

INSPECTION REPORT

GILLOTTS SCHOOL

Henley on Thames

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123240

Headteacher: Mrs C Brooker

Reporting inspector: Jan Allcorn
1068

Dates of inspection: 21-23 May 2001

Inspection number: 187276

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 students: | 11-16 |
| Gender of students: | Mixed |
| Headteacher: | Mrs Catherine Brooker |
| School address: | Gillotts Lane Henley on Thames Oxfordshire |
| Postcode: | RG9 1PS |
| Telephone number: | 014911410509 |
| Fax number: | 01491574315 |
| E-mail address | admin@gillotts.co.uk |
| Appropriate authority: | Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr Stuart Lee |
| Date of previous inspection: | February 1996 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | |
|--------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1068 | Jan Allcorn | Registered inspector |
| 9010 | Gail Ellisdon | Lay inspector |
| 13623 | James Waddington | Team inspector |
| 23324 | Sylvia Greenland | Team inspector |

The inspection contractor was:

PkR Educational Consultants Ltd
6 Sherman Road
Bromley
Kent
BR1 3JH

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Gillotts is an average sized, mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11-16 years. It has 883 students on roll and is in the prosperous riverside town of Henley on Thames. Students come from the town itself and surrounding towns and villages up to twenty miles away. The majority of students is from socially and economically advantaged families and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. A small proportion of students has less advantaged backgrounds. Students' attainment on entry has been above average in recent years, with the attainment of current Year 7 students well above average. A below average proportion of students has special educational needs, although an average proportion has a statement of special educational need. Few students are from ethnic groups other than white. The school rarely has students at the first stages of learning English, although there was one at the time of the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Gillotts is an effective school where standards are well above those expected nationally. It is not complacent about its very good examination results but continues to seek ways to improve the education it offers students and the standards students achieve. Students are confident, mature and work hard. The combination of the students' positive attitudes and the overall good teaching they receive helps the students to achieve well. Governors, the headteacher and the senior management of the school provide strong and clear leadership. Difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified staff in the last year have lowered the quality of teaching received by some students and slowed their progress. The school has worked hard to improve the situation and expects to be fully staffed for September. Although the behaviour of most students is good and often very good, a small minority does not always behave well. Overall the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students gain well above average results in national tests for 14 year olds and at GCSE.
- Very good leadership from the headteacher and other senior managers that continually seeks to improve the work of the school and is well supported by governors.
- Students are confident, mature and well-rounded young people, who work hard and are enthusiastic about all aspects of school life.
- The behaviour of most students is good and often very good.
- Students' standards and progress are well monitored to ensure the highest possible achievement and to help students know how well they are doing.
- The teaching for 14-16 year olds is good.

What could be improved

- Strategies for supporting students with behavioural and learning difficulties are not sufficiently effective.
- The school's monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the setting and appropriateness of homework, the use of tutor time and of new initiatives is not systematic enough.
- The management of the site, especially health and safety, is not as efficient as it could be.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1996. Since that time well above average standards have been maintained. National test results for fourteen-year-olds have improved, particularly for boys in English. Overall improvement has been satisfactory, with some key issues well tackled. These include better procedures for monitoring and evaluating the standards achieved, the students' progress and the work of subject areas. The school has obtained Investors in People status, which recognises the school's high commitment to improvement and to the development of its staff. Considerable improvement has been made in design and technology and music. The teaching of information and communication technology skills is more systematic, but not all subjects are using computers sufficiently as part of their teaching and learning programmes. In religious education, staffing difficulties have not helped the school to deliver its improved programme of work this school year. The school still does not have a daily act of collective worship for all students.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE

| Performance in: | Compared with | | | | Key |
|-------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|---|
| | All schools | | | Similar schools | |
| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2000 | |
| GCSE examinations | A | A | A | B | Well above A Above average B average C Below average D Well below E |

Similar schools are those with a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

Over the last four years, students' performance in national tests for fourteen-year-olds has been well above average. Performance in mathematics has been significantly above average. In English it has improved and is now well above average. For science it has been well above average except in 1999 when it was above average. Results in summer 2000 were much better than those for similar schools.

Performance at GCSE over the last four years has also been well above average and puts the school in the top 25% of schools nationally. In the last two years students achieved much better than expected, given their results at age fourteen. Results were above those of similar schools. All students achieved well from the least able to the most able. In summer 2000 the proportion of A*-C grades in English and mathematics was significantly above the national average and in science it was in-line. Students did best in design and technology, English and mathematics and least well in drama, history, and geography.

Although there are some differences in the performance of girls and boys, the school is taking appropriate steps to address any issues. In tests for fourteen year olds, boys and girls do equally well overall. At GCSE girls do better than boys, as is the picture nationally. The school sets ambitious and appropriate targets for its students.

