school cannot easily audit attendance records and attendance statistics for the two most recently completed terms were unavailable.

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

54. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to have strong links with parents and to value their support and co-operation.
55. The school listens to parents and has instituted full consultation when bringing out documents such as the home/school agreement and the homework policy. For example, following a meeting of Year 8 parents last year, it was possible to make the assignment of 'effort' grades consistent across the school. The 'raising achievement' initiative has resulted in 80 per cent of parents of identified under-achievers participating in monitoring their children's progress.
56. Overall, parents support the school. They help raise a substantial sum each year through the home/school association, attend parent evenings and special events, and want the school and their children to do well. They are pleased with the written reports of their children's progress and appreciate the new progress checks made in the term when written reports are not produced. However, parents were not seen in and about the school and only one parent was reported as helping in the school (with net ball).
57. That more than 20 per cent of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire saying stated that they could not agree that their children 'gets the right amount of work to do at home' or that the 'school works closely with parents' gives

cause for concern. The school is presently dealing with homework issues through its recent homework policy about which parents and pupils were fully consulted. The response to the other question and the several serious complaints written on the backs of, or attached to, returned questionnaires, represent a minority of parents, but nevertheless a group which is unhappy with the way their complaints are addressed. The governing body and senior management team must at the earliest possible date review the school's complaints procedures in order to establish a clear policy to hear and sensitively deal with complaints from parents.

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

58. The headteacher and senior management team provide very good leadership, thus ensuring clear direction for the work and development of the school. They are a key ingredient in the creation of a good and improving school where pupils are keen and able to learn. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and know what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. They lead by example in their contribution to the high standards of teaching and in their involvement in all aspects of school life.
59. The leadership of the school has a very strong focus on raising pupil achievement. The school development plan identifies the main factors (the quality of teaching; well motivated pupils with a high sense of self worth; partnership with parents and the community; and target-setting at school, subject and pupil level) which the school sees as contributing to raising academic standards. It goes on to provide realistic, but challenging, development targets with good planning for their implementation. The development plan is understood by the whole school community and, at all levels, policies and practices are consistent with it.
60. The school has a well-developed approach for monitoring and evaluating academic standards and the quality of teaching. There is an effective system of subject reviews. The school makes good use of data. The management team uses the information gathered to set challenging targets for the school as a whole as well as for individual staff. A good programme of staff development supports this. In addition, the school has very good arrangements for inducting new staff and makes a valuable contribution to initial teacher training through its links with Homerton College.
61. Whilst satisfactory, the monitoring and evaluation of other aspects of school life lacks the rigour given to academic monitoring. For example, the school has limited information and incomplete analysis on school attendance, behaviour and special educational needs.
62. There are no formal procedures for the line manager for special educational needs to ensure that provision is effective and monitored. One consequence of this is that the school cannot demonstrate that the skills addressed in withdrawal sessions permeate through the different subject areas or judge the cost effectiveness of provision. The school policy on special educational needs should be updated annually, detailing relevant success criteria and it should relate to the SEN development plan.
63. The school has explicit aims and values that are understood by teachers, parents and pupils. These are reflected in improving academic performance; relationships within the school; the high standards of behaviour and personal development; and the positive

school environment. A significant feature of the school is the way in which these aims and values are inclusive of pupils with special educational needs.

64. The management of the school has many strengths. There is a relatively unusual management structure that involves a lot of staff in whole school issues and bridges the divide between the pastoral and academic aspects of school life. It is an important reason for the high standards of behaviour and personal development, and for the shared ethos of the school. The management structure was created in response to the needs of the smaller school described in the last OFSTED report. Five team leaders, with the senior links, form a wider senior management team. The team leaders have wide-ranging responsibilities including pupil welfare within a year group and the monitoring of teaching and learning. Subject teachers are grouped in the teams, with subject co-ordinators having responsibilities including the planning and delivery of the curriculum. There is good delegation, with staff at all levels being responsible, and accountable, for key aspects of school life. For example, the tutors grouped in the teams have greater responsibility than is often the case for pupils' personal and academic welfare.
65. Whilst the current management structure has undoubtedly been of great benefit to the school, it is being placed under increasing strain as the school grows in size. As the numbers of staff and pupils increase, the teams are becoming unwieldy; key managers overloaded; and lines of responsibility and accountability, particularly between team leaders and subject co-ordinators, blurred. The fact that management continues to function effectively is a reflection of the high calibre of the managers at all levels and the very good relationships that exist, rather than of the system itself. The school has already recognized the need to change and is embarking on a restructuring process.
66. The governing body provides a sense of direction to the school. It is very well led and governors have a good understanding of their twin roles of supporting the school as a critical friend and of holding it to account for the standards it achieves. There is a good relationship between the governors and the headteacher and many of the governors are well known within the school through their programme of visits. As a whole, the governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the governors are not fully monitoring the curriculum, particularly with regard to special educational needs. They are not ensuring that the school provides a daily act of collective worship. The annual report to parents does not meet all legal requirements as it fails to deal with school security, disabilities, destination of pupils and information about future parent governor elections.
67. Staffing and accommodation are adequate and learning resources are generally good. There are sufficient and appropriately qualified staff, although the school has experienced difficulties in recruiting in some areas. Pupil:teacher ratios are average for comprehensive schools. Accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively, although the lack of a school hall has an impact on other aspects of school life. As the school grows, pressure on accommodation is developing. The increased number of pupils makes movement along corridors and on stairs very crowded and presents potential health and safety issues.
68. The library is a large, pleasant, welcoming space which offers opportunities for whole class teaching; a comfortable area for reading and browsing; access to a number of computers and a well-organised careers section. It is well resourced in terms of the

number of available books; ICT equipment and a developing audio and videotape provision. There is also good use of block loans through Braintree Central Library.

69. The school's finances are in good order and systems of financial control and budgetary management are effective. The bursar provides good quality information to governors and staff with budget responsibilities. Decisions on expenditure are informed by priorities within the school and departmental development plans are aimed at improving the quality of provision.
70. The school has gone a long way towards implementing the principles of best value. The principles are understood and applied where appropriate, for example where information about costs in other schools is available. Steps are taken to ensure that value for money is obtained when purchasing goods or services. However, the school does not yet have systems in place to consult on major spending decisions.
71. Grants received by the school for specific purposes for special educational needs for example, are used appropriately and to good effect. Overall, the school's resources are targeted at maximising pupils' achievement and good value for money is obtained.

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

The statements contained in the box called 'WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED' on the second page of the summary report (page 8 of this document) indicate areas for improvement identified from the inspection. In order to bring about improvements in these areas, the school should do the following:

### **Raise pupils' achievements further by:**

- continuing to prioritise strategies for raising boys' achievement and to ensure that they are implemented across the curriculum.  
(Paragraph 1 of the main report. This has already been identified as a priority in the school's development plan.)
- continuing to develop strategies to raise the attainment of all pupils.  
(Paragraphs 1-12 of the main report. This has already been identified as a priority in the school's development plan.)
- building on the school's policies on spiritual development and multicultural education and ensuring that they are implemented across all aspects of school life.  
(Paragraphs 38 and 41 of the main report.)

