

INSPECTION REPORT

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL SCHOOL

Woking

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125314

Acting Headteacher: Mrs G J Marels

Reporting inspector: Mr I Benson
02739

Dates of inspection: 30 April – 4 May 2001

Inspection number: 187753

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11-16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hermitage Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dr A J Collings

Date of previous inspection: March 1996

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2739	Mr I Benson	<i>Registered inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well is the school led and managed?
9931	Mrs M J Kerry	<i>Lay inspector</i>		The school's results and pupils' achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
8002	Mr L Farraway	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	
8756	Mrs P Hanage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
31441	Dr M King	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Equal opportunities.	
28175	Ms J Goodman	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
4474	Mr I Punter	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
15407	Ms M Harrison	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
10895	Mr D Wasp	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
30937	Mr M Clay-Dove	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information technology.	
15075	Mr B Goodman-Stephens	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern languages.	
12475	Mr S Johnson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
3982	Mr J I'Anson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
18673	Mr R Wilkins	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27409	Mrs S Hunt	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This 11-16 mixed foundation comprehensive school of 1558 pupils is situated in the south west of Woking. It serves a large urban and rural area and is regularly over-subscribed. The school's socio-economic profile shows that slightly more pupils come from advantaged than disadvantaged households: 4.4 per cent of pupils [below average] are eligible for free school meals. Most of the pupils are white: 5.8 per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds; 4.4 per cent [above average] have English as an additional language - none are in the early stages of language acquisition. Six point three per cent of pupils [below average] are on the special needs register: 2.2 per cent [about average] have statements. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average: annually the school can select a maximum of 26 higher attaining pupils, and a further 15 on their ability in music.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school, with a number of outstanding features. It is well led and managed and provides very good value for money. Standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above national averages and pupils are very well taught. Pupils' personal development is well supported through a very good quality curriculum that is complemented by a very wide range of other learning opportunities, activities, visits and exchanges. Pupils also benefit from an outstanding programme of monitoring, tracking and target setting within the vertical tutor system. The school's increased effectiveness has benefited from a well-founded programme of school improvement.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Standards at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are well above national averages.
- The quality of teaching and learning are very good across the majority of subjects.
- Outstanding leadership and a clear educational direction are provided by the head teacher and senior managers in partnership with the governing body: their financial planning for the strategic use of resources to support school improvement is outstandingly good and provides very good value for money.
- The school's aim and values are clearly and consistently reflected in pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships.
- The pupils' benefit from a very good quality curriculum, complemented by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and good support for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils receive excellent information from the monitoring, tracking and target setting relating to progress in their academic and personal development, supported by a strong tutorial system and excellent relationships.
- The school benefits from the very good partnership and support it has from parents.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Although no major weaknesses are identified, the following are areas that need improvement and are already part of the school's planning for improvement.

- Meet statutory requirements regarding the provision of design and technology at both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Devise and implement strategies to enable: underachievement of some lower attaining pupils and a small number with special needs to be tackled; special needs pupils to make better progress; all pupils to become more active participants in learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in March 1996. It is apparent that both governors and staff have a high commitment to school improvement. Particular progress has been made in improving standards and teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4, providing accommodation of good quality and developing provision for the teaching of information and communications technology and implementing arrangements for professional appraisal and review.

In addition, through a programme of refurbishment, the school has improved its learning environments in design and technology and home economics, and its access for pupils and adults with special needs, including the wheelchair bound. Also, as a result of success in bidding for additional capital resources from a variety of agencies and organisations, new building and further improvements have taken place in accommodation for English, modern languages, science and physical education. The school has been involved in other school improvement activities in addition to those identified in the last inspection report. For example, there has been significant improvement in the analysis and use of performance data. This is through the highly effective and influential computerised student target setting, assessment and academic tutorial tracking system that underpins the programme for raising standards. In addition, the school has gained Investors in People status for the second time, has been awarded a Charter Mark for public service and now provides very good value for money. The school is also designated a Beacon School and shares its good practice and development work with partner schools, universities and national organisations.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in end of Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key	
	all schools			similar schools		A
	1998	1999	2000	2000		
End of KS3 tests	A	A	A	B	well above average	
The Winston Churchill School, Woking			2		above average	
					B	
					average	
					C	
					below average	
					D	
					well below average	
					E	

GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B	
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Pupils achieve high standards, both in their examination results and in work seen during the inspection. Results are consistently well above the national average at age 14 and well above average at GCSE level. This performance has been sustained for the last three years. For the vast majority of pupils, achievement is good, and often very good. Some lower attaining pupils are not achieving as much as they could, and the school is well aware of this from its own self-evaluation. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. From the work seen, it is clear that standards in every subject are above or well above average. There is, however, some underachievement in resistant materials in design and technology at Key Stage 3, linked to unsatisfactory teaching. The raising of standards is supported by a highly sophisticated and integrated management information system. On the basis of this information the school sets itself very accurate targets that it consistently meets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school, have great pride in it and respond very well to the high expectations it has of them. They work hard and in most lessons are keen participants in learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour both in class and the public areas of the school is very good. They show responsible and mature attitudes as they move between lessons and in the support they offer each other in class and tutorial work.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are mature, self-disciplined and confident. They have a clear understanding of the values that enable the school to operate as an orderly community. They have excellent relationships with peers and adults, and benefit from working with pupils younger and older than themselves in their vertical tutor groups.
Attendance	Attendance is better than national averages. Absence is effectively monitored.

Pupils' attitudes to school, their work and learning are very positive. They enjoy working with others and supporting pupils younger than themselves. They have a clear understanding of the school's expectations and values. They show this in their own attitudes and commitment to the school, their acceptance of responsibility and involvement in a wide range of activities and charity work, the standard of their behaviour and the high quality relationships they have with peers and adults. The level of fixed term exclusion is low, there have been no permanent exclusions for three years and attendance is better than national averages. The use of electronic registration greatly helps the detailed monitoring of attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very good	Not applicable

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

The quality of teaching is very good overall. Eighty per cent of teaching was judged to be good, very good or excellent, with slightly more teaching of high quality at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Just over one third of the teaching was very good or excellent, again with slightly more of high quality at Key Stage 4. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching, with just four observations out of over 200, which were located mostly in the resistant materials aspect of design and technology. Teaching and learning is good in Key Stage 3, very good in Key Stage 4, and is good or very good in the vast majority of subjects inspected. In English and mathematics the quality of teaching is very good, and in science it is good. Teaching is especially effective for higher and middle attaining pupils and slightly less so for lower attaining pupils. Particular strengths of the teaching are very high expectations, which mean that pupils learn at a good rate, strong methodology, disciplined time management and very good subject knowledge. The teaching of basic skills is good. The inclusion of pupils with a range of physical and learning needs is a strong aspect of the school's policy on educational inclusion.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is of very good quality, providing a wide range of learning opportunities with the taught and extensive extra-curricular programmes. The requirements for design and technology (resistant materials) are not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special needs is satisfactory, a good feature being the structured reading programme for pupils at Key Stage 3. Targets on Individual Education Plans are not specific enough to enable progress to be measured.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision to support pupils' personal development is good. Very good provision is made to support pupils' moral and social development while that for their cultural development is good and for their spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils benefit greatly from the school's positive ethos.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good provision is made to care for all pupils. The outstanding process for monitoring pupils' academic and personal development, together with a strong and effective tutorial system, enables the needs of all pupils to be met.

An extensive range of extra-curricular activities complement the very good taught curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4. As well as GCSE courses at Key Stage 4, there is an imaginative enhancement and alternative curriculum programme designed to meet and enrich the learning needs of all pupils. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory, but the targets on pupils' individual educational plans are insufficiently clear to enable progress to be measured. Provision to

support pupils' personal development is good across the curriculum. The process for monitoring and tracking pupils' attainment and progress is outstandingly good: it is accompanied by target setting and very good quality tutoring. The school works very well with its parents and provides them with good quality information about their children's progress. The parents praise the approachability of staff and commend them for the generous amount of time they devote to helping and supporting pupils. Statutory requirements are not fully met in the resistant materials elements of design and technology and for providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The head teacher and other senior staff provide outstanding leadership for the school in partnership with the governing body. There is a clear educational rationale for the provision of good quality education for all its pupils and an ethos in which pupils' success as learners and individuals are celebrated and valued.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is highly effective. It has devised clear aims and a comprehensive range of policies and guidance to inform its own discussions and decision-making, and that of senior managers, and to enable the school to make appropriate provision to meet the learning needs of all pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is a regular and effective programme of self-evaluation to which senior and middle managers and their teams contribute. It is effective in identifying strengths in the school's practice and areas in need of further development.
The strategic use of resources	Very good strategic use is made of all resources at the school's disposal. The outstanding financial planning takes good account of current and future needs.

The highly constructive partnerships between the governing body, the head teacher and senior staff enables a coherent approach to school improvement to be planned and implemented. There is good provision for staffing, accommodation and learning resources in relation to the curriculum. Significant improvement has taken place in the provision of hardware for teaching information and communications technology. As a result of the school self-review programme, a considerable programme of refurbishment and building has taken place to improve the quality and provision for learning in specialist subject areas, including sport. The school applies the principles of best value outstandingly well. All aspects of its work are informed by extensive consultation, linked to a rationale that challenges existing ways of doing things, and is evaluated by reference to results produced and resources expended.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality teaching, based on high expectations, that helps pupils to make good progress. • Clearly focused management. • A very good range of extra-curricular activities. • The approachability of staff and their responsiveness to concerns. • The excellent quality of information parents receive about children's progress. • The school's ethos that helps children to grow into mature and responsible young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents expressed concern about the amount of homework provided and its follow-up.

The inspection evidence fully confirmed the positive views held by parents. There was some difference of opinion amongst parents themselves about homework: some expressed concern about the amount of homework given. The general view was that homework was usually consistently set, was well matched to children's needs and extended learning in class. There was felt to be some inconsistency in following up through pupils' daybooks. Inspection evidence confirmed this picture.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils achieve high standards, both in their examination results and in work seen during the inspection. Results are consistently well above the national average at age 14 and well above average at GCSE level. For the majority of pupils, achievement is good, and often very good. The evidence of underachievement mentioned in the last report is no longer apparent. Some lower attaining pupils are not achieving as much as they could, and the school is well aware of this from its own self-evaluation. Taken across all groups of pupils, standards in every subject are above or well above average.

2. Attainment on entry is broadly average according to data collected by the school as part of its own value added analysis. This data supplements the Key Stage 2 results received from the 23 partner primary schools. There are minor fluctuations in the entry from year to year, and generally there is less than expected of the highest attaining pupils, even though up to 26 pupils each year can be selected by ability. There are commensurately more middle attaining pupils. The school provides well for these middle-attaining pupils, and they achieve a good proportion of the highest grades at GCSE across the subjects. Up to 15 pupils each year can be selected for their musical capability, and this contributes to the high standards achieved in the subject.

3. At age 14, standards across all subjects are high, supported by teaching based on good subject knowledge, high expectations, varied methodology related to individual learning styles and purposeful time management. Results are improving in line with national averages, and both boys and girls are performing better than the national picture. Work seen during the inspection generally confirms the impression given by results.

4. The average points score in English, mathematics and science is well above average overall, with particularly strong results in English and mathematics. In other subjects, standards are above or well above average in most subjects. In the case of information and communications technology (ICT), this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. In art, standards are in line with the average: this is related to a wide range of attainment on entry, with the gap gradually narrowing as pupils experience good teaching, which improves standards for all, especially for lower attaining pupils. In design and technology (DT), standards are also in line with the average overall, although they are higher in home technology than in resistant materials.

5. In comparison with similar schools, performance is above average in English, mathematics and science. On the evidence of results and work seen during the inspection, both in work scrutiny and in classrooms, achievement is good in almost all subjects, and is never less than satisfactory. In DT, there are some elements of underachievement, caused by unsatisfactory teaching in resistant materials. This teaching limits pupils' creativity and their ability to design with reference to a specific design brief, and therefore the standards that they can achieve.

6. At age 16, the school's results in terms of average points score have been consistently well above average for four years, and are rising in line with national trends. Standards achieved in the work seen are high. Much of the teaching seen at Key Stage 4 was of very good quality, promoting these high standards through well-paced, varied lessons. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more A* to C

grades at GCSE level is well above average despite the expected dip in 2000. The school sets targets very accurately based on its own analysis of pupils' performance, and last year's results were as predicted. Results for lower attaining pupils are not as good, and fluctuate between average and above average. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls except in English, where boys perform less well than girls, and DT, where girls perform better than expected in some elements.

7. When compared with similar schools, average points score at GCSE level is still above average. In this context, results for lower attaining pupils, as expressed by the percentage attaining five or more A* to G grades, are well below average. This underachievement is noticeable in lessons where teaching is not sufficiently well adapted to the needs of these pupils. The school's self-evaluation has identified this as a priority within departments, but the strategies being implemented have yet to make an impact on results.

8. Standards in literacy are good. The school has developed an effective range of strategies for supporting the development of literacy across the curriculum. Most subject departments provide supportive policy guidance, and almost all provide planned opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding through discussion, debate and extended speech. There are a few instances of attainment and progress being impeded by the pupils' inability to understand text or their lack of basic writing skills. In most subjects, there is a good range of writing tasks and a wide variety of strategies employed to develop literacy skills. A particular feature is the development of lists of subject specific vocabulary. There is a lack of consistency in the use of the library for research and independent learning.

9. Pupils' numeracy techniques are very good, and they make a strong contribution to progress in other subjects. A good example was seen in geography, where lower attaining pupils were helped to understand the way in which they were being asked to display data relating to water usage; they achieved good standards as a result. Pupils in science are given reference booklets, appropriate for the level of their GCSE course, which helps them with their calculations. In science, most pupils can confidently handle number at a level that at least matches their attainment in science: for example higher and average attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 use their algebraic skills accurately and frequently. In geography pupils can use the scale on maps and can measure distances. In DT pupils can draw reasonably accurate diagrams, but some pupils in Year 8 had problems in using scale factors to calculate lengths.

10. Standards in ICT are good. ICT is seen as a creative tool, and the development of skills is well integrated into work in most subject areas with the exception of art. Particularly effective use is made of ICT in music to help pupils achieve good standards.