During the inspection the work being undertaken by students at both key stages reflected the very good public examination results students obtain. Students of all abilities are making good progress overall and achieve well. They have very good reading, writing and oral skills (literacy), and are able to express their views confidently and well. Numeracy skills are also well above average. Students use their literacy and numeracy skills effectively in other subjects of the curriculum. These skills make a good contribution to the well above average standards students achieve. Information and communication technology skills are developing satisfactorily.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Students are keen and interested and want to do well. Participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, is high. They like their school. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good and often very good overall, although a small minority of students does not behave as well as it should and disrupts some lessons. |
| Personal development and relationships | Students develop into mature, confident and well-rounded young adults by the time they leave the school. They work very well together and take a good level of responsibility for their work. |
| Attendance | Good, although it is not as good as it was in the previous year. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of students: | aged 11-14 years | aged 14-16 years |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Satisfactory | 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 overall, but it is better for the 14-16 year olds than the 11-14 year olds. Students make particularly good progress in their learning when teachers provide them with interesting activities that allow them to explore ideas on their own or in groups. There are good strategies in place in subjects such as English, mathematics and science to analyse the strengths and weaknesses in students' learning. Teachers use this information well to match future work to students' learning needs. The most able students have appropriate opportunities to achieve at the highest levels. Sound support is provided for those students with learning difficulties. Most teachers manage their classes well and create a good working atmosphere. However some teachers, especially temporary teachers, lack the necessary strategies to manage students' behaviour when it is not as good as it should be. In many competent lessons, particularly for 11-14 year olds, teachers miss opportunities to provide learning experiences that motivate and interest students and help them to make the best possible progress. This was mainly seen in the lower sets, where a significant number of students often has learning or behavioural difficulties or both.

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons observed. In 37 per cent of lessons it was good, and in 24 per cent very good or excellent. For 11-14 year olds just over half the lessons observed were good or better and for 14-16 year olds nearly three-quarters of lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Satisfactory overall. Students have appropriate opportunities to develop both academic and personal skills. However, statutory requirements are not yet fully met for 14-16 year olds in religious education, design and technology, and information and communication technology, but will do so from September 2001. |
| Provision for students with special educational needs | Satisfactory overall, but not all teaching staff ensure their planning takes into account these students' learning and behavioural needs. |
| Provision for students with English as an additional language | The school has very few students with English as an additional language. It has currently one student at the early stage of learning English. Although the school has no co-ordinated strategy, additional support and help is being given. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Provision is good for students' social, moral and cultural development. However, there was limited evidence of students' spiritual development in subjects other than religious education. Assemblies provide good opportunities for students to reflect on moral and social issues. Tutor time at the beginning of the day is not well used. Not all staff are fully implementing the school's intended programme of activities. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. |
| How well the school cares for its students | Oversight of students' personal and academic progress is good. Students like the supportive and friendly atmosphere of the school. However, the management of the site is not effective enough. In particular a number of health and safety issues were noted. These were reported to governors, who took immediate action. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good. The leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteachers is strong. Heads of faculty provide sound leadership. The school has appropriate plans to train a significant number of new key stage managers and faculty heads in September. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The governors are committed and well informed. They take an active interest in the work of the school. They have been particularly effective in gaining local sponsorship for the school's bid to become a technology college. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good. It knows its strengths and is taking clear action to improve its weaknesses. Test results are thoroughly analysed to ensure students achieve at least as well as expected. Nevertheless, the monitoring of some aspects of the school's work is not rigorous enough, particularly teaching and learning by heads of faculty and the success of initiatives in the school development plan. |
| The strategic use of resources | The budget is well administered and controlled. However, the school has not yet fully developed procedures to ensure it obtains best value in all aspects of its work. Overall value for money is good. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the standards their children achieve the range of extra curricular activities the care and support given to their children their children are happy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of students difficulties in appointing qualified and permanent staff homework, with a greater amount being set more consistently information about their children's progress, especially in Year 7 and Year 10 the poor condition of the toilets |

Parents are pleased that they sent their children to Gillotts School, even though they expressed concerns about some aspects of the school's work. Inspectors fully agree with what parents most like about the school. They also agree about the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of students. Scrutiny of homework diaries and talking to students provided evidence that homework is not always regularly set, especially in Key Stage 3, and that teachers do not always follow the homework timetable. The school recognises and agrees with parents' concerns about the timing of reports and consultation evenings, especially in Years 7 and 10 and is reviewing this. The toilets are often in poor condition; some of the boys' toilets are very smelly. The school tries hard to keep them clean, but some students, both boys and girls, do not treat them well. The school has worked hard to ensure it is now fully and appropriately staffed for September 2001.

(36 parents attended the meeting for parents and 168 questionnaires were returned)

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Students gain well above average results in national tests for fourteen year olds and at GCSE