### **Improve management and governance of the school in order to raise standards by:**

- refining the current management structure in order to ensure that it reflects the needs of the growing and developing school.  
(Paragraphs 64-65 of the main report. This has already been identified as a priority in the school's development plan.)
- defining roles and responsibilities more clearly, particularly with regard to pupil achievement.  
(Paragraphs 64-65 of the main report. This has already been identified as a priority in the school's development plan.)
- improving systems for monitoring and evaluating non-academic aspects of school life, including attendance, behaviour and provision for special educational needs.  
(Paragraphs 47, 52-53, 61-62 of the main report)
- improving procedures for dealing with parental complaints.  
(Paragraph 57 of the main report.)
- ensuring that the governing body meets its responsibilities, particularly with regard to the curriculum, special educational needs, and collective worship.  
(Paragraph 66 of the main report.)

In addition to the key issues listed above, there are a number of other issues that should be considered by the school. These can be seen in the following paragraphs of the report:

3, 24, 28, 29, 36, 47, 67, 70, 101, 111, 121, 130, 139, 146, 152, 158, 165, 171, 180, 188, 194



## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### The Speech and Language Unit

72. The Speech and Language Unit is an established provision for 15 pupils monitored by the Local Education Authority (LEA). Currently there are 16 pupils in the Unit. The criteria for admission are detailed in the school's special educational needs policy. This report focuses on how well the Unit operates as part of the school.
73. The Speech and Language Unit is a very effective part of the school. It makes a substantial contribution to the pupils it serves as well as the wider school community.
74. The Unit is well staffed by two teachers (including a teacher-in-charge), four teacher assistants (TAs), two of whom are senior TAs and one of whom is currently replacing a teacher on maternity leave. There are two part-time speech and language therapists, equivalent to one full-time post. The LEA has also funded a teacher for the equivalent of one day per week to address the additional needs of a pupil.
75. The quality of teaching is a strength of the Unit. This results from an effective team in which the speech and language therapists work in partnership with teachers to assess individual pupils' needs and plan objectives to inform future teaching. There is good and very good teaching in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. A very clear understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses supports good knowledge of the National Curriculum. This enables each pupil to gain full access to the curriculum and to reflect and build upon previous learned skills. Good use of questioning is used to consolidate and extend pupils' existing knowledge. This is shown through sensitive handling, which encourages pupil participation in a sensitive environment. Teaching strategies include the use of mind maps to help structure the thought process behind essay writing. The use of file cards to support and encourage organisational skills are effective in maintaining pupil motivation and providing a positive atmosphere in which pupil achievement is recognised.
76. Assessment is frequent and is used both to inform teaching and to demonstrate pupil progress. This is supported by close liaison between the Unit and subject staff, particularly in monitoring achievements and planning for accredited courses. When account is taken of prior attainment, pupils at both key stages make good progress.
77. The Speech and Language Unit has made good progress in ensuring that all pupils are integrated well into the full school provision. Good levels of support are allocated to pupil needs. The unit responds to individual needs and offers opportunities to obtain Certificates of Achievement in English and science. These opportunities are extended to other pupils in the school who benefit from this curriculum. The provision of homework clubs is used well by pupils throughout the school. It offers support to those pupils who have difficulty in accessing the curriculum due to poor literacy skills, particularly specific literacy difficulties.
78. Pupils are withdrawn from French with no formal disapplication made to support this. This needs to be addressed. However, the additional five hours has allowed the Unit to be flexible in offering pupils support for their individual programmes and time to reinforce mainstream subject knowledge.

79. The relationship between staff and pupils is very good and is an important contributor to the positive attitudes which pupils show in their work both in mainstream classes and withdrawal sessions. They work confidently and with enthusiasm. The staff have high expectations for the pupils who respond accordingly, particularly within withdrawal sessions.
80. Leadership and management is a strength of the Unit. The teacher-in-charge provides good, decisive and positive leadership. She is effectively supported by a team which is hardworking and capable. Procedures are in place for raising awareness of the needs of pupils with speech and language difficulties within the mainstream school. The Unit contributes to the induction of new teachers at Notley High School as well as whole staff development days.

### **Community Links**

81. The school is a leader in community development, working at grassroots level to improve the quality of life for local people.
82. The school is a leader in the 'Most Able Pupil Initiative' for Braintree, is the sole educational institution participating in the development of the Great Notley Discovery Centre and is working with a large housing developer to set up drop-in information and communication technology centres on new housing estates.
83. There are exceptional working relationships with the company employed by the LEA to provide a careers service. Company advisers offer timetabled interviews and advice in Years 9 to 11; mock job interviews in Year 10; and help in arranging work experience placements in Year 11. All pupils, including those on the special educational needs register and in the Speech and Language Unit, participate throughout. Industry Days for Year 9 pupils involves over 60 local businesses and people from the local area are recruited as mentors for pupils in Key Stage 4. These initiatives enhance what the school can provide through its own staff and contribute significantly to pupils' learning and achievement.
84. The school has excellent links with primary schools and with Braintree College. Strong curricular links exist with physical education and the teaching of French to primary pupils. The school's bid for specialist technology status has strengthened links with both primary and tertiary partners as part of a 'family of schools'.
85. The partnership arrangements with the local tertiary college go far beyond informing pupils and parents about the transfer from secondary school. The school and the college work closely together on issues of social exclusion; the broadening of community learning; and the natural continuum from the primary through the secondary to the tertiary phases of education.
86. Substantial links exist with Cambridge University from where student teachers come to observe lessons and undertake teaching practice.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	167
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7%	23%	36%	27%	6%	1%	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	889	n/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	85	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	32	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	143	n/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	94.1%
National comparative data	91.0%

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.1%
National comparative data	1.1%

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	82	75	157

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	49	43
	Girls	55	50	47
	Total	96	99	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63	63	59
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25	45	15
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	53	46
	Girls	60	50	50
	Total	109	103	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72	68	63
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28	48	27
	National	31	37	28

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	64	53	117

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	28	56	57
	Girls	31	49	51
	Total	59	105	108
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50.4	90	92.3
	National	46.3	90.7	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	38.1
	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	n/a
	National	n/a

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	882
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	60	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	50.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	565

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.5%
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	22.5
Key Stage 4	20.7

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	1965612
Total expenditure	1978552
Expenditure per pupil	2531
Balance brought forward from previous year	147455
Balance carried forward to next year	134515

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	889
Number of questionnaires returned	169

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	56	10	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	37	54	6	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	54	6	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	64	19	2	1
The teaching is good.	21	70	7	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	55	15	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	48	7	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	42	4	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	21	56	15	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	26	62	5	4	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	59	12	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	42	5	1	1