11. The progress of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory. Although staff members are aware of such pupils in their classes, there is variation in the quality of support these pupils receive. Individual education plans (IEPs) are not always sufficiently precise in their targets, especially the broader non-subject targets, to support pupils learning. However, good use is made of the subject specific targets to enable pupils to make progress. In contrast, the progress made by gifted and talented pupils is particularly strong. Such pupils are identified, and provision is well planned to meet their needs. A good example is physical education (PE), where links with the local community ensure opportunities for talented pupils to pursue their sport further.

12. The raising of standards is supported by a highly sophisticated and integrated management information system. This enables the school to target underachievement early and put strategies in place to try to improve pupils' learning. It also gives a measure of value added. This indicates that the majority of pupils make progress at above expectations, and very few underachieve. This picture is supported by value added data from the local education authority.

13. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to improve standards, so that they are now well above average. This is a significant achievement. There has been particular improvement in standards in ICT. Standards for lower attaining pupils, including those who have SEN, have not improved at the same rate as those for other pupils, although progress for these pupils is still satisfactory. Improvement in standards has been supported by a significantly improved teaching profile.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils enjoy school and show great pride in it. They are mature, self-disciplined and confident. They have a clear understanding of the values that enable the school to function as an orderly community. They enjoy warm and profitable relationships with their peers and adults, and willingly accept the responsibility placed on them by the school's expectations. Their membership of a vertical tutor group enables them to benefit from a variety of learning relationships with pupils both older and younger than themselves and with their tutor and head of year.

15. In lessons, pupils show a high level of commitment to their work. They arrive promptly, are well prepared, and expect to work hard and to concentrate for long periods of time. Their positive attitudes in lessons are under-pinned by the very high quality of the relationships they enjoy with their teachers. Pupils show great diligence in organising and managing their work. They listen attentively, and in their oral contributions to the lessons, whether replying to questions or in making a voluntary contribution to the learning, use language that shows sensitivity to the feelings of others. In those lessons where open-ended tasks are provided, many pupils show creativity in their thinking, and provide interesting and elegant solutions in problem solving. A pair of Year 7 pupils, for example, produced a well-researched and imaginative response to a history task on defending medieval castles. This took the form of a game on a CD ROM, where progress to the objective could only be achieved through accurate responses to a series of carefully crafted history questions. Pupils undertake extended projects and homework with care, both in the research and analysis of information, as well as in their commitment to present ideas and data in a clear and interesting manner.

16. There are a minority of occasions, however, when some pupils have few opportunities to be active participants in learning, when the teacher's oral exposition is long and learners' concentration and interest is lost. On such occasions attitudes are less than satisfactory, and can, occasionally, result in unhelpful chatter or poor behaviour.

17. In just under nine-tenths of lessons pupils' attitudes and behaviour were found to be good or better, and in just under half of all lessons they were very good or excellent. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when attitudes were said to be rarely less than satisfactory and behaviour was reported to conform to reasonable standards. Pupils respond very

positively to the very clear expectation that they will contribute to learning and will not impede others from making progress. This highly positive picture is reflected across all subjects at both key stages and in all year groups. Consistently good attitudes were seen in mathematics, art, geography, history, ICT, music and in religious education (RE).

18. Pupils are eager participants in school life, and value the many opportunities there are for self-evaluation and target setting. They are keenly aware of how well they are doing in all subjects, and work hard to identify, and improve upon, their targets. Many pupils seek a new challenge once they have achieved the target set in a subject. Such a high commitment to self-improvement is evident across the school, and pupils feel highly motivated by the recognition they receive for the progress, achievement and effort they have made. It is also a reflection of the very positive response pupils have to the good quality of provision the school makes for learning.

19. In the majority of lessons, pupils who have SEN work enthusiastically and conscientiously. Their behaviour is good, and they respond well to work that is suitably pitched and appropriately challenging. They enjoy taking a full and active part in their learning, and, when they have access to a support assistant, pupils are quite well organised and able to produce work of good quality, especially in oral and practical tasks.

20. There is very good involvement of pupils in the school's life and work. The vertical tutor group system has encouraged older pupils to take an interest in the progress and personal development of those younger than themselves. A number of Key Stage 4 pupils support those in Year 7 with literacy and those in Year 9 with making option choices. Year 8 pupils relish the responsibility provided by undertaking reception duties for a day, and learn much about dealing with visitors as well as about school office procedures. Many pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities, charity fund-raising, musical and dramatic productions as well as through membership of the school council. Some senior pupils recently contributed to the interviews for the appointment of a new head teacher. The recent discussions by the governing body about changes to the school's dress code attracted well-informed contributions from groups of pupils. Their positive involvement in such a variety of activities marks their commitment to the school and the value they place on the opportunities to support their personal development.

21. The pressures provided by the school's flexible day ensure that pupils move quickly between lessons. In their short lunch break, when staff supervision is minimal, pupils are very responsible in dealing with a range of things: eating, getting fresh air, undertaking library and research activities, collecting tutor group notices, organising activities and making contact with friends. All this is done with good humour and without unnecessary boisterousness. Many pupils take advantage of the school's facilities to support their learning before and after school as well as in their brief lunch break. Behaviour in the public areas of the school and in lessons is very good and shows a significant level of self-discipline.

22. Any incidents of aggressive behaviour or bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Both the bully and bullied feel that the school provides an opportunity to rehabilitate the miscreant and support the victim. Pupils from minority ethnic groups have complete confidence in the school's procedures for dealing with occasional racist comments. All pupils understand that sexism is unacceptable. Exclusion is used infrequently. Incidents are well documented and

parents and governors are appropriately involved. In the case of one class, the exceptional step of a day's exclusion for all of its members was used to enable them to reconsider their attitude and response to school expectations regarding behaviour. The level of temporary exclusion is much lower than reported at the last inspection and there have been no permanent exclusions for the last three years.

23. The quality of relationships across the school is excellent. The mutual respect that exists between staff and pupils contributes positively to high standards and the quality of teaching and learning in many lessons. Pupils are well known and are highly regarded by their teachers and tutors. Parents and pupils value the personal interest shown by staff. In lessons at Key Stage 4, when personal relationships were being discussed, pupils felt able to learn and explore sensitive issues within a positive ethos. Pupils feel confident that the school is a safe and secure environment within which they can learn and grow.

24. Attendance is better than national averages, as is authorised absence. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is in line with the national average. The authorising of absence is very rigorous against clear criteria. The electronic registration of pupils is extremely effective – at the start of a session and in each lesson. There is, as a result, careful monitoring of occasional internal truancy. Given the spread out nature of the school campus, and the areas from which pupils travel each day, punctuality is good. The majority of pupils arrive promptly each morning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

25. The quality of teaching is very good, and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teaching and learning is good in Key Stage 3, very good in Key Stage 4, and is good or very good in the vast majority of subjects inspected.

26. Overall 80 per cent of teaching was judged to be good, very good or excellent, with slightly more teaching of high quality at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Just over one third of the teaching was very good or excellent, again with slightly more of high quality in Key Stage 4. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching, with just four unsatisfactory lessons observed out of over 200, and these were located mostly in DT.

27. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is good. In the lessons seen, there were 30 per cent where teaching was very good or excellent, and 44 per cent where it was good. There were a small number of lessons where teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is very good, with teaching in 39 per cent of lessons being very good or excellent. In 46 per cent of lessons teaching was good, and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. The main difference between teaching quality in the two key stages was the greater effectiveness of methods in Key Stage 4 for promoting pupils' autonomy as independent learners promote. It occurred in lessons where teaching was clearly focused, and, in a variety of ways enabled pupils to contribute to, as well as benefit from, concise exposition, including the very good use of question and answer techniques, and well-defined tasks. As a result, progress in learning was more marked.

28. Teaching across almost every subject was consistently good or very good. There were significant amounts of excellent teaching in English, mathematics and RE, as well as examples of excellent teaching in modern foreign languages, ICT and the home technology aspect of DT. In a large number of subjects, a high proportion of teaching was good, very good or excellent, for instance in mathematics, geography, history, ICT, modern languages and RE. In music, all of the teaching was of

this high quality. Teaching in Latin and business studies was never less than good. A very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was found in one English lesson at Key Stage 3. Overall, whilst the majority of teaching in DT was good, in three resistant materials lessons at Key Stage 3 teaching was either unsatisfactory or poor.

29. An outstanding feature of the teaching is the high expectations, which are skilfully translated into demanding activities suited to a range of individual learning styles. A good example of this was a Year 8 Latin lesson, where pupils participated in a game that involved moving as they learned the conjugation of the verb *sum*. The strong methodology, combined with an emphasis on time management, ensures that learning moves at a brisk pace. Lessons are highly productive, with pupils making rapid gains in their learning. Higher attaining pupils learn particularly well. Ongoing assessment is very well used, often with immediate feedback to pupils, who are well aware of what they have learned and how they need to improve. The quality of planning is very good, and homework is used to extend learning beyond the school day. It is well linked to what happens in class.

30. Teachers have very good expertise in their subject areas, and this ensures that pupils acquire knowledge rapidly. An example of this was seen in a business studies lesson, where the teacher's wide-ranging knowledge led to probing questions which allowed pupils to deepen their understanding of the purpose of performance-related pay in an airline. Teachers plan well, with a variety of activities to sustain interest. This planning extends to the setting of homework that forms part of an overall structure, and helps pupils develop their own research and independent learning skills, particularly when they undertake extended projects. Management of pupils is skilful. The individual help pupils are given in lessons, and the level of challenge offered, effectively support learning in lessons. The inclusion of pupils with a range of physical and learning needs is a strong aspect of the school's policy on educational inclusion. Overall, the teaching is extremely effective in enabling these pupils to learn in depth and at a good rate.

31. Although the teaching is generally well targeted towards all groups of pupils, and is very successful for the gifted and talented, it is slightly less successful for lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs. A number of factors contribute to this. Sometimes teachers do not have sufficient strategies to manage the more challenging behaviour of lower attaining pupils, as in some mathematics lessons, or to motivate those who have a shorter concentration span by frequent changes of activity, as in some lessons in science. Generally, when the pace of learning slows, it is often these lower attaining pupils who lose interest and concentration. Sometimes this is related to inappropriate content or teaching methods, as in some bottom sets in English in Year 7. Sometimes there is insufficient range of work within bottom sets for the range of attainment, as was observed, for example, in geography. On some occasions too much work by lower attaining pupils is incomplete, adversely affecting their progress. Some of the targets set within IEPs are too general to support improvement, although some, including those within subject areas, are quite specific and can act as good exemplars in sharing practice.

32. Teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good. In subjects such as geography, numerical skills are well developed and applied. There is good reference to the basic skills of literacy in many departments, with the use of key words and writing frames to support learning. ICT is well employed to support learning in many subjects, notably music.

33. There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, when the indications were that the amount of teaching judged unsatisfactory was much greater than that found in this inspection. There have also been improvements in the proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching, some of which was observed at the last inspection. The school has succeeded in maintaining the excellence noted then, and also has effected marked improvements in the rest of the teaching profile.

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

34. The school and its governing body plan well together to provide a very good curriculum that is effectively organised to meet the needs of all pupils. There is a good quality curriculum at Key Stage 3. It is a broad, balanced and relevant programme of study that includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and RE and it is enhanced by the provision of drama. Pupils can pursue two foreign languages, and most choose to do so, whilst Latin is available for selected pupils. Provision for ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection, and is now good.

35. The very good quality Key Stage 4 curriculum ensures that the basic needs of pupils are met through the study of a common core of subjects. All pupils pursue GCSE English, mathematics, science, religious education, PE, a foreign language (French or German), a humanities subject, (history or geography), and GNVQ information and communications technology. The particular strength of the Key Stage 4 curriculum is, however, its flexibility, which enables pupils to construct a balanced programme of study that meets their individual needs and interests.

36. Thus in addition to the core subjects, pupils can choose two further GCSE subjects from a wide range of options, which includes media studies. Most choose to pursue the double science award, but they can pursue three separate sciences. Further enrichment programmes extend pupils' learning opportunities at Key Stage 4. There is alternative curriculum provision that allows pupils whose interests are best served by a more vocationally orientated programme, to pursue GNVQ leisure and tourism and single science. The highly innovative enhancement programme allows pupils to pursue other subjects of their choice from a wide-ranging portfolio, whether for examination purposes, or for personal fulfilment. Effective use of the flexible day enables appropriate timetable provision to be made for these additional learning activities.

37. At the previous inspection, the school allocated too little time to teaching RE to meet the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus. It has now addressed this weakness in its provision. At Key Stage 4 most pupils follow the GCSE short course. In addition, at the request of the head of RE, a number of pupils follow the full GCSE course in the time available for the short course, supplemented by twilight lessons. Success in this course is good. The school's provision for DT does not fully meet statutory requirements at both key stages: at Key Stage 3 because of lack of coverage of the National Curriculum and at Key Stage 4 because it is not taught to nearly half of the pupils. The school has been unable to recruit sufficient appropriately qualified staff to teach the subject.

38. The school demonstrates a very strong commitment to enabling all pupils to gain access to the very wide range of subjects and activities it offers. There is satisfactory provision for pupils who have SEN, and the special needs department has done much to ensure that teachers are equipped to meet pupils' needs through in-house training. However, a review is planned of the effectiveness of the

current provision and arrangements for SEN. The school takes justifiable pride in the caring and secure ethos it affords to all pupils who have SEN, and the wheelchair bound. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are well met through the extension programme. The governing body has clear policies for the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and the school has developed effective strategies so that further development of these skills permeates the whole curriculum.

39. The school provides a very rich range of extra-curricular activities to support pupils' learning in the classroom. Pupils' experience is enriched by theatre and concert visits, day trips to France, geography and history field trips, and visits to a variety of places of worship. There are good exchange links with schools in France and Germany, and study tours to the Rhineland. Pupils have excellent opportunities to develop skills in the creative and expressive arts, with music and drama being particular strengths, and to experience performing for audiences through regular productions and concerts. They can develop skills in all of the major sports through the very good range of after-school sports activities. There is a well-established Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and a very wide range of clubs and activities caters for the interests of all. Pupils value these opportunities: participation rates are very high.

40. The school provides well for pupils regardless of gender, ability or background. A policy sets out objectives for access to learning and resources, as well as identifying how promotion of self-esteem and prevention of discriminatory behaviour can contribute to achieving these objectives. This policy is put into practice through the Key Stage 3 curriculum that is available to all, and an appropriate range of options at Key Stage 4. Guided choice based on prior attainment is used to place pupils in, for instance, separate dual or single science courses. This sometimes leads to imbalance: in separate science, the top groups are four-fifths boys whilst the reverse is true of top sets in dual award science and modern foreign languages. The full range of extra-curricular activities is available to all pupils and there is a very high take-up in, for instance, music and PE. The school is taking action to address some relative differences of performance by boys and lower attaining pupils in, for instance, English and science by reviewing the setting arrangements and how the learning needs of all pupils are being met.

41. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual development. It is aware that its provision for collective worship does not meet statutory requirements, and will be reviewing this with the introduction of the new school day in 2001. The school has clear values, which are shared by pupils, parents and teachers alike. It makes very good provision for pupils' personal and social education (PSE), with a well-planned programme of sex, drugs and health education being delivered through a range of subjects. For example, the sex education programme is taught over four years, is delivered mainly through science, addresses the facts and issues in a clear moral framework, and prepares pupils well to make informed and considered choices.

42. The personal development of pupils is also fostered through form tutor mentoring, and through records of achievement and target setting. There is an effective programme of educational and vocational guidance. The school works closely with the careers service to ensure that pupils are well prepared to make informed choices about their GCSE options, further education, training or employment, and equipped with the practical skills necessary to achieve their goals. The well-planned programme of work experience provides a positive experience of the world of work for Year 10 pupils.

43. The school has good links with the local community that enrich the curriculum. Many visitors and outside agencies provide help to the school. There are strong links with industry and commerce, enriching learning in a number of areas. The school enjoys very good links with its

partner institutions in the primary, further education and higher education sectors. It also benefits from, and works very closely with, other schools in the midlands as well as universities, a national consultancy, two professional teacher organisations and the DfEE in its role as a *Beacon School*. Local links with sporting institutions are outstanding.

44. The school makes good provision to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Elements of the cross-curricular PSE programme contribute positively to these aspects of pupils' personal development. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. There is a full programme of year assemblies, and time is provided in most of these for pupils to reflect on moral and social issues. During the inspection, for example, a very thought-provoking Year 7 assembly was seen, in which Year 10 pupils presented an excellent role-play on the theme of bullying and "it's good to talk." In addition, prayer groups meet on a regular basis within the school to encourage participants to engage in spiritual reflection. Opportunities for pupils to explore feelings are provided within the vertical tutor group programme but there is little time for personal reflection within most of these sessions. As a result, the school still fails to comply fully with the requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Within the curriculum, opportunities for spiritual growth are provided in RE, history, English, mathematics, music, and in PE where a dance club has been established for Downs Syndrome pupils, devised and led by other pupils within the school.

45. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of pupils. There is a strong sense of shared purpose and firm procedures that help pupils to distinguish right from wrong. Issues of bullying are dealt with through a clear and rigorous code of practice. There is a valuable merit system to celebrate achievement and many pupils are involved in local charity work, such as the Year 9 initiative with the Salvation Army. Older pupils are expected to support their younger colleagues in a variety of ways, and this often takes place during the vertical tutor group sessions. During the inspection, for example, Year 10 pupils acted as mentors for Year 9 pupils in target-setting reviews, and Year 8 pupils helped Year 7 pupils with their reading. Opportunities for moral growth are prominent in English, which promotes regular discussion on drugs-related issues, in science, which has major responsibility for sex education and in RE, history and geography.

46. Provision for social development is also very good. The school council provides a useful channel of communication within the school, and members were involved in the recent headship appointment. The prefect system, however, does not have sufficiently clear roles and responsibilities. This may become easier to manage when the school day is changed in September. The school provides a very safe and harmonious atmosphere for all its pupils, and very good relationships are fostered both in classrooms and throughout the school. There is a wealth of clubs and extra-curricular activities to enhance the social development of pupils: in particular, sports clubs, music clubs, homework and revision classes, and subject-based activities. In addition, an activities week is provided for all pupils in Years 7 to 9 in June of each year. Opportunities for social growth are provided in most subjects, most notably in English, drama, science, history, RE, art and PE.

47. The cultural development of pupils is good. There is a commendably strong programme of visits, exchanges and other activities to enhance awareness of the world outside school. Prominent among these are numerous history trips, including one to Russia, and exchange links with schools in France and Germany. Cultural awareness is also fostered well through extra-curricular activities, visiting speakers, sporting fixtures, and music and drama productions. In the curriculum, there are also opportunities for pupils to celebrate cultural diversity in RE, history, geography, modern languages, art and music.

48. Within the school there is a coherent view of learning across both the taught and the extra-curricular activities made available to all pupils. There is also an impressive sense of commitment and shared purpose that is fostered by mutual respect between all members of the school community. Together these provide a framework within which pupils can grow as learners and as individuals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. The school effectively promotes pupils' welfare. Through the introduction of vertical tutor groups and a more effective use of performance data, pupils now benefit from an outstanding programme to monitor their academic progress and personal development.

50. The tutorial interview is a significant development in increasing feedback to pupils on their performance. It gives a comprehensive overview of pupils' attitudes, attendance and performance, which can be shared and discussed with both pupils and parents. A powerful and comprehensive database is at the heart of the school's intelligence gathering system. It provides meaningful monitoring data about how well pupils are doing, and, through the tutoring of pupils, agreement is reached about what targets each pupil needs to help them improve their performance. There is very good use of pupil self-evaluation during the preparation for interviews.

51. All pupils welcome the regular review of their performance. They find target setting with their tutors and subject teachers both helpful and motivating. The targets resulting from these interviews focus on generic learning skills and attitudes as well as those specific to a particular subject. Most pupils monitor their own progress against the targets noted in their own daybook. Many seek an interim review when targets have been achieved or additional challenge is needed to further improve their performance. Where there has been significant regression in performance, parents are involved in analysing why and in identifying strategies and support to help the pupil improve. This process is a major contributor to improvements in pupils' attainment and progress. Parents also have a very high commitment to the process: the vast majority of them are present with their child for academic tutoring and target setting.

52. Pupils who have SEN are well monitored and reviewed through testing and teacher assessment. Annual reviews, as well as reviews of IEPs, are carried out regularly and well. The EPS' targets, however, are not sufficiently detailed to allow progress to be measured and monitored. Although subject targets are not included in IEPs, they are increasingly effective in contributing to pupils' progress. Further work remains to be done, especially in reviewing the deployment and focus of support assistants. There has been good progress in implementing the Code of Practice since the last inspection.

53. Assessment practice within curriculum areas has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Pupils' work is marked regularly and all subject areas contribute assessment information to the pupil database. All pupils are well informed about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve standards.

54. Very good use is made of assessment data to inform whole school and individual subject curriculum planning. Pupils find the marking of their work very helpful, especially comments that provide clear indication about what has been done well and other things that need to be improved. School reports have improved significantly since the last inspection. At whole school level there is good

use of data, for example, to identify early a group of potentially disaffected pupils, to plan a curriculum based on inclusion rationale to meets their learning needs, and to counsel them appropriately when option choices are being decided for Key Stage 4.

55. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare are good, and there is effective support from tutors and the heads of year. There is particularly good support for pupils at times of transition. The induction for Year 7 pupils stretches over three days and includes an opportunity for parents to come to school with their children. This means that pupils feel very well prepared, and parents have confidence that pupils will settle well into their new school. Guidance on option choices is good, and support from the head of Year 9 and Key Stage 4 pupils in the vertical tutor group ensures that choices, for GCSE courses as well as the enhancement programme, are well informed and provide a balanced learning programme.

56. Procedures for health and safety are good. There is a regular review of this area both by a trained governor and the internal health and safety officer. The practice within the curriculum areas is generally good, although there are insufficient formal risk assessments regularly undertaken, especially in PE. The guidance for pupils is good, especially in science.

57. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. Current procedures for child protection show an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding. Staff awareness is good, and the matter is consistently raised through briefings and on induction. The current co-ordinator is appropriately trained. All teaching and support staff are well aware of the signs of abuse or neglect. Guidance in the school policy provides adequate, but limited, information.

58. The involvement of pupils in taking responsibility in school promotes good behaviour. The rewards system also has a very positive effect, especially at Key Stage 3. Where behaviour is a cause for concern, there is very effective monitoring, and, usually, successful action. Bullying and other forms of unacceptable behaviour are carefully monitored and kept under control. Pupils are well aware of the expectations the school has established with regard to behaviour, bullying, racism and sexism. With few exceptions, pupils respond positively to these and accept that infringement of the guidance will not be over-looked. The very high quality of the relationships between staff and pupils enable some difficult situations to be avoided or pre-empted before they get out of hand.

59. Overall monitoring of attendance, and that of individuals, is excellent. Electronic registration enables regular checks to be maintained throughout the school day and in each lesson. Follow-up by subject teachers, form tutors and heads of year is swift and is supported by highly effective work from administrative staff. There is very good liaison with the education welfare service. The procedures for monitoring and maintaining attendance are well used and highly successful.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

60. Parents think very highly of the school. Through the parents' questionnaire and meeting, as well as through written comments, they praised the school in a number of respects. These included the good progress children make, good teaching, high expectations, good management, a very good range of extra-curricular activities, the approachability of staff, the quality of information parents receive about children's progress and an ethos which helps children grow into mature and responsible young people. There was some difference of opinion about homework, with some parents expressing concern about

the amount of homework given. The general view was that homework was usually consistently set, was well matched to children's needs and extended learning in class. There was felt to be some inconsistency in following it up through daybooks. Inspection evidence confirmed this picture of homework.

61. The quality of information parents receive is very good. The academic tutorial system, in which both parents and pupils take part in an extended consultation with the tutor, is a highly effective way of involving parents in their children's learning. An impressive range of performance data informs the meeting. Annual reports are also informative, and linked to the same performance data. The parents of pupils with SEN are properly involved in annual reviews and in the review of IEPs. There are also meetings for parents on topics such as individual learning styles that help them better support learning at home better. Parents are very appreciative of these. They also value the helpful induction they receive as new parents, through meetings covering topics such as recognising and avoiding school phobia.

62. Parents are consulted in planning their own involvement in children's learning through a working group that has consulted on the school calendar. The approachability of the staff and the generous amount of time they give to pupils ensures that concerns can be dealt with swiftly and sensitively. Potential complaints are therefore dealt with before they arise, by creating a good understanding between parents and school about pupils' needs, both academic and personal. The high quality communications systems, backed by comprehensive information on progress, ensure that parents can make a real contribution to pupils' learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

63. This school benefits from the high quality of leadership provided by the head teacher, senior colleagues and the governing body. The successful partnerships between governors and the leadership team contribute positively to planning and provide a coherent approach to achieving the school's aim: that of providing the highest quality of education in a school where all pupils are enabled to achieve and develop as learners and individuals. Together they work hard to create an ethos within which these values and aspirations can be achieved.

64. The work of the governing body and its committees is well led by the chairman and the chairs of the main committees. Governors make a significant contribution to the school's leadership. They have provided the school with clear aims and a well-defined framework of policies within which to manage its affairs. These aims and values inform governors' discussions and decisions, and those of the senior management team. All aspects of their work are very clearly focused on providing a high quality education.

65. The governing body is also extremely well informed. Members visit regularly; a number take a particular interest in aspects of the school's curriculum and cross-curricular work, and report back regularly to colleagues. The governors are fully aware of the wealth of good practice that already exists, but also know of areas that need further development. They receive many oral and written reports, and are well advised by the head teacher and other senior staff. All information is subject to analysis and detailed questioning. This approach to their work contributes to the governors' monitoring role and to assuring themselves that statutory requirements are being met. However, currently not all pupils have provision for a daily act of collective worship, and statutory requirements are not fully met at both key stages for DT work in resistant materials.

66. Very good progress has been made in implementing the action plan arising from the key issues identified in the last inspection report. Particularly important has been the further development of the strategic use of performance data to monitor and support pupils' attainment and progress. There has also been significant improvement in the provision of hardware as well as teaching and learning in ICT.

67. In addition, since the last inspection the school has worked hard on a number of other projects. It has gained Investor in People status for the second time, been awarded the Charter Mark for public service and has become a *Beacon School*. This has enabled innovation to be disseminated and further work undertaken with a range of establishments and agencies on a number of projects, including, for example, reducing bureaucracy, information management, developing leadership and management, monitoring and tracking pupils' performance and target setting. Without doubt this has enhanced work on school improvement, particularly in further developing good quality practice in tutorial work, raising the professional skills of a range of colleagues and contributing to the provision of well-informed staff development.

68. The highly constructive partnership between the governing body and the school's leadership team, focused around the common agenda of school improvement, has ensured that aims, objectives and policies are consistently implemented and good working procedures and practices are established and regularly reviewed.

69. The overall leadership of the head teacher and senior management team is outstanding. Their educational aspirations for the school are shared, understood and consistently implemented by staff. The implementation of the vision has resulted in a review and re-engineering of the school's structures – the tutorial system, staffing responsibilities and structures, the school day, the learning relationships and support pupils need, and the effective use of performance data. This has resulted in a coherent framework within which pupils' high achievement and effective learning are promoted, and success is both recognised and valued.

70. The management team meet regularly, plan carefully and review the operational and strategic priorities for moving the school forward. On occasions this has meant a change in practices, and, following consultation with parents, the introduction of, for example, vertical tutor groups. However, the clear definition of the leadership team's responsibilities ensures that they work closely together, develop consistent and well-thought-out procedures and provide coherent support and guidance to the teams with whom they work.

71. The head and deputy head teachers regularly review the work of other senior and middle managers. The accountability of subject leaders and heads of year, through the professional expectations the school has of its middle managers, has given a sense of purpose and direction to their work. It has had a significant impact on improving teaching and learning and the effectiveness of monitoring standards and quality. The process of individual interviews, annual subject reports and plans, as well as meetings of heads of subjects and years and lesson observations all contribute to the range of opportunities to monitor progress of middle managers in implementing the school's priorities. The coherent departmental and year teams are well-managed and supported in reviewing their work, undertaking change and implementing the well-conceived priorities of their teams and the whole school improvement plans. Within the school's performance management structure, team members have a clear opportunity to identify professional development needs. Subject teams regularly share good practice and plan together. All are committed to the implementation of the school's agreed priorities.

72. The school's mission, to raise standards and enable more effective learning, is under-pinned by a coherent and systematic programme for monitoring learning outcomes and a process for evaluating school effectiveness. The computerised management information system includes baseline data and internal and external assessment results. Its use is complemented by target setting at a variety of levels, including discussions with individual pupils to improve their standards. The data also provides excellent quality information about learning outcomes.

