

INSPECTION REPORT

HARPER GREEN SCHOOL

Farnworth, Bolton

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105257

Headteacher: Mr P Jefferies

Registered inspector: Mr Sid Freeman
2636

Dates of inspection: 31 January - 4 February 2000

Inspection number: 187340

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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:	Harper Green Road Farnworth Bolton Lancashire
Postcode:	BL4 0DH
Telephone number:	01204 572941
Fax number:	01204 793031
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Gorner
Date of previous inspection:	26.02.1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr S Freeman	Registered inspector	Business education	Standards
			School results and pupil achievement
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
Mr M Romano	Lay inspector		Personal, social and health education
			Community links
			Care for pupils
			Partnership with parents
Mr C Campbell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr C Collinson	Team inspector	Mathematics	Value for money / best value
			Finance
Mr F Evans	Team inspector	History	Curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
			Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr G Gaskill	Team inspector	Science	Assessment and monitoring academic progress
Mrs S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
		Dance	
Mr G Leech	Team inspector	English	
		Drama	
		Special educational needs	
		English as an additional language	
Mr M Padmore	Team inspector	Design & technology	
		Information technology	
Miss P Rourke	Team inspector	Geography	
		Religious education	
		Equal opportunities	
		Humanities	
Mrs S Wilkinson	Team inspector	Music	

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services

Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

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The Registrar
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

Harper Green is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16. A new headteacher was appointed in 1998. There are 1272 pupils on roll, of which 619 are girls. Pupil numbers have increased by 182 since the previous inspection. Pupils entering the school include the full range of ability, but the attainment of most pupils is well below the national average. Most pupils come from areas of high social and economic need. Twenty-seven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. About six per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Seventy seven pupils have English as an additional language but only two are at an early stage of language acquisition. Forty two per cent of pupils have special educational needs, well above the national average. Statements of special educational need are held by 5.7 per cent of pupils, more than double that at the last inspection and above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Harper Green is an effective and improving school that provides good value for money. It is heavily over-subscribed. Most pupils make good progress. Their attainment rises from well below average on entry to average against national standards by the end of Key Stage 4 and well above average for similar schools. The attitudes and behaviour of most pupils are very good. The quality of teaching and learning are good. The school is well led and managed and has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment in GCSE are well above average for similar schools
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and most pupils make good progress in the school
- High quality teaching and learning in physical education in Key Stage 4 leads to very good achievement
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and enables them to make good progress
- The headteacher's leadership is very good. Generally, leadership and management are good
- Most staff are conscientious, committed, hard-working and good role models for pupils
- Pupils' attitudes to the school, their personal development and relationships are good
- Behaviour of most pupils is very good. There are good procedures to promote good behaviour
- Careers education and guidance and extra-curricular provision are excellent
- The provision for pupils' welfare and their moral and social development are very good
- Parents have a high regard for the school and the school has effective links with them

What could be improved

- Attainment against national standards, particularly in Key Stage 3
- Curriculum provision for design and technology, information technology and religious education
- Most planning, teaching, assessment and reporting is not linked to national criteria or standards – particularly in Key Stage 3. Also individual education plans lack targets which are specific to subjects
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and the performance management of teachers and departments, are not sufficiently rigorous or systematic
- Appraisal of teachers is unsatisfactory. Half the humanities teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Despite strenuous efforts by the school, attendance is unsatisfactory
- Boys' underachievement in English, drama, mathematics, art and geography in Key Stage 4
- Pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory and collective worship still does not meet requirements
- The library is inadequately stocked and poorly located to support learning

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Governors and staff understand the need to improve and there is evidence of satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in February 1996. The attainment of pupils on entry is similar to the last inspection, but the school's GCSE standards have improved above the national trend since 1996. Results in 1999 exceeded the school's targets. The school has made good improvements in the key issues relating to teaching and learning, allocation of resources and accommodation; also satisfactory improvement to boys' attainment. The school has made cost-effective use of external funds to improve the accommodation, which is now good, but the art rooms have not improved. There has been very good overall improvement in mathematics and physical education, also good improvement in English, science, art, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages, music and religious education. However, provision for information and communications technology across the curriculum, religious education and collective worship are still unsatisfactory. Parents are very positive about the improvements which have taken place.

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	D	E	C	A

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

Most pupils make good progress in the school, their attainment rises from well below average on entry to the national average when they leave. The results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science combined are well below the national average and below average for similar schools. The 1999 average points score for GCSE is close to the national average for pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C and A*-G and exceeded the school's targets. Improvement in GCSE is higher than the national trend. Only the work seen in physical education in Key Stage 4 was above national standards. Work in mathematics, design and technology and information and communications technology was below national standards in both key stages. Standards are not high enough, particularly in Key Stage 3.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils are enthusiastic learners and enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour of most pupils is very good in lessons and around the school. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in five per cent of lessons (13 per cent in Year 8) are unsatisfactory. Most of the misbehaviour is linked to unsatisfactory teaching.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships within the school are good. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by the opportunities provided for them to take responsibility. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Most staff are good role models for pupils in the quality of their work, their commitment and their approach to pupils.

Attendance	Despite strenuous efforts by the school, attendance is unsatisfactory, being below the national average, and insufficient improvement has been made. Years 7 and 9 were average in 1998-9, but Year 11 was well below average. Very good and poor attendance are clearly linked to high and low attainment respectively at GCSE in the sample of pupils analysed for the inspection.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
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 in English and mathematics is good in both key stages. Science teaching is good in Key Stage 4 and satisfactory in Key Stage 3. English teachers have a good command of their subject. Planning and preparation are very thorough and marking of pupils' work is very careful and supportive. Mathematics is usually well planned, using a variety of teaching approaches. In the best lessons, expectations are high and pupils work at a good pace. Science teachers have good subject knowledge, often state clear lesson objectives, make good use of technical terms and have a positive rapport with pupils. Unsatisfactory teaching in a quarter of science lessons in Key Stage 3 shows inadequate planning and ineffective control of behaviour.

Teachers' subject knowledge, their expectations, teaching methods, classroom management and day-to-day assessment are good in both key stages. Planning, teaching and assessment are not always matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils, nor linked to national criteria or standards. Teaching is good throughout the school in English, drama, mathematics, geography, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and business studies (only taught in Key Stage 4); in physical education it is good in Key Stage 3 but very good in Key Stage 4. Half the humanities teaching is unsatisfactory. Good teaching promotes good learning in this school. Pupils' development of knowledge and understanding, the effort they make and the pace of learning, their interest and concentration are good in both key stages.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in the school is satisfactory overall. In English and mathematics they are taught well, but there are no agreed approaches in other subjects areas. This limits achievement, particularly in Key Stage 3. A co-ordinated approach to literacy is emerging, but not to numeracy.

Ninety-six per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better. Sixty-four per cent is good or better and 19 per cent is very good or excellent. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 70 per cent of lessons observed during the last inspection, including 40 per cent which were good or better. Both of these proportions have increased by about 25 percentage points in this inspection.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Since September 1999 the curriculum has been in a state of transition and improvement. Requirements for design and technology, information technology and religious education are not met. Careers education and extra-curricular provision are excellent.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They have access to all subjects. They make good progress through good support in lessons, withdrawal for individual teaching, also the help of visiting specialists.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Teachers are well informed of their language needs, they have support in lessons and the help of a visiting specialist who speaks their first language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision for pupils' personal development is good. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Moral and social development are very good. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's provision for pastoral care and guidance is good. There are good procedures to promote and monitor good behaviour. The school's procedures for child protection are very effective. Monitoring of pupils' academic performance is good in Key Stage 4, but unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3.

The school has an effective partnership with parents which supports pupils' learning and promotes their personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's leadership is very good. Overall leadership by governors and those staff with management responsibility is good. Day-to-day management of the school is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Since 1998 the governing body has become more effective. It is setting appropriate priorities for development. Governors fulfil statutory obligations except those related to curriculum and appraisal. Teachers and managers are not sufficiently accountable to the governors.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Teaching and departmental performance are not sufficiently rigorously or regularly monitored, evaluated or reported to governors.
The strategic use of resources	The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff match the demands of the curriculum. Overall the accommodation and learning resources promote effective teaching and learning. The library is inadequately stocked and poorly located to support learning. Good use is made of grant funding. The school applies the principles of best value very effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements in the academic standards, including the 'fast-track' for very able pupils The improving reputation of the school The school's response to complaints Pupils' behaviour Support given to pupils by teachers Time teachers devote to extra-curricular activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers' inconsistencies in setting homework Pupils often say that they completed homework at school or that no homework was set Behaviour of a small minority of pupils in mixed-ability lessons Inadequate information on their children's progress, particularly in Key Stage 3

Inspectors confirmed the positive views of parents. Parents' comments on inconsistent setting of homework were not supported by inspectors. Homework provision is generally satisfactory; it is not a strength of the school. Pupils are keen to attend study and homework clubs and may complete their homework there. The attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of pupils is unsatisfactory in five per cent of lessons (13 per cent in Year 8). It is often linked to unsatisfactory teaching. Reports to parents on pupils' progress meet statutory requirements, but, particularly in Key Stage 3, they lack details of pupils' achievements in subjects and specific information on improving attainment. Reports on pupils' progress are more frequent and more informative in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. The school plans to improve this reporting system.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The level of pupils' attainment on entry is evident from Key Stage 2 test results, standardised tests in Year 7 and inspection evidence. These indicate that attainment in English, mathematics, science and information and communications technology skills is well below average when pupils enter the school.
2. The results for National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, in all English, mathematics and science combined, are well below the national average for all schools and below average for similar schools. English fell sharply in 1999 to well below the national average, having been average and above average in 1997 and 1998. This is an aberration due to problems in marking which were not wholly rectified, due to difficulties with the appeals system. Mathematics was below the national average in 1999 and science was well below average. Results in 1999 were average for similar schools in mathematics, but below average in English and science. Results for the previous two years in English were well above average for similar schools. The trend in English has been upwards since the last inspection, with the exception of 1999; standards in mathematics have been rising; the trend in science has fallen in line with results nationally.
3. Teachers' assessments in foundation subjects indicate that attainment in 1999 was well above national standards in design and technology and geography, above national standards in art, history and physical education, and below national standards in information and communications technology and music. Inspection findings indicate that these results are inaccurate, with the exception of history and physical education, due to teachers' unsatisfactory assessment skills.
4. The 1999 GCSE average points score is close to the national average for pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C and A*-G and one or more grades A*-G. The trend in the school's average points score since 1994 is above the national trend. Higher attaining ('fast track') pupils sat examinations in science and art at the end of Year 10 and all passed with A*-C grades. The 1999 GCSE results exceeded the realistic but challenging targets set by the governing body. Until 1998-1999 high standards were achieved in some subjects by restricting entries to a smaller percentage of the group engaged on the course. Now the policy is for pupils to be given the maximum opportunity for examination entrance. There is a high percentage of examination entries for English literature, as well as language, and almost all gain a grade at GCSE or alternative recognised qualification, very few leave without certification in English. In 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE A*-C grades in English was close to the national average; it was below the national average in mathematics. Those gaining A*-C grades in double award science were in line with the national average. All pupils entered for separate sciences gained grades A*-C and the results for chemistry and physics were significantly above average.
5. Very good and poor attendance are clearly linked to individual pupils' high and low attainment respectively at GCSE in the analysis produced by the school for the inspection.

6. On the basis of inspection evidence, gained from entry tests, lesson observations, discussion with pupils and scrutiny of past and present work, the standards in subjects are as follows.
7. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are:
 - in line with national standards in English, drama, art, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education
 - below the national standards in mathematics, science, design and technology, information and communications technology and music
8. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is:
 - above the national standards for physical education
 - in line with the national standards for English, drama, science, art, geography, history, modern foreign languages and music
 - below the standards for mathematics, design and technology, information and communications technology, religious education, business studies and humanities.
9. The standards of attainment in work inspected in Key Stage 4 are lower than those evident in the GCSE examination results in 1999. Evidence from tests and records of prior achievement indicate that the overall attainment of the current Year 11 is lower than the previous cohort.
10. Pupils' progress is discerned by comparing their current achievement to their prior attainment. The attainment of most pupils is well below the national average on entry to the school, below average by age 14 and average by 16. This represents good achievement against prior attainment throughout the school. Achievement in physical education in Key Stage 3 is good and very good in Key Stage 4 and is judged to be very good overall. It is good throughout the school in English, mathematics and geography. Inadequate curriculum provision leads to unsatisfactory achievement by the majority of pupils in information technology and religious education in Key Stage 4. Achievement in other subjects is as follows.
11. Achievement against prior attainment in Key Stage 3 is:
 - good in music
 - satisfactory in drama, science, art, design and technology, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and religious education.
12. Achievement against prior attainment in Key Stage 4 is
 - good in science, business studies
 - satisfactory in drama, art, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, music and humanities.
13. Overall good progress is made by pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and pupils who are gifted and talented. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory in design and technology, information and communications technology and religious education throughout the school, also art and music in Key Stage 4. The progress of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory in information and communications technology in Key Stage 4.

14. Pupils' attainment and progress in literacy, numeracy and information technology skills is broadly satisfactory. Overall the teaching of these basic skills is satisfactory. The teaching of literacy in English and numeracy in mathematics is good. There is very good support for basic skills in business studies and the promotion of high standards. However, there are no agreed approaches in other subjects areas. A co-ordinated approach to literacy is emerging, but not to numeracy. Pupils do not receive their full entitlement to information and communication technology. This inadequate and unco-ordinated provision hinders pupils' attainment and progress in basic skills throughout the school, but particularly in Key Stage 3. This, in turn lowers standards across the curriculum.
15. Boys' underachievement was identified as an issue in the last inspection. The school has been working systematically on this problem and the gap is narrowing in the overall results. The difference between attainment of boys and girls in several subjects, including English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages reflects the national picture in Key Stage 3. Whereas the lower attainment of boys in Key Stage 4 English, drama, mathematics, art and geography is greater than the national average. The school does not monitor the effects of ethnicity and social circumstances on achievement.
16. Recent school proposals to extend the sharing of attainment and progress data with Key Stage 3 pupils and their parents and to involve pastoral staff in the monitoring of pupils' academic performance, mentoring and target-setting across all subjects and year groups are positive and appropriate courses of action.
17. Staff have devoted considerable energy to mentoring pupils on the GCSE grade C/D borderline and school figures indicate the beneficial effects for most pupils. Nevertheless, over the last two years, about a quarter of these pupils have not worked hard enough and have failed to achieve the results indicated by their prior attainment. There has been a reasonably thorough reflection on the performance of pupils, but insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of mentoring. Further, there has been insufficient use of pupils' attainment data to evaluate the quality of teaching and to take effective action. In some departments the response has been thorough, particularly in modern foreign languages, but the process is not consistent or sufficiently rigorous across the whole school

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Pupils' attitudes to school and their work are good. They say that they enjoy coming to school. In 70 per cent of lessons observed their attitude, behaviour and response to work was good. Pupils' response was very good or better in 16 per cent of lessons overall and in 20 per cent of lessons in Key Stage 4.
19. In five per cent of lessons observed in both key stages, pupils attitudes were judged to be unsatisfactory or poor, usually where a few pupils did not maintain interest in the lesson, for example in a Year 8 art lesson, where the teacher failed to match the level of work to individual pupils' needs, pupils were noisy and inattentive. However, the few instances of poor attitudes were far outweighed by the many examples of pupils co-operating well with teachers and other pupils. Usually, they showed respect for each other and resources. The highest proportion of lessons where pupils attitudes and behaviour were unsatisfactory was in Year 8 (13 per cent) in sharp contrast to Year 7 where all lessons were at least satisfactory. Attitudes were particularly good in music and physical education lessons.

20. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good and a strength of the school. Staff know pupils well and most set very good examples by their behaviour towards each other and the pupils. Pupils are orderly in moving round the school and show respect for the school community by their mature behaviour in the dining hall, communal rooms and outside areas at break and lunchtime.
21. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively. Pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities offered for them to take responsibility as monitors, prefects, school councillors or as receptionists or 'orderlies'. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to use their initiative in their own learning, particularly in Key Stage 3. Few pupils were observed using the library or computer facilities for research.
22. The incidence of fixed-term exclusions increased from 1995 to the year 1998/9 when the number, 84 (72 boys and 12 girls), was well above the national average. An apparently dramatic rise in exclusions from 1998 was due to a more accurate system of reporting. The school adopted a policy of inclusion for pupils with behavioural difficulties from September 1999 in response to national initiatives, and is employing a range of strategies including an isolation unit to support this policy. This approach appears to be effective as the fixed-term exclusions since September are very low. Most teachers have a good range of strategies to deal with challenging behaviour of these pupils.
23. Attendance is unsatisfactory. In 1998/9 it was below national average, with unauthorised absence above national average. Statistics for this year show that Year 11 and Year 10 have the worst attendance rates, both well below the national average.
24. Since the last inspection, a behaviour policy has been adopted. The consistent application of this policy has ensured that behaviour is very good. Attendance has not improved. Despite good monitoring systems, rewards for good attendance and mentoring to improve attitudes, the school has been unable to promote acceptable attendance levels. Pupils' punctuality to school and lessons is satisfactory. The school evaluated the effect of attendance on GCSE attainment and established that good attendance was linked to good attainment and poor attendance was directly related to poor attainment. Further initiatives are planned to encourage higher attendance, since those used to date have not been entirely successful.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

25. During the week of the inspection 191 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. The Overall quality of teaching was good. In 96 per cent of lessons it was satisfactory or better. In almost 64 per cent of lessons the teaching was good or better. Overall, 19 per cent of lessons were very good or better, including two excellent lessons in physical education. Teaching was very good or better in 25 per cent of lessons in Key Stage 4 and very good in 13 per cent in Key Stage 3. Teaching was less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons, most of which were in Key Stage 3.

26. During the inspection the quality of teaching for each subject was assessed through direct classroom observation, an examination of pupils' work, past and present, discussions with pupils and a review of teachers' planning. The quality of teaching in physical education good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4; it is good throughout the school in English, drama, mathematics, geography, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and music. In other subjects teaching is as follows.
27. In Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching is:
- good in art
 - satisfactory in science, design and technology and religious education.
28. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is:
- good in science, design and technology and business studies
 - satisfactory in art, religious education and humanities.
29. From this evidence, teaching is judged to be good overall. It is satisfactory throughout the school in design and technology and religious education and good in other National Curriculum subjects. Teachers' subject knowledge, the challenge presented to pupils, teaching methods, classroom management and day-to-day assessment are good. Planning and use of time and resources are good in Key Stage 4; all other aspects are satisfactory.
30. The following aspects of teaching are strengths within individual subjects in both key stages, also in business studies and humanities which are only taught in Key Stage 4. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and understanding in the way they present and discuss their subject in modern foreign languages. This is good in English, science, art, geography, history, information and communications technology, music, business studies and humanities. There is very good teaching of basic skills in business studies; it is good in English, mathematics, art, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and music. Teachers plan very effectively, setting clear objectives that pupils understand in English. In mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and business studies this aspect of teaching is good. Teachers challenge and inspire pupils very well, have very high expectations and so deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in modern foreign languages. In English, mathematics, science, geography, history, information and communications technology, music and business studies this challenge and inspiration is good.
31. Good teaching methods are used which enable all pupils to learn effectively in English, geography, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and business studies. Teachers manage pupils very well and insist on high standards of behaviour in geography, history and physical education. Classroom management is good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and business studies. They make very good use of time and resources, especially information and communications technology, in business studies; good use is made of time and resources, and of support staff in English, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and music. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly and use assessments very effectively to help and encourage pupils to overcome difficulties in physical education and business studies. This assessment is used well in English, mathematics, art, modern foreign languages and music. Good

use is made of homework to reinforce and extend what is learned in school in English, science, modern foreign languages and business studies.

32. The high quality teaching and learning in physical education in Key Stage 4 leads to very good achievement compared to prior attainment which is above national standards.
33. Weaknesses in teaching include homework in art in Key Stage 4 and assessment and homework in both key stages in religious education. The limited time allocation for religious education limits the work of teachers and restricts the attainment of pupils. A quarter of Science observed in Key Stage 3 was unsatisfactory due to inadequate planning resulting in unstructured teaching and inadequate assessment. Ineffective classroom management also led to unacceptable behaviour and unsatisfactory learning. Half the teaching observed in humanities was unsatisfactory, due to inadequate planning, inappropriate teaching strategies, and too much time devoted to the teacher talking, which failed to engage the interest of the pupils and led to unsatisfactory learning. Parents complained about teachers' inconsistency in setting homework. This complaint is not justified by inspection evidence. Homework is satisfactory overall, however, it is not a strength of teaching.
34. The overall quality of pupils' learning is good. It is good throughout the school in English, drama, mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. In other subjects it is as follows.
35. The quality of learning in Key Stage 3 is:
 - good in art,
 - satisfactory in science, design and technology, information and communication technology and religious education.
36. Learning in Key Stage 4 is:
 - good in science and business studies
 - satisfactory in art, design and technology, information and communication technology, religious education and humanities.
37. The following aspects of learning are strengths in both Key Stage 3 and 4, also in business studies. Teachers enable pupils to learn well by acquiring new knowledge and skills, developing ideas and increasing their understanding in English, mathematics, art, geography, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and business studies. They make good intellectual, physical and creative effort in English, art, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and business studies. Pupils are productive and work at a good pace in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and business studies. They show strong interest in their work, concentrate well and think and learn for themselves in English, mathematics, science, art, geography, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and business studies. Pupils have a very good understanding of what they are doing, how well they have done and how they can improve in business studies. This is good in English, history and modern foreign languages. Pupils with special educational needs learn very effectively in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and business studies. Those with English as an additional language learn very well in English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and business

studies. Apart from their work in 'fast track' classes, gifted and talented pupils are not challenged sufficiently to higher achievement. Their progress is good but it could be better, particularly in mixed-ability groups.

38. There is a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in this school. The highest proportion almost ten per cent, was in Year 8. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory learning, again, almost ten per cent, and unsatisfactory pupil attitudes, behaviour and personal development were also evident in Year 8 lessons. Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour in lessons throughout the school were generally associated with inadequate teaching. There were also some lessons where a few pupils were eager to disrupt other teachers. However, effective teachers skilfully focused and channelled the energy of such pupils into worthwhile and demanding learning activities, whereas weaker teachers focused on behaviour and control.
39. Most teachers do not provide tasks and resources specifically matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils in the class. Also, most planning and teaching is not explicitly related to National Curriculum, Agreed Syllabus or examination criteria and attainment.
40. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They are able to make good progress through good support in lessons, withdrawal for individual and small group teaching and the help of visiting specialists. Teachers also spend time providing personal support for these pupils. The learning support staff work well with teachers. Many individual education plans do not include subject-specific targets, or the strategies to achieve them. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Teachers are well informed of their language needs, they have support in lessons and the help of a visiting specialist who speaks their first language. These pupils make good progress.
41. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in the school is satisfactory overall. Literacy is taught well in English and numeracy in mathematics. There is also very good support for basic skills in business studies, but there are no agreed approaches in other subjects areas. This limits achievement, particularly in Key Stage 3. Teachers have received insufficient training to ensure the systematic development of these skills, though training is planned. There is also no systematic monitoring of teaching strategies or assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in these basic skills.
42. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 70 per cent of lessons observed during the last inspection, including 40 per cent which were good or better. Both of these proportions have increased by about 25 percentage points in this inspection. One key issue focussed on improving teachers' expectations, particularly of boys, another on extending the range of teaching styles. There has been good improvement overall in the quality of teaching and learning in response to the last inspection.

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

43. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school are good and improving. The curriculum is increasingly relevant to the pupils' needs. However, not all statutory curriculum requirements are met.
44. The curriculum is in a process of transition. This reflects the school's intention to improve the quality and range of the provision by providing challenging opportunities and choices relevant to the pupils' learning needs. A new curriculum structure for Key Stage 4 introduced in September 1999 is in place in Year 10. It has extended the opportunities available to pupils and makes effective provision for all pupils to follow a GCSE course. The school has initiated 'fast track' GCSE courses in science, art and modern foreign languages of which science is the most successful. In addition, there are three well-organised National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses presently offered, which are run in conjunction with the local college. The school intends to widen this provision with a GNVQ course in September 2000. When this curriculum structure moves through to Year 11 in 2000/2001, the school's curriculum should be coherent and comprehensive and offer a satisfactory range of choices to all pupils.
45. There are some weaknesses. Design technology and information and communication technology do not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4. Religious education is provided up to Year 10 but is not provided for all pupils in Year 10 or to Year 11. The time allocation for art, music and physical education in Key Stage 3 is below the national average and constrains National Curriculum provision. Apart from these weaknesses, the school is committed to equality of opportunity and access. The current plan is to remove these anomalies by September 2000.
46. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They have equal access to all subjects and are taught alongside their peers. They are able to meet the academic demands of subjects through good support in lessons, withdrawal for individual and small group teaching and the help of visiting specialists. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory.
47. Pupils make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy, largely due to the effective teaching in English and mathematics. There is no coherent whole-school strategy and provision is not co-ordinated or systematic. A co-ordinated approach to literacy is emerging, but not to numeracy. A local superstore is active in a project to raise attainment and motivation in a small group of Year 7 pupils. This has utilised Success-Maker computer software and employer mentoring, to improve literacy standards in these pupils. This project is one of a number of curriculum link projects, where the school is co-operating with the local education authority, Bolton Chamber of Commerce and the Training and Enterprise Council.
48. The range and quality of extra-curricular provision makes an excellent contribution to pupils' learning. There are a considerable number of lunchtime and after school clubs, including excellent sporting and aesthetic pursuits as well as subject-based study skills. Pupils also have many opportunities to go on visits into the immediate and wider community, including visits abroad (Euro Disney - a French weekend), through the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and visits to local employers.

49. Very good links have been established with local primary schools. Pupils and staff regularly go into these schools for assemblies, sports' competition and events. Primary school pupils visit Harper Green for lessons and new intake days. Through these links a smooth transition to secondary education is assured.
50. The school is well aware of the problem of underachievement by boys. At the time of the last inspection there were substantial differences in the attainment of boys and girls. Strenuous efforts have been made since then to redress the situation, with some considerable measure of success. Differences remain, shown in National Curriculum tests and GCSE results, between the overall performance of boys, and girls who still attain at a higher level, but the relative performance is now closer to the national picture. However in some subjects, including English, drama, mathematics, art and geography in Key Stage 4 the difference between girls' and boys' attainment is greater than the national average. Much of the school's efforts have been directed towards changing attitudes and behaviour amongst boys and raising their aspirations. These have been supported by effective organisational strategies such as sitting boys and girls in pairs in class and increasing the size of the upper ability groups in Key Stage 4. Attitudes and attainment of boys and girls are regularly monitored by the senior management team and the effectiveness of strategies assessed. Some behavioural problems with boys remain, however. The very few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour observed during the inspection were predominantly the responsibility of boys. In a few lessons there was some sexist behaviour towards women teachers, by individuals or groups of boys involving the asking of intrusive personal questions, defiance and impertinence.
51. The last inspection report stated that more needed to be done to extend the most able. Although these pupils make good progress, in many lessons they do not have tasks and resources provided which would challenge them to even higher attainment so the comment remains valid.
52. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Each year group follows a specific programme of work, including sex education, health education (drugs awareness is a key part of this), careers from Year 9 including work experience. The weekly session on personal, social and health education also includes discussion on feelings, friendship and bullying. This course makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and attitudes towards others. Many aspects of pupil's personal responsibilities are reinforced in assemblies.
53. The curriculum support department, which has a cross-curricular responsibility, oversees the excellent careers and vocational education, which is a strength of the school. There is a thorough and very well organised careers education programme, which begins in Year 9 and continues into Years 10 and 11. There are very good links with the personal, social and health education programme. Harper Green also has very good links with local colleges and universities. Over 400 local employers provide valuable work experience for Year 10 pupils. They also support industry days and conferences. The school has established such good relationships with employers that many of them come into school to provide support and guidance for pupils considering their future careers. In some cases, they act as mentors for pupils who may have behavioural or other difficulties, providing a perspective which can influence and enhance pupils' personal development. The annual visits to universities for Key Stage 4 pupils are an example of how the school seeks to widen the pupils' experience and increase their awareness of the choices available.