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

### **ENGLISH**

87. The most recent English GCSE results were above the national average and reflect a steady improvement in girls' results over a three year period and a significant improvement in boys' results between 1998 and 1999. In the literature GCSE, results are significantly below the national average but this is, in part, due to a policy that ensures a far higher proportion of the year group is entered for the examination than is the case nationally. Girls consistently outperform boys and, although the gap is closing in English, it is significantly wider than the national picture in literature.
88. By the age of 14, pupils are performing in line with the national average. This represents good progress from their relatively low attainment at the start of Year 7.
89. Reading is an area of strength. A very good policy in Year 7 and Year 8, which allocates ten minutes to private, quiet reading at the beginning of each lesson, generates engagement and enthusiasm and is well supported by thoughtfully selected class libraries. As the pupils move through the school, they are taught and encouraged to make increasingly sophisticated responses to texts through an expanding range of activities like text marking, structured discussion and frameworks for thinking that help with a critical evaluations of texts studied. Indeed, in one year 10 class, there was an excellent discussion about the 'art' of the novelist. Dictionaries are available in every classroom and works of non-fiction are an integral part of the schemes of work. There are, however, insufficient texts from different cultures and traditions, particularly in Key Stage 3.
90. Writing develops well over both key stages in terms of accuracy, control and an overall engagement in a range of genres. A focus on structured, scaffolded support, particularly in terms of persuasive and discursive writing, produces confident writers across the whole range of ability. Modelling and sharing is much in evidence and the excellent displays in every classroom act as a showcase for pupils' work. The displays are also a reference point for technical terminology and for useful connectives to enhance textual cohesion. In a small minority of classes there is an over emphasis on decontextualised exercises and tests. This is a result of a misreading of the 'Grammar' unit of work which should not be delivered as a detached, free-standing teaching programme.
91. Talking and listening provide a powerful foundation for learning. A tradition of collaborative work has been established wherein pupils are explicitly taught about constraints and possibilities. They respond positively to questioning; engage productively in discussion; and work particularly well in pairs ['table partners']. This supportive, sensitive environment is, in part, a result of an effective implementation of the school's policy on mixed gender pairing. There is a good, focused use of role-play and hot-seating and listening skills are emphasised in all years. This indicates real progress since the last inspection and has had a profound impact on the quality of learning and of relationships.

92. The standards achieved are rooted in the high quality of teaching. Two-thirds of lessons observed were good or very good and no lesson was less than satisfactory. Good teaching is characterised by: a high level of confidence and subject knowledge; excellent classroom management; the use of a range of teaching strategies; a sharp pace with clear transition points; an explicit outlining of objectives; a deep knowledge of individual pupils - generating excellent relationships; and high expectations of both work and behaviour.
93. Whilst still satisfactory, in some classes there was infrequent devolution of responsibility for learning to the pupils; less consolidation through pair-work; and fewer examples of the modelling and sharing of good practice and good ideas.
94. Marking in the majority of lessons is focused and thorough. When it is less than helpful it tends to be restricted to surface features of language and targets for pupils are not sufficiently specific, do not relate to a learning objective that is achievable, or do not offer guidance about how to improve.
95. The attitude and the behaviour of pupils are exemplary and are a direct result of the traditions established by the quality of teaching and of the relationships that have been developed.
96. Subject documentation is thorough, extensive and helpful. However, in the Key Stage 3 scheme of work: learning objectives are not sufficiently sharp; the units do not adhere to a common format; there is no mention of the work of primary schools or of the National Literacy Strategy; and there is insufficient guidance or support for the provision of differentiated tasks for the less able. At the moment, differentiation is well defined through support and through a range of resources and there are examples of differentiated tasks but this is an area that needs further consideration.
97. The setting arrangements (for Years 9, 10 and 11) are well conceived and are working well for all abilities. There is a continuing need to monitor the results of the lower sets, but there is already in place a useful system of targeted support for pupils on the C/D borderline in these sets.
98. English is well led by both the subject co-ordinator and the team leader. This dual management structure works well in this context because of the professionalism and the productive, creative relationship of the two people involved. However, there are inherent problems related to a potential overlapping of roles in this expanding school, to the lack of a second in charge in the subject and to the heavy teaching load of two people with extensive management responsibilities.
99. Improving the use of information and communication technology is a priority in the subject action plan, but only a minority of teachers are confident about integrating aspects of the new technologies into their work and this is an ongoing issue.
100. Since the last inspection, academic standards have risen, particularly at GCSE and there has been a highly successful emphasis on listening in all year groups.

**101. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- the effective integration of IT into units of work;
- the further development of explicit differentiation for less able pupils;
- the use of focused learning objectives both in units of work and in individual lesson plans;
- the introduction of a wider range of texts from other cultures – particularly at Key Stage 3; and
- the establishment of the National Literacy Strategy teaching objectives as a foundation for the Key Stage 3 scheme of work.

All these points are in the context of a successful subject wherein there is a powerful ethos that generates high quality teaching in the majority of classrooms offering wide-ranging opportunities for genuine and enduring learning to take place.

## MATHEMATICS

102. Results in the 1999 GCSE exams were below the national average for pupils gaining grades A\* to C, but in line considering average points score, and above average for those obtaining grades A\* to G. Mathematics results at GCSE compare less favourably with other subjects in the school than they do at Key Stage 3. Since 1997 mathematics results have been improving at the same rate as national standards, but are still lagging behind as far as grades A\* to C are concerned.
103. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 can deal competently with the trigonometry of a right-angled triangle, solve algebraic inequalities and understand direct and inverse proportion. Average attaining pupils can use calculators appropriately and well. They can find the mean of a distribution from grouped data, and apply formulae using correct  $\Sigma$  notation. However, some display uncertainty when converting improper fractions to mixed numbers. Most lower attaining pupils and all of those with special educational needs, who were seen during the inspection in mathematics lessons, were doing well in relation to their ability.
104. Pupils' attainment in the 1999 National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 9, was above the national average for pupils achieving level 6 or better. The number of those achieving level 5 or better was in line with the national average. When compared with the results obtained by pupils from similar schools, results were above average overall. Maths results for 1999 were better than those achieved by science or English. Over the years 1996 to 1999 the Key Stage 3 results have been in line with the national average. Girls have performed better than boys have during this period.
105. By the age of 14 higher achieving pupils can solve linear equations such as  $3(x + 7) - 2(x + 4) = 3(2x + 1)$  and find probabilities for mutually exclusive events. Average attainers, for the most part, are confident when converting from centimetres to kilometres which involves good understanding of place value and decimals. Lower attaining pupils can use geometrical drawing equipment safely and effectively. They can also recognise number patterns in sequences. Pupils with special educational needs attain well in relation to their varying abilities.
106. A major factor in the subject's success is the attitude and behaviour of the pupils. In almost all lessons, and in all of those taught well, the pupils worked hard, showed interest and often the ability to think for themselves.