1. Over the last four years, overall performance in national tests for fourteen-year-olds and at GCSE has been well above the national average. The very good standards reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and in the last two years national test results for fourteen-year-olds have improved. Students achieve well and do better than students in similar types of school. In summer 2000 students achieved very well at GCSE. They made much better progress than most students had nationally from age fourteen to sixteen. These results put the school in the top twenty-five per cent of schools nationally.
2. During the inspection, these very good standards were evident in the scrutiny of students' work and in the classroom. The school's intake covers the full ability range, from the gifted student to the student with learning difficulties. Nevertheless, the overall attainment on entry to the school has been above average in recent years and for the current Year 7 is well above average. Students make good progress over time and build well on the good standards with which they enter the school in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, by the end of Key Stage 3 in geography students compare and contrast different environments to a high standard. They use geographical terms with confidence, write well at length, explain their conclusions clearly and analyse effectively numerical information. The GCSE English coursework of Year 11 students has a high level of content and presentation. Work on "Othello" shows very good understanding of character and plot. Students make very good progress when the teaching gives them opportunities to discuss issues amongst themselves, using their previous learning to arrive at their own conclusions to share and test with others. In most other lessons, students usually make at least good progress even when the teaching is not as effective as it could be. This is because they want to achieve well and enjoy learning. In some classes progress is slowed by the disruptive behaviour of a few students.
3. During this school year, the students' progress in some subjects and classes has been hindered by the school's difficulties in appointing appropriately qualified and experienced staff. The national shortage of teachers in some subjects has been further affected for Gillotts by the high cost of housing in the South East area. Year 11 students taking GCSE graphic design particularly experienced difficulties, as the school was unable to appoint a suitably qualified teacher until Easter 2001. The school has been successful in filling its vacancies with appropriately qualified staff for September 2001.

Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology

4. Students' speaking and listening, reading and writing skills (literacy) are very good. They make a significant contribution to the very good standards the students achieve, not only in English, but in other subjects of the curriculum. Students' numeracy skills are also well above average, with many of the lowest attaining students having a quick recall of times tables and confidently working with numbers. In science and geography students are able to use their graphical and data handling skills to good effect. The

school quickly recognised the importance and effectiveness of the National Strategies for literacy and numeracy now in place in primary schools. Both the English and mathematics faculties have already started to adopt the national secondary strategies for literacy and numeracy prior to their national implementation in September 2001. A whole school literacy policy is in place and is beginning to have a good impact on the work of all subject areas. Faculties are putting a greater focus on the correct use and spelling of technical words and are developing strategies to help students produce structured written work appropriate for the subject. For example, in science students are expected to give scientific explanations in their own words. This develops their literacy skills and leads to a greater understanding of scientific ideas. A whole school numeracy policy is currently being developed.

5. Opportunities for students to develop the full range of information and communication technology skills have satisfactorily improved since the last inspection. Two new up-to-date computer rooms provide opportunities for all students to have a specialist information and communication technology lesson on a regular basis. This will be fully in place in September 2001 when the Key Skills accreditation currently being undertaken by Year 10 students moves into Year 11. Students develop appropriate skills in the use of word-processing, databases, spreadsheets and the Internet for research. They are confident users of new technology. However, the use of data-logging in science and of computer aided design in design and technology is still at the early stage of development. Good use of information and communication technology was observed in mathematics and the modern foreign languages faculty is beginning to use computers more frequently. Nevertheless, the use of computers as an aid to learning is not yet well developed across all subjects of the curriculum. Approximately seven out of ten students in the school have access to computers at home and many use them for homework tasks and GCSE coursework. The good availability of computers in the school's Open Learning Centre, both during and outside lesson times, ensures all students have sufficient access to computers for their work.

National test results for fourteen-year-olds

6. In summer 2000, performance in national tests for fourteen-year-olds in all three core subjects, English, mathematics and science, was well above average. Since the last inspection English results have steadily improved and mathematics results have been consistently well above average. In science results started to fall but significantly improved in summer 2000. The improvement in English is very much due to a greater focus on teaching and learning strategies in the last two years that has led to an improvement in boys' results. The strategies have included a greater focus on non-fiction reading and boys and girls being seated together.
7. Overall there are no significant variations in the performance of boys and girls, but girls perform better than boys in English, as they do nationally, boys slightly better than girls in mathematics, and boys clearly better than girls in science. This year, the science faculty has reviewed its teaching and learning strategies to encourage girls to perform better and has held separate revision classes for girls and boys. Classroom observation noted no significant differences in the attitudes and performance of boys and girls in lessons. Given this, and the school's clear monitoring of the performance of girls and boys, inspectors have no specific concerns about any differences in boys' and girls' results. Higher attaining students are entered for the extension papers in the national tests, which are appropriately demanding. Parents and students appreciate the challenge. The needs of the most able students were generally well met in the lessons observed, although some parents consider that work is not always hard enough

for their more able children. Very demanding work on algebraic notation was observed with higher attaining students in mathematics.

8. In other subjects in summer 2000, national assessments for fourteen-year-olds were well above average overall, although comparison with GCSE results in individual subjects suggested that some assessments might be inaccurate. Inspectors did not have time to pursue this in depth, but the school is aware of any issues. It is monitoring the situation and addressing any weaknesses.

