

# INSPECTION REPORT

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS GIRLS' GRAMMAR  
SCHOOL**

Tunbridge Wells

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118789

Headteacher: Mrs L Wybar

Reporting inspector: Mrs G Kayembe  
2901

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> January – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2001

Inspection number: 187758

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to18 years
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	Southfield Road Tunbridge Wells Kent
Postcode:	TN4 9UJ
Telephone number:	01892 520902
Fax number:	01892 536497
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Granatt
Date of previous inspection:	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
2901	Mrs G Kayembe	Registered inspector
9779	Ms S Smith	Lay inspector
13734	Mr H Davies	Team inspector
2715	Mr R Hancock	Team inspector
8552	Mr W Hart	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

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

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

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

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>5</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>20</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a selective school for girls aged 11-18. Currently 880 pupils attend the school, including 237 in the sixth form. Pupils are drawn from a wide catchment area across the county, with a small proportion coming from the neighbouring counties. The vast majority of pupils are of white UK heritage. The very few with English as an additional language are fluent in its use. Since pupils are given a place at the school based on their ability, their attainment on entry to the school is well above average. The overall social and economic backgrounds of pupils are very favourable when compared to national norms and this is reflected in the low uptake of free school meals. Very few have special educational needs. There are no pupils with statements.

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

This is a very successful grammar school. Very good teaching coupled with very good leadership and management result in pupils reaching exceptionally high standards. The school's key aims of reaching high standards, providing an education which develops the whole person and being a happy school are realised through the commitment and hard work of staff and governors. Despite the considerable shortcomings in the accommodation and the poor state of some of the buildings, the school provides very good value for money.

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

- Standards of attainment are very high
- Teaching is very good, and at its best it is inspirational
- The outstanding quality of pupils' attitudes and behaviour makes a significant contribution to their learning
- Very good leadership and management, particularly by the headteacher and school governors, provide a clear direction for the school's future development
- Very good provision for extra-curricular activities promotes pupils' personal development
- Financial planning and management are very good so that the best use is made of all available funds

#### **What could be improved**

- Accommodation is unsatisfactory with too many huts, some of which are in a poor state of repair, and not enough specialist rooms for some subjects
- Legal requirements with respect to the National Curriculum in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) and the requirement for a daily act of collective worship are not met fully
- Information to parents, particularly about progress, is limited and there is scope for improving communication with parents
- Middle managers are well focused on their specific areas of work but their involvement in monitoring and evaluation and whole-school initiatives is not as strong

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

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

Overall the school has made good progress in improving itself since the previous inspection in April 1996. The pace of change has accelerated over the last eighteen months with, for example, tangible improvements to the accommodation. The high standards of attainment found at the time of the last inspection have been improved upon with particularly notable improvement at A-level. The quality of teaching is now much better. All the key issues from

the previous inspection have been tackled, but not all fully addressed. Accommodation continues to require substantial investment to improve and considerable time and energy has gone into addressing this taxing issue. Measures taken recently have alleviated some of the concerns expressed in the previous report. However, the school has not obtained funding for what it most needs, that is, a new teaching block. Significant improvement has taken place recently with respect to provision for design and technology and ICT, although further improvement is still required. Given the very good management and quality of education provided, the school is in a good position to improve further. However, some key developments, such as improved curricular provision for ICT and design and technology, are dependent on improved accommodation.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A*	A*	

**Key**

very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Pupils' overall performance in tests and examinations at the ages of 14, 16 and 18 is exceptionally high when compared with the performance of pupils nationally. These results are also well above those achieved in grammar schools. In the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2000, pupils' performance was best in English, where it is well above that of similar schools, whilst in science and mathematics, it is above. At GCSE, the proportion of pupils who gain A\* or A grades has always been high in most subjects but was particularly marked in the GCSE results for 2000. The average points score at GCSE is well above the average of similar types of schools. GCSE results are consistently very high in art, drama, English, French, information technology and music. Results in science, design and technology and German are not as good as in other subjects, although science results showed a good improvement between 1999 and 2000. The school met its targets for 2000 for GCSE. A-level results have improved at a very good rate since the last inspection and are now outstanding when compared to A-level performance nationally and in grammar schools.