107. Overall, teaching in mathematics is good. However, it is not consistent across classes. Two thirds of lessons are well taught and in half of these teaching is very good or excellent. In the best lessons the subject guidelines for lesson planning are followed. The lessons begin with a brisk test of mental mathematics and this is followed by a variety of activities involving listening, working at exercises, reflecting and discussing. The organisation of the pupils is of a high standard and the pace is challenging. In these lessons, pupils are enthused by the work and the way in which it is presented to them. Hence they make excellent progress. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, this results from insufficient planning, so, for example: lessons do not involve the full range of ability; use the pupils' prior knowledge; or have a wide enough range of examples to keep all pupils purposefully engaged throughout the lesson.
108. For the first time in several years the subject is taught entirely by qualified teachers of mathematics. The team, in common with other subject teams in the school, is under what is effectively joint leadership. Both the team leader and the mathematics co-ordinator are very talented teachers with a great sense of commitment to the pupils; to their subject; and to the team as a whole. However, the current organisation does not assist in smooth and efficient organisation. Leadership, therefore, is no better than satisfactory; and it is this good because of the high level of skill, teamwork and dedication shown by those involved. Too much time is taken with the need for discussion and cross checking. This is time that would be better spent on developing the mathematics curriculum.
109. Since the last inspection the subject has confronted the issues raised and made satisfactory progress towards resolving them. Lesson planning and pace of delivery were identified as problems previously. In most cases, these issues have been addressed. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs continues to be good. Average and lower attaining pupils are also achieving better. A good degree of investigation is now incorporated into the schemes of work and a subject handbook is in place. The science laboratory mentioned in the last report has been incorporated as a mathematics classroom. Some progress has been made to incorporate information and communication technology into the mathematics curriculum, but there is still substantial room for improvement. The percentage of A\* to C grades remains below the national average and the number of very high grades is still low. However, standards in the current Year 10 top sets indicate that there is substantial progress being made towards improving upon this position.
110. There are good monitoring and support procedures in place. Teachers are regularly observed in their classroom and marking and assessment of pupils' work is monitored to ensure subject policies and procedures are effective and being followed. Newly qualified teachers are well supported both within the subject and by whole school induction procedures. Regular testing of pupils' work informs setting arrangements and serves as a motivator for pupils to improve.

#### **111. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- staff development for the less experienced teachers, including the opportunity to observe good practice in other classrooms; and
- greater use of information and communication technology.

#### **SCIENCE**

112. The most recent results in GCSE modular science were significantly above the national average. The performance of pupils in science exceeded additional school

targets in 1999 and shows a continuing upward trend in achievement since the last inspection. Given that last year's Year 11 were below national averages on entry to the school, good progress was made in Key Stage 4 and pupils did well to reach these standards. The percentage of girls achieving A\* to C grades in science is slightly better than the percentage of boys. Pupils are invariably well behaved in GCSE classes; co-operate well together in sharing resources; work safely when handling apparatus; and have good relationships with teachers. Those pupils with special educational needs are able to access differentiated materials and make progress within their groups. Pupils are able to use texts to search for information and report back both orally and in writing

113. In a Year 11 lesson pupils were able to offer explanations of how a guitar string produces a higher pitched sound using their knowledge and understanding of compression waves. Later in the lesson another pupil was able to recall the use of sound waves in a television archaeological programme to reveal the pattern of structures underground and apply it in the context of her learning. Pupils in a Year 10 middle ability group were able to consider the costs of insulating the laboratory from heat losses through the floor and windows and calculate the various cost-benefits over time. However, the more-able pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not always given enough challenge in lessons through further developing their graphical analysis of data from scientific enquiries and also their confidence in evaluating the significance of this data. They should continue to apply and extend these skills with a broader range of resources from current and past scientific literature which develops their understanding of changes in science over time.
114. At the end of Key Stage 3, the most recent national test results were broadly in line with national averages. However, in comparison with similar schools the results were below average. Performance in the knowledge-based attainment targets in Year 9, whilst being maintained over the past four years, shows there is room for improvement. Test results at level 5 or above were lower than the Teacher Assessments and significantly lower at level 6 or above for all pupils. Test and Teacher Assessments of boys and girls at level 5 show the test results slightly lower.
115. Pupils in a Year 9 introductory lesson on genetics were able to summarise their learning by selecting key words from a list on the board. During a lesson on the properties of metals and non-metals, Year 8 pupils could link work undertaken in Year 7 to their current learning. Pupils, throughout the Key Stage, were able to handle apparatus safely and confidently. Eye protection was worn when needed without continuous reminders and relationships and behaviour were good.
116. Girls in a Year 7 group responded eagerly to questions on the effects of variables in a thinking science module using a variety of pipes to make sounds. In developing their process skills pupils need further opportunities to measure volume and mass accurately and to be given greater independence in devising various tables to collect data. Increased understanding of the vocabulary and contexts used in teaching primary science will build on pupils' learning in the primary school. All pupils need further practical tasks, including demonstrations, to develop their understanding of the skills of scientific enquiry, particularly in offering predictions.
117. Teaching in science is good. During the inspection week, no unsatisfactory lessons were seen and four out of five lessons were good or better. The proportion of good or better teaching is greater than that found in most schools. In all lessons there was

a brisk introduction which set a context for learning; good pace was maintained; and pupils were challenged on their understanding. In Key Stage 4 good teaching included a variety of different activities. For example, the use of a guitar and a video clip to stimulate and reinforce understanding of compression waves and the pitch of a variety of musical instruments. A Year 7 group were given regular encouragement to build their confidence in using technical vocabulary whilst thinking about the scientific concepts in the way sounds are produced in a variety of pipes. In a further Key Stage 3 lesson, good teaching and learning was enriched by the use of 'Salters Science' material to introduce the terms 'sonorous' and 'malleable' in investigating the properties of metals and non-metals.

118. Excellent teaching in a Year 8 lesson challenged pupils to consider a person's self-image and its importance to a positive state of mind. Although a single lesson within a health module, pupils make very good progress in their learning through thoughtful analysis of three character profiles, interpreting what each character represented and developing respect for the opinions of others.
119. The management of the subject is good. Both the team leader and subject leader clearly understand their roles, but the developing needs of the school may require the structure to be reviewed. The good leadership within the subject has developed monitoring and evaluation strategies that are manageable and effective. Pupils are aware of their grades and are set targets to guide and improve performance.
120. There have been changes in staff since the last inspection. The schemes of work have been mapped against National Curriculum areas and are regularly reviewed. The structure and variety within lessons have been revised. A boy/girl seating policy has been introduced and is having a positive effect in raising standards. Relevant scientific vocabulary is prominently displayed. GCSE co-ordinated texts have been purchased together with homework books for Key Stage 3. The 'Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education Thinking Skills' modules are in place in Years 7 and 8. The marking policy has been clarified. Revision texts have been purchased for Year 9. The learning environment has been improved with benches varnished and graffiti removed. A member of the learning support staff is now attached to the subject and schemes of work to support special educational needs are in place. Enrichment classes for Year 9 pupils aiming for level 7 in national tests have been introduced together with half-term revision sessions for Year 11. The British Association for Young Scientists (BAYS) and the Green Club meet weekly. Support from the technical staff is good.

#### **121. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- further development of the skills of scientific enquiry, particularly at Key Stage 3;
- the needs of the more-able pupils at grade B GCSE and level 6 in Year 9;
- targets for higher grades to ensure appropriate rigour and challenge at both key stages; and
- the cost-effectiveness of the reprographics budget and its impact on the resourcing of text books in Key Stage 3.

#### **CREATIVE ARTS**

122. At Notley High School, art, drama and music are taught as discrete subjects throughout the school but are within a creative arts learning area. There are very

strong extra curricular links between these subjects, particularly in performances.