54. All of these community partners visit the school regularly, together with many others, including the police, the education social worker, the school nurse and the careers service. Local senior citizens are invited to see performances, the pupils take harvest gifts to local residents and the school's 'LINK' magazine is distributed widely throughout the area. The school takes advantage of opportunities to reinforce its links and to demonstrate pupils' achievement through occasional radio and television broadcasts.
55. The high standard of personal, social and health education and community links evident at the last inspection have been maintained. Careers education and extra-curricular provision have improved.
56. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
57. The provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Some subjects make a contribution to spiritual development, notably English, drama, science, history and information and communications technology. Religious education is beginning to make an impact through the study of Christianity and other world religions. Unsatisfactory progress has been made on collective worship, a key issue in the previous inspection. During the inspection, registration / form tutor periods and year group assemblies were observed, but none contained an act of collective worship.
58. The provision for moral development is very good. The school has a clear code of conduct, which stresses the school's core values. This is displayed prominently around the school. Staff have high expectations of good behaviour by pupils, reinforced by the consistent daily routines of the school. The staff are impressive in the amount of time they voluntarily spend with the pupils outside the lessons. Before, during and after school, there is a strong staff presence, which is reassuring and welcoming to pupils. This makes a significant contribution to the moral well-being of the school community. In some lessons, there are opportunities to raise and discuss moral issues. For example, in history lessons on the loss of the Titanic, Year 9 pupils discuss the moral and practical implications of the class system in life aboard the liner and in the survival rates of first and third class passengers. There are good contributions from science, business studies, design technology, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and religious education.
59. The provision for social development is very good and a strength of the school. Most staff are good role models for the pupils and by the quality of their interaction with them, promote good and harmonious social relationships. The staff have a real concern for the well-being of their pupils. Parents and pupils appreciate this contribution. This openness and involvement, make a major contribution to the social development of the pupils. The school building is open to the pupils at break and lunch times, showing the confidence that the school has in its pupils. Pupils respond well to the trust placed in them. The subject-based clubs and activities provide opportunities for pupils to relax or to be involved in sport. There are homework clubs and subject-based revision classes. During the week of the inspection there was a 'maths fun evening' for pupils and parents. In lessons, team building skills and group work are encouraged, particularly in design technology, history, modern foreign languages, science, physical education, mathematics, English and drama. Pupils operate a school bank and there is a school council.

60. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils learn about their own and other cultures through English, drama, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education and through the activities and events in which the school is involved. Large numbers of pupils are involved in activities and performances in music. Pupils experience aspects of French culture through a day set aside to celebrate French life. Holidays abroad, including a skiing holiday, enrich pupils' experiences of European cultures. English, drama, dance, music, history and religious education help pupils appreciate their own culture. This is enhanced by visits to the theatre and universities. However, the awareness of the multicultural nature of society is inadequate in the curriculum, pupils' tasks, displays and resources.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

61. The school provides a high standard of pastoral care. Pupils say that they feel secure and are confident in approaching teachers or other staff when they have concerns.
62. Procedures for child protection are very good. The requirements of the local authority child protection committee are followed consistently. A senior teacher is the designated person and has very good contact with the relevant statutory agencies, including social services. Although staff are aware of the arrangements there is no regular staff training to ensure that they are reminded of the need for vigilance.
63. Health and safety are effectively monitored by the premises manager and all necessary arrangements for pupils' safety and care are very well administered. The school has carried out thorough health and safety checks and has plans to rectify issues identified including badly worn stairs. Safety is taught appropriately across the curriculum, with risk assessments carried out as required. Procedures for fire, first aid, medicines and visits are well documented and effectively carried out.
64. Pupils' behaviour is well monitored through the pastoral year group structure. Pupils understand the need for rules, the rewards for improvement and sanctions which accompany misdemeanours. Although exclusions have been higher than the national average in the past few years, these are reducing. This is due to the school's efforts to counsel and improve pupils' attitudes. Regular offenders and particularly difficult cases are brought before a pupil management group, which is a 'short sharp shock', a last step before exclusion is considered. This group is a committee of governors, which has been successful in some very difficult cases. The school's social inclusion policy addresses the problem of demotivated pupils by finding an activity which will motivate them to good behaviour and therefore, often, good attendance also. Recently one such pupil was placed with a sympathetic employer as a trainee car mechanic. The school had recognised that his only interest is cars, and hopes that using this interest will encourage him to attend school and study for the future.
65. Attendance is well monitored. Poor attenders are monitored, mentored by staff, and parents are visited by the educational social worker, who meets with the pastoral senior teacher and pastoral secretary weekly to examine registers and agree action to be taken against the worst offenders. While this is effective in maintaining the attendance at around 90 per cent, it has not resulted in any improvement on this figure.

66. The school is considering further strategies to promote more regular attendance, particularly for the 'disenchanted' minority who see no point in attending school. Rewards for 100 per cent attendance, improved work, attitude and behaviour are given regularly. Pastoral staff regularly monitor pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development, using the referral and incident slip systems. The staff also know the pupils well and show great commitment in monitoring those giving concern. They volunteer to act as mentors for individuals who need additional support. Pastoral care is a great strength of the school and makes a very good contribution to pupils' confidence and security.
67. Pupils have the opportunity to raise concerns at the school council. They say that their views are taken into account and action is taken when this is appropriate.
68. Overall the school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' educational guidance and for monitoring their academic performance. The provision and guidance are good in Key Stage 4 and unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' academic attainment and progress. In Key Stage 4, these procedures are well established in all subjects. Arrangements in Key Stage 3 are inconsistent, but there are examples of effective practice, for example in mathematics and English. Regular testing takes place in both key stages. In addition to assessing attainment in subject areas, information is gathered annually on pupils' cognitive and basic literacy skills. In all subjects in Key Stage 4, assessment is closely linked to external examination requirements. In Key Stage 3, a minority of subjects, particularly mathematics and English, have internal assessments explicitly linked to National Curriculum criteria and standards
69. Information gathered for assessment is used in a satisfactory manner to guide curriculum planning. In both key stages, subject departments use end of key stage assessment results to evaluate the effectiveness of the whole curriculum. This has led to the successful introduction of new and more effective schemes of work. The use of testing at the end of a module or teaching unit gives teachers valuable information on pupils' attainment. Assessment is not used sufficiently to make the modifications that may be needed to improve standards or respond to pupils' needs while the topic is being taught.
70. The school places considerable emphasis on the use of assessment information to set individual targets for all pupils. This system is well organised in Key Stage 4 and has a positive effect on standards. Pupils' attainment and targets for improvement are formally gathered each term in all subjects. The process involves the sharing of data and targets with pupils, who are actively involved in self-assessment, and the review and revision of set targets at regular review meetings. However, most targets are vague and concerned with attitudes and behaviour, rather than attainment or progress in subjects. Also, some review meetings do not take place or do not result in revised or confirmed targets.
71. In Key Stage 3 the forecasts of pupils' attainment relate to their performance in GCSE. Individual pupils have no targets relating to their performance termly, annually or during Key Stage 3. Targets are, therefore, of little value in motivating or monitoring pupils. The system is currently inadequate.

72. Most academic targets set for pupils by the school lack direct reference to attainment and progress in subjects. Similarly, comments used for individual education plans, reports to parents on pupils' progress and marking pupils' work lack this direct link to learning outcomes in subjects, to national or examination criteria or levels of attainment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

73. The school's links with parents are good. Parents generally have a positive view of the school. There is an active parent teachers' association. Which raises considerable funds for resources and equipment through social events.
74. Parents say that they are pleased with standards of behaviour and attainment in the school. They express concern about the inconsistency in the setting of homework across the school. This is not borne out by inspectors who judge the use of homework to be satisfactory though it is not a strength of teaching. Homework diaries are used well by parents to indicate when they have seen homework completed. Some comments from parents at the OFSTED parents' meeting about homework not being set or set inconsistently may be due to pupils' enthusiasm to attend homework clubs at lunchtime and after school. Parents are concerned about a lack of information on their child's attainment and progress in reports, particularly in Key Stage 3. These concerns are justified. Reports to parents on pupils' progress meet statutory requirements, but, particularly in Key Stage 3, they lack details of pupils' achievements in subjects and specific information on improving attainment. Reports on pupils' progress are more frequent and more informative in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3. The school plans to improve this reporting system. The school carries out regular surveys of parents' views' and acts on the information they provide. Parents affirm that they can raise any concerns with members of staff. Records are kept of attendance at curriculum meetings, parents' evenings and other events. The school has adopted innovative approaches to promote parental involvement.
75. Information provided to parents through newsletters, correspondence and personal contact is satisfactory. The school is effective in its efforts to involve parents and readily consults and informs them when there are any concerns about their child's academic and personal progress.
76. The very positive links identified at the last inspection have been improved by the provision of regular reports on pupil's progress in Key Stage 4, which were not evident then.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

77. The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good. He laid out his vision for the school on his arrival in 1998, worked with the staff and governing body to produce a five year strategic plan to achieve this vision and is leading the school towards its fulfilment. Appropriately, the key areas for development are attainment, management of pupils, school ethos and environment and staff.

78. The headteacher and deputy headteachers work together effectively. There is a helpful separation of roles in order to build on their complementary knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and personalities. The day-to-day management of the school is very good. The composition of the senior management team, extended since the last inspection, redresses the male dominance in senior management. This team is supporting the developing ethos of the school and managing effectively. Lines of delegation are clear; matters of accountability for the quality of education provided and standards of attainment, line management, monitoring and evaluation are not.
79. Overall management by subject leaders is good. Management by the subject leader makes a very good contribution to pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and religious education. The contribution is satisfactory in physical education and geography; it is good in all other subjects. Provision for special educational needs has been well managed by a senior teacher during the long-term absence of the co-ordinator.
80. Three school aims are clearly reflected in the work of the school: fulfilling the potential of the individual, developing a caring environment based on consideration and respect, and promoting the school within the wider community. The school is seeking to implement the other aims - providing a broad and balanced curriculum, promoting an understanding of the religious and moral values of all cultures, and the special place of Christianity, and developing a staffing structure which is responsive to change – but these are not so evident.
81. This is a school which is rightly proud of its secure foundations and strong traditions. There is also a shared understanding by staff and governors of the need to improve and evidence of satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There is not a shared commitment by all with management responsibility to the hard decisions and the rigorous action that are necessary to ensure good improvement. Most staff are conscientious, hard working and strongly committed to children's attainment and progress. There is appropriate delegation and support to enable staff to fulfil their roles. There is insufficient monitoring and accountability to ensure and improve effectiveness.
82. Under the current headteacher there is a greater openness between staff and the governing body, increased liaison and shared decision-making. The governing body is now acting more effectively as a critical friend and shaping the direction of the school. It is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the challenges it faces, and setting appropriate priorities.
83. The governing body's post-OFSTED action plan led to good improvement in the key issues from the last inspection relating to teaching and the allocation of resources; also satisfactory improvement in boys' achievement. Information and communications technology across the curriculum and collective worship still do not meet statutory requirements. Additionally, the governing body has not ensured that the school meets the curriculum requirements for religious education and design and technology. The special educational needs governor did not fulfil her delegated responsibilities by visiting the school for a year after her appointment. The governing body is effectively judging this success by the quality of education provided and pupils' standards of attainment. The school has set realistic and challenging statutory targets for pupils' attainment from 1999 to 2001. GCSE examination results for 1999 exceeded the targets. The next two cohorts have lower overall attainment and the targets reflect their respective abilities.

84. The improvement of the quality of teaching is the top priority in the school improvement plan. Classroom observation has taken place in most subjects through subject leaders, senior teachers and the headteacher. The improvement in teaching in this inspection is evidence of success. Monitoring and evaluation is being used well to support and develop teaching in English, mathematics, business studies, design and technology, drama, history, information and communications technology, modern foreign languages and music. However, this is unsatisfactory in art and physical education.
85. Statutory requirements for appraisal are not met. The school has no system for annually reviewing the performance of teachers and departments which is linked to the school development planning cycle. One department is reviewed each term and the performance of teachers and departments has been regarded as a matter of internal concern to the department, in conjunction with a senior teacher. When teaching has been observed, notes have only been shared with the person monitored. When weaknesses are identified considerable support is given, but there is insufficient rigour to require and ensure improvement. There are few records of monitoring observations and little evidence of monitoring and evaluation leading to effective improvement. The performance management of teachers and departments lacks rigour, consistency, a systematic approach, effective recording, reporting and follow-up, also appropriate accountability from the classroom to the governing body.
86. The management of resources available to the school is good and the budget has been set within the funds available. Financial planning is sound and based on the school's educational objectives. The long-term planning has resulted in major building programmes to improve facilities and cater for increased pupil numbers. The provision for science and information and communications technology has been much improved as part of this programme. The governing body is well informed on budgetary matters and fully involved in the prioritising of expenditure and financial planning. The school has obtained external grants and been successful in bidding for funds, for example, for new building and through the social inclusion project. The monitoring of funds obtained through grants and bids is satisfactory.
87. The school has effective financial controls and the administration of finance in the school is satisfactory. The financial systems of the school are supported effectively by management systems and technology. The bursar and administrative staff ensure that staff with responsibility for budgets are well supported and there are safeguards in place to avoid over- and under-spending. Day-to-day procedures for processing and monitoring financial transactions are satisfactory. There is a monthly check of spending totals with the local education authority. The governors' curriculum and finance committee meets regularly and prepares an annual budget for submission to the governing body. Appropriate action has been taken on the recommendations of the 1998 auditors' report.
88. The school has made a satisfactory start to the funding arrangements which enable the school to obtain services from a range of providers. Tenders are obtained as required and the school is very effective in applying the principles of best value.

89. The school has a satisfactory ratio of pupils to teachers. The teachers are appropriately qualified in the subjects they teach although some mathematics and religious education is taught by non-specialists. The expertise of subject leaders matches their responsibilities. There is now a gender imbalance on the staff (28 male and 49 female) and the senior management team is still predominantly male. The long-term absence of staff in art, music and Spanish have disrupted pupils' learning and hindered attainment in these subjects. The learning support staff are well qualified and experienced in the areas in which they work and provide an effective service. The school has effective procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers and for mentoring initial teacher training. There are good procedures for staff development and in-service training.
90. The school has made great efforts to improve accommodation, especially in science, physical education, information technology and geography but art rooms in the basement are inadequate, as they were in 1996. The school has drawn up plans for the improvement of accommodation for music. One business studies classroom is inadequate. Overall, the school's accommodation facilities are very good and, in respect of indoor sport and leisure facilities, they are excellent.
91. The level of resources for learning is good and this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The school has responded well to the criticisms in the last report and most of the concerns have been addressed satisfactorily. The school now devotes a higher percentage of its total resources to improving the provision of materials, equipment and books. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology. The library is still a weakness. The stock of books is still low for a school of this size, also the size and location of the accommodation restricts usage by classes and opportunities for independent learning.
92. The school is judged to provide good value for money. The socio-economic circumstances of most pupils are very unfavourable and their attainment on entry is well below average. The school is effective in that attainment for most pupils is close to the national average when they leave and achievement against prior attainment is good. The attitudes and behaviour of most pupils are good. The quality of teaching is good. The overall quality of leadership and management of the school is good and the school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The school uses its funds effectively to support its educational priorities and the average expenditure per pupil is below the national average.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

93. The following matters should be addressed by the governors, senior managers and staff in order to raise standards of attainment and improve the quality of educational provision in the school.