GCSE results

9. At GCSE in summer 2000 the proportion of students gaining five or more A*-C grades, the highest grades, was well above the national average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes, A*-G grades, was also well above the national average. In English and mathematics the percentage of A*-C grades was significantly above the national average, whilst in science it was in-line with the national average. The science faculty undertook a rigorous analysis of results to address this drop in performance from the previous year and consequently this year provided extra support for borderline A*-C students. The faculty also had a number of staffing changes during 1999/2000 and considers this also contributed to the lower than expected results. Both boys and girls did best in design and technology, English and mathematics and least well in history, and geography. Results are often not as good as they should be in other optional subjects such as drama, music and media studies. The school is reviewing teaching and learning programmes with subject leaders to improve results.
10. Girls do better than boys overall as they do nationally and especially at the highest A/A* grades. However, the boys are still performing much better than boys do nationally, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In summer 2000, A*-C results in English for boys were ten per cent better than for boys in any other school in Oxfordshire. Outstanding results in design and technology are particularly due to the high performance in textiles and food studies predominantly taken by girls. Girls did better than boys in French and boys did better than girls in physical education and information studies. Whilst these latter results indicate some gender bias, there is good encouragement and opportunity throughout the curriculum for boys and girls to undertake all subjects, for example girls play cricket and boys dance. As for younger students inspectors' classroom observations and discussions with staff and students raised no serious concerns about any differences in boys and girls performance. The school monitors these differences carefully and is very well aware of issues relating to the performance of boys and girls. It continually seeks to address them.
11. The small number of students with learning difficulties has appropriate opportunities to take a GCSE programme more suited to their needs. This includes key skills courses and the ASDAN Youth Award accreditation in which they gain good results. The school's well above average GCSE results at all levels for summer 2000 show that these students achieve well for their abilities. However, during the inspection, instances occurred where teaching was not as well matched to these students' learning needs as it could have been and slowed their progress.

Very good leadership from the headteacher and other senior managers that continually seeks to improve the work of the school and which is well supported by governors

12. Gillotts School fulfils effectively its central purpose to provide a good standard of comprehensive and co-educational education for its students. It has consistently over the last four years obtained well above average results in national tests for fourteen-year-olds and at GCSE. Most students, approximately 90 per cent, leave at sixteen years to pursue additional qualifications in further education colleges. The school provides students with a very good foundation for future learning, not only through good examination results but also through helping them to become confident and mature young adults able to take responsibility for their own learning. Students also have very good opportunities to develop other interests such as music and drama and to participate in trips as far away as the United States of America. Students are very positive about the range of extra curricular activities available and in particular the very good sporting opportunities the school provides, at which many excel.
13. However, the school is not complacent. Through the rigorous analysis of results and the careful thought given to future priorities, it seeks continually to improve the quality of education it offers its students. A very good example of this is the recent bid to the ¹DfEE for technology college status. Even though the school does not yet know whether the bid has been successful, the bidding process has enabled the school over the last year to review its current practice and to identify curriculum priorities for the future: the use of new technology in particular. It has helped the school to improve its links with local primary schools, Henley College of Further Education and the local business community. The school is also participating in a teaching and learning project with King's College London. The project aims to involve students more fully in their learning. Teachers provide continual feedback to students on what they know and understand, encourage them to identify and learn from their mistakes and set targets with them to help them improve. The project is beginning to have a positive impact on students' learning in both mathematics and science, the pilot subject areas. The school obtained Investors in People status in 2000. This has just been renewed, with staff commitment and involvement in the work of the school particularly commended.
14. Leadership and management of the school are good, with some very good features. The headteacher and her senior management team provide strong, thoughtful and well-informed leadership. However, that provided by heads of faculty and key stage managers (heads of year) is more variable in quality, ranging from good in mathematics and physical education to satisfactory in other areas.
15. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2001 and through spending her time with students and staff has quickly gained a good grasp of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. She has a clear vision for the school's future and this has been shared with staff and governors. Through staff discussion, future priorities have been clearly and appropriately identified. The filling of vacant posts has rightly been a high priority, as has improving students' behaviour. Currently the school has all posts filled for September. This involved considerable time in re-advertising and additional interviews to ensure the best possible appointments were made. New procedures are already being put in place to address unacceptable student behaviour. The headteacher is very well supported by both deputy heads, who have clear roles and undertake these with both vision and effectiveness.

¹ DfEE - government Department for Education and Employment

16. The roles of heads of faculty and key stage managers are not yet fully developed. High staff turnover and new management structures have led to a considerable number of new or acting heads of faculty and to new responsibilities for staff in charge of students' welfare and progress, such as key stage managers. The school has rightly identified the development of their management skills as a key priority to support other priorities such as improvements in students' behaviour, more consistently good or better teaching and the better use of tutor time. A programme to develop their management skills is being put in place for September when all these middle management posts will be filled with permanent appointees.
17. Governors are very supportive of the school and headteacher. Well led by the chairman of governors, they take a keen interest in the school's development and bring considerable expertise to the work of the governing body. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have been very proactive in gaining local business sponsorship for the technology bid. They are beginning to explore a range of strategies for developing plans in the technology bid if the school is not successful in obtaining funds from the DfEE. Although financial management is good, more systematic procedures need to be put in place to ensure the school is providing the best possible value for money, not only in the management of resources, but in the effectiveness of the curriculum and the use of staff. However, given the good progress pupils make, the school provides good value for money. It is not yet meeting fully statutory requirements relating to a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and the Annual Governors' Report to parents.