## **Art**

123. Overall standards in art are good. There is a good quality of art education for all pupils.
124. GCSE results for 1999 were well above the national average with three quarters of pupils attaining grades A\* to C. Girls performed slightly better than boys, and attained more A and A\* grades. However, the number of pupils overall attaining the very highest grades was below the national figure. GCSE results have been improving steadily over the last four years and have improved considerably since the last inspection. The present Year 11 pupils are attaining standards in their course work which indicate the potential for a high percentage of A\* to C grades this year. In class, pupils tackle the development of their ideas with confidence and show a good grasp of basic techniques and processes. Whilst most pupils produce individual work through the personal exploration of ideas and techniques, a minority are over reliant on the teacher and need encouragement to be more experimental. Some exciting design work has been produced using computers, but this has mainly been made on pupils' home equipment.
125. Pupils in Year 10 have made a good start on their GCSE studies. They have a sound knowledge of major art movements and are learning to produce individual studies of artists using a range of sources for their research including a class visit to the Tate and National Galleries. The good grounding in art is enabling them to use confidently a range of processes to develop their ideas. Sketchbooks, which support class project work, are used well in Year 10 and Year 11, but pupils could also keep their own visual diary. This would help them make more individual and creative responses to the projects.
126. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain levels in art which are in line with national expectations and a small minority attain above this. Basic skills such as drawing and painting are systematically learnt over the Key Stage through the well structured curriculum. Pupils in Year 7 are producing accurate and lively work on colour theory, carefully mixing and matching colours and exploring the colour wheel. Pupils in Year 8 confidently present their research about masks to the class showing good oral skills.
127. In Year 9, pupils can draw using the laws of perspective and make creative surrealistic compositions. Some imaginative and effective work was produced during a project on African art. Pupils are skilled at applying graphic techniques to create their design work but have few opportunities to explore their ideas through the use of computers. Personal research in sketchbooks is used effectively to support class projects. Most pupils only have a rudimentary understanding of chronology and the style and genre of art from different periods and cultures. Approaches to teaching art history and the relevant resources need to be widened in order to make the subject more accessible, pertinent and interesting to all pupils.
128. Teaching is purposeful and energetic. It is never less than satisfactory and in the majority of lessons it is good or very good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. The good teaching ensures that progress is steady over both key stages. Teachers plan their lessons carefully; have very good subject knowledge; and employ a fair range of teaching approaches including effective

demonstrations of techniques. The aims of the lessons are made very clear and pupils are encouraged to use and understand specialist language. Teachers' expectations of behaviour and standards are high. In return, pupils work hard and show pride in what they produce. The very good procedures for assessing pupils' work are used consistently and explained carefully to the pupils. Homework is regularly set and marked.

129. Overall subject management is very good and leadership provides a clear vision for the development of the subject. The Key Stage 3 curriculum meets statutory requirements in all but the provisions of ICT; ensures a balance of both attainment targets and provides a good preparation for Key Stage 4. The need for computers specifically for art use was identified in the last inspection report. There has been little improvement since then, although the need for these resources is identified in the current subject development plan. Resources such as books, slides and videos are fairly limited in range but have been improved since the last inspection. There is no slide projector and screen. The lack of ICT severely disadvantages all pupils and particularly those doing the GCSE course.

### **130. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- the encouragement of more individual, experimental work to challenge the most able pupils;
- strategies for teaching art history;
- improving the use of information and communication technology; and
- broadening the range and depth of resources such as slides, books and videos

### **Drama**

131. Drama is a strong feature of this school. It is taught to all pupils at Key Stage 3 and is a successful subject option at Key Stage 4.
132. The most recent GCSE results were well above the national average and the number of A/A\* grades was very high. There has been a steady improvement over the past three years, where all pupils taking drama gain over a grade higher than for the average of all their other subjects. More girls than boys are consistently gaining the very highest grades. Much work is being done to raise boys' achievements through the focus on appropriate content and in increasing the opportunities to complete coursework units in school. Pupils of all abilities are gaining successful results and can develop and present drama with meaning, conviction and confidence. They understand and can use a range of drama techniques to a very high standard. The most able pupils can sustain characters and build tension through the careful and considered use of language and physical imagery.
133. At Key Stage 3 all pupils understand the skills they need to make drama presentations successful, although it is the more able pupils who are most confident in using language appropriate to their roles. A portfolio of original and well-presented homework would be helpful in contributing to individual pupils' sense of achievement.
134. Teaching in drama is good or better in all lessons. Teachers' energy, commitment and knowledge are successfully used to motivate all pupils, and at both key stages all pupils are learning to be confident articulate performers and sensitive thinking

audiences. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives that all pupils understand. The high expectations and constant challenge is reflected in the quality of the pupils' work, especially at Key Stage 4, where team teaching as a strategy is successfully used with Year 11 pupils. Pupils at both key stages use high levels of creative energy to progress their work and demonstrate high levels of evaluation and presentation skills. Wide ranges of opportunities to use talk are being skilfully managed. There are lots of opportunities for pair, group and whole class work; for the use of personal experiences; development of imaginative ideas; reflection, and the acquisition and practice of drama skills. Drama makes a consistent contribution to the teaching of speaking and listening skills.

135. Pupils enjoy drama and behaviour is always good or better. This contributes to the quality of both teaching and learning at both key stages. Pupils want to meet both their own and their teachers high expectations.
136. There is a challenging and valued programme of classic plays as annual school productions and regularly planned performance opportunities. Key Stage 3 pupils would benefit from a more planned programme of curriculum enrichment, and there are limited opportunities to explore cultural traditions other than their own.
137. There is a good assessment system, which is used to inform planning, however the current management structure is not helpful. The burden of work on some individuals is considerable and the subject, as opposed to team, meetings are irregular and unstructured, limiting opportunities to discuss and plan for subject specific curriculum developments.
138. Since the last inspection, schemes of work have been evaluated, rewritten and are regularly monitored. Cross-curricular links have been consolidated especially with English. It is important to maintain and develop these links especially with regard to curriculum changes. There have been some improvements to the learning environment, but specialist resources need to be used more regularly. The increased focus on strategies for teaching and learning has had a considerable impact on standards and pupils' achievements.

**139. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- further development of extra curricular opportunities for younger pupils; and
- exploring other cultural traditions.

## Music

140. Standards in music GCSE have risen dramatically during the last three years. Although small numbers mean comparisons have to be treated with caution, the most recent examination results are above the national average. This represents good achievement for the pupils taking music who show a commitment and dedication to the subject. In GCSE lessons, pupils are able to work out, using their dictated notes, triads across the major scales and many are familiar with key signatures. Many pupils are able to notate their melodies in Year 10 and are working hard to fit appropriate chords to the melodies. However, some melodies lack a sense of phrasing, melodic balance or a sense of key. In all the classroom work observed at Key Stage 4, pupils were working on keyboards, although some of them do play, and have composed for, other instruments particularly wind instruments.
141. In Key Stage 3, standards in musical skills and knowledge are broadly in line with national expectations, but standards in compositional and creative pupil-initiated activities are below expectations. This reflects the detailed schemes of work in Key Stage 3, which are rather orientated towards musical skills and knowledge. In a Year 7 class pupils were able to recall factual information and knowledge about woodwind instruments which had double reeds and which single. In the practical activity, pupils had rehearsed the melody and bass line parts for a spiritual, taught through rote learning and letter names, and were all involved in a class rendition, although some were still experiencing difficulties in keeping a corporate pulse. There was little evidence in a Year 8 class, working in groups on ideas for their own programme music, that pupils had any creative or compositional skills beyond making sound effects. Year 9 pupils, some showing clear musical potential, were working on a 12 bar blues module. Most pupils had mastered and were able to play the chord sequences, some with flair, but the compositional element of improvising round the blues scale had been left for only the final lesson in the module.
142. In practical activities, pupils with special educational needs are well supported by additional staffing and are achieving alongside their peers. However some are struggling with the written nature of the skills and knowledge based homework tasks.
143. Teaching in music is never less than satisfactory and has some good features. Lessons are carefully planned following the schemes of work, but lack a clearly worded learning objective. All lessons move at an energetic and brisk pace and most pupils are involved and enthusiastic about their work. However, lessons are lacking in opportunities for considered and probing questions which support pupils' understanding or in time for reflection or reinforcement. More opportunities and activities need to be provided for all pupils to engage with and develop compositional skills. Pupils currently do not have enough opportunities to demonstrate their own musical ideas or for working independently and taking charge of developing these musical ideas.
144. The subject is well resourced with keyboards and a good range of classroom percussion instruments. There is little evidence that pupils are developing ICT skills on school equipment, although some clearly were making use of music software programmes at home. The noise level in some lessons is very high and both pupils and staff would benefit from the use of headphones, especially in the Year 10 and Year 11 classes.