(1) Improve the attainment and progress of all students by:

- raising standards of attainment against national standards, particularly in Key Stage 3 (paras 2,7,8)*
- systematically and consistently teaching literacy, numeracy and information technology skills through all aspects of the curriculum (paras 14,41,47,104,124)*

- ensuring that planning and teaching are matched to the needs of all pupils and closely related to National Curriculum, Agreed Syllabus and examination criteria and levels of attainment (para 39)
- closely monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils, using the data to set individual targets for pupils, related to national criteria, and reporting attainment and progress to parents (paras 16,17,74,68,70)*
- ensuring that individual education plans are directly related to learning and attainment in subjects targets (paras 40,72)
- ensuring that the library is adequately stocked to support the curriculum and needs of pupils and used to support learning (paras 91,21)

(2) Improve the curriculum by:

- fulfilling the statutory curriculum requirements for Key Stage 4 in design and technology, information technology and religious education (paras 10,45 152,174,177,206)*
- ensuring sufficient time is available in Key Stage 3 to teach art, music and physical education effectively (para 45)

(3) Improve the roles of the senior managers and subject leaders in raising pupils' attainment by:

- formally monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, addressing weaknesses , sharing effective practice and reporting developments to the governing body (paras 84,85)*
- using the data on pupils' progress to identify aspects of teaching and learning which need improvement (para 17)
- fulfilling the statutory requirements for staff appraisal and performance management (para 85)
- annually reviewing and reporting whole school and departmental improvements to the governing body (para 85)*
- the governing body monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of educational provision and of the school management in raising pupils' attainment (paras 83, 85)

(4) Improve attainment and personal development by:

- seeking and implementing more effective procedures to promote attendance (paras 65,66,151,162)*
- promoting the spiritual development of pupils through the curriculum and life of the school (para 57)
- fulfilling the statutory requirements for collective worship. (paras 57, 83)

94. Other weaknesses which should be considered by the school:

- ensure the health and safety of pupils by implementing the recommended repairs to stairs identified in the recent health and safety survey. (para 63)*
- address the accommodation issues affecting art and business studies. (para 90)

* indicates that this will build on work already being undertaken in the school

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	191
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	69

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.0	18.5	45.0	31.4	2.6	1	0.5

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	1272	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	343	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	73	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	540	N/A

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	77

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	113	139	252

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	42	51	46
	Girls	78	76	54
	Total	120	127	100
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	48 (71)	50 (45)	40 (40)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (30)	26 (17)	12 (14)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	52	65
	Girls	127	75	81
	Total	190	127	146
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (54)	50 (47)	58 (52)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (19)	25 (25)	21 (7)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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	102	118	220

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	36	90	96
	Girls	58	112	113
	Total	94	202	209
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	43 (31)	92 (86)	95 (92)
	National	46.3 (46)	90.7 (88)	95.7 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.4 (29.2)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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	6
Indian	4
Pakistani	65
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	2
White	1191
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	83	3
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)	74.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	554

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	23.2
Key Stage 4	19.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2,714,694
Total expenditure	2,702,765
Expenditure per pupil	2,215
Balance brought forward from previous year	65,372
Balance carried forward to next year	77,321

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,272
Number of questionnaires returned	178

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	48	6	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	60	34	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	44	5	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	51	13	3	1
The teaching is good.	45	49	4	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	39	19	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	38	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	30	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	33	46	10	4	7
The school is well led and managed.	44	46	2	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	47	4	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	33	2	1	4

Other issues raised by parents

Behaviour of a small minority of pupils in mixed-ability classes

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

ENGLISH

95. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 and above was above the national average and the average for similar schools in 1997 and 1998 but unexpectedly dropped well below the national average in 1999 based on pupils' average points score. The standard of pupils' work observed, however, is in line with the national average.
96. From a well below average level of prior attainment on entry to the school, most pupils make good progress to achieve satisfactory standards when they leave. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment and those with special educational needs make good progress, though there is infrequent provision of resources and tasks appropriate to their needs. They receive good support, in class from support staff and in withdrawal sessions, for literacy development and for individual attention by visiting specialists. The progress of pupils of high levels of attainment is good but the provision of more complex work to challenge them is limited. Girls achieve higher standards overall than boys but the difference is in line with the national difference.
97. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in English language was close to the national average, as it had generally been in previous years. Girls do better than boys, as they do nationally, but there is some underperformance by boys which makes the school difference greater than the national difference. The good progress, relative to their levels of attainment on entry to the school, made by pupils is shown by the fact that a greater proportion of them enter for GCSE English language than nationally, but the proportion gaining grades A*-G is close to the national average. This is even more marked in GCSE literature, where the school entry is similar to that in language while nationally it is significantly lower – but the proportion achieving grades is still close to the national average. A measure of the good progress of lower-attaining pupils and of those with special educational needs is the fact that all but a few pupils enter for and gain a grade in GCSE. Those few who cannot meet the demands of GCSE enter for the certificate of achievement and only a handful of pupils leave the school without a recognised qualification in English. By the end of Key Stage 4 the standard of pupils' work is in line with national expectations. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs follow a course leading to the certificate of educational achievement but some make sufficient progress to enter also for GCSE.
98. Pupils in Key Stage 3 develop their skills in speaking and listening, in reading aloud from texts and their own work and responding to teachers' questions. They participate articulately in a good variety of paired and group tasks - in Year 9, for example, discussing and explaining the plot developments in *Romeo and Juliet*. Pupils' speaking skills are enhanced by their activities in drama. Reading skills develop well through the use of class libraries in reading lessons and through the withdrawal of pupils for reading development sessions. Progress is carefully monitored by teachers listening to individuals reading aloud, by the use of reading records and regular testing of pupils attainment in reading. Pupils write in a variety of forms for different purposes and the quality of their expression is improved through the standard practice of redrafting their work in the light of teacher comments. Meaning is generally conveyed clearly though pupils of lower levels of attainment need the writing plans provided to structure their responses and can have some problems with spelling before correction.

99. In Year 11 they make perceptive oral contributions to the analysis of poetry in the GCSE anthology. The good development of oral skills continues with carefully structured group work in preparation for formally assessed speaking tasks. In Year 10, pupils use press reports and statistical information to inform their talks on how a school's success can be measured. Reading skills improve as pupils meet the demands of set texts, with the help of supplementary information and task sheets to focus their reading. Higher attainers are able to develop their understanding by being provided with more complex extension tasks. Pupils are able to undertake satisfactorily the range of writing required by the examination syllabus with the support of 'writing frames' to structure their thoughts and work. In Year 11, for example, pupils examine and discuss the use of persuasive language in holiday advertisements. Pupils take notes without dictation and are able to complete lengthy written coursework pieces to a good standard, helped by the practice of drafting and revising.
100. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. They respond with interest in lessons and at times can be enthusiastic in their desire to contribute and participate. They work co-operatively in pairs and groups and complete the tasks required of them. They are pleasant and polite to teachers. When working independently they are quiet and are able to maintain their concentration on the on task. A small number of pupils have to be reminded of the need for quiet and concentration. They need quite firm control and have difficulty in settling down to work, but are responsive to the sanctions of the school.
101. The quality of teaching is good overall in both key stages. In Key Stage 3 in all but one of the lessons seen it is satisfactory or better, one third is good and one third is very good. In Key Stage 4 it is satisfactory or better in all the lessons seen, good in two thirds and very good in a quarter. Teachers are well qualified and have good knowledge and understanding of their subject, which enables them constantly to challenge pupils to improve the quality of their responses. This is shown in Year 11 lessons where the pupils' interpretations of poems in the GCSE anthology are developed by teachers' close questioning and comments. A significant feature of all teaching is the very thorough preparation of lessons, which fits into comprehensive units of work. Close attention is paid to the requirements of the National Curriculum and of the examinations, which enables pupils confidently to meet those requirements. This is illustrated in a Year 10 lesson in which preparation for an assessed speaking test is carefully structured through group work and the provision of background material to guide pupils' discussions. Pupil management is firm but friendly, and class control is aided by the employment of a variety of teaching strategies, which maintain pupils' interest and a good pace in lessons. The study of 'Romeo and Juliet' by a Year 9 class, for example, is enhanced by the use of video, note-taking, group discussion and reporting-back to the whole class. Where appropriate, almost every lesson contains a carefully judged combination of reading, writing, listening and speaking activities, which stimulates pupils' responses. Good progress in written work is maintained by conscientious marking. Assessment is thorough and constructive, appropriate targets are set and progress is carefully monitored. Pupils have formal opportunities for self-assessment and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. In Key Stage 4 the setting of groups by ability enables work to be pitched at a level appropriate to the pupils. In Key Stage 3, however, insufficient attention is paid to the particular needs of both high and low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in the provision of tasks and materials to mixed-ability classes. There is some provision of extension work for higher attaining pupils and in reading lessons a range of books is offered. Writing

plans are used to help pupils structure oral and written responses, but generally pupils are set the same tasks with the same study and stimulus texts and they respond according to their levels of prior attainment. Pupils do, nevertheless, make good progress as a result of good teaching, which at its best is characterized by energy and an interest in the subject, which is communicated to the pupils and stimulates them to respond.

102. The English department is well managed with helpful delegation of responsibilities and regular meetings to enable all staff to contribute to planning and development and to share effective practice. Aims and objectives are established and there is an effective departmental plan, which clearly details future developments. There is an established programme of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. There is good support for staff new to the school. The scheme of work allows teachers to develop their own individual approach, but careful attention is paid to the systematic development of English skills, including some use of information and communications technology (ICT), to ensure coverage of the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and of the GCSE and certificate of achievement syllabuses. Assessment is carried out carefully, pupils' marks relate to National Curriculum levels and examination grades, and good records are kept to enable the monitoring of pupils' progress and the achievement of targets. Teachers are well qualified and have a good range of experience. The accommodation and the good supply of resources are used well to support teaching and learning. Teachers have their own teaching rooms and good use is made of wall displays, predominantly of pupils' work, to stimulate interest.
103. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection in improving the weaker features identified. In Key Stage 3 there is no longer a significant difference between the performance of boys and girls other than the national difference, although the difference is still there at Key Stage 4. There has been an improvement in teaching methods and the sharing of effective practice. Lessons in Key Stage 3 now offer a variety of activities and no longer rely on teacher-led exposition and class question and answer sessions, followed by written exercises. Oral skills are now systematically developed through a series of prescribed oral activities.

Literacy

104. Literacy skills are taught well in English. In most lessons there is a combination of activities developing pupils' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 prescribes a series of formally assessed tasks for each year group to measure progress against each of these attainment targets. Pupils' reading ages are measured on entry to the school and regularly re-tested. Pupils whose reading ages are significantly below their chronological ages are withdrawn for intensive corrective reading lessons in Year 7, and for literacy development using a computer integrated learning system in Years 7 and 8. The progress of these pupils is very closely monitored using standardised reading tests and the results show significant improvement in the standard of most of the pupils involved.
105. In other subjects across the curriculum, there has not been the same concentration of effort nor has there been until recently a unified strategy for literacy development. A school literacy coordinator is now in post who chairs a team of representatives from each subject area or faculty. The team has had training on literacy development, and whole-staff training is planned for this academic year. The subject representatives

have conducted an audit of the literacy demands and teaching strategies of each subject leader, as a result of which each subject has submitted draft plans for their own literacy development in their own subject. After these have been reviewed by the team and by senior management they will become action plans.

106. Currently the strategies used in subjects other than English are limited. Little is done to develop literacy in mathematics other than the development of speaking and listening through class question and answer sessions and the display of word lists in some classrooms. Reading skills are developed through the use of textbooks, other resource material and worksheets in most subjects but only in science and drama are pupils additionally required to undertake library research, while in modern foreign languages they have reading books. A variety of writing opportunities is given to pupils in business studies, history, science, languages, religious education and geography, though little extended writing is done and spelling is a problem for most pupils. Attention is given to the introduction of new vocabulary specific to subjects. Drafting is used to improve the quality of written expression in history, foreign languages and business studies and there is some use of writing frames to structure answers, in geography, for example.

DRAMA

107. In Key Stage 3 inspection judgement is that the standard of pupils' work is judged to be in line with national expectations. All pupils make good progress. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment and those with special educational needs are able to participate fully in lessons and do not need the support they receive in other subjects. Girls achieve higher standards overall than boys but only as they do nationally. Pupils develop the skills of drama progressively, showing good mime skills in Year 7, competent improvisations with dialogue in Year 8 and developing character and plotting in Year 9. In Year 9 setting by ability enables talented pupils to commence the GCSE course.
108. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well below the national average. The subject attracted similar numbers of boys and girls, but girls did significantly better compared to national gender averages. GCSE drama is offered as an option but, although it has for a long time been a popular subject, with the proportion of pupils choosing it being twice the national proportion, higher-attaining pupils are generally attracted by more academic subjects. The standards of pupils' work are satisfactory relative to pupils' levels of prior attainment. Pupils in Year 10 are able to prepare and perform convincing monologues in character based, upon their reading about teenage runaways. In Year 11 pupils are able to use their own research to prepare improvisations on a variety of themes, or to produce coursework studies on the technical aspects of theatre.
109. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Much of the work is done in pairs and groups and they work together pleasantly and co-operatively. They have good relationships with teachers, show appreciation of each others' efforts and enjoy the activities.
110. The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Teachers are well qualified and have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, so are able to show the skills required. In Year 8, for example, pupils are given an explanatory demonstration of how to improvise with a 'prop'. Class control is friendly but necessarily firm in this

practical activity, as indicated by the good management in a Year 7 lesson to overcome the problems of working in a furnished dining room.

111. The department is well managed. Aims and values are clearly established, teaching and learning are carefully monitored. A well-organised scheme of work offers a programme of lesson units which teachers are able to modify to their individual style to ensure the systematic development of drama skills. In Key Stage 3 drama contributes to the attainment target of speaking and listening in English and makes a contribution to the teaching of Shakespeare in Year 9. Specific drama targets of making, performing and responding have, however, been identified. Attainment for each level is described and used to measure pupils' progress. In Key Stage 4 GCSE grades are used.
112. Drama was not featured in the last inspection, except in its contribution to English – that has developed with the work on the play set for examinations. With its good facilities, its strong tradition of successful productions and the social and cultural benefits it brings to pupils, drama continues to make a significant contribution to the life of the school.