Students are confident, mature and well-rounded young people, who work hard and are enthusiastic about all aspects of school life

18. Inspectors were impressed with the ability of students to talk about their work and what they like and dislike about the school in a mature and sensible manner. The students listen to each other, respect each other's views, and are confident at expressing preferences that might in some circumstances give cause for teasing: for example boys indicating they like food studies and choosing dance as a GCSE physical education option. Boys and girls get on well with each other and work well together. Year 11 students, although keen to do well and clearly revising hard for their GCSE examinations, did not show many nerves about their forthcoming examinations. They appeared relaxed and confident, knew what they were expected to achieve and felt well prepared. Year 9 students, who had recently taken their national tests, were also confident, from the least able to the very able, that they had performed well.
19. Whilst most students bring very good social skills and attitudes from home to their school work, it is also clear that the school has a supportive and encouraging atmosphere which allows these to flourish. Students are happy at Gillotts and this was well supported by students who had transferred from other secondary schools. Students value the wide range of trips and extra-curricular activities the school offers, especially the sporting opportunities. Older students willingly take on responsibilities. They act as peer counsellors for younger students and undertake prefect duties, such as overseeing dinner queues and break-time. Students exhibit concern for others. The Year 10 Youth Award group has collected money and equipment for young people of their own age in Sierra Leone, who have suffered immense hardship, as well as a lack of schooling, because of the civil war. They have spoken at year assemblies and held a coffee morning for staff. However, students in discussion with inspectors commented that they feel their own concerns are not always listened to. The school council is not viewed as effective, although in the meeting observed students put forward some good

suggestions for improving their school. Whilst appreciating the peer counselling system, students provided little evidence of having found it useful.

20. Students have very positive attitudes to their work and want to do well. This makes a significant contribution to the very good standards achieved. In most lessons students settle quickly to work. They respond well to their teachers, especially when the activities arouse their interest and they are actively involved in their own learning. Even when the teaching is less effective, they usually work at and respond well to the activities set and continue to make good progress in their learning and achieve well. This was observed particularly at Key Stage 3 where, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, teachers missed opportunities to stretch students further in their learning. Students like opportunities to work together, such as in religious education when they prepare presentations on different religions. They do not like copying notes for the major part of a lesson. The students ask questions readily when they do not understand. They are able to work independently and the new Open Learning Centre is providing very good opportunities for them to undertake individual research both in and outside lessons. This is much appreciated and it is used well. The Open Learning Centre provides good opportunities for students who do not have a computer at home to undertake tasks which require one.

The behaviour of most students is good and often very good

21. Students behave well in most lessons and around the school. They are polite to their teachers and to each other. This helps students make good progress in their learning in lessons. Bullying is not a problem. This was confirmed by both students and parents, who consider that when or if it occurs it is dealt with effectively. Exclusions are below the national average. However, whilst behaviour is good and often very good overall, a small minority of students does not always behave well and can disrupt lessons. The school recognises this and the development of strategies to improve students' behaviour is a priority. A well managed initiative to separate badly behaved students temporarily from their friends, without interrupting their education, is a positive move and early indications are that it is effective. No misbehaviour was evident during breaks and lunchtimes. Students arrived promptly for afternoon lessons despite the fine weather and scattered over the large and very pleasant green site. However students do leave a considerable amount of litter around and do not always treat the toilets well.

Students' standards and progress are well monitored to ensure the highest possible achievement and to help students know how well they are doing

22. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and evaluating the standards students achieve in their work and their progress as they move through the school. Examination results are carefully analysed and those for each subject discussed annually with heads of faculty. This process enables action to be targeted where results are not as good as they should be. There is clear evidence that appropriate action is taken. For example the science faculty has reviewed its teaching strategies to improve girls' results at Key Stage 3 and the school is providing support for the history faculty to develop its assessment and moderation procedures.

23. The school rigorously monitors students' individual progress from the time they enter the school. Standardised testing and Key Stage 2 results (national tests for eleven-year-olds) are used to predict Key Stage 3 results, and subsequently GCSE results. Each year these are updated to ensure students are performing as well as they should be and to address any under-performance. This has a positive impact on the standards students' achieve and on the quality of teaching and learning. Appropriately ambitious targets are set. The school analyses public examination results to check that both boys and girls perform at least as well as expected and to identify the proportion that do better than expected. However, it does not yet review systematically enough how different groups of students, other than boys and girls, perform: for example students eligible for free school meals, the most able and those on the special educational needs register.
24. Students clearly know how well they are doing, both from feedback by teachers and opportunities to evaluate their progress for themselves. Year 9 students, who had just taken their national tests in English, mathematics and science and Year 11 students, about to sit GCSE examinations, indicated that they knew their expected levels and grades. They generally felt confident that they would achieve them. Students' own assessment of their progress is encouraged. As part of their annual report students have the opportunity to write their own comment for each subject and to discuss it with the teacher.
25. The assessment project with King's College London encourages teachers to work with students throughout the year on highlighting their strengths and weaknesses and how their work can be further improved. For example, in mathematics each question in end of unit tests is analysed to see what percentage of the class has arrived at the correct answer. Where a high proportion of students has had trouble, the teacher discusses with the class the improvement needed and further work is undertaken. Other subject areas in the school have been informed about the work of the project, but as yet not all teachers have become fully involved. The English faculty has recently joined the project. This will help it to develop further the good practice already in place. In English, teachers' written comments in students' books already provide good feedback to students on their work and give clear suggestions as to how they can improve.