73. The output from the powerful database, detailed analysis of external examination results against local and national comparisons, monitoring of teaching and learning and evaluation of school effectiveness enable the school and its governors to identify their priorities for development and plan coherently their school improvement programme.

74. Many areas of school life are clearly documented. The school's policies provide good reference points against which practice is evaluated. The subject areas and year teams have well developed documentation to inform daily management and the planning of effective teaching and learning. However, in DT work is planned to provide schemes of work for the teaching of resistant materials at both key stages.

75. A well thought-out programme of professional development effectively supports all members of the staff. Newly qualified and recently appointed teachers and support staff have a rigorous induction programme of outstanding quality. Good mentoring, and an informative series of well-planned training sessions support those students on initial teacher training courses. Within the Investors in People framework, all members of the staff have the opportunity to identify their professional development needs. These are met, having been matched against the priorities in the strategic plan.

76. Coherence and clarity are the keynotes of planning the use of the school's resources. The senior management team and the governing body share a vision for providing resources and this is included in the innovative and comprehensive school improvement plan. There is extremely clear targeting of a range of resources, including financial resources, to educational objectives set within the improvement plan. Budgetary and finance processes are integral to this planning, so that developments can be effectively carried through. Governors' committees are well involved in budgetary and resources decisions. The strong links between the finance and other committees are particularly helpful in managing the governing body's work. The finance committee takes a proper role in setting the budget and monitoring expenditure. Detailed financial plans cover the current year, and forward planning is dealt with through the school improvement plan. The rigour with which the finance committee undertakes its work ensures that expenditure is systematically monitored.

77. The governing body and senior managers have been successful in bidding for the funding of major building projects. These bids have been skilfully developed to meet educational and community priorities identified within the improvement plan. Their considerable success in mounting and managing such projects has drawn on the experience and skills of both governors and senior staff. A meticulous monitoring process has ensured that such projects are completed on time and within budget. The successful completion of the projects has enhanced accommodation for teaching and learning and has also resulted in high quality school and community provision for sporting and fitness activities.

78. The schools' financial systems are very well run, and the recommendations of the latest audit report have been implemented. On behalf of the governors, the Responsible Officer visits the school

regularly to monitor the effectiveness of the financial systems. Governors receive very high quality information from the systems to enable them to fulfil their monitoring role; this includes regular spreadsheets that predict outturn and a commentary on any key issues raised by the financial statements. Very good use is made of ICT for administrative purposes and especially for monitoring and tracking pupil progress.

79. Overall, the staffing, learning resources and accommodation are satisfactory. There is a good match between teaching and support staff and their deployment in relation to the current curriculum. On the few occasions when teachers are deployed in their second subject, for example in mathematics, they have a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. The support and technical staff, who are well qualified, are appropriately deployed, and those involved in administration and reception duties manage with sensitivity the competing priorities related to their work. All support staff contribute positively to the school's work.

80. Accommodation is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is especially noticeable in provision for English, DT, music, PE and ICT. There are plans to improve the cramped and inflexible art rooms in the near future. Overall, many of the school's major buildings are in good condition. The deployment of the accommodation is well planned in all subjects. Traffic noise on the south side of the school has a negative impact on work in some subjects, especially when windows are open. There is equality of access for pupils and members of the community who have SEN, especially those who are wheelchair bound. This is now much improved since the last inspection. Display throughout the school is very good and clearly supports pupils' learning. Overall, the improved facilities have led to greater community use of the building, especially for community access to the excellent sports facilities.

81. Provision of learning resources is generally satisfactory. In PE the facilities are excellent, and in modern foreign languages they are very good. There has been significant expenditure over the past few years to address the poor provision for ICT reported at the last inspection. This has resulted in good access for pupils to new technology. Provision of musical instruments is good, and rooms are well equipped. Although learning resources in science are used to good effect, the overall provision is unsatisfactory and the need for pupils to share equipment inhibits their progress. There are some weaknesses in the targeting of resources in DT. Although the library has a satisfactory range of books and is used well, further development is needed for it to be a good research facility. Plans to install four computers with Internet access in the library will complement other information sources within there. The careers area has limited resources.

82. The school applies the principles of best value outstandingly well. All aspects of the school's work are subject to constant challenge and evaluation. There is a clear focus on high quality, cost effective provision that meets the school's aims. Innovations are made for clearly defined educational reasons, and, should changes not meet the required objectives, the school has the honesty and determination to deal with this. The application of the principle of challenge to existing methods has resulted in some highly successful innovations, such as the management of individual pupil performance data, which has benefited pupils' learning.

83. Comparisons are regularly made with national and local authority's performance benchmarks, and these inform the work in departments in raising standards. Sophisticated financial management includes comparing costs for goods and services with available local and national information. The

work of the business manager and governors' finance committee ensure effective expenditure through various mechanisms, including competing quotes, tendering

for contracts, or, where this is more effective, employing somebody in-house. Continual scrutiny and critical review ensure that the principles of competition and comparison are very effectively applied in decisions on expenditure in imaginative and creative ways. Presentations to the governing body by prospective suppliers ensure that challenge and competition are vital and transparent processes within the school.

84. Extensive consultation informs the work of the school. Parents, staff, pupils and the governing body are frequently consulted in a variety of ways for different purposes. Often these consultations are focussed on specific suggestions that the school is thinking of taking forward. Recent examples are consultation with pupils and their parents on the flexible school day, changes in curriculum provision and the vertical tutoring system. Sometimes consultations come about as a positive response to a complaint. Different groups are asked to comment on changes before they are made, and to contribute to their evaluation, and pupils play a major part in these consultations. They have recently contributed, through the school council, to the appointment of a new headteacher, as well as debates on the school dress code, the refurbishment of the toilets, and colour schemes in areas being re-decorated.

85. Overall, this is an effective school that provides a very good quality of education, achieves high standards and enables pupils to make good progress. Taking into account the school's costs, the very good quality planning for school improvement and the strategic use of its resources and its social context, the school gives very good value for money – an improvement since the last inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

86. In the context of the school's many strengths, the following areas for growth, development and improvement should be considered in the action plan to:

- Meet statutory requirements for design and technology [resistant materials] by:
 - * Producing a scheme of work to inform the detailed planning of teaching and learning at both key stages;
(Paragraphs: 4, 5, 6, 141)
 - * Ensuring coverage of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study at Key Stage 3 including the development of all elements of information and communications technology and the effective use of computer-aided design and manufacture;
(Paragraphs: 37, 65, 135, 140, 141)
 - * making provision for all pupils at Key Stage 4.
(Paragraphs: 37, 65, 140)

- Develop and implement strategies to enable:
 - * The underachievement of some lower attaining pupils, and those who have special educational needs, to be tackled;
(Paragraphs: 1, 7, 31, 40, 88, 89, 116, 147, 168, 178)
 - * Pupils who have special educational needs to make better progress;
(Paragraphs: 11, 13, 19, 31, 52, 88, 89, 92, 182)
 - * All pupils to become more active participants in their learning.
(Paragraphs: 16, 122, 129, 149)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	208
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	61

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	29	45	18	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1558	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	65	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	109	N/A

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	68

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
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
	2000	165	149	314

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	143	145	126
	Girls	134	120	109
	Total	277	265	235
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	89 (83)	85 (81)	75 (70)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (42)	63 (56)	43 (38)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	138	146	130
	Girls	137	118	115
	Total	275	264	245
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	88 (85)	85 (85)	79 (72)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	47 (51)	64 (58)	48 (44)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	134	145	279

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	66	119	129
	Girls	98	134	142
	Total	164	253	271
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	59 (68)	91 (96)	97 (98)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45 (47.4)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	9
Pakistani	30
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	8
White	1480
Any other minority ethnic group	25

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	45	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	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)	94.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:

Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	19.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	502

Deployment of teachers:

Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	69.8
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Average teaching group size:

Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.6
Key Stage 4	21.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999 - 2000
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	£
Total income	3,553,106.00
Total expenditure	3,550,385.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,281.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	60,881.00
Balance carried forward to next year	63,602.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

1558
274

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	50	7	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	3	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	58	7	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	54	17	3	2
The teaching is good.	35	61	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	47	6	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	32	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	30	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	50	10	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	57	38	3	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	55	3	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	48	3	0	3

[The percentage of responses are rounded to the nearest whole number and thus the sum may not equal 100]

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

ENGLISH

87. By the time pupils reach the age of 14 years, attainment is well above national averages. For example, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected and the higher levels in the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 2000 was well above national averages, as are the standards in the classroom. Although girls perform better than boys, the attainment for both boys and girls as a whole has risen over the past three years, and in 2000 was higher than that of pupils in similar schools. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

88. Most pupils make good progress through Years 7, 8 and 9. Gifted pupils make very good progress, but progress is slower for pupils who have SEN and for some lower attaining pupils. Standards for these pupils have not improved since the last report. The principal reasons for this are that the teaching strategies used in some classes, and the curriculum provided, are not always appropriate.

89. By the time pupils reach the age of 16 years, attainment is well above national averages. For example, the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grade passes in the GCSE English language and literature examinations in 2000 was well above national averages, and these high standards are reflected in the work seen in classrooms. Gifted pupils make very good progress. A feature of these results is the high proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A*, A and B in both English language and literature. This is an improvement since the last report. However, by the end of the key stage, there is still a discrepancy in the attainment and progress between boys and girls and between higher and lower attaining pupils. In English language, where all pupils from the year group are entered, girls do significantly better than boys, even though the proportion of boys achieving A* to C grade passes was above the national average in 2000. The school has recognised this underachievement and has introduced a number of strategies to improve standards. A principal reason for the under-achievement of some lower attaining pupils, and pupils with SEN, is their weaker reading skills. Many of these pupils read satisfactorily, but without full understanding of the text they are reading, and some do not read sufficiently widely.

90. The last report suggested the need for more extended class discussion. This is no longer the case. Most pupils have speaking and listening skills well above national average by the end of each key stage. Pupils listen attentively in class, and whole class and group discussion is everyday practice. There is clear progress in the development of speaking skills throughout the two key stages. For example, Year 7 pupils answer clearly and fluently and usually pertinently: in Year 11 many pupils are confident and polished speakers, capable of constructing a coherent and cogent argument to support a point of view. However, teachers rarely correct pupils on the occasions when some slip into the vernacular.

91. Reading is above the national expectation by the end of each key stage for all but some lower attaining pupils and some pupils with special educational needs. The school has some effective strategies in place to support reading, such as the wider reading lesson for Year 7 pupils and the individual programme for pupils who find reading more difficult. In the wider reading programme, pupils explore a range of genre, write critiques and keep detailed individual records. Overall, there is a lack of a coherent strategy to manage the individual reading of all pupils in

Years 7 to 9. For example, the majority of lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 surveyed are not reading of their own volition, and do not read regularly to a teacher. There is no systematic check on the quality and quantity of material higher attaining pupils read, because reading records are not always completed. Few pupils in the survey chose books from the school library.

92. The quality of most pupils' writing is well above national average by the end of both key stages. A major strength is the curriculum balance between writing across a wide range of forms, the learning of basic skills and writing in response to literature. Much of English teaching is literature based, and the focus on structured writing within clear frameworks provides some effective analytical writing. With regard to writing more generally, teachers employ a wide range of creative approaches to stimulate pupils' interest in writing. The basic skills of grammar, spelling and punctuation are soundly and systematically covered. Teachers use specially prepared school booklets to complement classroom teaching, thus ensuring the continuous and progressive development of basic skills. Whilst these approaches are sufficient for most pupils, they are insufficient for pupils with SEN. The support and teaching strategies employed for these pupils are currently unsatisfactory. Although presentation and handwriting are satisfactory, standards are inconsistent. When pupils word process their assignments, presentation is usually very good.

93. The quality of teaching is good across the subject and particularly at Key Stage 3: it is very good at Key Stage 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection. All of the teaching is at least satisfactory in Key Stage 4 and almost all is satisfactory in Key Stage 3. The majority is at least good in both key stages. A reason for the difference between the two key stages is the higher proportion of very good and excellent teaching in Key Stage 4, where over a third of teaching is very good and a quarter is excellent. Although there is some excellent teaching in Key Stage 3, there was one lesson where teaching of a lower attaining group was unsatisfactory.

94. The high quality of teaching has a significant impact upon learning. In many lessons teachers have a very good command of the subject and high expectations of pupils. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher chaired an in depth discussion of the GCSE text *'My Father'*. Pupils enjoyed the challenge set and responded with a developing interpretation and sensitive appreciation of the text. Much of the teaching is characterised by active approaches to learning through whole class and group discussion. Learning is enhanced in these lessons by the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. A great strength is choosing appropriate activities to motivate pupils. In an imaginative Year 8 lesson, pupils began preparing for a written assignment on the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. One element was to evaluate the relative power of a range of writing techniques and negotiate figures of speech to be used later. Teachers take care to ensure pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning and why. This is achieved through careful planning of sequences of lessons and providing opportunities to evaluate the progress they are making in well-structured lessons. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils learned about dramatic irony as a literary technique and then discussed many examples, recalling their previous knowledge of the play, *'An Inspector Calls'*.

95. Teaching of some lower attaining pupils in Year 9 is particularly good, with teachers finding effective frameworks to support pupils' learning. In a Year 8 lesson, the teacher carefully evaluated pupils' understanding and consolidated their knowledge by checking the interim progress of a homework assignment. Teachers' use of homework to complement and extend class work enhances their learning. At Key Stage 3 much of the basic skills teaching is effectively consolidated through

homework, whilst in Key Stage 4 homework often effectively complements and extends the study of literature. Positive marking of assignments and clear assessment of pupils' progress enhance learning.

96. There are other factors that significantly enhance pupils' learning. Almost all pupils enjoy learning; they establish constructive working relationships with teachers and fellow pupils and work hard, thus contributing to the effectiveness of lessons through group work and class discussions. With the exception of a small group of Year 7 pupils, behaviour is very good. The school has developed a very effective assessment system. In English, this enables the accurate identification of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and helps teachers to place pupils in the groups where they will learn best, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and to set skill-based targets for improvement.

97. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides equal opportunities for pupils. Pupils are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum. The department is beginning to integrate the teaching of ICT into English teaching, although provision is currently inconsistent. The wider reading programme in Year 7 is, in a sense, a forerunner of the National Literacy Strategy now being introduced into all secondary schools, and does not meet requirements fully in its current form. Teachers visit primary schools and have established curriculum links. Provision for pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is good. Teachers take opportunities to discuss these dimensions as they arise naturally from the literature being studied. For example, Year 11 discussed the exploitation of Cambodian clothes trade workers as part of their study of a newspaper article, and Year 10 pupils discussed the social and moral implications of the behaviour of characters from *'Twelfth Night'*. In Year 9, all pupils participate in a 'Drugs or Bust' project. The curriculum is enriched by extra-curricular activities. For example, the week before the inspection, a travelling theatre group performed in school for Year 9. There are a number of theatre visits each year, and visits to places of literary interest, such as Bleak House. Another feature is the production by pupils of a high standard school newspaper, 'The Churchill Clarion', which is sometimes accompanied by a literary supplement.

98. The department is very well led, and its efficient organisation supports teachers in maintaining academic standards. The whole department is housed in a relatively new self-contained block, providing a very good learning environment; the book stock has been improved since the last inspection. The department has made good progress since the last inspection; particular improvements are in pupils' attainment in the end of Key Stage 3 tests and in the GCSE English language and literature examinations.

Drama

99. Although the attainment of pupils in Year 8 is above national expectations, by the age of fourteen it is only in line with them. This is because the higher attaining pupils study an extra modern foreign language, rather than drama, in Year 9. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress in learning drama skills and in working together to create drama. For example, pupils are developing a good understanding of mime that they practise through a range of dramatic styles. Pupils retain concentration and role very well, and the most able pupils develop character convincingly through body language. The attainment and progress of pupils with SEN is satisfactory. By the age of 16, attainment is above the national average for the majority of pupils: this is reflected in the GCSE examination results and the work seen. Pupils make very good progress in drama, working together and effectively improvising scenes. For example, in Years 10 and 11 pupils are involved in a variety of projects, they slip easily into role to establish character and are developing a good sense of movement and awareness

of space. Pupils are less successful in creating a coherent and convincing plot. Pupils with SEN make good progress and their achievement is good.

100. The overall quality of teaching across the key stages is very good, and contributes significantly to pupils' learning. Teachers have good class management skills, particularly in Key Stage 4. This encourages pupils not to waste time but to develop disciplined habits when planning improvisations. Learning is enhanced by well-chosen and creative activities, for example, the use of a selection of hats to enable pupils to develop characterisation. Lessons are well structured, developing skills over time and within lessons. For example, pupils adapt mime to suit a range of styles through a series of lessons. Teachers make sure pupils are clear about lesson objectives, and provide opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own progress and that of others. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. Teachers have a good command of the subject, demonstrate techniques expertly and provide pupils with the confidence to try out new ideas in a non-threatening environment. Pupils behave well and enjoy drama lessons. They work hard, maintain good levels of concentration and their positive attitudes contribute to their learning.

101. Drama accommodation is good and supports pupils' learning. The curriculum, to which all have equal access, is broad and balanced, and, at Key Stage 4, meets the GCSE examination requirements. The unit-based scheme of work ensures knowledge and skills are learned continuously and progressively during Key Stage 3. The take-up of drama at Key Stage 4 has increased, as has the involvement in the recreational drama groups and the dance recreational group. The extra-curricular provision complements and extends the work in the classroom. In alternate years drama and dance productions are presented. Pupils take the initiative to organise additional activities, including a primary school tour each Christmas, performing and organising workshops. Provision for pupils' spiritual, social and moral education is good. The department is very well led and efficiently organised. This has a positive impact on teaching and learning in the classroom. The wide range of new initiatives has encouraged the development of the subject and led to an increase in the numbers of pupils studying drama.

Media Studies

102. The report is drawn from a small sample of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' assignments and discussions with teachers and pupils. By the age of 16 years, attainment, as reflected in examination results and work seen, is well above national averages. Examination results have improved over the past three years. Pupils make good progress in class. In one lesson, Year 11 pupils watched a series of video clips and were able to analyse a range of strategies used to make documentaries. In a Year 10 class, pupils demonstrated good knowledge of the features of advertisements and are developing frameworks for their analysis. Pupils have completed project work in readiness for examinations, for example, a films project. These are detailed and very well presented with a good balance between description and analysis.

103. The quality of teaching is good. Pupils benefit from some team teaching in both year groups. These lessons are followed by consolidation and extension work in the smaller class groups. This approach was effectively used in a lesson on advertising, when both teachers taught different aspects of the subject. An outside speaker contributed to the very effective learning because of the ability of the teacher to identify key points from the effective presentation made by the visiting expert. Teachers have a good command of the subject, have high expectations of pupils and are well prepared. This careful

preparation enables pupils to build knowledge and skills continuously and progressively. Pupils rise to challenges and the result is high quality whole class discussion. The range of attainment is very wide, and in class there is an occasional tendency to fail to provide appropriate frameworks to support all pupils.

104. Pupils' positive attitudes enhance their learning. They enjoy the subject and have a high level of commitment. Pupils listen carefully to others, are keen to apply their previous knowledge and contribute ideas in discussion. Accommodation and resources for media studies are barely satisfactory and do not facilitate learning. Resource materials such as equipment, class books, reference books and other materials are minimal.

105. The department is well led and the efficient organisation supports pupils' learning. The curriculum, which is broad and balanced and to which all have access, provides a wide range of learning opportunities and meets examination requirements. Extra-curricular provision complements and extends pupils' learning and is a strong feature of the department's work. There are visits to television studios. Provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, principally because teachers find time to discuss issues raised by media practice.

MATHEMATICS

106. Good progress has been made in tackling the issues raised at the last inspection. Teaching has improved and standards have risen. The trend of external assessment results is upward, with particularly good improvement in the results achieved by the higher attaining pupils. Standards reached by pupils are well above national averages by age 14 and 16 years. Data collected by the school shows that pupils' attainment in mathematics on entry to the school in Year 7 is broadly average.

107. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is well above national averages, with some pupils in the highest sets reaching very high standards. The National Curriculum Key Stage 3 test results in 2000 confirm this, with results that are well above national averages, and also well above those of similar schools. In the 2000 end of Key Stage 3 tests over a third of pupils reached Level 7 or above.

108. By the end of Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils have very good algebraic skills. Average attaining pupils can calculate the interior and exterior angles of regular polygons and lower attaining pupils can calculate simple percentages and place numbers to three places of decimals in the correct order. The increasing emphasis in lessons on improving mental recall and agility has resulted in pupils achieving very good standards in numeracy. They are able to carry out calculations quickly and accurately.

109. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are reaching standards well above national averages, with some pupils in the highest sets achieving very high standards. The 2000 GCSE results are well above national averages at A* to C and at A* to G. Comparison of the 2000 GCSE results with those of schools with similar prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998, shows that pupils did much better than expected, particularly the higher attaining pupils. Overall, pupils do well in mathematics in comparison to their GCSE performance in other subjects.

110. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils can simplify a wide range of algebraic expressions. They can use a number of methods that include computer-aided graphics to solve cubic

equations. They are able to choose from, and use successfully, a wide range of skills to answer increasingly complex problems. The standards reached by pupils in the top set in Year 10 are sufficiently high for them to move on to GCE Advanced Subsidiary work next year. Average attaining pupils can apply the correct formulae to the solution of problems, for example using inverse or direct proportion. They can investigate problems methodically, using diagrams to collect data, tabulate it and look for emerging patterns. Lower attaining pupils can calculate the area of a number of shapes, and calculate the mode mean and median of a set of data. They can apply standard techniques to more straightforward questions, but have more difficulties in coping with unusual or complex ones.

111. Over the past four years, there have been some fluctuations in test and examination results by both girls and boys. There is, however, no significant difference in their performances over the period that is due to gender. In a small number of the teaching groups there is a much higher proportion of one gender than the other. For example in one of the top sets in Year 11 there are many more boys than girls. The school continues to monitor the composition of teaching groups and the relative performance of girls and boys within them. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. In general, standards are similar across all aspects of mathematics, and particularly good use is made of ICT to help pupils' learning in mathematics.

112. Achievement is very good for most pupils throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Very good teaching, pupils' positive attitudes, hard work and very good behaviour are all factors in this progress. Pupils enjoy learning mathematics and are keen to participate in lessons. Most of the pupils work well together, either in practical activities or in discussing the next steps in difficult questions. Relationships with teachers are very good, and pupils feel that additional help is always available outside lessons if they need it. GCSE coursework clinics are an example of this. The lively and colourful displays in mathematics corridors and classrooms form a stimulating backdrop to their work and help them to enjoy the subject. Setting in all years helps teachers to target work more closely for each group. In some teaching groups in Year 7 there is a wider range of attainment than in other years: this makes targeting more difficult to achieve.

113. At Key Stage 3, pupils develop a strong skill base across all aspects of mathematics, with particular strengths in numeracy and in explaining what methods they are using and why. Their work at Key Stage 4 builds on this, and provides very good opportunities for mathematically gifted pupils to extend rapidly their knowledge and skills. A small proportion of pupils, especially on the lower and average attaining pupil borderline, do not make as much progress as other groups, and could do better. These pupils are not prepared to work as hard, are not as well prepared for lessons and so do not make the best use of time as others. This is reflected in their examination results. Pupils who have SEN make very good progress.

114. The quality of teaching was very good overall. It was outstanding in well over an eighth of the lessons observed, very good in a quarter, good in about a third and satisfactory in the rest. There were no lessons when teaching was unsatisfactory. This is much better than at the last inspection, and shows the positive impact on teaching of the sharing of good practice within departmental workshops. This is due to the good, enthusiastic and energetic leadership of the new head and deputy in the department, both of whom started in September 2000.

115. The strengths of teaching include very good class management, with a clear basis of classroom routines, and the ability to present mathematical ideas and methods in ways that are appropriate to different groups of pupils. These include using a much more structured, step-by-step approach with

practical activities, working at a more abstract level and encouraging pupils to tease out the different ways in which complex problems can be tackled. In one lesson at Key Stage 3 with low attaining pupils, teaching was outstanding, as well established classroom routines combined with a lively imaginative approach, helped pupils to place numbers given to three places of decimals in the correct order. Teachers also make very good use of time. The practice of using a short sequence of questions, often oral, at the beginning of lessons helps pupils to focus quickly on learning mathematics. Some teachers are good at reviewing the work of the lesson by getting pupils to summarise what they have learnt. This helps to identify any areas that need revisiting, and helps pupils to compare different methods of approaching the same problem. When teaching is very good or outstanding, skilled use is made of ICT, including the use of the overhead projector, to present ideas. Well prepared sequences, for example number patterns or diagrams of polygons, are of a high standard. The effective use of educational technology helps teachers to make the best use of available time, to produce quickly a wide range of questions, and to spend more time with those pupils who need more help.

116. When teaching is satisfactory, rather than good or better, the teacher often spends too much time with individuals, as opposed to working with the whole class. Sometimes this can be because these pupils are not settling down to work, or have not fully understood the tasks. This can lead to slower progress for other pupils, who take the opportunity to stop working for a short time. Another characteristic of satisfactory, rather than better, teaching is that higher attaining pupils are not given sufficiently demanding work quickly enough.

117. There is currently some monitoring of teaching in the department, and new strategies for teaching are developed in staff workshops. However, more systematic classroom observation and planned scrutiny of written work is being developed to ensure that best practices continue to be identified and shared and high standards of written as well as oral work are maintained.

118. Pupils' work is usually marked regularly, and feedback on work carried out in class is clear. Pupils know how well they are doing and what are the areas they have to work at to improve; oral feedback in class is particularly useful for this. Homework reinforces work done in class. Presentation of written work is often good, but sometimes not enough care is taken. For example, diagrams are not carefully drawn and necessary steps in working not shown. The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a good, enjoyable experience for pupils.

SCIENCE

119. On entry to the school, pupils' standards in science are slightly above national averages and have been so for several years. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the average point score is well above the national average, and the proportion achieving Level 5 and above and Level 6 or better is also well above national and local averages. The average point score has been steadily well above national averages over the last three years for both boys and girls, whilst there have been improvements in line with national trends in the percentage achieving Level 5 and above and Level 6 or better. Nevertheless, taking all three measures into account, standards are less good in science than in the other core subjects. Work observed, and answers given by pupils, suggest that most are achieving at or above expected levels, although there are a few pupils with SEN who are not achieving within the expected range. Comparison with local data shows that overall, all pupils make comparable progress at Key Stage 3, with higher attaining girls slightly outperforming local comparisons and lower attaining girls performing a little less well.

120. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of the cohort achieving GCSE grades in the A*to C range in either dual award science or all three separate sciences is above the national average. Between 15 and 20 per cent of the cohort have achieved grades A* or A through one of these routes –

figures well above national and local comparators. Pupils' work shows very high levels of achievement, especially in top sets and among separate science groups. Comparison with other schools show progress from Key Stage 3 to GCSE to be close to local averages and slightly above national averages, leading to satisfactory progress in science across the school.

121. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good within the department. They show respect for each other and the equipment provided, paying good attention to health and safety issues. Relationships between pupils and staff and among pupils are positive and constructive throughout the department. The atmosphere is relaxed, but with a clear common agenda of pupils' learning and achievement. Pupils are universally polite and forthcoming to visitors, and talk confidently and positively about their experience in science. They listen attentively and learn productively as individuals, in groups and through demonstrations.

122. Teaching is satisfactory or better in all lessons, with more than two thirds good or very good. Teachers show superb subject knowledge and enthusiastically put this to good effect, particularly at Key Stage 4. Revision strategies to prepare pupils for forthcoming end of Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations are sophisticated and wide-ranging, recognising many different learning styles and gaining above average attainment in external assessments. In a Year 9 lesson for lower attaining pupils, a combination of word-searches and quizzes generated by pupils using ICT, video extracts and sections of test questions on light and sound consolidated and enhanced learning. Methodology in other lessons is good, and uses a highly structured approach targeted at specific objectives from the National Curriculum and GCSE programmes of study. A Year 8 lesson, on whether chlorophyll is necessary to make starch, enabled pupils to build their understanding of photosynthesis and link it to other knowledge. Explanations of concepts are good, and in most lessons build on pupil's suggestions and ideas. In a few lessons, the introduction to the lesson involves pupils in extended listening, missing opportunities for more active engagement in learning. In one Year 7 lesson, during the first 50 minutes, listening and some closed questioning were the only activities, allowing passivity from some pupils and reduced learning. Opportunities are limited for pupils to apply their good understanding of concepts in more open and demanding work. Science Attainment Target 1 activities provide opportunities for open-ended investigations. The scope to encourage this in some lessons addressing objectives from Attainment Targets 2, 3 and 4 is not always fully exploited. For example, in a Year 10 chemistry lesson on rates of reaction, a method was given, when most pupils were well able to plan how to find out the effect of different factors. Marking is thorough and usually provides constructive feedback, although this varies from teacher to teacher.