145. An energetic and committed subject co-ordinator manages music and has made a substantial contribution to the development of the subject. A great deal of effort has been invested in raising the profile of music in the school and the wider community since the last inspection report. The subject co-ordinator spends a lot of extended curricular time in supporting both Year 10 and Year 11 pupils. She has worked very hard to build up and organise the instrumental peripatetic opportunities and many pupils can now take advantage of this with the majority opting for woodwind, singing or keyboard lessons. The school wind band rehearses regularly and delights audiences both in school and in the wider community with particular emphasis, in the summer term, on performing in local primary schools.

**146. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- adjusting the balance between the teaching of musical skills and knowledge and composition; and
- providing more opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their own musical ideas and to work independently.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

147. In the most recent GCSE examinations, nearly half of all pupils gained A\* to C grades amongst the five contributing areas of food, graphics, resistant materials, systems and control, and textiles. This was slightly below the national average and reversed the 1998 position which was significantly better than the national average. The results for graphics and textiles were outstanding. The result for systems and control was poor, but this mainly reflected the level of attainment of most of the group on entry to the course. Girls' performance is better than boys' and reflects the national picture. Pupils studying resistant materials in Key Stage 4 are better at making than designing. Excellent practical work is produced in Year 10 textiles as part of an innovative, simulated line-production that uses computer-aided manufacture as part of its assembly system.

148. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils perform above the national average. In lessons, they make products of good quality but achieve lower levels in designing. Girls do better in investigative and presentational work, but boys are more successful in initiating ideas. Pupils with special needs respond well to the challenge of the work and higher achievers demonstrate greater capacity to analyse a problem and to produce more original ideas. Pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 use a fairly rigorous and structured design process, but in Year 9 the judgements lack rigour and progression. For example, in the application of the design process older pupils do not always write their own design brief and success criteria to evaluate a product's outcome. The time to make a product is not considered nor used by pupils to fix lesson targets and to monitor their own success. Good quality products are made in Year 7 resistant materials, but there is a lack of progression in the methods used for constructing models the following year.

149. The overall quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Teachers show a good grasp of their subject and present and teach it in interesting ways, sustaining motivation and a good pace. Lesson plans are very good in food and textiles, but in resistant materials there is a lack of detail. The resistant materials teaching

programme is being updated and expanded to include more differentiation of the work. Long term teaching aims and middle term learning objectives require expansion. The lack of challenge of Year 8 and Year 9 design activities should be addressed. Teachers know what they intend to teach, but lesson objectives are not made sufficiently clear to pupils to encourage them to plan and self-evaluate. Much advice given to pupils is, however, judicious, evaluative and supportive. An orderly working environment is maintained. Protective clothing is not always worn in resistant materials and safety procedures for checking machinery before pupil use should be revised. The one unsatisfactory lesson observed during the inspection week occurred when planning and pace were lacking.

150. The joint subject co-ordinators are strongly committed to raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is need for both to take a view of their subject as a whole. Resistant materials rooms have potential and the programme of self-help is slowly improving the situation after a period of neglect. The lack of a full-time workshop technician seriously hinders progress and places an unrealistic reliance upon the teachers to improve the environment and prepare materials, not allowing them to concentrate fully upon the teaching and learning processes.
151. Since the last inspection standards overall have improved. The recent changes to the management and teaching staff in resistant materials are having a positive effect. Assessment procedures continue to improve and a scheme is now in place. The workshop accommodation is better organized and is improved in appearance. but some still remains underused and the storerooms are still in need of attention to avoid clutter.

#### **152. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- ensuring progression and rigour in the design process;
- developing the schemes of work in resistant materials;
- improving the GCSE results in systems and control;
- further raising the achievement of boys;
- reducing the number of changes of teacher that a pupil has in the resistant materials aspects of the rotational course;
- increasing the technician time to support the subject; and
- renovating and modernizing the accommodation in resistant materials and improving access to the food and textiles suite.

## **HUMANITIES**

At Notley High School, geography, history and religious education are taught as part of a humanities programme in Years 7 and 8. They are taught as discrete subjects from Year 9, with pupils having the option to continue studying them as GCSE subjects in Years 10 and 11. Religious education is taught to all pupils at Key Stage 4 through the PSHE programme. This course leads to an ASDAN qualification.

## **Geography**

153. Standards in geography are satisfactory. The most recent results at GCSE approached the national average and represent a significant improvement since the last inspection and an advance on the previous year. However, as yet, few pupils achieve the highest grades, although the current cohort demonstrates the potential, particularly through the coursework already undertaken, to suggest further improvement in 2000. The majority of pupils achieve well, relative to some other subjects they take, and boys in particular perform better than the national norm. Teacher assessment at Key Stage 3 is in line with levels awarded nationally and consistent with that achieved in English and history.
154. During the inspection, pupils were observed to make good progress and are developing a wide range of skills and competencies. Of particular note are the opportunities pupils have to apply information and communication technology to their studies in geography. There are impressive examples of pupils' assessed work at both key stages that demonstrate high levels of achievement both in terms of geography and ICT. Such items also show strong evidence for improved key skills of literacy and numeracy through the synthesis of different types of information and the manipulation and analysis of data. Pupils engage frequently in personal research using a wide range of sources. However, they usually work to a focus defined by the teacher and rarely are the questions they pose formulated by the pupils themselves. Pupils of all abilities are well supported in geography, with the very able increasingly demonstrating their ability to operate at very high levels. Pupils with special educational needs are engaging with the majority of the tasks set. High levels of motivation are also much in evidence, as are teachers' expectations of pupils. Boys are aided by the strategy that encourages them to work alongside girls.
155. The quality of teaching is always sound with the majority of teaching being good or very good. Planning is usually of a very high standard and activities structured in such a way as to encourage learning of comparable quality. Subject knowledge is very secure and teachers employ a range of strategies to stimulate pupils' interest in the subject. Teachers have made a start on developing differentiated tasks and materials and work in this regard is ongoing. Considerable thought goes into pupil groupings, which is helping all pupils to learn effectively.
156. The subject benefits from effective leadership, which provides clear direction for development. A range of well-designed assessment activities enhances teaching and learning and good quality feedback to pupils enables them to progress. Teachers make good use of the statistical data on pupil performance and target setting is well developed for both individual pupils and groups. The accommodation is good and resources are varied; good use is made of the library book stock and IT facility and teachers' understanding and appreciation of the humanities enhances pupils' experience of geography. The interesting bank of problem solving and decision-making activities that have been developed will provide a firm basis upon which to build geography's contribution to citizenship education under Curriculum 2000.
157. Since the last inspection, geography has continued to provide good quality teaching and learning and the standards pupils achieve have improved over time. Pupils now have increased access to fieldwork experiences, especially at Key Stage 4 with the introduction of a residential course. In addition, the issues of the lack of a geography specialist and resources provision have been effectively addressed.