The quality of work seen in lessons reflects the very high standards attained in public tests and examinations. In English, pupils are very fluent and articulate speakers, who can express ideas imaginatively and forcefully. They write with skill, adapting their writing to fit the purpose. Pupils have very well developed skills in solving mathematical problems and are adept at manipulating equations. Although pupils' achievements in scientific experimental and investigative work are good they do not quite match their very high standards of scientific knowledge and understanding.

Overall, in lessons and in examinations, the great majority of pupils produce their best and reach the highest standards that they can.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and keen to do their best. They are highly motivated in lessons and give full attention to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Impeccable. Pupils are lively yet mature and self-disciplined. In lessons they work constructively and co-operatively in groups and productively on their own.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils have respect for each other and show a mature understanding of different viewpoints and the needs of others. They are independent, self-reliant and self-assured.
Attendance	Well above average. Punctuality to lessons is not as good as it could be because of the sprawling nature of the site.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is very good overall. None of the lessons seen was less than satisfactory, about 93 per cent were good or better and 57 per cent were very good or better. The teaching in English, mathematics and science is largely very good. In other subjects the teaching is also mostly very good. The outstanding quality of the work in art points to excellent teaching, particularly in relation to the development of ideas and creative expression.

In the majority of lessons seen, teachers use their subject expertise exceptionally well to extend pupils' ideas and depth of subject knowledge and understanding. High expectations and challenging work which stretches pupils are key characteristics of teaching at this school. In return, pupils rise readily to the challenges presented to them and put in the necessary creative and intellectual effort to succeed. However, sometimes, teachers miss opportunities to help pupils learn for themselves by not involving them actively enough in lessons. Overall, however, pupils make very good progress and rapidly grasp new skills, knowledge and ideas. The majority of lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and girls keep up well with their teachers, although very occasionally, a few get left behind. Work is on the whole well matched to individual needs. Teachers keep a careful eye on how well pupils are doing and where they might need to reinforce learning further or give additional support to individual pupils.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The curriculum is well planned and provides good depth and range, thus ensuring that the needs of these very bright girls are well met. A wide range of A- and AS-level courses is on offer in the sixth form. However, legal requirements are not fully met in design and technology and ICT.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This was identified as an area of weakness in the last inspection report but the school has made good progress here and there is largely good, and improving, provision being made for the few pupils on the special educational needs register. The area is very well managed and pupils receive good support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good, and particularly strong for social and moral development. Religious education lessons provide very good opportunities for spiritual development. Whilst the school ensures that there is daily provision for pupils to meet collectively, either through assemblies or tutor periods, not all such gatherings contain an act of worship. There is as yet no co-ordinated approach to the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good, with good attention being paid to health and safety and to child protection. Governors and school staff are very vigilant about health and safety matters but risk assessments are not formally documented.

Whilst there has been an improvement in the provision for design and technology since the previous inspection, statutory requirements are not met at Key Stage 4, and less time is spent on this subject at Key Stage 3 than in schools nationally. The use of computers in subjects is developing well at Key Stage 3, but not enough such use is made of ICT at Key Stage 4. In addition, at Key Stage 4, not all pupils study a GCSE course in ICT. Those who do not, have a very limited experience of using computers.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The strong leadership provided by the headteacher ensures a very clear direction for future development. Her vision and energy are driving the school forward at a remarkable pace. The deputy headteachers provide good support to the headteacher and there is good teamwork within the senior management team. Heads of department and key stage co-ordinators are accountable for the standards of work in their areas, but their involvement in whole-school initiatives is more limited. Overall though, there is a shared and commonly understood commitment to excellence.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. An astute governing body provides a very clear steer for the future strategic development of the school. Governors are not only very supportive but monitor performance and have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are actively involved in seeking ways to improve the school, for example, with respect to the accommodation and in working towards ensuring that statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good and improving. The senior management team, especially the headteacher, undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The role of middle managers, such as heads of department and key stage co-ordinators, is not as well developed. Examination performance is rigorously analysed to identify areas for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial planning and management are very good. Money is carefully spent to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from spending. The school pays good attention to the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school expects their daughters to work hard and achieve well</li> <li>• Their children like school</li> <li>• The behaviour in the school is good</li> <li>• The school is helping their daughters to become mature and responsible</li> <li>• The quality of teaching is good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about their children's progress</li> <li>• Closeness of working relationship with parents</li> <li>• The quality and provision of accommodation</li> </ul>