The teaching in Key Stage 4 is good

26. Although the overall quality of teaching is good, it is more consistently good or very good for older students. Although fewer lessons were observed at Key Stage 4, Year 11 students being on study leave, three-quarters of the lessons seen were good or better at Key Stage 4. For Key Stage 3 students the teaching observed ranged from excellent to one unsatisfactory lesson as it did at Key Stage 4. However, the proportion of good or better teaching observed in Key Stage 3 was just over a half. Scrutiny of students' work and of homework diaries supports these judgements, particularly concerning the higher level of work and commitment expected at Key Stage 4.
27. A quarter of lessons seen at both key stages was very good or excellent. In these lessons, the teaching took full advantage of the students' very positive attitudes towards learning and their ability to work well together in a confident and mature way. Students made the best possible progress in their learning because teachers' expectations of students were high and the work set was both motivating and demanding. For example in Year 10, English students' knowledge and understanding of the plot and of the characters' motivations in "Macbeth" were thoroughly developed by one group of

students, acting as 'detectives', interrogating other students 'in role' as characters in the play. The best lessons are also well planned and move at a good pace. The activities stimulate and interest students. In Year 7 French the imaginative use of role play, conducted fully in French, led to effective learning of the language associated with getting up and going to school. Students thoroughly enjoyed acting out the process whilst repeating and learning the vocabulary associated with each action.

28. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good and usually very good. The best teachers use their specialist knowledge very effectively to plan activities that match students' learning needs. For example, with a Year 9 top set in mathematics the teacher used the opportunity provided by an investigation to introduce students to a form of algebraic notation usually taught to older, more able GCSE candidates. Students discussed and shared their understanding of the tasks set, wanting to succeed and to increase their mathematical understanding further, even though the work was difficult.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Strategies for supporting those students with behavioural and learning difficulties are not sufficiently effective

29. Whilst most students in the school behave well and overall attainment is well above average, there is a small minority of students with behavioural difficulties, learning difficulties or both. Both students and parents consider that unacceptable behaviour has increased in the last few years. This view is supported by a rise in the exclusion rate, although it is still below that nationally. A few parents expressed concerns that their children's learning difficulties were not being sufficiently well met.
30. During the inspection, unsatisfactory behaviour was observed in lessons mainly taken by temporary staff and on several occasions in form time/registration sessions. However, it also takes place with other staff and this was confirmed by incidents that occurred during the inspection week and through information from students and their parents. On one occasion, during a registration session, students showed open defiance by refusing to do as the teacher requested. On another occasion the poor behaviour of a group of students, mainly boys, hindered the learning of the rest of the class. In both situations teachers did not have the skills to manage the behaviour of the students. In the lesson the teacher's planning and organisation were also ineffective. Year 7 students feel particularly strongly about the number of lessons that are disrupted by other students' poor behaviour, especially when it results in extra work for them to do at home. The school has rightly made an improvement in students' behaviour a priority for its future development plan.
31. Although the unsatisfactory lessons observed during the inspection were with temporary staff, other observations and information support inspectors' judgements that teaching staff need to develop further their teaching strategies for students with behavioural and learning difficulties. This would ensure all students behave and achieve as well as they should in the classroom. Where practice is good, teachers use effectively the guidance in the school's well-constructed behaviour policy. For example, they quietly talk to students not paying sufficient attention, rather than disturbing the lesson as a whole and sending students unnecessarily outside to work. The best teaching also provides work at different levels of difficulty for students in the same class. However, in some groups the learning needs of all students are not well met and activities for the lowest attaining students do not always interest or fully motivate them. This leads to inattention and less effective learning.

32. There is variable use by both teachers and learning support assistants of individual education plans for students with special educational needs. Some teachers have them readily to hand and have added specific subject targets for students. Other teachers search in folders for them. Information for the annual review process is not always speedily available to the special educational needs staff from subject teachers. The learning support assistants provide good encouraging support in most lessons, but very few were observed to keep specific notes of what students achieved in lessons. Liaison and preparation with class teachers ranged from good to the superficial. In one or two lessons support assistants were not used as effectively as they could have been, for example two sitting at one table with four students.
33. Support for students with special educational needs during the current year has suffered from the late resignation of the previous special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). A new permanent SENCO appointment at a senior level and the continuing development of more systematic procedures have the potential to support staff in managing students' behaviour and learning needs more effectively in the classroom. All staff will be expected to take a greater role in the setting and monitoring of targets for students on the special educational needs register, as recommended in national guidance.