## 158. Points for further action

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- encouraging greater independence in the enquiry process; and
- making greater use of the local area, especially at Key Stage 3 where fieldwork is still under-represented.

## History

159. Standards in history are good. The most recent GCSE results were well above the national average; indeed the trend over the last five years has been upwards. A most encouraging aspect of recent results has been the proportion of highest grades achieved which compares very favourably with the national average. Boys in particular achieve well in history as compared with many of the other subjects they take. At Key Stage 4, progress is very good. The requirements of GCSE are addressed in a focused way and pupils are well prepared for the demands of the examination.
160. Teacher assessment at Key Stage 3 indicates that standards are largely in line with national averages and reflect attainment in other literary subjects such as English and geography.
161. A firm foundation is laid in Key Stage 3 and pupils make good progress in all elements of the subject; they gain in confidence and respond positively to teachers' high expectations. They develop facility in handling historical evidence; an appreciation of the ideas, beliefs and attitudes of the people and periods they study; and understanding of events, changes and developments which took place. Empathetic writing is particularly well developed and generally rooted in the depth studies that form part of each study unit. Careful structuring of pupils' learning usually supports pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs. More able pupils are often challenged to produce work of substantial complexity and sophistication.
162. The quality of teaching in history is invariably sound and, in the main, is good. Occasionally, history teaching is very good. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm to pupils and employ a wide range of teaching and learning strategies that provide stimulus and challenge to all ages and abilities. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure, as is their understanding of assessment for both the National Curriculum and GCSE. Pupils develop many skills of enquiry and are given plentiful opportunities to undertake research. They also have increasing opportunities to apply information and communication technology in history. However, pupils are rarely required to devise or articulate their own questions or pursue their own avenues of enquiry.
163. The subject benefits greatly from energetic and insightful leadership and teachers are supported by well worked out schemes of work and detailed planning, although currently there is limited scope for the subject co-ordinator to monitor and evaluate work across the subject. Good use is made of the statistical data on pupil performance and target setting is well developed for both individual pupils and groups. The accommodation is good and resources are increasingly varied; the library enhances pupils' experience of the subject, as does teachers' knowledge of the wider humanities subject area. There do however remain some areas for further

development: encouraging greater independence in the enquiry process; studies involving the local area; and a greater acknowledgement of the cultural diversity in British society through the ages. The requirement to review the curriculum in the light of Curriculum 2000 and the allocation by the school to history of curriculum time to address citizenship should lead to the integration of all three issues into the schemes of work.

164. The period since the last inspection has witnessed the consolidation of an upward trend in both attainment and in the quality of teaching and learning. An increased range of teaching and learning styles has provided a greater degree of access to the curriculum and some progress has been made in differentiating pupils' work although this remains an area for ongoing development. History currently makes a significant contribution to pupils' proficiency in literacy and, to a lesser extent, the other key skills of ICT and numeracy.

**165. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- developing more independent enquiry;
- making greater use of the local area; and
- ensuring that history reflects the cultural diversity of British society.

**Religious education**

166. Standards in RE have been poor. GCSE results at higher grades are about half the national average and pupils, particularly girls, perform significantly worse in RE than in their other subjects. Entry numbers for GCSE are low, but increasing, and standards in the present Year 10 GCSE group indicate that results will improve in future years. Some work of very good quality was seen from this group covering a wide range of faith perspectives. Pupils following the non-GCSE course (ASDAN) achieve at a much lower level and demonstrate only a superficial knowledge and understanding of religions.
167. At Key Stage 3, standards vary considerably between classes according to the quality of teaching. In some classes, pupils are making good progress and are acquiring a good understanding of some aspects of major world faiths, for example, Christianity in Year 7 and creation stories in Year 9. In other classes, learning is less evident, especially amongst boys whose work is often incomplete and of inferior quality.
168. Teaching in the subject is at least satisfactory and often good or very good. Despite some lack of subject expertise, most teachers make great efforts to create sound conditions for learning and use resources well to provide stimulating lessons which cause pupils to think carefully about issues of moral and religious significance. Teacher explanations during lessons are a particular strength.
169. The subject lacks specialist leadership, despite the school's best efforts to secure it. Notwithstanding this, the humanities team leader provides good support to the subject, which enables a satisfactory RE curriculum to continue. The requirements of the local agreed syllabus are broadly met.

170. Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements to the timetabling arrangements for RE at Key Stage 3 and to the take-up of the subject as a GCSE option. Due to the generally good quality of teaching and, with the future appointment of a subject co-ordinator, standards in RE are likely to improve at both key stages.

**171. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- Strengthening subject expertise in RE; and
- an extension of curriculum time for RE in Key Stage 4.

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

172. There were no examinations in information and communication technology (ICT) in 1999. Standards at Key Stage 4, as judged from lesson observation, work scrutiny and discussions with pupils, are good. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

173. All pupils currently study a key skills module within the PSHE programme where many pupils demonstrate well developed ICT skills. Pupils apply these skills to a range of information handling tasks, including the creation of a presentation for an audience.

174. A significant number of pupils at Key Stage 4 follow a GNVQ Part 1 course in ICT. The ICT skills of many of these pupils are very high in the use of editing and presentation software. Pupils apply these skills to the thoughtful and creative design and publication of web sites based on a subject of their choice.

175. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is overall in line with national expectations. Standards are in line with expectation in the areas of modelling, control and measuring and above the national expectation in communicating and handling information. There are many good examples of work at the higher level involving the processing and presentation of information using desktop publishing software. All pupils follow a programme, which covers word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases and computer control. Pupils' skills in these areas are well developed by the end of Key Stage 3, although the planning of ICT lessons does not always enable pupils to demonstrate attainment at the higher levels. The use of spreadsheets is taught to an advanced level for Key Stage 3 and provides good opportunities for modelling. Pupils study data-logging in science lessons and controlling devices in design and technology. In all lessons where ICT was used, pupils' level of interest and motivation was seen to be high.

176. Teaching in ICT is predominantly satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Examples of both unsatisfactory and excellent teaching were seen, but in the majority of lessons teaching is good. In a lesson where the teaching was excellent, pupils of differing abilities were challenged by a well-planned lesson to undertake a study on the theme of planning a holiday. As pupils evaluated a range of electronic sources, the teacher discussed the work with them to help them develop their ideas. As a result all pupils were seen to make good progress in processing information to create letters, presentations and graphs. Where teaching was unsatisfactory the plans for the lesson caused pupils to work at a level well

below that of which they were capable.