Parents expressed very positive views about most aspects of the school's provision in their responses to the Ofsted questionnaire and at the meeting with inspectors. They are, overall, happy to be sending their daughter to this school. A significant minority, however, feel that they do not get enough information about their daughters' progress. Inspection evidence supports this view as, until recently, reports were not detailed or frequent enough. How well Year 7 pupils are settling in was a common concern amongst the returns from the parents of pupils in this year group. These concerns, along with worries about communication between home and school, also contribute to the feeling amongst a minority of parents that the school does not work as closely with them as they would like. There is scope for the school to improve its communication with parents. The inspection evidence strongly supports the concerns expressed about the availability and quality of accommodation.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Standards of attainment are very high**

1. Pupils enter the school with well above average attainment having successfully passed local tests for entry into a grammar school. The school draws from the top 25 per cent of most able pupils within the county, in line with Kent's procedures for selection. Results of public tests and examinations thereafter indicate that the school enables these pupils not only to sustain but to improve further on this high attainment on entry. As a result, pupils' performance in tests and examinations is quite exceptional and comparable with that of the five per cent of best performing schools nationally.
2. By the age of 14, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science are very high when compared with national averages. The overall average points score compares well with the average points score for grammar schools, being well above this average. The results are best in English, where pupils achieved results that were well above those found in grammar schools nationally in 1999 and 2000. In science and mathematics, pupils' achievements were above the averages found in similar types of schools in 2000. In science, not quite so many pupils reached the higher levels, Level 6 and above, as in English and mathematics in both 1999 and 2000, although the 2000 results in science were much better than those of 1999.
3. In GCSE examinations, virtually all pupils gain at least five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C. A very high proportion gain A\* or A grades. The average points score is very high when compared to schools nationally and it is well above the average points score in grammar schools. GCSE results are consistently very high in art, drama, English, French, information technology and music. Results in science, design and technology and German are not as good as in other subjects, although science results showed a good improvement between 1999 and 2000. Nonetheless, performance even in these subjects is good.
4. A-level results have shown continuous improvement over the last few years, and pupils' performance has improved from being well above national averages to being very high. The average points score for 2000 was significantly better than the average points score in grammar schools. In most subjects, a much higher proportion of pupils achieve the highest grades of A or B than in schools nationally. In 2000, the results in art, English, geography, nineteenth-century history, physics, psychology and sociology were exceptional.
5. Standards of work seen during the inspection were of very high quality and reflect pupils' very good performance in public tests and examinations. In English at all key stages, pupils are fluent speakers who are confident and self-assured. They articulate ideas with clarity and precision choosing their use of words carefully and from a growing range of vocabulary as they move through the school. In effect, they are in command of the language. On the whole pupils have little difficulty in handling a wide variety of reading material, non-fiction or fiction. They are skilled in finding information, interpreting it and summarising relevant extracts. Written work demonstrates very good fluency and understanding of the use of different styles of writing to secure the reader's engagement and interest. In mathematics, the level of numeracy is very high and pupils handle mental arithmetic problems with skill and ease. Pupils' problem-solving skills are highly developed thus more complex written problems are handled with equal skill.

For example, pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form manipulate difficult algebraic equations competently. Strong subject knowledge and in-depth understanding of scientific ideas are a characteristic feature of pupils' work in science. Whilst they have well-developed practical skills and good knowledge and understanding of the principles of scientific investigational work, these are not quite as well developed as their theoretical knowledge.