The school's monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the setting and appropriateness of homework, the use of tutor time and of new initiatives is not systematic enough

34. Whilst the school monitors well students' standards and progress, it does not yet monitor as effectively other aspects of its work to confirm improvements in the quality of education it offers. The school development plans for the last two years have had appropriate priorities, such as the raising of attainment at Key Stage 3, the implementation of new assessment and reporting procedures, the development of literacy and numeracy strategies and the recruitment and retention of staff. They are generally costed, but projected outcomes to evaluate success are not always specific enough. Subject development plans are clearly and well based on school priorities. However, whilst there is good evidence of some faculties evaluating the success of their plans, this is less so for whole school initiatives. More rigorous procedures are planned for September 2001 for evaluating the success of targets in the school development plan, particularly through their impact on pupils' achievements.
35. The senior management team of the school keeps themselves well informed of the quality of teaching and learning in individual subject areas by undertaking up to six faculty reviews a year. A good feature of these reviews is the involvement of the head of faculty in lesson observation and in the identification of issues to be explored. Good follow-up action takes place on emerging issues. However, given the current high turnover of staff, heads of faculty do not observe subject teachers' work in the classroom on a sufficiently regular basis. Useful monitoring of books and observation of each other's work take place in some subject areas, such as mathematics. These activities develop an individual teacher's knowledge and understanding of work in their subject. They do not focus systematically enough on evaluating the effectiveness of an individual's teaching and do not help heads of faculty to identify where improvement in the work of the faculty needs to take place.
36. In many competent lessons observed during the inspection, teachers missed opportunities to extend or consolidate further students' learning. As a consequence

teaching at Key Stage 3 was satisfactory overall, rather than good. Teachers' use of time was not as good as it could be. Too often, little opportunity was left at the end of the lesson to recap on what had been learned during the lesson and to make sure all students fully understood the homework set. Teaching and learning strategies were not as well-matched to the needs of students as they could be. In the lowest sets, they were sometimes too easy for the most able in the group and at other times they were neither motivating nor interesting enough. For higher ability students, teachers did not always expand on the insightful questions asked by the students and explore students' knowledge and understanding at the highest possible level.

37. In September 2001 there will be five major new heads of faculty in post: for English, mathematics, science, the arts and humanities. The school is preparing well for this by planning a programme of support to develop their management skills, including observation of teaching in the classroom and feedback to staff.
38. The school has a clear homework policy and timetable in place. These are appropriate and not over demanding of students and their time. However, at Key Stage 3 inspectors' scrutiny of student planners and discussions with students indicated that homework is not set on a regular and consistent basis in many subjects. It is most consistent in the core subjects and for 14-16 year olds. Parents expressed concerns, both at the meeting for parents and through their response to the questionnaire, about the small amount of work their children appear to do at home, or the occasional overload because it all comes at once. A few commented on the occasional lack of challenge, for example 'colouring in' and collecting plants and materials.
39. The school is not meeting the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all students, both through assembly sessions and tutor time, which take place at the beginning of the school day. Each year group has two year assemblies a week, a lack of large areas in the school making bigger gatherings impossible. These provide good moral and social messages for students, some spiritual content, and an opportunity for reflection. For the rest of the week, tutors are expected to implement the school's tutor time programme, which includes the school's theme for the week, to promote reflection on social, moral and spiritual issues. This arrangement has been put in place since the last inspection. Inspectors did not observe this time used well in most of the tutor sessions seen. Tutors deal with administrative matters, check homework diaries and speak to students individually. Students mostly chat amongst themselves or do nothing. Some students read. Tutors do not provide any substantial moments of reflection on spiritual, moral or social issues. In only one session were students observed working at a planned activity. Occasionally, behaviour is not as good as it should be in tutor time.
40. In the last few years, the school has introduced new assessment methods and reporting procedures through its school development plan. Although there is good evidence of their effectiveness, no formal review has been undertaken. The school now needs not only to seek and analyse the views of staff on the effectiveness of these initiatives, but also those of parents and students.
41. Whilst most students get good feedback on their work, a relatively high number of parents, from those who attended the meeting for parents (36) and who completed the questionnaire (168), indicated that they would like more information on how well their children are doing throughout the year. Nevertheless, they are confident that the school would contact them if there were any major concerns. Because the school's assessment process involves students in marking their own work and a greater

proportion of feedback through discussion in class, marking in students' books does not always provide sufficient information to parents. Additionally, the timing of reports and consultation evenings and the lack of an interim report this last year have contributed to parents wanting more information about their child's progress. For example, Year 10 parents do not have any written report or consultation evening until the summer term, which is over halfway through their child's GCSE course. The school now recognises these concerns and is reviewing the timing of reports and meetings, with a new interim report currently being discussed.