177. There is a clear vision for ICT, shared by senior staff, which places an emphasis on using ICT to promote pupils' achievement. Good progress has been made on the development plan. Steady investment has led to good ICT facilities. These are effectively managed by two able technicians and are heavily used by pupils during the break and lunchtime.
178. The use of computers in subjects across the curriculum is growing. A good example is in the teaching of geography where pupils evaluate information from the Internet in order to explore environmental issues to do with siting an oil pipeline. In food technology, pupils analyse their diet using a computer application. However, ICT is not properly used in all subjects and is an area for development.
179. Since the last inspection the teaching of ICT at Key Stage 4 has improved and consequently, standards in this key stage are higher, There are now greater numbers of computers available for teaching and learning in this subject.

**180. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- the further development of the IT skills of all subject teachers; and
- improving the quality of planning, particularly at key stage 3, so that all pupils have sufficiently challenging work.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

181. At Notley High School, French is taught to all pupils in Year 7 and this continues as their main foreign language throughout the school. German is introduced in Year 8 to pupils in top sets. However, only low numbers of pupils choose to study German to GCSE level.
182. Standards in French compare well to national averages. The most recent GCSE results show both boys and girls performing better than in most other schools. Pupils are gaining higher grades in French than in their other subjects and results have been on a rising trend in recent years. The picture in German has been rather different. Whilst 1999 results compare well with national averages, the small number of pupils taking the examination (eight) make such comparisons difficult. Pupils performed worse in German than in their other subjects. However, some pupils in the current Year 11 are demonstrating standards that should produce better results this year. Girls perform significantly better than boys in both languages.
183. In Year 11, pupils studying for GCSE display a good attitude to their work and respond well to the challenge presented by the course. Their standard of written work, knowledge of grammar and range of vocabulary are good, particularly in the top sets. Many pupils have a sound recall of previously learned structures and phrases. Most pupils aiming for the Certificate of Achievement struggle with oral work and write with less confidence.
184. At the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments show about two-thirds of pupils achieving at the expected level or better. In lessons observed in Years 7 to 9, some work was seen of a good standard, especially in top sets. Pupils' listening and

speaking skills are well developed and good progress is made in learning new words and phrases. Attitudes to learning are generally good.

185. Teaching in both languages is usually satisfactory, but good or very good in almost half the lessons. Particular strengths are in confident use of the foreign language by teachers; good use of repetition to reinforce new vocabulary and aid pronunciation; and good management of classes. Over half the languages teachers are inexperienced. Despite this, all classes benefit from some lessons of good quality. In a minority of lessons there are weaknesses which relate to a lack of appropriate challenge, poor use of time and an unclear focus. In order to improve standards throughout the school, the balance of emphasis between speaking, listening, reading and writing in each year should be reconsidered.
186. The subject is well led and continues on a path of improvement. The response to reviews carried out within the school has been very positive and has resulted in developments in practice. Good use is made of available resources, including computers. Teachers make efforts to include basic skills such as numeracy when opportunities arise during lessons. There are good curricular links with feeder primary schools involving Notley staff teaching French to Year 6 pupils.
187. Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements in standards, particularly in French. Ongoing concerns about the profile of German as the second language remain to be resolved. When the curriculum is next reviewed, consideration should be given to achieving a more equitable allocation of time to the subject.

**188. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- the balance between speaking, listening, reading and writing;
- staff development for the inexperienced teachers; and
- raising the profile of German.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

189. There has been a substantial improvement in standards at GCSE since the last inspection. In 1999 results were slightly above national averages for grades A\* to C, but no pupils obtained A or A\* grades. However, these results represented good achievement as the pupils started from a low base in Key Stage 3. Girls' results are slightly better than boys, although numbers taking the course are far fewer.
190. Overall, standards of attainment are slightly above national expectations. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is generally good though it varies from unsatisfactory to excellent, depending on the activity. Attainment in GCSE dance is good and, sometimes, very good. Pupils can compose very creative dances using varied genres and have good analysis skills. GCSE PE pupils have good knowledge of anatomy and physiology. Pupils working towards the Junior Sports Leader Award (JSLA) demonstrate excellent standards in organisation, communication and knowledge of skills when working with pupils from a local feeder school. In hockey and badminton, the majority of pupils work at a satisfactory level, though the more able boys perform above the expectation in badminton. They play a good range of strokes with accuracy and use good tactics to outwit their opponent. Standards in

volleyball are unsatisfactory. The majority of pupils do not have the skill to serve accurately or sustain a rally.

191. By the age of fourteen attainment is just about in line with national averages. Most girls in gymnastics link paired balances showing good control when they concentrate fully. Girls perform basic skills in basketball, netball and hockey though the quality drops when the skills are used in small-sided games. In volleyball boys volley and dig with some accuracy. Attainment in boys' rugby and gymnastics is poor. Very few boys demonstrate satisfactory passing and introductory scrummaging skills. In gymnastics most boys do not perform basic balances with quality or link them together satisfactorily.
192. Standards of teaching and learning are generally good. In most lessons teachers have good knowledge, very high expectations and manage pupils, equipment and space well. They plan lessons effectively with clear objectives, structure and progression. As a result pupils listen, behave well, stay on task, show interest and work at good pace. Standards of kit are exemplary. Only occasionally, however, do teachers provide pupils opportunity to work independently such as leading warm-ups or devising their own strategies. There is little evidence of differentiation in activities. Relationships are very good and this enables teachers to use time effectively. During the inspection, teaching in Key Stage 4 was at least satisfactory with half of the lessons being very good and a quarter excellent. In dance and JSLA lessons standards of teaching and learning are very good or excellent with teachers showing excellent knowledge, organisational skills and strategies to encourage and stimulate pupils to achieve excellent standards. Teachers of dance at Key Stage 4 are not specialists, but they are very good teachers with substantial personal experience and high interest. They have received LEA support to enable them to develop GCSE dance. Teaching in GCSE PE theory and badminton is good. Homework is purposeful and challenging. Over three quarters of lessons in Key Stage 3 are at least satisfactory with more than half being good or, occasionally, very good. Teaching is good in health - related fitness and girls' basketball and very good in girls' netball and hockey. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, teachers do not give clear instructions or expectations; do not organise space and equipment efficiently; or do not provide tasks that pupils can achieve at the expected level.
193. Since the last inspection, when the subject was a key issue for action, the personnel within the subject has changed completely. Very strong leadership of the subject has been a major factor in the improvement since the last inspection and all but one of the problems has been addressed. Issues of breadth and balance in activities, non - participation, poor turn out for fixtures and poor pupil attitudes have all been addressed and the profile and quality of the subject is now very much improved. However, at Key Stage 4 the time allocated to the subject still does not allow coverage of National Curriculum requirements in sufficient depth. Provision for extra - curricular activities is now extensive and participation is high. The subject co-ordinator has clear ideas for development and acknowledges the need for medium term planning which identifies unit objectives and clearer assessment strategies.

**194. Points for further action**

To take the subject further, consideration should be given to:

- developing the teaching of volleyball, boys' rugby and gymnastics;

- providing more opportunities for independent work;
- ensuring that the best practices in teaching are employed across the subject; and
- providing more time for the subject in Key Stage 4.