6. Work in other subject areas is also of a very high standard. Artwork on display is particularly thought provoking and demonstrates pupils' enormous capacity for innovation, creativity and self-expression. Many are skilled musicians able to perform and compose to a high standard. In modern foreign languages, pupils demonstrate a wide range of vocabulary and make good use of it in responding to questions. Pupils' historical knowledge has considerable depth, and in A-level lessons, they showed considerable skill in being analytical and evaluative when writing essays or expressing their viewpoints. They are confident and very fluent in oral debate about historical issues such as 'England was more Catholic than Protestant in 1547'. Very high order skills in debating were also seen in an A-level general studies lesson, where pupils were examining the role of government.
7. Overall, it is the high level of challenge in the work provided to pupils and the depth to which they are expected to handle a wide variety of topics which result in very good achievement at all stages throughout the school.

### **Teaching is very good, and at its best it is inspirational**

8. The overall quality of teaching is very good, and it is very good at each key stage. Overall, teaching was very good, or better, in 56 per cent of lessons and in 93 per cent it was good, or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Most of the teaching seen in mathematics and science was very good, although there was some teaching in science which is satisfactory. In mathematics, there is a very rigorous approach within the department to teaching pupils how to solve problems and to apply newly learned techniques to a wide variety of different situations. As a result of this good teaching, pupils' skills and confidence grow lesson by lesson. Thorough and in-depth questioning in most science lessons enables pupils to gain a wide body of knowledge and a very good grasp of scientific ideas. In English, although most of the teaching seen was good, the quality of pupils' written work points to very good teaching in this area. In lessons, teachers' very good literary knowledge was often seen being used to good advantage in helping pupils develop sharp insights into character and plot and to uncover many layers of meaning behind a text. In other subjects, the quality of teaching seen was mainly very good. The work in art and design points to outstanding teaching, especially with respect to the way in which art teachers help pupils to develop their creativity and forms of self-expression. The teaching of skills is highly developed and clearly provides pupils with tangible means to explore and express inner thoughts and ideas.
9. Very good subject knowledge was a key feature of many lessons right across the range of subjects. This knowledge was very well used to probe and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding, to develop their skills and also to help them enjoy the learning process. In many instances, teachers' own love and enthusiasm for their subject inspired pupils' own desire and thirst for learning. In music, for example, the teacher's own skilled performance and sheer enjoyment rubbed off well on Year 7 pupils, engaging their interest and improving the quality of their own composition and performance. Overall, the very good level of theoretical knowledge of teachers enables

them to provide clear and coherent expositions and explanations to pupils whose understanding develops rapidly as a result.

10. In the majority of lessons, teachers pitch the work at suitably challenging levels. High expectations are a key reason for the very high standards being achieved. Pupils are pushed by the demands of the work to put in their best effort and they rise very well to the challenges they are presented with. In the best lessons, very brisk pace coupled with intense intellectual challenge not only brings out the best in pupils but also whets their appetites for more.
11. Interactions between pupils and teachers are very good, and all teachers strive to develop and maintain good rapport with their pupils. Friendly but firm relationships are effectively established by teachers and these help to promote very good levels of mutual respect and are a very good basis for pupils to learn.
12. Lesson activities and content are always well structured so that there is progressive development of skills and knowledge amongst pupils. Where teaching is very good or better, pupils are usually given good opportunities for active involvement in their learning. However, in some lessons, there is too much direction by the teacher giving fewer opportunities for pupils to learn by doing. On these occasions, opportunities are missed for pupils to develop a wider range of skills and knowledge. A small group of pupils, in discussion with inspectors when asked 'When do you feel you learn best?' responded 'When we are involved'.
13. Whilst marking is regular, it is not always informative. Most of the time homework is appropriately given and provides pupils with good continuity with classwork, but it is not always provided. Parents and pupils mentioned that some weeks there is more than others.
14. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good and they are given useful support and help. Staff are aware of who these pupils are and are very ready to give additional advice and support. Where pupils are grouped by ability, as in mathematics, teachers pitch the level of difficulty at a very good level so that pupils experience success but are also well challenged.
15. Overall, the very good quality of teaching undoubtedly has a significant impact on promoting high quality learning for pupils.