MATHEMATICS

113. Pupils' attainment is well below the national average on entry, it rises to below average at the end of Key Stage 3. By the end of Key Stage 4 girls' attainment is in line with girls nationally, though boys' attainment is still below average.
114. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in mathematics is below the national average based on pupils' average points score. There has been an upward trend in performance since the previous inspection and consistently improved results in the national tests at level 5 and in the higher grades in the last three years. In 1999 the results at level 5 and above were average when compared with schools of a similar kind, and above average at level six and above. The results obtained by girls and boys are similar.
115. In GCSE examinations, results in mathematics are below the national average in grades A*-C. There has been fluctuation in the results since the previous inspection and no clear trend. There was improvement in 1999 and the girls' performance was in line with the average for girls nationally, although the boys' results were still below average. In 1999 almost all pupils entered for GCSE gained grades A*-G and most of the small number that were not entered obtained certificates of attainment.
116. In Key Stage 3 pupils extend their understanding of mathematics, particularly in the development of number and algebra. Attention is given to the development of mental calculation in percentages, decimals and negative numbers. Pupils' calculation skills show improvement as they move through the key stage. Although on admission to the school many pupils' knowledge and understanding in mathematics is well below average, most pupils make good progress throughout the key stage. Pupils with special educational needs do well in the mathematical course that is provided and demonstrate knowledge of, for example, multiples and factors. Higher attaining pupils are suitably extended in the work they do, for example in the use of mental arithmetic to solve and check simultaneous equations.

117. In Key Stage 4 pupils extend their knowledge and skills in all areas of the mathematical curriculum and in the application of these skills to problems. Pupils continue to make good progress and build effectively on the knowledge and skills gained in Key Stage 3. The work for pupils of all levels of attainment is suitably demanding. For example, higher attaining pupils extend their understanding of trigonometric ideas and are able to apply these to problems and graphs of trigonometrical functions. Lower attaining pupils are able to use their knowledge of angles to calculate angles at a point and find angles in simple shapes. Numerical topics in measurement, approximations and estimation are introduced at appropriate levels for all pupils. All pupils in the key stage take courses leading to GCSE.
118. In mathematics lessons pupils are interested and well motivated. Behaviour is good and this promotes effective learning. Pupils show confidence in explaining their work and in contributing to class discussion. When pupils are given opportunities to work independently, as in problem solving, they do this responsibly.
119. The teaching in Key Stage 3 is good overall. The teaching is good or very good in more than half of the lessons; there is a little unsatisfactory teaching. The effective teaching has variety which includes practice in number work and mental arithmetic skills, investigative activities which are included in the scheme of work, as well as more formal approaches. In Key Stage 3 the teaching shows an improvement on that seen at the previous inspection, when there was an emphasis on routine examples in some lessons. Efforts have been made to extend the teaching methods used and details on lessons which teachers have found to be effective are exchanged at departmental meetings. For example, a number stick is used to demonstrate fractional, decimal and negative numbers. Simple games using number cards are used in ordering numbers and discussing factors and multiples. The planning for mathematics lessons is good, using the guidance of the new scheme of work introduced in September 1999. Teachers build effectively on previous learning, for example, in a lesson with high attaining pupils on algebraic equations where the estimation and checking of answers was used as the basis for a more systematic approach. There is good provision for low attaining pupils, as in a lesson on simple algebraic equations where pupils were able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills to the class. Where the teaching is less effective there is a lack of organisation and too great a dependence on the textbook. Some mathematics classes are split between two teachers and problems of co-ordinating the work reduce the effectiveness of the teaching and learning.
120. In Key Stage 4 the teaching is good overall. In more than two thirds of the lessons it is good or very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Where the teaching is good the expectations of pupils are high, lessons are well prepared and there is a good pace to the work, as, for example, in the development of the ideas and vocabulary arising in questions of correlation and scatter graphs. All teachers show a strong commitment to their teaching and to improving pupils' results. The management of classes is good. Homework is set and is linked to the classwork taking place, and notes which are provided for homework are helpful to pupils. Where the teaching is less effective it is too formal and dependent on the teacher and gives too little attention to providing learning opportunities which enable all pupils to learn effectively.

121. Pupils' learning is good in both key stages. In most lessons the work is matched to pupils' ability and is linked to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades which are appropriate for the pupils. Good learning opportunities are provided and there are good gains in knowledge and skills, for example, in the practice of mental calculation in questions on angles and algebraic equations. Where the learning is less effective, as in a very few lessons in Key Stage 3, planning and learning activities are inadequate and the highest attainers are not challenged.
122. Effective systems for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' performance have been developed to match the new schemes of work and provide a regular check on pupils' performance. Records of pupils' performance are maintained by teachers and the department. This information is used as the basis of monitoring pupils' performance and setting their individual targets. In Key Stage 4 targets for GCSE are now set for pupils. This approach is being extended into Key Stage 3.
123. The leadership of the department and day-to-day management are very good. There is a strong commitment to improve pupils' performance and a number of strategies have been adopted which have raised performance in the 1999 external examinations. The requirements of the National Curriculum and statutory assessment arrangements in mathematics are satisfied. All pupils are given the opportunity to take the GCSE courses. The schemes of work have been revised to provide a sound framework of guidance to teachers in new GCSE courses and the Key Stage 3 work leading up to them. Extra-curricular activities include fun evenings for parents, links with primary schools, involvement in the local and national mathematics challenges. Forward planning has identified realistic priorities with targets and success criteria, and action taken under each main heading. The department has begun a monitoring programme which includes teaching, planning and pupils' work. These are first steps towards a more systematic approach to monitoring. The specialist mathematics teachers are well qualified and the department has a good range of expertise and experience. The accommodation is good and well maintained. The resources, which include up-to-date textbooks and supplementary materials, are of good quality and effectively support the work of the department. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection.

NUMERACY

124. Attainment in calculations and the use of number is below national standards. In mathematics lessons, attention is given to the development of number skills and mental calculation. Examples of the use of number are seen in other subjects, although there is inconsistency in the opportunities which are taken to develop numeracy in the curriculum as a whole. Skills of numeracy are developed in science through measurement, estimation and the use of graphs. Graphs relating to force and distance are used in an Earth in Space activity. In history, an investigation on the Titanic uses the collection of data, graphical interpretation and the calculation of percentages to illustrate the casualties sustained in this disaster. A whole school policy has not been developed and the school lacks a coherent approach to promoting numeracy.

SCIENCE

125. Attainment on entry is well below the national average for all schools. The average points score in the 1999 National Curriculum test, were well below the national average for all schools and below the average for similar schools. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are making satisfactory progress against prior attainment. Teacher assessments for the science at the end of Key Stage 3 were more optimistic than the actual outcomes. Results in science have fallen over the last three years but this is broadly in line with national trends. The difference in performance between boys and girls over the last four years has varied and overall is in line with national averages.
126. In 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades and the school average points in GCSE Double Award science for GCSE were in line with national averages. There has been a steady but significant increase in these results in the last few years. In 1999, about 10% of pupils were entered for separate sciences. All pupils achieved A*-C grades and results in chemistry and physics were significantly above the national average. The science department successfully operates a policy of full access for all pupils to GCSE examinations. At Key Stage 4, pupils are making good progress against their prior attainment.
127. In both key stages, pupils' attainment seen in lessons and their written work is below average in Key Stage 3 and average in Key Stage 4. Pupils of all ages and abilities make frequent and appropriate use of technical terms; this is a strength of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs, English as an additional language and those who are gifted and talented make good progress.
128. In Key Stage 3, pupils achieve better standards in Year 7, relative to their age and ability, than in Year 8 and 9. By Year 9 there are a few instances of satisfactory investigative work whilst in Year 7 this aspect is developing well in many classes. Pupils in Year 7 have a broad and balanced knowledge of the subject whereas older pupils in the key stage lack this balance, particularly in Year 8. The highest attaining pupils in Year 9 demonstrate a good knowledge in their study of electricity when they study quantitative relationships of current and potential. In contrast, above average pupils lack an understanding of simple electrical circuits. In Year 9 there are several examples of pupils attainment matching their academic ability but pupils underachieve in a significant number of lessons.
129. By the end of Key Stage 4, the quality of pupils' work improves in understanding and coverage of the whole science curriculum. Pupils produce well structured investigative and experimental work in a satisfactory range of contexts. The most able pupils in Year 10 relate clearly the main aspects of reflex action in humans and give several illustrative examples. Pupils in Year 11, of slightly below average ability, are familiar with the basic factors affecting rates of chemical reactions. The most able pupils successfully grapple with the demanding concept of osmosis. Lower attaining pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the properties of light and, with guidance, describe aspects of breathing in humans with good health and those who have to cope with disease.

130. Attainment in science has improved since the last inspection. In Key Stage 4 the policy of entering higher attaining pupils for separate sciences, after a double award science course in Year 10, has been particularly successful. The arrangement has given confidence to the pupils following this 'fast track' and motivated other pupils in Key Stage 4. Much effective development has taken place in the curriculum and with standards in Key Stage 4. Efforts to raise standards are starting in Key Stage 3.
131. Overall teaching is good. In Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is good. All teaching is satisfactory or better and half that observed was very good. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is more variable, with 25 per cent unsatisfactory, but overall it is satisfactory. This is due to insufficient use of schemes of work, inadequate planning, resulting in unstructured teaching and a lack of effective classroom management resulting in unsatisfactory behaviour. These circumstances lead to underachievement by most pupils in these classes.
132. Good teaching is characterised by insistence on correct scientific terminology, but also ensuring that the terms are understood. Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear, with both open and closed questioning of pupils to explore pupils' understanding. Support is given when pupils are busy with individual and small group work. There is a satisfactory range and balance of different teaching and learning strategies. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. There are frequent examples of lesson where objectives are made clear at the start of a teaching session but these are not always brought together at the end. Regular marking takes place but comments are not always specific to new learning in science. Homework features strongly and is purposeful.
133. Where teaching is satisfactory or better, all pupils, including those with special needs, consistently respond positively by getting on with the task set. Overall, behaviour is good with instances of excellence. Support for pupils to improve their academic performance is very good, particularly in Key Stage 4. Staff give generously of their own time for the benefit of pupils. Teachers know the pupils well and relationships are positive.
134. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is very good in Key Stage 4. The department is taking action to improve the unsatisfactory curriculum in Key Stage 3 noted in 1996. The introduction of a new scheme of work in Year 7 is having a positive effect on standards in the classes where the work is rigorously applied. Opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual development are not fully explored, for example in their studies of Earth in Space. Moral issues are planned in the curriculum, for example, issues of carriers of hereditary disease. Pupils' social development is well catered for in the organisation of a range of learning activities, particularly collaborative, small group work. Cultural aspects include using dietary requirements from several ethnic groups and the contribution that previous civilisations, such as the Ancient Greeks, have made to science.
135. Assessment at Key Stage 4 is well organised and firmly linked to GCSE requirements. In Key Stage 3, learning outcomes in lessons are generally not linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment. The new scheme of work being introduced in Year 7 goes some way to putting this right. Assessment tends to be by end of topic tests. This restricts any modifications that may be needed to improve standards while the topic is being taught. The recording and reporting of assessment outcomes meets requirements. Pupils are familiar with the process of self-assessment and setting personal targets. This is an improvement since the last inspection, but their records are inconsistently maintained. In general, comments and descriptive targets in reports to parents on pupils' progress lack a firm link to knowledge and skills in science.

136. There is some new, very high quality laboratory accommodation but also rooms that are outdated. Available teaching time constrains teaching, but the department takes effective action to overcome much of this. These are improvements since the last inspection. Resources are sufficient, with the exception of hardware and software for information technology. Technical support staff are very efficient in their duties.
137. There is purposeful leadership and a common sense of direction, with staff wanting to make best provision for all pupils. Teaching and learning is monitored through sampling of pupils' books. This process has agreed areas of focus, but these tend to be too many for specific developments to take place. Where issues are a major concern, the senior management of the school become involved. Results of end of key stage tests and examinations are analysed and effective action taken to raise standards. Development planning clearly identifies realistic targets and timescales. Improvement since 1996 is good. The department has the capacity to improve, drawing on forward strides already made in Key Stage 4 to raise standards and the astute recognition of its own areas of strengths and weakness.

ART

138. Teacher assessments indicate that three quarters of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 are meeting or exceeding national expectations in art. Inspection evidence indicates that these assessments are generous and that standards of attainment are in line with national expectations, and progress is judged to be satisfactory.
139. GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 are double that of 1995 and are now broadly in line with the national average. The results gained by the girls in 1999 are above the national average. Their performance is higher than that of the boys by an unacceptable 55 per cent. Girls' attainment has been rising steadily in recent years but that of the boys has fallen dramatically since 1998 when their results were also above the national average. The higher attaining pupils have an opportunity to sit the GCSE examination in Year 10.
140. Attainment in work seen in Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Generally the girls' attainment is better than that of the boys, due in part to their more careful, thorough approach. Compositional skills, pupils' understanding of colour and knowledge of critical studies are all good. Pupils' observational drawings skills are lower than expectations. Pupils are more confident basing their work on existing images taken from books, other sources or the work of artists. Nevertheless, good work was being done by a class constructing mirror frames inspired by Gustave Klimt. Another class were seen producing portraits based on the working methods of the German artist, Hunderwasser. These paintings were of a high standard and were developed from sketchbook investigations and intermediate studies into original, personal compositions. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in Key Stage 3, as do those pupils who have special educational needs. Pupils identified as being gifted or talented in art are taught together in Year 9 and make good progress.