123. Schemes of work are excellent. They are clear and itemise objectives, differentiated activities and resources for each lesson. They are stored on a computer and updated regularly by all staff in the light of experience and detailed review. The Key Stage 3 plan, based on a published scheme, was found to have shortcomings, and a more appropriate new programme is being phased in. In developing this, more account is being taken of primary school liaison and progression through Key Stage 3. Good attention is paid to numeracy, whilst technical word banks and reading aloud are used to develop literacy. ICT usage is planned in most topics and is well used for data logging, computer-aided learning and research. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is planned by teachers on an individual basis, and is relatively ad hoc. References to current issues, such as being space tourists and blindness from cataracts in the third world, were numerous. Whilst an excellent reflection on the meaning of life was observed

in an astronomy lesson, there is little evidence of planning this dimension into schemes of work. At departmental level, assessment and tracking are very well developed, and used to inform curricular and lesson planning. The department has paid some attention to appropriate strategies for the lowest attaining pupils: this is now being further developed. Programmes for gifted pupils, using Woking College and the University of Surrey, enhance their understanding in science, and some pupils attend science and astronomy clubs.

124. Accommodation and resources are adequate, although the quality of the accommodation and the quantity of resources inhibit learning in some lessons. Teachers are well qualified and suitably deployed. The four laboratory technicians support the work of the department and are used to assist in lessons when the equipment demands of the lesson activities are high. A comprehensive database of resources helps to make effective use of what is available, to save teachers' time and avoid frustrating clashes for limited apparatus and other learning resources. The location of 12 rooms in a single block is an asset and helps joint planning and timely, efficient resource provision. Displays enliven all the laboratories and mask some of the less attractive décor.

125. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The teamwork of the department is outstanding. Six teachers have major co-ordination responsibilities, and all, except recently qualified teachers, share in managing the work of the department. The department is self-critical and has collectively identified appropriate priorities for building on their current good performance. The lack of a clear head of department has led to discussion about how the department addresses issues such as educational leadership, relations outside the department and accountability. These have yet to be resolved, especially in the context of performance management. There is scope to make further use of formal lesson observation and work scrutiny to enhance professional development. Progress has been made since the last inspection in assessment, the effective use of resources including ICT and developing methodology. Differentiation within lessons and the overall management structure are receiving continuing attention.

ART

126. On entry to the school at the beginning of Key Stage 3, pupils achieve standards which are in line with national expectations overall. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards achieved are in line with national expectations and pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above national expectations. The proportion of GCSE grades A* to C increased considerably in both 1999 and 2000, compared with 1998. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 4.

127. Girls' achievement is higher than boys' in both Key Stages 3 and 4, as the girls work more consistently in lessons than boys. At Key Stage 3, all pupils develop skills in handling a range of materials for producing work in two and three dimensions. They draw from observation and use the drawings to develop paintings. For example, pupils in Year 7 used a range of mark-making techniques to produce pencil drawings of shells, which were developed into larger paintings relating to the sea. High attaining pupils use materials with sensitivity. Paintings of vegetables by high attaining pupils in Year 9 used complementary colours as a starting point for developing unusual and individual colour schemes. At Key Stage 4, pupils extend and apply their technical skills. For example, pupils in Year 10 produced some detailed design work based on art nouveau and art deco, using collage materials.

Pupils are introduced to the work of a range of artists from a variety of cultures at both Key Stages 3 and 4.

128. Pupils' behaviour is mostly good at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils enjoy the work and respond particularly well when they are given the opportunity to use their imaginations and develop ideas that they can relate to their own experience. For example, in a piece of work based on signs of the zodiac, pupils in Year 8 understood how to use symbolism and imagery to create an abstract representation of personality. At Key Stage 4, a number of pupils who have not been able to select art within the option system seek the opportunity to work towards the GCSE examination during enhancement sessions. Pupils in both key stages are confident and articulate in one-to-one discussions. Girls' concentration is better than that of boys in many classes, although boys often contribute more readily to class discussion.

129. Teaching is good overall and at both Key Stages 3 and 4. The quality of teaching was good in just over three-fifths of lessons and satisfactory in the remainder. Lessons are clearly planned, with useful worksheets and examples provided, so that pupils understand the process of learning. Demonstrations of technique by teachers help to develop pupils' skills and enable them to relate to the teachers as artists. Lessons are most lively and successful when pupils are drawn into and contribute to activities. Homework is used constructively to enable pupils to progress with work in class. Lessons are mostly well paced so that pupils make good use of time. The sharing and development of successful planning and teaching styles help to ensure that both boys and girls participate fully in lessons and that teachers use a range of strategies for supporting low attaining pupils at Key Stage 3. Assessment and marking are used successfully to enable individual targets to be set for all pupils and to encourage them to improve achievement. However, the provision of subject-specific level descriptors for pupils and parents would enhance their understanding of assessment

130. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through providing opportunities for them to reflect on themselves and to explore the work of artists. The schemes of work offer rich possibilities for developing this aspect further, especially in the context of considering western contemporary and other cultures. Visits to galleries at Key Stage 4 and access to the art rooms after school extend pupils' learning opportunities. However, there are few visits organised for pupils at Key Stage 3 and no opportunities for pupils to work with visiting artists, designers or arts professionals at Key Stage 3 or at Key Stage 4. The subject-specific use of ICT in art is limited throughout, and needs to be integrated more effectively into pupils' learning to comply with National Curriculum requirements.

131. The head of department works with a committed team of teachers who provide a wide range of specialist knowledge. Since the last inspection, teachers have worked hard to provide resources so that all pupils now experience a range of three-dimensional work. Working space is still limited for larger groups at Key Stage 3, and storage space within the department is inadequate. These two factors restrict the scale of work that can be attempted. The department is in a position to develop an individual identity that exploits the wide range of skills and interests of its staff and enables them to develop further their potential for providing an exciting art experience for pupils.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

132. The standards achieved by pupils in all DT material disciplines in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were well above national averages. The courses pupils followed included graphic products, resistant materials and textiles technology. The GCSE results in textile technology have been consistently very high over the past three years with only one result lower than a grade C in this time. The GCSE results in home economics subjects in 2000 were also well above national averages. The GCSE courses followed in this area were food and nutrition and child development. The results in food and nutrition were very high. There have been some fluctuations in GCSE outcomes over the last three years, but the results in 2000 show a significant rise in the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in graphic products and resistant materials. The very high standards achieved by pupils following courses in food and nutrition and textile technology in 1999 were maintained in 2000.

133. Girls achieve significantly higher GCSE outcomes than boys and also demonstrate higher attainment in DT and home economics than in their other GCSE subjects. The margin between girls' and boys' attainment is considerably higher than that found nationally, and is evidence of significant added value in terms of the progress that girls make at GCSE level across the whole department. Although significantly higher than national comparisons, the overall attainment of boys is, on average, one and a half GCSE grades lower than those gained by girls. The boys' GCSE results in DT are not significantly different from those in their other subjects. By comparison this performance data indicates significant underachievement by boys within the DT area.

134. In lessons at Key Stage 4, standards are above national averages in food and textiles technology but are just in line with average attainment in resistant materials and graphics products. In a Year 11 food and nutrition revision lesson, pupils showed impressive levels of subject knowledge and understanding when answering questions across a broad range of topic areas concerning food preparation, cooking methods and healthy diets. In a Year 11 graphic products revision lesson, however, the pupils' understanding of pictorial drawing methods needed reinforcement although the levels of skill demonstrated in the construction of a simple orthographic drawing were only average.

135. At Key Stage 3, standards of attainment in lessons are in line with expectations overall. However, there are marked differences between the high standards that pupils achieve in food and textiles technology in comparison with the standards achieved in resistant materials and graphics, which are well below average. Assignments in food and textile technology require pupils to identify the user and the purpose of the products they are creating. As a consequence they are required to take account of others' needs and views and to consider the environment in which the product would be used or sold. Standards of designing and making in these areas are equally high. In a Year 9 textile lesson, pupils were in the final stages of designing decorative drawstring bags to be sold at The London Aquarium. Each pupil's design was entirely personal and showed evidence of individual decision making and choice of decorative techniques. The standards of presentation were very high across the range of attainment. In a Year 7 food lesson pupils are able to consider the implications of using different toppings for a pizza, considering the taste of the finished product and the time it would take to cook. However, in the resistant materials aspect of DT, standards are much lower in designing than in making. The weaknesses in standards arise from the prescribed nature of assignments and the lack of opportunity for pupils to make individual design decisions and choices. Many of the tasks lack an effective context, and pupils are not required to conduct research or to identify and apply design criteria to inform the generation and development of their ideas. In a Year 8 graphics lesson, for instance, pupils were asked to design a board game without any consideration of who it was for; the book, CD

or tape support assignment offered to Year 9 pupils in a resistant materials lesson was very prescribed. In these lessons the expectation that pupils would produce creative and imaginative work is very low. At Key Stage 3 girls achieve significantly higher standards than boys in all material areas do.

136. Pupils' attitudes to the subject in both key stages are very positive, with good levels of attention to teachers' demonstrations, explanations and instructions. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good, and working relationships between pupils and with teachers and other adults are very strong and support high quality learning. Pupils follow established routines, and when making products they work safely and hygienically with tools, equipment and machinery.

137. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching is excellent or very good in under a third of lessons, good in a fifth and satisfactory in under a third. In the remaining three lessons teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, these lessons being in resistant materials at Key Stage 3. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory overall but is inconsistent across the department and ranges from outstanding to poor. All excellent, very good or good teaching takes place in food and textiles. There is less difference at Key Stage 4 where the quality of teaching is good overall. However, most of the good or very good teaching is found in food and textiles lessons. The quality of teaching in resistant materials and graphics products is satisfactory and occasionally good in Key Stage 4.

138. Strengths in teaching are secure subject knowledge and effective use of resources and visual aids. In lessons where teaching is of high quality, the clear learning objectives are matched by well chosen teaching strategies. Pupils' motivation and interest in these lessons is well supported by teacher interventions at individual pupil and whole class levels. Question and answer sessions are effective in testing and securing pupils' knowledge and understanding of manufacturing techniques, tools, equipment and processes. In these lessons, pupils make good progress in developing skills and completing work. Many pupils show good levels of independence and can overcome problems.

139. A feature of the high quality teaching is the accurate assessments used effectively to inform teachers' expectations of pupils. These assessments are carefully referenced to National Curriculum criteria, and teachers are involved in regular moderation work to ensure that appropriate standards are consistently applied. Marking is also detailed, and written feedback helps pupils to know how to improve the quality and standard of their work. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, prescribed activities and workbooks constrain pupils' creative responses and their level of engagement with the work. In these lessons, pupils' learning needs are not well supported, and the lack of challenge leads to underachievement, particularly for higher attaining pupils. The pace of learning in these lessons is often slow and there is variation in pupils' levels of application, concentration and interest. Linked to the lower quality teaching is cursory marking of pupils' work, with little developmental commentary to move them forward. Assessments are not well used to inform teachers' expectations and are not sufficiently referenced to national standards.

140. The Key Stage 3 curriculum does not provide pupils with experiences of modern materials, control, pneumatics and computer-aided design and manufacture. There is also insufficient progression of experience for pupils in electronics, mechanisms and the use of ICT. A recent development however, has been an effective ICT based module linked to food technology. There are detailed schemes of work for food and textiles that support high quality teaching and learning, but there is no scheme of work to guide teaching in resistant materials and graphics. DT is optional at Key Stage 4 and only about half of the pupil population in Years 10 and 11 study the subject. This contravenes the statutory requirement for all pupils to experience the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and no

progress has been made on this issue since the inspection in 1996. The reason provided by the school is the lack of appropriately qualified technology teachers applying for vacant posts. There is insufficient planned use of ICT at Key Stage 4, and no resources to support the teaching of computer-aided design and manufacture in resistant materials or graphic products GCSE courses.

141. There is strong and effective leadership in the areas of food and textiles that contributes to the consistently high quality of teaching and learning, which has been maintained since the last inspection. The facilities for textiles have been much improved since the last inspection. The quality of leadership in the graphics and resistant materials area is weak, however, and lacks strategies to make the necessary improvements in provision and in standards and quality of teaching. There are currently no working links between the two sides of the department. The lack of sharing of work schemes and pupil assessments leads to significant inconsistencies, both in practice and in the quality of the pupils' technology experiences. This seriously inhibits pupils' progress at Key Stage 3 and prevents the sharing of good practice across the range of GCSE courses at Key Stage 4. The management and organisation of all work areas is good, and some rooms contain high quality displays that are effective in celebrating achievement and providing good exemplars to support pupils' learning. Significant investment is required to provide the department with the equipment and resources needed to meet the latest curriculum requirements at both key stages.

GEOGRAPHY

142. Attainment by age 14 is consistently well above average for both boys and girls. This is supported both by work seen during the inspection and by the Year 9 teacher assessments of National Curriculum Levels. Pupils' numeracy skills are supported by very good development of map and graph skills in Years 7 to 9. The frequent use of co-ordinates, work on cross sections and a well developed understanding of the purposes of different graphs all support and develop numeracy skills. Reading aloud, the use of glossaries and clearly displayed technical word banks provide good support for developing pupils' literacy. Pupils use and understand key terms and develop a range of writing and research skills through fieldwork, use of ICT and detailed studies, as shown by the creative displays of Year 8 work on rivers and Niagara Falls.

143. By age 16, attainment is well above average. GCSE results are well above average for those gaining grades in the A* to C range and for the proportion gaining A* and A grades. Work seen during the inspection showed that standards of written work were good overall: higher attaining pupils produced detailed work of a very good standard. Pupils across the range of attainment produce analytical writing. In extended projects standards are good and the range includes some that is excellent. One piece is based on coastal processes and management studies in the field, and the other is based on a tourism study using research information. All pupils use research skills effectively and write clear conclusions based on evidence.