### **The outstanding quality of pupils' attitudes and behaviour makes a significant contribution to their learning**

16. In almost all lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are at least good, and in the majority they are very good or better. Very early on in their secondary schooling, pupils establish excellent work habits. They expect to work hard in lessons and rise willingly to the challenging nature of the work they are given. Their mature predisposition to learning, their interest and curiosity go a long way to supporting the very good outcomes they achieve. Behaviour is very good, both in and out of lessons. There was only one fixed term exclusion in the last academic year.
17. Pupils hurry to lessons, they rarely loiter in corridors. Once in class, they settle quickly and quietly and their behaviour is exemplary. Listening skills are very well developed and pupils listen attentively and with respect not only to their teachers but also to one another. When pupils are given the opportunities to work together, they display a very

high degree of co-operation and their skills of collaboration are excellent. Pupils discuss individual points of view, share ideas, help one another and work out solutions to problems together making helpful suggestions in a manner which is purposeful and encouraging of one another. They are always very supportive of one another, and this is a key characteristic of a happy and caring learning environment.

18. In most lessons, pupils are willing to ask questions and to ask for help if they are unsure about any aspect of their work. They trust their teachers and appreciate what they do for them. The majority of pupils enjoy learning, especially when given the opportunity to work by themselves or in small groups. An excellent example of pupils' approach to learning was seen in a Year 9 ICT lesson when pupils were rushing ahead of the teacher in their enthusiasm to find out how to use a multi-media program. They wanted to experiment with it and find out how to incorporate sound, pictures and animation. Levels of curiosity were very high and pupils demonstrated a fearless approach to trying out new features in order to see how the program worked. They worked rapidly, wasting not a minute of their time on the computers.
19. Overall, pupils' self-motivation is high and most organise their own work, such as revision and coursework, very thoroughly. They are very well focused on achieving their best, but also have time to enjoy themselves and to expand and extend their horizons by participating in extra-curricular activities.

**Very good leadership and management, particularly by the headteacher and school governors, provide a clear steer for the school's future development**

20. The school is very well led and managed. The current headteacher has been in post for about eighteen months and has set a very clear agenda for the future development of the school. Staff, pupils and governors speak highly of their headteacher and feel that she is working towards achieving the best for them. There is a very good focus on high standards and on providing quality education for very bright girls. Increasing parental involvement and creating a physical environment which stimulates and inspires pupils are high priorities. The recently produced displays of photographs of pupils and examples of their work around the school as well as the refurbishments to accommodation have served to improve pupils' sense of well-being and self-esteem. The emphasis on analysis of the school's data on performance has been a key move towards ensuring that the standards being reached across all subjects are the highest possible. There is good teamwork between the members of the senior management team and shared aims and goals. The deputy headteachers ably support the headteacher and manage their own areas of responsibility well. The delegation of responsibilities through the management structure is good and improving with the greater demands being made of the accountability of middle managers.
21. Governors work very closely with the school and have an excellent understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They are actively involved through the school's programme of self-review and through their work on committees and working groups in overseeing the school's work and in holding it accountable for its performance. The finance committee is particularly active and governors have a strong involvement in planning and monitoring of school finances. Governors are aware of the areas where the school is not meeting statutory requirements and have concrete plans to make appropriate provision for the future. They have a shared understanding of the school's key aims and goals and have a strong commitment to continual improvement. Governors ask searching questions of the school in order to both further their understanding of its work but also to ensure that the school is meeting all its

obligations, particularly to parents and pupils. Overall, the governing body has an excellent strategic view of where the school is heading.