141. At Key Stage 4 attainment in work seen is in line with national expectations. Good work is being done in painting, drawing and printmaking but work in ceramics and dimensional studies has been reduced due to long-term staff illness. The head of department is working with the headteacher to seek ways to remedy this situation. As in Key Stage 3 the compositional skills of the pupils and the way they base their work on artists including Picasso, Modigliani or native North American design, are good. Sometimes their work is based on imaginative drawing or insufficient personal research and is less accomplished. The attainment of the pupils seen during the inspection indicates that the girls continue to out-perform the boys but that attainment is generally in line with national standards. The department's individual action plans ensure these older pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.
142. Teaching in the department is good overall. Teachers work well together and have a common view of the work of the department. The best teaching occurs in Key Stage 3 where it is good and sometimes very good. The quality of learning in Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils acquire much new knowledge from the varied activities and experiences offered to them. A class working on portrait heads inspired by Cubism were able to use drawing, collage and a variety of painting techniques to produce original images while broadening their understanding of art history. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and sometimes good but occasionally it lacks the quality of instruction in the basic skills of drawing, composition and colour theory which feature at Key Stage 3. Pupils' learning in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Some of their work, while reflecting their enthusiasm and energy, again lacks the invention that personal research brings with it, although a class engaged in observational drawing demonstrated they have enough skill to continue the trend of improvement. The teachers' movement around their classes, assessing their pupils' work, offering advice and encouragement whenever appropriate, is a strength. The way they skilfully link their pupils' work to that of famous artists is particularly good. Teachers' classroom management and emphatic step-by-step instructions on the care of resources and the fabric of the department are also good. Teachers obviously enjoy their subject and in almost every lesson their pupils respond positively to their enthusiasm. Occasionally, when a class has the full ability range, teaching strategies do not challenge the more able pupils nor do they engage the least able and progress and standards of behaviour deteriorate. The failure to set regular homework represents a missed opportunity to extend high attainers and for the boys to use their talents away from the public gaze of their classmates. Pupils are usually sufficiently engaged in their studies to generate a good pace of working and learning; the only exceptions being small groups of boys at both key stages, who resist the best efforts of their teachers. The great majority of pupils enjoy the subject and demonstrate a willingness to learn, not just from their teachers but also from each other and from their own mistakes. Pupils know what they are doing and are able to explain their work, clearly and sensibly. The teachers' use of technical language and the way they introduce their pupils to two new art and design words each week, makes a positive contribution to literacy.
143. The curriculum is broad and balanced although there is insufficient emphasis on creative textiles and ICT. Schemes of work retain the freshness of recent management changes and are being constantly modified to exploit the skills and interests of the teaching staff. The timetable does not allow sufficient time for full coverage of the National Curriculum for most pupils and makes the continuous development of study into Year 10 difficult. There are few opportunities for pupils to visit museums or galleries or to work with artists in residence.

144. Good leadership and management of the department is providing clear direction for the work and is central to the many improvements, notably in attainment, since the last inspection. However, there are a number of weaknesses, including long and short-term development planning, standardisation of departmental procedures, target-setting for pupils and use of data gathered from the monitoring of teaching to promote staff development. The accommodation in the basement is unsatisfactory, as it was in 1996. One room is small and overcrowded. Twice as many pupils opted for art in 1999 and the acute lack of storage space is an increasing problem, as the department's success attracts more and more pupils. The furniture is old and some of it restricts the opportunities for working on a large scale. Displays of pupils' work both inside the department and in the main school are good and raise pupils' expectations and the status of the department. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

145. In the 1999 National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 over 92 per cent of pupils in the school were awarded level 5 and above by their teachers. This is well above the national figure of 63 per cent. From scrutiny of pupils' folders and inspection of their work in lessons it is evident that these teacher assessments were inaccurate and that attainment was below national standards.
146. In the range of GCSE examinations taken in 1999 the overall percentage of pupils who gained grades A*-C was just over 32 per cent. This was well below the national standard of just over 49 per cent. Trends in performance in the separate subjects making up this subject area have differed greatly over the past three years. This is due to the variations in the number of pupils taking courses and to the differing ability levels of candidates. In the 1999 examinations 44 per cent of the pupils taking the food technology option gained A*-C grades. This was an exceptional year for the subject. In the two preceding years the figures were 35 per cent in 1997 and 29 per cent in 1998. These figures are close to this year's aggregate figure and are both well below national standard for those years. The GCSE resistant materials option averages out over the past three years at just over 20 per cent of pupils gaining A*-C grades and is significantly below the other subjects. Results in graphic products have dropped considerably from around 40 per cent averaged out over 1997 and 1998 to 28 per cent in 1999. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, 17 per cent of pupils studying child development gained a grade in the range of A*-C. This is significantly below national averages.
147. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils reach standards which are below national expectations. The main weaknesses are in design and in the areas of knowledge and understanding set down in the National Curriculum. Most pupils' practical skills are satisfactorily developed. In the lessons observed during the inspection pupils exhibited satisfactory practical skills in, for example, textiles. Most use sewing machines competently; they use patterns, measure, cut out and tack their work to a satisfactory standard. When they work with wood and metal they successfully use tools to measure, mark out, cut and finish. When they work with food they show competence in assembling, mixing and cooking ingredients. In these lessons they begin to test and evaluate their work and also gain knowledge of the properties of convenience foods.

148. Key Stage 4 pupils reach standards that are below and sometimes well below national expectations by the end of the key stage. As in Key Stage 3 their practical skills are stronger than their design skills. Pupils generate sound ideas for products to develop but their specifications draw on weak background knowledge and understanding. Their analytical skills are also weak. In graphic products pupils competently use a range of technical drawing techniques and conventions, including sketching, to communicate design ideas but their research into projects lacks depth and draws on a narrow range of sources. In food technology practical skills are satisfactory. They produce notes that demonstrate their coverage of the required areas of knowledge and understanding though in discussion and in tests their recall of these areas is weak. Pupils studying resistant materials have weak knowledge and understanding and the specifications they draw up for their projects often do not reach beyond those suggested by their teacher.
149. In child development, basic research and analytical skills are poor and pupils achieve standards that are well below national expectations. This is because the pupils who choose this course are mostly lower attainers. They experience and enjoy a wide-ranging syllabus that is enriched with the benefit of a good range of outside speakers. They make satisfactory progress. In both key stages pupils with special needs reach standards that are closely related to their abilities and particularly so when they have the support of classroom assistants.
150. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 it is good. Pupils' learning in both key stages is satisfactory and their achievement is good compared to their prior attainment. Teachers have strengths in subject knowledge across the materials' areas and in child development. That is evident in the high quality of their planning and in the instruction and advice they give to pupils. Their supportive style as they move around rooms keeps pupils working and helps to maintain satisfactory levels of progress. Teachers also make good use of expert demonstrations to advance pupils' acquisition of skills. Their management of pupils in the working environment is generally good, though in Key Stage 3 some inexperience in teachers leads to pupils being inattentive during instruction or in question and answer sessions. This impedes progress when pupils are not fully clear about what they have to do and have to be reminded of what has been said. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons, particularly when learning assistants are available. Both teachers and assistants have good knowledge of what is needed to give the support required and they work well together to achieve that. The level of challenge teachers present to pupils is satisfactory, though in Key Stage 3 projects, for example the kites project, opportunities to link the materials areas and to provide greater depth to study are missed. The use of ICT in teaching and in learning is limited. Pupils do not demonstrate high levels of initiative and folders are often poorly organised and incomplete. The relationships teachers have with pupils are generally good though some pupils are too dependent on teachers for direction and do not, for example, hand in their work until they are reminded to do so.
151. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are satisfactory in both key stages. Concentration during introductions is mainly good. Pupils start the lessons well and get down to practical work quickly. They help each other when difficulties arise and listen well to the feedback teachers offer. They respond well to praise and encouragement. In some classes poor attendance affects progress.

152. The department is well led. There is strong leadership that is committed to raising achievement. The scheme of work does not enable the efficient teaching of the National Curriculum. Schemes of work in Key Stage 3 sometimes duplicate work on aspects of design and this leads to some inefficient use of teaching time. Also assessment information is not used effectively to guide curriculum planning. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in teaching and management and satisfactory improvement overall. Though examination results remain fairly static, teaching has become less variable and management at all levels is stronger. Not all pupils in Key Stage 4 take a technology course. This does not comply with statutory requirements.

GEOGRAPHY

153. Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 3 so that by the end of the key stage their attainment is close to national expectations. They acquire a good understanding of the nature of geography from Year 7 to build up and use a subject-related vocabulary. They use a variety of geographical skills including the interpretation of maps and graphs and simple recording and analysis of data. Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of the concept of differing stages of economic development experienced in countries around the world and the global inter-dependence which those create.
154. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades at GCSE has been below the national average for the last three years although they are close to the national average at grades A*-G. Girls' results are much better than those of boys.
155. Large numbers of pupils choose to study geography in Key Stage 4. They continue to make good progress and the standards achieved in lessons are close to national standards. Pupils of high prior attainment in Year 10 have a very good knowledge and understanding of the main elements of the geography of the United Kingdom including its changes and development over time. They are able to make effective use of knowledge gained outside school to understand some most recent changes such as the development of high technology industries along the 'M4 corridor'. Pupils in Year 11 use their full range of skills to produce good coursework reports. Some pupils make very good use of ICT - word processing and data processing - to help them in this. A group of pupils of low prior attainment make particularly effective use of ICT to produce attractively presented, and with the help of the computer's dictionary, accurately expressed work. Other than for coursework, however, the use which pupils' make of ICT is limited to the occasional use of their home computers to word process their homework.
156. At both key stages a weakness in many pupils' work is their inability to explain their understanding as well in writing as they can orally. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 4. Plausible conclusions drawn from pupils' first hand investigation of local shopping centres and housing zones are weakened by poor expression; occasional reluctance to use subject-specific vocabulary makes written explanations of concepts lengthy and unclear.

157. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages. They are taught with their peers and receive good assistance from support staff and their subject teachers. Pupils with English as an additional language and those who are gifted and talented also make good progress.
158. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good at both key stages. Their behaviour in lessons is rarely less than good and is usually very good. They are interested in their work and in most lessons are enthusiastic participants. They set to work quickly and generally concentrate well. The vast majority of pupils present their work extremely well, taking much care over it. Relationships with each other and with their teachers' are very good and they are able to work effectively in pairs and groups. There is a very small minority of pupils who behave less well, but they are ignored by most of the rest of their class who carry on with their own work and do not let themselves be distracted. In many lessons in Key Stage 3 there are limited opportunities for pupils to show much initiative and independence in their learning although in Key Stage 4 there are such opportunities in pupils' first hand fieldwork studies.
159. The overall quality of teaching is good in both key stages. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In Key Stage 3 two thirds of teaching is good. In Key Stage 4 one third is good and one third is very good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection and promotes good learning in both key stages. All staff share an enthusiasm for geography which is communicated to the pupils. Their good subject knowledge gives them the competence and confidence to promote effective learning and to make lessons interesting, relevant and challenging. All lessons are well planned and organised and activities are clearly explained to pupils so that they know what they are expected to do and how they are to do it. This was notably achieved with several classes of Year 11 pupils who were completing their coursework files and needed minimum direction from the teacher to begin their work. All teachers use questioning techniques effectively to ensure learning, develop thinking and encourage participation in lessons. Management of pupils is never less than satisfactory and is mostly good. Pupils concentrate well and are encouraged to do their best because they want to and not because they have to. An occasional weakness in teaching is the lack of more complex work for gifted and talented pupils, which leaves them with nothing to further their learning when they finish work earlier than the rest of the class. Pupils' exercise books and files are marked, but comments are not often made which help pupils know how to improve their work and too many spellings are left uncorrected.
160. Pupils' learning and attainment is supported by satisfactory departmental management. Responsibilities are appropriately delegated and adequate resources effectively deployed. Teachers' work is monitored through the scrutiny of pupils' written work but there is no direct monitoring of teaching. This is unsatisfactory. Relationships with the partner primary schools have recently been strengthened to encourage the progressive development of knowledge and skills from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and pupils' geographical skills are now assessed early in Year 7. Assessment of pupils' work in Key Stage 4 is carried out according to GCSE standards but in Key Stage 3 assessment is not standardised against National Curriculum levels of attainment nor is it standardised across the department. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Overall the curriculum and range of learning activities is satisfactory, however the lack of fieldwork in Key Stage 3 is a weakness in provision. Planning for the use of ICT shows some progress since the last inspection. The staff have recently begun a training programme with the schools' ICT teachers and some good use is made of ICT in Year 11 but it is not part of the planned

curriculum in Key Stage 3. Accommodation has improved considerably since the last inspection and the work of the department is enhanced by a well appointed suite of four specialist-teaching rooms. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

HISTORY

161. Attainment in history by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in history and, as a result of carefully directed teaching, they make satisfactory progress and their standards rise. Pupils in the present Year 9 are investigating the loss of the Titanic. They know about the sequence of events and about the lives of some passengers. Through their study, pupils learn about the class system and how this affected life aboard ship and the chances of survival. In lessons observed, about half the pupils are already attaining at or above national expectation and the others are moving steadily towards it.
162. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results have fluctuated in the last three years. In 1997, results at grades A*-C were close to national averages. Results were poor in 1998 but improved significantly in 1999 when results at grades A* -C were better than the school's expected average results but well below national averages. There was little difference between the boys' results and those of the girls. For the first time in recent years, the points per pupil were close to national averages. Given the levels of attainment on entry to the school, the 1999 results reflect good progress. Poor attendance by a minority of pupils in Key Stage 4, in Year 11 especially, has an adverse affect on results because pupils do not make sufficient progress and fail to meet coursework deadlines.
163. Pupils in enjoy Key Stage 3 history and work hard. Behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils respond well to those lessons where they are given the opportunity to work together on an investigation. This approach to history engages the pupils in learning and contributes to raising standards by the end of the key stage. Pupils develop competent writing skills and their work is usually very well presented. .
164. Pupils at Key Stage 4 continue to enjoy history and work hard. Their written work shows developing confidence in writing. Pupils are encouraged to draft and redraft their coursework and do so. In general, pupils make satisfactory progress.
165. A pattern of poor attendance is to be seen in the present Year 11 history classes. For example in a lesson on Sharpeville, pupils made good progress because they concentrated on sources and could identify first hand evidence about what really happened on 26 March 1960. Pupils responded to the challenge of very good, well-planned teaching. However, 20 per cent of pupils were absent for the lesson. In another Year 11 history class about a third of the pupils were absent. Poor attendance is the single most important factor affecting GCSE results in history.
166. Teaching in history is good and promotes good learning in both key stages. In eight out of ten lessons, teaching is good or very good. There are no unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers work hard and give generously of their time to assist and support pupils through clubs and revision lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is used to enliven lessons and challenge the pupils to learn. The lessons are well organised and purposeful, with good use being made of information and communication technology. Teachers are skilful at using questions to prompt pupils to think about the subject. Pupils' progress is generally satisfactory. Where pupils are more actively involved in

their own learning they make good progress. For example, pupils in a Year 9 class are involved in the Titanic investigation and, as a result of their research, can identify an impressive list of reasons for the disaster. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress.

167. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the teachers know their needs and they often have in class support.
168. There are some weaknesses. Marking across the department is now more consistent than at the last inspection but there is variation in showing pupils how they can improve. National Curriculum level descriptions are not linked to lesson objectives and they are not used as a means of showing pupils not only what they achieve but also how they could improve. The best marking is a positive and friendly dialogue with the pupils, which balances praise and encouragement with advice about improvement. The use of extended writing in history is inadequate.
169. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a concern to evaluate and improve pupils' performance but the present monitoring procedures are insufficient at Key Stage 3. The department encourages pupils to assess their own work regularly but the targets then set are not linked to subject skills. Standards in the department are monitored through analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons. Results are shared with the history staff. There has been some research, involving pupils, on boys' achievement. One result was the introduction of the investigative approach in Year 9, which has contributed to raising standards.
170. History is a good department that has made good improvements since the last inspection. It makes a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

171. The 1999 National Curriculum teacher assessments in information technology at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate standards that are well below national standards. Forty three per cent of pupils in Year 9 gained level 5 and above. The national figure is 59 per cent. Over a third of the pupils in last year's Year 11 were entered for the GCSE information technology examination. Forty six per cent gained an A*-C grade compared to the national figure of 52 per cent. Thirty six per cent of pupils who entered the GCSE office applications examination gained A*-C grades. There are no national comparisons for the examination.
172. Pupil's attainment on entry to the school is below national standards. By the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 information technology courses pupils attain standards that are below national expectations. In Key Stage 3 this represents satisfactory improvement on performance in previous years, as indicated by the teacher assessments. This is due to improvements in the provision of information technology, including the installation of a number of new computers with industry standard software and to good teaching. In Key Stage 3 all pupils follow a course which covers the full range of areas set out in the National Curriculum. Pupils in this key stage show satisfactory levels of competence in communicating information. This is their main strength in information technology and these pupils attain levels which are below national expectations in the other aspects that make up National Curriculum information technology. They create simple databases with clear guidance from

teachers but are not generally confident in creating their own. They add to and amend information and recognise the need to be precise in their operations. They compare paper-based and electronic databases. Pupils demonstrate simple information modelling skills when they experiment with financial information using a spreadsheet but do not extend these skills in other contexts such as electronic circuit modelling software or simulations. They reach basic standards in the control aspects of National Curriculum information technology and can control the loading of a cargo ship on screen using a simple programming language but they do not use sensors to sense physical data. They have little experience of using the internet facilities that have been installed recently. Most of the advances made in acquiring and developing information technology skills occur during information technology lessons. There is little opportunity within other subjects to develop the skills they learn in these lessons. This has an adverse effect on levels of attainment. Some good work is done in other subjects, such as geography and history, for example when pupils visit the internet web site of an archaeological dig in the Middle East, but this is not enough to add substantially to the progress pupils make. Overall pupils' achievement against their prior attainment is satisfactory.

173. Pupils following the GCSE information technology course have a basic understanding of a range of applications of the technology in a commercial and social context. They have a basic grasp of the terminology used in this area and display that in their project work. Their descriptions of problems that form the basis of their project work often lack clarity and investigation and analysis are weak. Those pupils following the office applications and basic keyboarding courses have satisfactory keyboard skills. They have a working knowledge of the applications they use and their general accuracy and standards of presentation are satisfactory. They are given a good preparation for the world of work.
174. Pupils in Key Stage 4 who do not experience information technology teaching in any of the examination courses are not assessed on their attainment in these skills. Their experience of information technology across the curriculum does not provide these pupils with the teaching they need to achieve satisfactory standards against national expectations. For example, few develop the skills in modelling and control and measurement they acquired in Key Stage 3. There is no scheme of work for this key stage for pupils who do not take an examination. These pupils do not receive the teaching they need to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. Their progress is unsatisfactory and their attainment is below national standards
175. Teaching in the information technology courses is good and promotes satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 3 teachers have developed schemes of work that ensure full coverage of National Curriculum requirements. Teachers provide useful guidance sheets for Key Stage 4 project work which supplement their own advice and enable pupils to be less dependent on teachers. In both key stages there are clear introductions to lessons that ensure that pupils know what is expected of them. Information technology teachers have good subject knowledge. This is evident in the quality of the advice and instruction they give. They have produced useful assessment procedures so that the progress of pupils can be tracked. Nevertheless, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, also the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is unsatisfactory. They make sure that pupils are given the basic information technology skills they will need in a suitably wide range of applications. The progress pupils make in the use of information technology in reinforcing and developing skills in other areas of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The emphasis placed by the department on the teaching

of basic keyboard skills has a positive effect on progress because it speeds up the rate of input of data.

176. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in information technology lessons in both Key Stage 3 and 4 are good. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented is satisfactory over all. Pupils demonstrate good levels of concentration. They are happy to help each other. Pupils are too dependent on teachers but pupils are becoming increasingly independent as they get used to the new computers. They always listen well during introductions and their behaviour in the rooms is invariably good. They enjoy using the technology.
177. Strong leadership for this subject has promoted good improvement since the last inspection. The department is well supported by a highly competent technician who is a former teacher and who makes a positive contribution by supporting teachers who are not confident with the technology and by freeing teachers from dealing with technical problems. A programme of training is in place and has been successful in increasing the skill level of teachers. Resources for some subjects are insufficient for them to significantly contribute to attainment in information technology. This is the case in food technology and in music especially. Provision does not meet statutory curriculum requirements in Key Stage 4 because not all pupils are being taught the full range of information technology set out in the National Curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

178. In teacher assessments pupils' attainment in French and Spanish by the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national standards. GCSE results in French in 1999 were above the national average as was the case at the last inspection. Attainment in Spanish in Key Stage 4 has been adversely affected by gaps in learning caused by long-term absence of specialist staff and GCSE results in 1999 were well below the national average. Girls continue to attain significantly higher standards than boys.
179. Attainment in work seen is in line with national standards by the end of both key stages. Listening is generally a well developed skill in both key stages because pupils hear the foreign language spoken frequently in lessons. By the end of Key Stage 3 many pupils can take part in brief exchanges using familiar words and phrases with intelligible pronunciation. By the end of Key Stage 4 many pupils have developed the confidence to speak at reasonable length from memory. Within the limited range of texts that they read, pupils can extract basic information and, by the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils show an understanding of a variety of texts on a range of topics in the foreign language. In Key Stage 3 many pupils can copy familiar words and phrases accurately and can produce short pieces of writing in which they seek to convey information. By the end of Key Stage 4 many pupils can produce accurately redrafted pieces of writing of good length on a range of topics.

180. Overall, pupils' attainment is satisfactory compared to prior attainment. The progress of those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and those who are gifted and talented is good. This is because they show interest in learning a foreign language and they respond positively to the support and encouragement they receive from their teachers. Most pupils display positive attitudes to learning a foreign language. They participate willingly, often enthusiastically, and they work productively and without the need for close supervision. They display good levels of concentration and attentiveness and they are generally well-behaved, co-operative and courteous.
181. The quality of teaching is good; in a quarter of lessons it is very good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the language they teach. They have the confidence, experience and expertise to use the foreign language consistently in their lessons, which enable pupils to develop their listening and speaking skills. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, including those with special educational needs, and they set challenging but realistic tasks. Teachers use a variety of methods to make their lessons interesting and enjoyable. Pupils are well managed and teachers expect good behaviour. They make good use of time and resources and set homework on a regular basis to consolidate and extend pupils' learning. The curriculum for modern foreign languages is broad and balanced and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The department has effective arrangements and procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress and there is now more involvement of pupils in their own assessment to enable them to understand their progress and identify learning targets. The quality of teaching and the attitude of pupils promote good learning in both key stages.
182. The department is managed and administered efficiently and effectively by an experienced, well qualified linguist who provides strong leadership and clear educational direction for a hard working team. The subject leader receives very good support from a senior teacher in the department. The provision of qualified staff and learning resources is generally good although access to ICT resources is limited. The provision of accommodation is adequate although some dispersed teaching has to take place in non-specialist rooms.
183. The good standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained and the department has taken effective action to implement improvements, particularly in the area of teaching methodology. Overall improvement is good.

MUSIC

184. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, for the last three years, have been flawed by lack of familiarity with the criteria required to assess the National Curriculum. It is evident from the scrutiny of pupils' work, lesson observations and from analysing information and assessments that achievement for the majority of pupils in Year 9 remains below average, as it was at the time of the last inspection, although a few higher attaining pupils who play instruments or sing well achieve higher than this. GCSE grades A*-C in 1999 were below the national average, but matched the national picture in grades A*-G. This was a big improvement in results compared with the previous years when results were very low or there were no entries.

185. Attainment in work seen is below national standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and in line with national standards by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils enter the school with standards that are well below average because they have not achieved many of the musical skills expected of them before they leave primary school. For instance, most pupils in Year 7 find it difficult to play up to four bars of a simple tune, or to maintain a steady pulse in a two note repeated rhythm. Pupils in Year 9 make good progress through the key stage but for the majority their attainment remains below expectations. Most find it difficult to recognise instruments of the orchestra, or to play a simple eight bar tune. However, a group of four instrumentalists in a higher attaining group are able to play a simple tune successfully in the lesson, forming a quartet of flute, guitar, violin and clarinet. The clarinettist is able to transpose the tune into a key which fits in with the other three instruments. Although the school identifies those pupils in Key Stage 3 who may achieve a grade A*-C in the GCSE examination, pupils do not yet have personal targets set for them which identify what standard they are achieving in their current work.
186. Relatively small groups of pupils choose to study music for GCSE. Currently there are only six pupils in Year 11, but next year there will be 16 entered for the examination. The work of the Year 11 pupils is below average and this has been hindered by the long-term absence of their teacher, so that they have not made the progress of which they are capable and there are gaps in their learning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 now have targets set for them. Individual evaluations of their composing and performing skills are helping them to know how much progress they are making and how to improve. They compose and perform according to individual instrumental skills and work well in partnership with each other. They are developing their listening skills through structured teaching of the different eras of music. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are making the same progress as others in their classes, lifted by one or two who have particular composing skills. There is no significant difference between the learning of boys or girls at either key stage.
187. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have improved. Pupils have more instrumental skills through the provision of centrally funded woodwind, brass and string tuition and instrumental groups have developed, providing music for concerts and shows. Singing is becoming more accomplished as part of the curriculum and techniques heard in the singing of the vocal band are of a high quality. Information technology is used well both as a teaching tool and by all the pupils, who select sounds from electronic keyboards and record their music. Pupils in the examination groups, and others with a talent for composing, regularly use the teacher's own personal computer, linked to appropriate software.
188. The quality of teaching in both key stages is mostly good. Some teaching in Key Stage 4 is very good. There are now only qualified teachers in post. The teaching of temporary music staff in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory or better. There are high expectations of behaviour at all times. Subject knowledge of the permanent staff is very good, enabling pupils of all abilities to be taught in small steps and ensuring key words and technical language are thoroughly learned. Topics chosen are interesting to the pupils and drum kit work is included where possible to develop co-ordination and skills in rhythm. Pupils' learning is good in all the classes observed in both key stages. Pupils understand what they are expected to do and cope well with the tasks set for them, though, sometimes, listening, tasks are too complex for many pupils, who find it difficult to hear too many textures and sounds at one time. Currently there is little time for self-appraisal of the tasks pupils have carried out, so that pupils' self-

knowledge is not yet growing as quickly as it could in Key Stage 3. Teachers find ways to enable pupils of all abilities to learn effectively and teaching use a variety of practical examples such as teacher-generated computer backing tracks in different styles and layers to support learning.

189. There are problems with accommodation, so that the size and environment of one music room is oppressive, the heat cannot be controlled and there are no adjacent practice rooms. The school has drawn up plans for a new music suite when finances allow. Resources are adequate, although computers are old and there are insufficient classroom percussion instruments to allow the teaching of different tones and textures in music. The curriculum time for music in Key Stage 3 remains low in relation to the national average, as it was at the time of the last report. Statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are now met. The curriculum is broad and balanced, however some pupils in Year 7 receive an extra lesson of music so that not all have the same opportunity, although there is currently no difference in the amount of progress these pupils make. The scheme of work covers many styles and cultures, such as music from India, Africa, Indonesia and the South Pacific. There have been visitors to the school to present the different rhythms of world music and there are plans for a Gamelan workshop. There is a high standard of behaviour and respect in music, and in the faculty of expressive arts, which is supported by an effective system of rewards and sanctions. Extra-curricular music is very good and the quality of singing from the vocal band of around sixty singers is very moving. There is very good social interaction through membership of the school band, vocal band, keyboard club and instrumental tuition. Pupils perform in school, at presentation evenings in the local town hall and in the local community, including local primary schools. Music makes a strong contribution to the life of the school.
190. The leadership and management of music and extra-curricular activities through the head of the faculty of expressive arts is good. Systems for assessment in Key Stage 3 do not measure the progress pupils are making in the elements of music as they move from year to year, although the detailed assessment of individual pupils in Key Stage 4 is good. Use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is unsatisfactory. Reports to parents in Key Stage 3 do not indicate the development of pupils' musical skills. There are fluctuations in the numbers of pupils choosing to take music for GCSE each year which do not reflect the quality of their instrumental skills, as is usually the case. Monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work is thoroughly carried out by the faculty head, according to the school system, but little is done to ensure that this is supported and acted upon.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

191. In the 1999 National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils' attainment was above the national standard. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C in the 1999 GCSE examination results was well above the national average. There has been an improving trend in the GCSE results and a dramatic improvement since the previous inspection. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, or pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils' results in physical education are the highest in the school.

192. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' levels of attainment in physical activities at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations, and at the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above the national expectation. Standards at Key Stage 3 are similar to those observed in the last inspection, but standards in Key Stage 4 have improved, particularly in the GCSE course. On entering the school, pupils' attainment is below average, but by the end of the Key Stage, most pupils achieve at least average standards in games. Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 3, showing competence in a range of skills, which they develop alongside tactical awareness in small-sided games. This was well illustrated in football, where pupils showed commendable ball control and accuracy under difficult playing conditions. A good beginning is made in badminton, where pupils of all levels of attainment learn new skills through tasks matched to their abilities. Standards in gymnastics are satisfactory, and pupils show control and body tension as they work on apparatus. Good standards are achieved in dance, and Year 8 pupils demonstrated the improvement they had made in their coursework by good use of dynamics and a well developed sense of timing, as they choreographed their own group dances. Planning, performing and evaluating skills develop well in most lessons. Team talks are a regular feature of games lessons, and pupils discuss and plan tactics as well as evaluating the success of strategic play. However, pupils rarely observe, analyse and comment on performance against specific criteria, in Key Stage 3. Pupils' literacy skills develop well in the majority of lessons, but there are few opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy and ICT skills in the subject.
193. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' standards of attainment in the core physical education programme are generally above average. Pupils' progress is very good. Most pupils have a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body and the need to warm up before strenuous exercise. Almost all pupils make a significant improvement in games and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics effectively. This was well illustrated in basketball, where lower attaining pupils worked out a strategy of zone defence for themselves and implemented it, in the game. High standards are achieved in trampolining. Pupils demonstrate good control and technical skill, and the majority can perform a sequence of bounces in good style. Most pupils gain British Trampoline Federation awards as part of their course. Standards of attainment in the GCSE course are well above average. High standards are achieved in football and trampolining, alongside critical observation and analysis of each others' performance. Written coursework is of an equally high standard. Pupils show a very good knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects and apply their knowledge to practical activities. For example, in a lesson on aerobic and anaerobic fitness, pupils successfully devise and test their own interval training exercise to improve anaerobic fitness.
194. The first GCSE examinations in dance will take place in 2000. Standards of attainment in both theoretical and practical studies are broadly in line with the national expectation. Year 10 pupils show a good sense of rhythm, and make a sound beginning to learning a set dance. High attaining pupils use dynamics well.
195. Pupils' achievements in extra-curricular sport are good and a third of the school population participates regularly through an extensive range of clubs, inter-form and inter-school competitions. School teams in most of the major games have a good record of success in competition with local schools and the school is particularly proud of the high profile it has achieved in recent athletics competitions. In 1999 the senior girls' hockey team reached the final of the Bolton schools' hockey championships. Individual pupils represent Bolton schools in the Greater Manchester

schools' championships in cross-country, football, cricket and athletics. The school currently has the Bolton Schools' cross-country champion. An annual dance show enhances the well-balanced extra-curricular programme.