144. By the end of Year 9 pupils have developed very good skills of presentation. They work hard, produce an impressive amount of written and diagrammatic work and almost all pupils complete the work set. They are encouraged to use a variety of writing styles. In Year 8 both spider diagrams and fact files were used when studying floods. In Year 9, the use of ICT enabled pupils to produce good quality news reports on the Kobe earthquake disaster. In Year 7, diary entries about impressions on moving from a rural to an urban area, encouraged creativity. All pupils develop good research skills through fieldwork and through class work that is based on enquiry methods. Higher attaining pupils

achieve very good standards of extended and analytical writing and produce good annotated maps and diagrams. Lower attaining and pupils who have SEN use structured writing tasks, graph templates and outline diagrams to assist their learning and to encourage accuracy. They make progress that is never less than satisfactory. Progress is good where some lower attaining pupils have been challenged by the use of more open-ended tasks.

145. By the end of Year 11 all pupils show satisfactory to very good understanding of their class studies and coursework. There is good development of knowledge and good use of key terms, demonstrated by oral responses and class activities, both related to very good listening skills. Extended writing is well developed through a variety of tasks, for instance in letters to the Prime minister about world trade and debt issues, answers to previous examination questions and environmental management studies on the Florida Everglades using ICT. Lower attaining pupils are encouraged to complete all work with the use of outline structures and tables, in, for example, studies of industrial change in South Wales, and writing frames for studies on issues about the Norfolk Broads. All pupils complete class work.

146. Most pupils have very good listening skills, behave well in class and have good Levels of concentration. However, some lower attaining pupils in Year 7 have only satisfactory listening skills and poor concentration. Most pupils work well in groups and co-operate well with each other. Relationships with other pupils and with teachers are good.

147. Teaching is good overall and very good with GCSE pupils. Teaching was very good in just under half of the lessons observed, good in a similar proportion and satisfactory in the remainder. None were unsatisfactory. The few weaknesses include loss of pace in some classes with lower attaining pupils and lack of extension work. Occasionally teachers talk too much and disturb pupils' concentration. In most lessons teaching is good or very good and learning is always at least satisfactory. In a Year 7 lesson with low attaining pupils, there was initially poor concentration. However, by the end of the lesson all the pupils were confident in using a blank outline map and key to produce a map of Cambridge illustrating the key features of its location. In a Year 11 lesson on issues related to world trade, an excellent video promoted good, positive images of people and problems in Tanzania. This was followed by the use of a very good pupil information sheet and time spent in discussion, to enable extended letters to be written about international debt and aid. In another lesson on water supply for low attaining Year 9 pupils, the good variety of tasks and very good pupil-teacher relationships led to excellent concentration and quality of work. Teachers plan their lessons well, there are varied activities and pupils are expected to produce good work all the time. These high expectations allied to very good planning promote good to very good learning in almost all lessons. Pupils' oral responses to questioning, their own ability to question and the quality of work seen in their books, all indicate good learning and progress.

148. Management of the subject is very good. Leadership by the committed head of department is excellent. There is a manageable yet comprehensive handbook that includes a wide range of department policies and a realistic development plan. Assessment is thorough and very well organised. Marking is regular and is supported by constructive comments. Teaching is monitored, and initial teacher training students and newly qualified teachers are individually

mentored and supported. Fieldwork and the use of ICT for lessons and homework is well managed, and has been creatively planned to maximise opportunities for all the large year groups. Planning for the development and consolidation of pupils' skills is excellent. Accommodation is satisfactory, with excellent displays to enliven the environment and support learning for pupils and teachers.

149. Since the last inspection, attainment has improved to well above national averages, and all low ability pupils make satisfactory to good progress. Planning for fieldwork and for the use of ICT is now very good. Imaginative planning has been used to ensure all pupils have some fieldwork experience. Further improvements to already good practice could include a greater awareness by teachers of the opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, improved subject targets for EPS, extension work for lower attaining pupils and the further involvement of all pupils in their own learning.

HISTORY

150. In recent GCSE examinations, results in both the A* to C and A* to G range have fluctuated at or above national averages, although they fell slightly below these norms in the year 2000. In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection, standards were high throughout the age range. The seeds of this achievement are being sown from the outset, as pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject rapidly in Year 7. They also learn to organise information, and are soon at ease with the critical use of sources. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 7 lesson, during which pupils made very good progress in examining the importance of the church in medieval society. Higher attaining pupils in particular are able to write for a variety of purposes. In this context, some very good extended writing was seen from Year 9 pupils, on the plight of soldiers during the First World War. The work took the form of letters home giving very detailed insights into trench warfare conditions. As a result of these advances in subject skills, standards are above national expectations for most pupils by the end of Year 9. These high Levels are maintained in Years 10 and 11, so that, by the age of 16, most pupils have developed a detailed knowledge of the subject and can analyse historical documents in considerable depth. At this stage, Year 11 pupils are also refining their note-taking skills and are producing mature pieces of extended writing on, for example, various aspects of Soviet Russia.

151. The attitudes of pupils are always positive and behaviour is mostly very good. They show a clear commitment to learning and enjoy history lessons. They respond very well to challenges, and a purposeful classroom atmosphere is maintained in all lessons, based on mutual respect. This was shown particularly well in a Year 9 lesson, during which pupils showed considerable skill and high Levels of concentration as they examined conflicting sources on the quality of life in Nazi Germany.

152. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory; in half of the lessons teaching was very good, a third it was good and in the remainder it was satisfactory. All teachers have a very sound and secure grasp of subject knowledge and this is used very effectively to give pupils the confidence to become active learners and budding historians. The promotion of very good relationships helps teachers and pupils to explore historical issues together, through questioning and discussion. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 11 lesson, in which pupils explored the causes and events of the Russian revolution: very clear guidance was given to pupils on how to improve their answers in order to achieve high grades in the imminent GCSE examination. Classroom management is strong, and high expectations from all teachers lend an air of rigour and purpose to classroom activities. Lessons are planned well but there are occasions when teacher talk tends to predominate, and not enough time is given at the end of lessons for pupils to reflect on their progress. All pupils are encouraged to take part

in classroom debate, and they do so with enthusiasm and maturity. At times, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to benefit from working on activities in groups. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject through extension work. Lower attaining pupils, and those with SEN, are supported well in the classroom. The department is producing a good range of materials to suit their individual needs. This has addressed an issue arising from the last inspection report.

153. The department has many strong points, chief among which is a dedicated teaching team with an admirable mixture of youth and experience. It is very well led with efficiency and enthusiasm. The monitoring of pupils' performance is very thorough and there is a strong commitment to raising standards of literacy for all pupils. Marking techniques are thorough, but some lower attaining pupils need more specific advice on how to improve their written work. There is a highly commendable programme of visits to enhance the taught curriculum, including a visit to Russia for Years 10 and 11. Members of the department have produced some very thorough booklets to support published materials in the classroom, and, during the inspection, some excellent examples were seen from Year 7 pupils of games they had produced to support their learning on medieval castles. Display is used imaginatively to enhance the learning environment in classrooms and corridors. The use of information and communications technology has improved since the previous inspection and the department has plans to develop this area of its work still further.

154. Overall, the history department has maintained the high standards noted in the previous report. The very high uptake of the subject in Years 10 and 11 is testament to the dedication and hard work of a very strong teaching team. There are clear plans for further development and the department has the undoubted ability to achieve these aims.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

155. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are well above national average. Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 shows that the majority of pupils are working at, or above Level 5, with one-third at Levels 7 and 8. Results at Key Stage 4 are also well above national expectations. At GCSE Level, the results in 2000 are above national expectations, with almost all pupils achieving higher grade passes, and two-thirds gaining A and B grades. The results in the first unit tests of the GNVQ are also very good, with almost all pupils gaining a pass and half achieving a merit. Boys and girls perform equally well at both key stages, and work collaboratively in class.

156. At Key Stage 3, pupils are able to save information and to use their skills to organise and present their work in an appropriate way for the subject being studied. A Year 7 English class was observed editing and writing poetry. To do this effectively, they selected the font best suited to their theme: they were able to manipulate both text and layout. A pupil who had written a poem contrasting the imagery of the city with a jungle had imported graphics of skyscrapers and tall jungle trees to the presentation. Two pupils in Year 7 had produced an excellent game on CD-ROM, based on attacking a medieval castle in response to a history task. Year 8 mathematics groups were seen producing a graph using a spreadsheet application and evaluating the most effective form of presentation.

157. At Key Stage 4, pupils are able to work independently, and to apply their ICT skills to their studies in a range of subjects appropriately and effectively. For example, pupils studying GCSE PE

improve their basketball skills by using digital cameras to analyse their technique, and in geography pupils access census data. Pupils during their GNVQ course produce some excellent work; for example one pupil produced a graph to show how the behaviour of pupils affected the quality of homework.

158. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils is excellent. They are positive, enjoy the lessons and are interested in the subject. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have become independent learners. They endeavour to work out the solutions to their problems before seeking help from teachers, who explain the processes involved for the pupils to apply themselves. This has a good effect on standards and attainment. In many lessons at Key Stage 4, pupils were seen to work collaboratively, the lower attaining pupils being included in activities by the higher attaining pupils; there is a genuine sense of collegiality which helps all pupils work to the best of their abilities, resulting in high attainment and good progress.

159. Teaching is a significant strength of the department's work, and is very good overall. Teaching in three fifths of lessons observed was very good, a small amount was excellent and in the remainder it was good. The high quality of teaching is the result of careful planning that addresses the learning objectives, which are made clear to the pupils. Lessons have a good pace, which is maintained by the teacher interjecting frequently and by personal comments and advice to the individual pupils. Pupils are challenged in lessons, and they work in an environment of high expectations. Success is always rewarded, and failure is used to make individual suggestions that act as learning targets. Question and answer sessions are used to reinforce previous learning, assess pupils' understanding and extend thinking about the implications of what they are learning. All the teaching seen was lively and stimulating, and based on excellent pupil-teacher relations. Appropriate homework is set, which develops the work in class. Marking is diagnostic and effective in showing pupils where they can improve their work.

160. ICT in the school is meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The assessment of progress in Key Stage 4 is good, and the scheme of work is detailed. The cross-curricular provision of ICT at Key Stage 3 is mostly effective, although there is some weakness in the delivery of control and mapping. The subject areas have clear guidance on the assessment of their assigned aspect of ICT, and progress is recorded on the staff network, so that the co-ordinator of Key Stage 3 is able to track the progress of all pupils. The management of the subject by the co-ordinators of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is therefore a strong feature of the department's work, and has a positive impact on the standards attained and the progress pupils make.

161. Pupils who have SEN are provided for with sensitivity and are making good progress. Resources are good and the developments in the provision of ICT since the last inspection are very good. This progress is the result of the careful targeting of resources by the governing body, the quality of the school's leadership in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection, and the vision of the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 co-ordinators of ICT.

162. To continue the development of ICT, further attention should be given to a programme of training for teachers in Key Stage 3, and to the sharing of good practice that already exists in the school. The co-ordinators of the key stages may benefit from training beyond the school, to ensure that they continue to be fully informed about developments in the subject. Further development of assessment procedures at Key Stage 3 is planned to ensure standards are consistent across subject departments.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

163. Pupils' attainment upon entry in French is uneven. Many pupils have a basic knowledge of vocabulary categories such as numbers, days, months and colours and they are additionally able to understand and give simple personal details. Some pupils have more limited knowledge than this, and a few have no experience of the subject at all. The Year 9 teacher assessments in 2000 were well above the national average, with about three-quarters of pupils reaching or exceeding the average. There has been a consistent pattern to GCSE results over recent years. In the past three years, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in both GCSE French and German has been well above the national average. The number of A* and A grades during the same period has been substantially above the national average. In the 2000 GCSE examination in French, pupils achieved nearly three times more A* and A grades than the national average. The difference in attainment between boys and girls broadly reflects the national picture.

164. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are generally above the national average in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening skills are good because of the extensive and consistent use of the foreign language in lessons by nearly all teachers, and frequent exposure to recorded material. Many pupils can reply confidently with good accents to questions from the teacher, and they can initiate short dialogues in pairs. Pupils of all Levels of attainment are also encouraged to use a range of tenses in their replies. There are more limited opportunities for pupils to use the language spontaneously, or for group interaction. Some teachers do insist, however, that pupils make requests, such as to close the window or to ask for a new book, in the foreign language. Reading skills are generally well developed, with the use of worksheets to supplement the textbook. The modern languages book club, used mainly by Year 7 pupils, provides good opportunities to read for pleasure in the foreign language. It would be valuable to offer a reading programme for all pupils that could be incorporated into the schemes of work. Pupils make very rapid progress in their writing skills through Key Stage 3. They start by accurate copywriting in Year 7, and by Year 9 the higher and average attaining pupils write accurate texts containing different tenses in both French and German. The higher attaining pupils display a good grasp of word order and tenses in German, and in French they are able to write about their holidays last year using perfect and imperfect tenses.

165. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards continue to be well above average in both languages. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils can write accurate extended texts. They use subordinate clauses routinely and are confident using all basic tenses. They are also able to produce lengthy and

fluent projects on a range of topics. The strong emphasis placed on the understanding of grammatical patterns enables pupils to increase their grasp of the structure of language, self-correct their work and achieve greater accuracy. Most pupils are capable of understanding lessons delivered at normal speed in the foreign language, and listen attentively to recorded texts to extract details. One middle ability group in Year 11 in German found it daunting, however, to have to listen to a cassette recorded at normal speed. Many pupils are able to participate with great fluency in role-plays and presentations. They can speak at length using a range of tenses and structures, stating opinions and giving reasons. They are capable of using previously learned material in new situations and can cope with the unexpected and unknown.

166. Gifted and talented pupils are challenged by the pace and demanding activities in the top sets. The setting system also enables those with special educational needs to make good progress. One of the lower French sets in Year 9 was seen doing very challenging work which required pupils to describe a holiday using two contrasting past tenses. Pupils in a low set in German in Year 10 were able to describe with fluency and accuracy what people were wearing.

167. Most pupils are very enthusiastic language learners, eager to demonstrate their skills. In several classes at Key Stage 3 they were fully engaged by a range of language games and communicative activities. They show high Levels of concentration and perseverance, consult dictionaries with confidence and enjoy using ICT to enhance their learning.