The management of the site, especially health and safety, is not as efficient as it could be

42. At the time of the inspection governors and the school did not have a clear and sufficiently rigorous programme for checking the condition of the site and any aspects of health and safety that need to be corrected. However, immediately following the inspection they began to address the concerns reported to them by inspectors. The cost of maintenance of the site is high and with a tight budget this puts a significant constraint on the school's financial resources. However, the overall low standard of decoration of parts of the site and the care of the site does not fully reflect these high costs. The school depends a great deal on contributions from the parents' association for developments such as the Open Learning Centre and the dance studio. Both are attractive additions to the school site.
43. It is the relatively high number of issues rather than their severity that causes concern. Some had been noted already by the fire officer on his visit three weeks previously. Others indicated a lack of systematic checking of the site and a strategy to undertake repairs – for example a window that has been cracked for over a year and a half and other non-urgent but potential safety hazards. Whilst subject areas generally have high standards, some teachers show a lack of awareness of basic good practice: for example fire extinguishers are used to keep doors open in hot weather. The school has already taken action on many of the issues raised, but both it and governors need to ensure the new procedures being put in place are fully implemented.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. To maintain the school's current very good standards, the governors, headteacher and staff should now ensure the following actions, already identified by the school as priorities, are put in place:

- (1) Strategies to improve students' behaviour and learning should be further developed by
 - providing in-service training for all staff on behaviour management;
 - ensuring all staff understand their responsibilities to contribute to and implement individual education plans for students on the special educational needs register;
 - developing a wider range of teaching and learning strategies to meet students' behavioural and learning needs.

(paragraphs 11,15,21,29,30,31,32,33,36)
- (2) More rigorous monitoring of the effectiveness of initiatives and targets in the school development plan should be put in place through
 - setting clearer outcomes for judging the success of initiatives and targets in the school development plan that reflect their impact on the standards students achieve in their work and behaviour;
 - developing the management skills of key stage managers and heads of faculty, particularly in more systematic classroom observation;
 - reviewing the effectiveness of form time and homework.

(paragraphs 14,15,22,34-41)
- (3) More rigorous procedures should continue to be introduced for the management of the site including
 - regularly inspecting the site to an approved check list;
 - regular reporting to the premises committee;
 - ensuring all staff are regularly updated on good health and safety practice and any weaknesses observed;
 - updating the premises development plan to ensure a manageable strategy to improve the accommodation and appearance of the site and to undertake repairs as cost effectively as possible.

(paragraphs 42-43)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 38 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students | 20 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 8 | 16 | 37 | 34 | 5 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's students

| Students on the school's roll | Y7-11 | Sixth form |
|---|-------|------------|
| Number of students on the school's roll | 883 | N/a |
| Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals | 48 | N/a |

| Special educational needs | Y7- Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|---------|------------|
| Number of students with statements of special educational needs | 22 | N/a |
| Number of students on the school's special educational needs register | 124 | N/a |

| English as an additional language | No of students |
|---|----------------|
| Number of students with English as an additional language | 15 |

| Student mobility in the last school year | No of students |
|--|----------------|
| Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 14 |
| Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 14 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.4 |
| National comparative data | 7.7 |

| Unauthorised absence | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.2 |
| 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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 2000 | 96 | 73 | 169 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 75 | 79 | 81 |
| | Girls | 67 | 57 | 54 |
| | Total | 142 | 136 | 135 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 84 (76) | 80 (76) | 80 (70) |
| | National | 63 (63) | 65 (62) | 59 (55) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 54 (39) | 59 (50) | 46 (52) |
| | National | 28 (28) | 42 (38) | 30 (23) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 62 | 70 | 66 |
| | Girls | 61 | 56 | 47 |
| | Total | 123 | 126 | 113 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 73 (67) | 75 (76) | 67 (77) |
| | National | 64 (64) | 66 (64) | 62 (60) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 29 (34) | 54 (54) | 26 (42) |
| | National | 31 (31) | 39 (37) | 29 (28) |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | 2000 | 104 | 86 | 200 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|--|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of students achieving the standard specified | Boys | 57 | 103 | 104 |
| | Girls | 67 | 92 | 93 |
| | Total | 124 | 195 | 197 |
| Percentage of students achieving | School | 62 (66) | 98 (98) | 99 (99) |
| | National | 47.4 (46.) | 90.6 (90.9) | 95.6 (95.8) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per student | School | 47 (48) |
| | National | 38.4 (38.0) |

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

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

| | No of students |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 1 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 7 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 4 |
| Chinese | 2 |
| White | 853 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 16 |

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 37 | 1 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y11

| | |
|--|-------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 44.6 |
| Number of students per qualified teacher | 19.80 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 16 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 320 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 76 |
|---|----|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Key Stage 3 | 28 |
| Key Stage 4 | 25 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 2000/2001 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 2305985 |
| Total expenditure | 2268370 |
| Expenditure per student | 2569 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 154098 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 191713 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 883 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 166 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 35 | 51 | 11 | 2 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 36 | 51 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 16 | 50 | 25 | 2 | 6 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 16 | 52 | 25 | 4 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 21 | 63 | 8 | 1 | 6 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 17 | 47 | 26 | 10 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 51 | 38 | 10 | 1 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 43 | 46 | 7 | 1 | 4 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 14 | 51 | 26 | 7 | 2 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 25 | 53 | 7 | 2 | 13 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 34 | 50 | 8 | 2 | 5 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 34 | 45 | 11 | 4 | 6 |

These do not all add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Other issues raised by parents

A considerable number of parents commented on the poor condition of the toilets.

A few parents feel there is not enough difficult work for the brightest students.

Two parents commented on delays in providing satisfactory support for students with special educational needs.

A few parents considers the choice of subjects in the Key Stage 4 options as restrictive, such as pupils not able to take a full GCSE course in history and geography, and all pupils having to do an arts subject.