### **Very good provision for extra-curricular activities promotes pupils' personal development**

22. The school makes a strong commitment to providing pupils with a wide range of developmental experiences in addition to the high quality of academic education. It believes strongly in widening pupils' horizons and promoting their personal, social and cultural development through curricular enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Excellent provision for dramatic, musical and sporting activities are provided through the rich programme of extra-curricular activities for these. During the week of inspection, pupils were rehearsing for *The Tempest* to be performed later that week in a local theatre. A good number of pupils are involved with this production and collaboration between the music and drama departments is very effective.
23. There are regular formal and informal concerts organised by the music department. The physical education department has achieved the Sportsmark award for providing a comprehensive programme of sporting activities. For example, girls have the opportunity to play hockey, netball, football and cricket. They also take part in gymnastics, swimming, trampolining, self-defence, dance and many more activities. Pupils take regular part in competitions with other schools and many of the school's teams experience considerable success in these.
24. The programme of visits and trips abroad is quite unique. In addition to the wide range of trips to theatres, museums and other places of interest, pupils also make regular exchange trips to France, Germany and India. A recently forged link with Luxor, in Egypt, has enabled the school to undertake an exchange trip there. There is regular contact with Ghana, where pupils, under the leadership of the head of science, are involved with an environmental development project. Pupils raise funds and groups are selected to go out to Ghana and work with local people in delivering the aims of the project. These opportunities make a significant contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.
25. There is an active sixth-form society which organises many events and visits for the sixth form. These have included trips to football matches as well as theatre visits and trips to Europe. The school has good links with the Voluntary Service Unit on site and there is good involvement of pupils in fund-raising activities. Pupils also take regular part in debating competitions. Sixth-formers also organise clubs and activities for younger pupils, such as the Buddy System for new pupils and dance and drama clubs for Years 7 and 8 pupils.

### **Financial planning and management are very good so that the best use is made of all available funds**

26. The school's budget is meticulously set in order to take account of the school's educational priorities and these are, therefore, very well reflected in the financial planning. For example, careful planning and judicious use of nationally available grants have enabled the school to improve its accommodation, although it continues to require substantial investment. Spending is very carefully monitored by the school and by governors. Careful research is carried out where large sums are being committed in

order to ensure that the best value is obtained from the money spent. Overall, the key principles of best value are in force and effective.

27. The school has an active finance and facilities committee which oversees the school's financial processes and procedures. Its members have good involvement in forward planning which, overall, is very good. Governors' involvement in seeking funds for improvement of the accommodation is high. There is a strong commitment to finding funds for a new building block and much of their time has been invested in putting together relevant bids to try to secure such funds.
28. There is extensive and appropriate use of new technologies to support the work of the school. For example, staff have access to e-mail, and the administrative staff make very good use of computerised systems for their daily work.
29. The last financial audit report was broadly satisfactory, but highlighted a number of areas where the financial regulations needed tightening up. Improvements are largely now in place and, overall, the systems and procedures for controlling finances are rigorous. The role of the bursar makes a very good contribution to the management of the school's finances. Overall, the school makes very good use of its strategic resources, including educational grants.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Accommodation is unsatisfactory with too many huts, some of which are in a poor state of repair, and not enough specialist rooms for some subjects**

30. This was highlighted as a key issue following the last inspection. The school does not have enough permanent buildings to house all pupils and has had to make use of a large number of temporary huts, most of which are now in quite poor condition and some that are unfit for habitation. For example, the huts being used for religious education are damp and musty. It is not possible for teachers to put displays on the walls as they become damp and fall off within a short time of being put up. A breakdown of absence statistics shows that pupils in a Year 11 form based in one of the huts since they were in Year 10 had considerably more days off school due to colds and coughs than the forms based in the main building. Much inconvenience is caused to staff and pupils in using the huts, especially in bad weather and in winter in particular. Storage space is non-existent thus making it difficult to store resources.
31. The positioning of the huts creates a large distance between them and the main building and contributes to loss of time when pupils and staff move between lessons. Punctuality can at times be poor because of this, leading to loss of valuable time for teaching and learning. The school is considering adding movement time between lesson changes, but this may result in the school day becoming longer, and this too may have a negative impact when many pupils are traveling long distances to and from school.
32. Heating and lighting are unreliable in the huts. During the inspection, power to the huts was cut off due to an electrical fault. This caused considerable inconvenience to staff and pupils and resulted in teaching and learning being disrupted whilst alternative rooms were found in the main building. It was too cold and dark for teaching to continue in some of the huts. Power cuts such as this are not an unusual occurrence.