168. The quality of teaching is good overall at both key stages. In over two-fifths of lessons observed, teaching was very good and a small amount was excellent. In half of the lessons it was good, and in the remainder it was satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good or better in all lessons. It is very good or excellent in half of the lessons. At Key Stage 4 teaching is satisfactory or better in all lessons and is good or very good in four fifths of lessons. The department has some excellent linguists and one native speaker. The teachers generally use the foreign language extensively in lessons, both as a medium of instruction and for routine interaction. All lessons are very well prepared and are nearly always delivered enthusiastically and at a brisk pace, with good use of varied resources, including the overhead projector, sound and video recorder, high quality resource sheets and flashcards. Good use is made of deadlines to motivate pupils and keep them on target. The content of lessons is carefully graded and matched to the needs and interests of the age group, with frequent changes of task and good coverage of the four skills. Teachers make frequent use of pair and group work, and have excellent relationships with their pupils. There is a calm, productive atmosphere in lessons, and effective teaching, combined with high motivation, enables pupils to make rapid progress in the acquisition of new skills. The very best lessons are taught with skill and enthusiasm, and consist of a wide variety of logically linked activities that flow seamlessly from beginning to end. In the very few lessons where teaching was only satisfactory, there were occasionally problems with materials or activities that did not provide sufficient challenge.

169. Most pupils study both French and German from Year 7: both languages have equal status throughout the school. The number choosing to study both languages at Key Stage 4 is high. The programme of visits to France, Switzerland and Germany ensures that the department makes a strong contribution to the cultural development of some pupils, and also enhances their linguist skills. The department benefits from very good leadership, which ensures that the high quality of teaching and learning is maintained. The head of department is an excellent manager and administrator. The modern language teaching team works well together: documentation is sound and schemes of work are in place. Good assessment procedures ensure that pupils' progress is carefully monitored.

170. There has been a marked improvement since the last inspection. The department has extended its repertoire of teaching strategies and makes good use of ICT to raise standards. It has also raised the level of performance in French, so that it is now an equal partner with German, and has introduced Spanish as a club activity in Year 9 and as a full option in Year 10. Most pupils now have their own copy of a textbook to enhance their independent learning.

MUSIC

171. Pupils enter the school with standards that are generally in line with national expectations. Current standards of attainment, in lessons, discussions with pupils and in the analysis of work, are above the expectations at Key Stage 3, and well above national average at Key Stage 4. GCSE results over the last three years are well above national averages; all pupils entered in 2000 gained passes at grades A* to C.

172. Pupils at Key Stage 3 are able to control keyboards and perform in ensembles using keyboards, acoustic instruments and percussion. For example, a Year 9 class completed a project on Reggae music by putting on a classroom concert in which groups of pupils performed their compositions and arrangements to each other. The pupils are familiar with graphic and staff notation and compose and improvise freely. They create well-shaped melodic phrases over a harmonic accompaniment. Listening skills are well developed and pupils are familiar with technical vocabulary. Class singing standards are variable, the pupils sing with enthusiasm and good rhythmic feel, but the tone is lacking in quality. Extra-curricular performance standards, including singing, are high. At Key Stage 4 performance skills are good; all pupils in the various ensembles play orchestral instruments or keyboards, and are able to perform individually and in ensembles. They respond well when listening to music, demonstrating a good knowledge of period and style and showing very good understanding and use of technical vocabulary. The pupils' compositions reveal very good exploitation of timbre, and a confident feeling for melodic structure. There are good examples of harmonic exploration and the creation of textures with good use of music technology. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls at either key stage, and the level of achievement is good for all groups of pupils.

173. The quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. In the lessons observed, none of the teaching was less than good. Teaching was very good in about a fifth of lessons and good in the remainder. This level of consistency in the teaching is a great strength that contributes to the high standards pupils reach. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and specialist skills, which are used very effectively in planning lessons with a good variety of activities. They have high expectations; for example, in a Year 8 lesson the whole class was expected to improvise in turn over a rhythmic accompaniment. Explanations are very clear, and tasks are well structured to allow pupils to work at different levels. This, plus good individual attention, enables lower attaining pupils to make good progress and to be fully involved in all the activities. Sometimes, at Key Stage 3, extra use could be made of more difficult tasks to stretch the higher attaining pupils. At Key Stage 4, the high level of individual attention enables pupils of all levels of attainment to make very good progress. At both key stages, the teacher's very good pupil management results in high concentration levels and productive working, with learners completing assignments. Marking is conscientious and follows the school's assessment policy, with marks awarded for achievement and effort. Pupils are also encouraged to evaluate their own work.

174. Pupils have a good attitude to the subject; this is reflected in the high level of participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and their good behaviour in lessons. The take-up for instrumental lessons is well above average. Pupils are keen and work with enjoyment. Relationships among pupils and with staff are good and provide a very firm basis for collaboration during group work. An indicator of the high quality of their relationships is the courtesy and respect the pupils show when they are listening to each other's compositions and performances.

175. The curriculum is broad and balanced and fulfils statutory requirements. The schemes of work are well set out, providing good coverage of the National Curriculum, although sometimes lacking in detail of the actual level of skills to be achieved by each year group. Accommodation and resources for learning are very good, apart from an inadequate number of computers in the department. This severely limits the opportunity for pupils to use ICT in the subject, particularly at Key Stage 3. The leadership of the department is of very good quality. The head of music is an experienced and enthusiastic teacher who is well supported by a highly committed team of classroom and instrumental teaching staff. The department has improved significantly since the last inspection. Standards of attainment have been raised at both key stages and the quality of teaching has been improved. Accommodation and resources have also been significantly improved. Pupils who are selected on the basis of their attainment in music achieve very high standards. In Year 7 the school is very successful in helping those selected to settle into their new life, to encourage friendships coming out of their shared interests and to support their continued commitment to, and success in, music at The Winston Churchill school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

176. Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 shows many pupils to be working well above the expectation for the end of the key stage. The evidence from the inspection supports this. At the end of Key Stage 4 many pupils are meeting the required levels in core and GCSE PE lessons.

177. In volleyball at Key Stage 3, boys have a clear understanding of the rotation of players at the change of service allied to a grasp of setting. Girls' basketball skills were of such a high order that they were able to use them to great effect in games and extra curricular activities and work well with fellow players. The lower attaining pupils, however, have difficulty translating skills into active match play. Higher attaining pupils, both boys and girls, can modify and refine their skills in a variety of games and know when to pass or shoot and how to beat an opponent. At Key Stage 4, GCSE pupils have a detailed understanding of how the body responds under exercise conditions and how this knowledge could be applied to the development of group and individual exercise programmes. Overall, both girls and boys have very good skill levels in both football and hockey. They can control and send the ball in a variety of ways allied to a good understanding of the principles of attack and defence.

178. Progress is good at both key stages. The structure of teaching and learning ensures that progress is made in the development and practice of skills, using paired or group work as well as the playing of games. Many lessons begin with the reinforcement of previous learning. As a result, in basketball higher attaining boys and girls have good basic passing, dribbling and shooting skills and can apply them accurately and fluently. Lower attaining pupils found it difficult to develop, use and adapt a number of these skills. Girls in Year 9 improved their tennis skills, especially in sustaining a rally, after they had spent time improving their strategic on-court movements. The high level of skill in hockey and football at Key Stage 4 is clearly built on the good development of previous learning. Opportunities for

pupils to coach, analyse and evaluate work resulted in good progress in, for example, developing acceleration at the start of a sprint race.

179. The quality of teaching overall is good and never less than satisfactory. Teaching in two thirds of lessons observed was good and in the remainder it was satisfactory. In lessons where teaching was good, at both key stages, teaching is characterised by good knowledge and demonstration, the use of appropriate questions and high expectations of pupils. Good questioning in a Year 7 athletics lesson led to a greater understanding of speed and technique in the sprint start, and, in another lesson, positions at the relay changeover to maximise results. Another athletics lesson provided opportunities for pupils to organise, to lead or to coach an aspect of the skill being taught. Teachers use a range of teaching methods to enable pupils to acquire knowledge and develop understanding and skills. One particular skills lesson pupils were allowed to plan the most effective technique to send a football to another group. In tennis lessons there was a good use of cue cards to illustrate serving and forehand and backhand techniques. In basketball demonstration was well used to show how to beat an opponent. The activities were adapted to enable all pupils, including the wheelchair bound, to enjoy success and develop skills, for instance, of sending and stopping the ball in a cricket lesson. The Year 10 pupils were set tasks in athletics to work co-operatively on relay baton changeovers: the teacher supported each group. With GCSE pupils, a variety of effective techniques were used to support revision for their examinations. However, little use was made of tasks to support individuals or groups of pupils with their work. Because of the weather some practical lessons had to be relocated quickly into indoor spaces but equipment was changed and adapted with the minimum of fuss and disruption.

180. Pupils' attitudes are very good throughout the school. They are highly motivated and very positive about the subject. They listen attentively and follow instructions carefully in well-planned activities that encouraged independent learning. For example, in a Year 7 athletics lesson pupils led the warm-up activity with a clear knowledge of the muscle groups involved in running activities. Pupils in many lessons worked responsibly with their partners or in groups on the set tasks. Relationships amongst pupils and with their teachers are very good. Pupils display a willingness to help with the organisation of lessons by getting out and setting up equipment. Year 11 girls organise and run a dance group for Year 7 pupils. One girl also runs a dance group supporting Downs Syndrome teenagers from a nearby school.

181. The curriculum is broadly balanced, fully meets the National Curriculum requirements at both key stages and makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. GCSE PE has been introduced since the last inspection and dance will be taught in the drama department. Extra-curricular opportunities, involving all PE teachers and some from other departments, are excellent and attract a large number of pupils. Through extra-curricular activities gifted and talented pupils gain access to a wide range of local clubs. There is a scheme of assessment, which is now being linked to the levels of attainment in National Curriculum 2000. End of lesson assessment is good and informs future lesson planning. The marking of project work is poor and does not inform pupils how they can improve.

182. The department is very well led and managed. The department has developed effective policies and procedures. Its very good development plan has identified key priorities for curriculum development at both Key Stages 3 and 4. All members of the PE teaching team contribute to the success of the department and have clearly identified responsibilities for aspects of management. An effective learning environment has been created. The good standard of work reported at the last inspection has been clearly maintained. The quality and range of accommodation is outstanding. Pupils with physical needs are very well integrated into the

department. Work is not always well pitched to fully integrate pupils who have SEN. To be fully inclusive the needs of dyslexic and dyspraxic pupils also need to be addressed. Risk assessments are not always reviewed or up-dated for all the facilities and activities in PE. There is insufficient sharing of good practice and the further development of their own skills by individual teachers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

183. The school meets the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus. At Key Stage 4, the school meets its requirements by following the GCSE examination syllabus. In the Year 2000 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining grade A* to C passes in the full course, and their average points score, was well above the national average. In the GCSE short course examination, while the proportion of pupils gaining grade A* to C passes was in line with the national average their average point score was significantly higher than that nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to G was well above the national average. Pupils' attainment in both the full and short course examinations was significantly higher than in the previous year's examinations. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of pupils at age 16 pursuing the GCSE examination courses was well above average for their age. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of the Christian and Buddhist religions, and their skills in applying the insights of their teaching to moral and ethical issues are particularly well developed.

184. In work seen during the inspection, pupils aged 14 were attaining standards above the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion; the place and origins of Christianity and other principal religions in the country; and of their distinctive features and beliefs. They understand why adherents' beliefs are important to them, and how those beliefs shape their lives. They have a good grasp of religious language and concepts, and their skills in applying religious insights to their own experience, and to that of others, are well developed.

185. The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It also makes a very good contribution to the development of their literacy skills, through very good attention to vocabulary, spelling and grammar, and well-planned opportunities for writing for a wide variety of purposes and audiences. It makes a sound contribution to the development of pupils' ICT skills, particularly in word processing and the use of the Internet for research, but does not do enough to develop their numeracy skills. Both boys and girls of all levels of prior attainment, including those with SEN, make very good progress and achieve very well at both key stages. This very good achievement reflects both the very good teaching in the subject, and the very good attitudes pupils bring to their work.

186. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall: they were excellent in nearly one in five lessons observed, very good in half of the lessons, good in a quarter and satisfactory in the remainder. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject, and very high expectations of pupils. They know clearly what they wish them to learn, and plan their lessons well to achieve their aims. They engage and hold pupils' interest through a variety of imaginative, stimulating and challenging activities and tasks that are well matched to their individual needs. For example, Year 7 pupils made excellent gains in understanding the symbolism attaching to the events of Holy Week. This was because the teacher brought them alive by re-enacting them in the classroom, including the washing of the disciple's feet with the teacher and a pupil in role, and the actual breaking and sharing of

unleavened bread. Year 8 pupils made very good gains in understanding the concept of Shaladah in Islam, because the teacher made imaginative use of reflection on abstract seamless Islamic images and artefacts to convey the seamless concept of the “Oneness of God” in Islam. Year 9 pupils were led to a sensitive appreciation of the importance of the Five Pillars of the faith in Islam; the teacher built

effectively on their prior homework research to extend their knowledge and understanding through a carefully sequenced series of discussions, reading and written tasks. Year 10 pupils made very good progress in understanding Christian and Buddhist teaching on poverty, because the teacher was able to bring Third World issues of wealth and poverty alive from personal experience.

187. Teachers manage time very well, ensuring that pupils make a sustained intellectual effort. They regularly set meaningful homework that extends work in class, for example in Year 10 work on the relationship between Wesak Day and the life of the Buddha. They help pupils understand how to improve their work through supportive and diagnostic marking and target setting. This very good teaching is underpinned by the very good relationships that teachers enjoy with their pupils, based on caring and mutual respect. Teachers create a secure and sensitive ethos in the classroom in which learning can flourish. Where teaching is less secure, pupils are afforded too little time for reflection, because of the low time allocation for the subject.

188. The attitudes of pupils of all ages towards the subject are very good. They are very well motivated, come to lessons keen to learn, and take pride in their work. They are very responsive orally, and listen with respect to each other's views and opinions, as was well seen in a Year 8 discussion on the significance of Good Friday and how it is celebrated in Christian tradition. They behave very well, and enjoy very good relationships with each other and with their teachers.

189. The subject has shown a marked improvement overall since the last inspection. Standards of attainment have been raised at both key stages. This is because the department has significantly improved the quality of its teaching, its schemes of work and its assessment procedures. The school has now addressed the issue of the previous inspection concerning the low time allocation for Key Stages 3 and 4. The dedication and sheer hard work of teachers has done much to achieve the current high standards and commitment by pupils to work in RE. The very high standards in religious education reflect the excellent quality of the leadership and management of the subject. The head of department has a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take to raise standards further, which is shared by all members of the team, who are equally committed to its achievement. The department's innovative approach enables higher attaining pupils to take GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10. It also has firm plans for all pupils to begin GCSE in Year 8, be examined in Year 10, with the option of then pursuing the subject at GCE Advanced Subsidiary level in Year 11.