196. The quality of teaching is good, resulting in good learning in Key Stage 3, and very good teaching and learning in Key Stage 4. Many aspects of the teaching of the GCSE course are outstanding. The high quality of teaching reported in the previous inspection has been maintained and improved, particularly in Key Stage 4. The very good relationships between staff and pupils are at the heart of the supportive and productive learning environment, which prevails in the department. Teachers know their pupils well. This contributes significantly to the very good standards of behaviour and the high levels of participation observed during the inspection. Nearly all the pupils are well motivated and have positive attitudes to learning, particularly in Key Stage 4, where GCSE is a popular option. Management and organisation of pupils is a strength of the department and the teachers have good control of their classes. Most teachers combine good knowledge of the subject with a wide range of teaching strategies, which enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through planning and evaluating, as well as performing. This results in pupils making effective gains in knowledge, skills and understanding in the majority of lessons. Teachers build on pupils' previous knowledge and experience and readily check that they understand the tasks and know what they have to do to improve their work. Observation, assessment and feedback is a teaching strength and, where there is a specific learning outcome, teachers give individual coaching, so that pupils can work at their own pace. High expectations of what pupils can achieve are a feature of the very good teaching, and promote a demanding pace of learning. Pupils work hard to meet the teachers' expectations and good standards are achieved. This was well illustrated in trampolining, where the pupils were focused, challenged and fully engaged. Low attaining pupils make satisfactory and often good progress because they concentrate well in lessons, and teaching is planned to allow a careful development of skills, for example in hockey, where pupils build up their dodging skills, through practice and made discernible progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme and generally progress at the same rate as their peers.
197. The most effective teaching challenges pupils both physically and intellectually, at a brisk pace, and tasks engage the pupils in problem-solving and decision-making, which helps to make them independent learners. In a football lesson, for example, the teacher's probing questions addressed individual needs in pupils' understanding of defensive tactical play and enabled them to create games' situations to demonstrate their skills effectively, against competition, and to articulate their knowledge and understanding through analysis of each others' play. Teachers know their subject well and lesson planning is a strength at Key Stage 4, particularly in the GCSE course. Excellent resources have been produced to support the theoretical aspects of the course and there are examples of excellent marking and monitoring of pupils' progress, which make a significant contribution to the high levels of success in the examination. Planning is less effective in Key Stage 3, where some inconsistencies in teaching are evident. Schemes of work do not always help teachers to plan effectively for pupils' involvement in the evaluation of their own and others' work, or for matching tasks to pupils' abilities. Occasionally, when all pupils are given the same task with a specific learning outcome, low and high attaining pupils make less progress than they could. The extensive extra-curricular programme offers excellent additional learning opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities. Many staff from

within and outside the department give generously of their own time to enable pupils to make good progress in their chosen activities.

198. The teaching of dance is good, overall, in both key stages. Pupils studying GCSE dance are well motivated and have good attitudes to learning. Satisfactory gains in knowledge, skills and understanding are made and discernible progress is evident as pupils consolidate and refine their performance in the set dance through practice.
199. There is a strong staff team, who share a commitment to the improvement of the subject and to the pupils. This enables the head of department to delegate aspects of leadership to energetic, creative colleagues. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in standards of attainment in Key Stage 4, and the quality of teaching. The Sportsmark award has triggered several curriculum developments that enhance the Key Stage 4 curriculum and links with the community and primary schools. Excellent developments in the planning, resourcing and assessment of the GCSE course also contribute to a strong Key Stage 4 curriculum, which is particularly relevant for the pupils, and contributes to their high standards of attainment. The excellent indoor accommodation and resources for the subject add significantly to the quality of pupils' learning. Time allocation for physical education in Key Stage 3 is well below the national average, and does not permit teaching of the National Curriculum in depth. There is also inequality in the amount of time boys and girls spend on different activities. Schemes of work for Key Stage 3 give insufficient guidance on how they are to be implemented. The current informal monitoring of teaching and work of the department is unsatisfactory. Structured monitoring is required to develop consistency and to provide a means of sharing effective practice.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

200. At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is close to the national expectation. Most pupils in Key Stage 4 do not receive their statutory entitlement to religious education. The attainment of those who do have religious education is below the standard expected by the agreed syllabus..
201. Pupils' written work in Key Stage 3 shows a growing knowledge of the major world faiths, in line with the requirements of the Bolton Agreed Syllabus. Pupils understand the significance of religious symbolism and use correct terminology in discussing religious concepts. Pupils in Year 8 appreciate Muhammad as an historical figure of some considerable significance although pupils in Year 7 are much less sure of the reality of Jesus Christ as an historical figure. Pupils in Year 9 begin to ask about and to understand some fundamental questions about life's meaning in their work on the holocaust. They are aware of the ways in which people's lives are affected by their differing religious beliefs. They can empathise with the experience of suffering for those beliefs and question intelligently how and why people are able to behave in an inhuman way. In some classes, however, pupils' opportunity to develop these qualities to more than a satisfactory level is hindered by the lack of subject specialist teaching. Pupils with special educational needs achieve standards appropriate to their level of prior attainment and most participate fully in oral work. Overall progress in this key stage is satisfactory

202. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have not previously experienced a discrete religious education course. It has been introduced this year for half of the pupils in Year 10. Although they are following the GCSE short course, their standards of attainment are below those expected by the agreed syllabus. Many pupils in one class are dismissive of the concepts of religious belief and faith and are not prepared to consider the reality of humanity's almost universal search for a meaning and purpose to life. They use poorly understood and inaccurate scientific concepts to justify their rejection of what the subject is offering them. Pupils in another class have acquired some knowledge of the significance of marriage relationships in Christianity and Islam but their knowledge is inadequate. Pupils' progress in this Key Stage is unsatisfactory.
203. In Key Stage 3 almost all pupils show interest in their lessons, join in class discussions and concentrate well. They work hard and take pride in their work, almost all of them taking considerable care in the presentation of work in their books and files. Their behaviour is good and relationships between pupils and with their teachers are good. In all classes seen, pupils are respectful of other people's different values and beliefs. Pupils in Key Stage 4 engage less well with the subject matter of the lessons when they are taught by teachers who are not subject specialists and the behaviour of some pupils is unsatisfactory. They waste time in chatting and most do not work hard. Some boys have not developed an appropriate set of values. In two classes they showed an element of disrespect to their female teacher. In one instance this went so far as to reveal elements of bullying and sexism.
204. The quality of most teaching is satisfactory. Some teaching observed in Key Stage 4 was good. Very detailed and effective lesson plans and resource materials, which support the teaching of those who are not subject specialists, have been produced by the new subject specialist teacher. The subject specialists have good subject knowledge that allows them to use the teaching in a way that challenges pupils to think deeply and maintains interest and pace. They lead discussion with confidence and authority and pupils respond well, as did pupils in Year 9 in lessons on the Holocaust who are able to reflect on the feelings of others and the consequences upon others of their actions. Teachers who are not subject specialists do not challenge pupils so effectively, as their lack of subject knowledge does not give them the necessary confidence to do so. Their own subject specialisms do not use the same teaching methods as those required in religious education and they are not skilled in leading discussions with pupils. Pupils' work is assessed thoroughly by the specialist teachers in accordance with the department's mark scheme but the non-specialist teachers do not generally add comments which will help pupils improve. A weakness throughout the teaching is that work presented to pupils is not often modified to extend talented and gifted pupils or to offer additional support to pupils with special educational needs. In a Year 7 class some pupils finished work quickly then had nothing else to do so failed to learn as well as they could have done. Some pupils in a Year 8 class found writing difficult and answered questions by a single word rather than in a sentence, which will subsequently have little meaning for them.
205. There is a comprehensive scheme of work that meets the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. However, the provision made by the school does not meet statutory requirements for religious education as it is provided for only half of Year 10 and for none of Year 11. This is an improvement on the provision at the time of the last inspection, when discrete religious education was provided only for Year 7. The school is planning for complete compliance with requirements by September 2001 when all pupils in Years 10 and 11 will follow a religious education course. Some other weaknesses remain in provision. Pupils do not visit places of worship and the

use of ICT is not planned into the scheme of work. The need to develop a formative assessment policy, identified in the last inspection, has not been addressed.

206. The department has achieved very good improvement in the quality of provision through the hard work of the subject leader who by her own endeavour has become a subject specialist. The appointment of a another subject specialist this year has very much reduced, but not eradicated the school's reliance on constantly changing teams of non-subject specialists and much improved the quality of pupils' experience. Overall, good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

BUSINESS STUDIES

207. Attainment at grades A*-C in GCSE business studies has been well above the national average for the last four years. Between 98 and 100 per cent of pupils have gained grades A*-C during the same period and the trend has been upward since 1997. The standard of work produced by the present Year 11 is below average due to the predominance of lower attaining pupils in the option group.
208. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress due to good teaching and their positive attitudes to the subject. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language as well as those who are gifted and talented achieve well against their prior attainment because knowledge and understanding are built through well planned and sequenced tasks; major assignments are designed to provide scope for pupils to demonstrate flair and creativity and pupils are well supported and challenged individually to produce work of appropriately high quality.
209. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge which is well conveyed and enables pupils to have a very good understanding of what they are doing, to work at a good pace to clear deadlines and to well defined outcomes. For example, a small group of Year 11 pupils becoming too absorbed with the graphics and presentation of an article were reminded firmly than the main purpose of the task was to present a case using a cost-benefit analysis and that time should be managed appropriately to achieve this within the tight deadlines. Teachers make very effective use of time and especially of ICT. School produced resources are clear and precisely linked to topics, though other resources to stimulate and extend pupils' knowledge and perspective are lacking. Very high priority is given to the teaching of basic skills. This involves precise use of language for specific purposes and audiences and the use and interpretation of data, statistics and graphs. Assessment is positive, very closely linked to national criteria, thoroughly identifies strengths and weaknesses and promotes improvement. Pupils are encouraged to think and learn for themselves.
210. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive and they generally work well. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are good and promote learning. Many pupils make use of time outside lessons to complete and improve work and teachers give freely of their time to support and advise pupils in this.

211. Good leadership of the department ensures clear direction, promotes and enables high standards of attainment and provides good professional support. The teachers are well qualified for their teaching commitments. The mentoring of a newly qualified teacher is good and recognised as mutually beneficial. The subject was not reported in the last inspection, but there is evidence of a strongly shared commitment to improving the subject and of successful development. Teaching and learning are strongly supported in one classroom, but the size and structure of the other room seriously inhibits teaching and learning. The subject makes a particularly good contribution to pupils moral and social development through its content and methodology.

HUMANITIES

212. For the past three years this subject has been taken in Key Stage 4 by small groups of pupils. The proportion achieving pass grades at GCSE was below the national average in 1999 and 1997 but was close to the national average in 1998. In relation to their prior attainment, many pupils obtain good grades.
213. In the present Year 11 attainment is below national standards. In Year 10, however, the course is now followed by pupils of a wider range of prior attainment than previously, and the standards they achieve are in line with their prior attainment, ranging from below to above national expectations. In both year groups most pupils have completed good amounts of written work in their files and their personal writing shows understanding at a simple level of such concepts as culture, prejudice and conflict. Two groups in Year 10, both of which include a number of pupils with special educational needs, appreciate that there are no easy answers to some moral dilemmas. They are able to select, organise and assemble information in the form of a newspaper page to illustrate the arguments for and against the mass bombing of Dresden in the second world war. In the process they both acquire knowledge and learn respect for different views. While most pupils attain well in relation to their prior attainment, there is a significant minority who attain poorly because of their high absence rate. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
214. Most pupils in Year 10 are interested in their work and join in the lessons with enthusiasm and sensitivity. Their behaviour is very good, they concentrate well and work hard on their own. Relationships amongst them and with their teacher are very good. Other pupils in Year 10 are much less engaged and are passive recipients of a lengthy exposition on the build up to the second world war. In spite of a lack of stimulus in the lesson, they are still well behaved and some of them respond, albeit in mechanical fashion, to questions from the teacher. The quantity of written work in their files, carefully presented by many, indicates their overall positive attitude. Pupils in Year 11 behave less well when they are not stimulated by the lesson. They do not listen and become noisy. However, they do settle to written work and continue with it quietly.
215. Overall the teaching and learning are satisfactory. Half the teaching is very good, half is unsatisfactory. The major strength of the very good teaching is its highly effective organisation to ensure that it meets the differing needs of a wide range of pupils. There are high quality information sheets and worksheets, some of them simplified for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are managed calmly and clearly. Good individual support, encouraging or challenging pupils as appropriate, by the teacher and support staff, promotes good learning. The major weaknesses of the

unsatisfactory teaching are the lack of adequate planning by this teacher and an inappropriate teaching strategy. The teacher talks too much and fails to engage the interest of the pupils, who by Year 11 have lost the habit of doing much work in this subject. Pupils' learning in these classes is therefore unsatisfactory.

216. Leadership of the subject is good. The subject leaders' very good organisational skills are shown in the detailed scheme of work and the high quality resources that have been produced to support it. Much assistance is offered to pupils outside lessons as staff are available every Monday evening to advise pupils on their completion of coursework. The teaching of the subject has not been monitored and evaluated and the evident weaknesses identified and dealt with. This subject was not reported on at the last inspection.