33. Lack of any significant investment in the school buildings for many years has resulted in insufficient availability of accommodation for specialist subjects such as design and technology. The dining hall is in poor condition and in need of upgrading. The school has successfully bid for funds and carefully used its own funds, where available, to make some good improvements to the accommodation. For example, there is a new design and technology room, a refurbished chemistry laboratory, prep room and store, common room for sixth-form pupils and refurbished toilets for pupils. The main building has been redecorated with very good improvements to the facilities for display. These improvements have had a positive impact on the school ethos and helped to raise the self-esteem of pupils; this was highlighted as an issue at the time of the last inspection. Overall, however, the most significant aspect of the work on the buildings has yet to be funded and completed, that is, a new block to replace the huts and sufficient specialist accommodation, particularly for design and technology.
34. The most major impact of the weaknesses in the accommodation is on the efficiency of the school. For example, a good proportion of lessons begin late because pupils and staff are travelling across a large site, much time is spent by staff on dealing with issues related to accommodation, such as reorganising rooms when the heating breaks down, and moving resources from the main building into the huts because there are no storage facilities. In addition, there are health and safety implications in the poor state of some of the huts and the school is placed in a difficult position when it comes to meeting legal requirements for delivering design and technology and ICT. The use of computers is developed best in subjects that are closest to the computer rooms and least in some of the subjects, such as mathematics, that are the furthest away and based in huts.

**Legal requirements with respect to the National Curriculum in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) and the requirement for a daily act of collective worship are not met fully**

35. Lack of sufficient specialist staff and accommodation has delayed the full introduction of design and technology in the school. As a result, few pupils in Key Stage 4 choose to follow an approved design and technology course, and in the current Year 11 no pupil has opted to do so. Hence statutory requirements are not being met. Recent appointment of a teacher, who is now in charge of design and technology, and the development of a new resistant materials room have enabled pupils in Key Stage 3 to gain meaningful experiences in this area and to begin to develop a skills base in design and technology. The curricular time for design and technology at Key Stage 3 is significantly lower than in most other secondary schools and hampers the development of a wide enough range of skills in a variety of materials. The school plans to gradually increase the numbers taking GCSE design and technology as the skills base being developed currently in Key Stage 3 is firmly established and more girls are confident about continuing their studies in this subject into Key Stage 4. However, current levels of accommodation will not sustain a full cohort studying design and technology to GCSE. In addition, as a result of the low priority given to design and technology in the past, the standards being achieved are not as high as they should be in most year groups, although they are high in Year 7.
36. Major investment in ICT resources has promoted well the use of computers across the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3. However, whilst most subjects are ensuring that pupils make use of ICT as part of learning in their subjects, some subjects, such as mathematics, have made very little if any use. There is much less use made of computers by subject staff in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Some subjects, such

as modern foreign languages, make good and regular use of ICT. Modules of work in science incorporate the use of ICT so that pupils in each year group in Key Stage 3 have an opportunity to use computers. History is now doing the same. There is no formal monitoring of the use being made of the computer rooms by subject teachers or of looking at the extent to which pupils in different classes have equal access to computers. Nor is there a working group to examine and plot the development of the use of ICT across the curriculum. It is not clear from discussion with staff as to the extent of incorporation of the use of ICT within schemes of work for individual subjects. Nonetheless, there have been good improvements, particularly in the resources, and all pupils in Key Stage 3 have regular ICT lessons to develop their skills. Standards are very good in Key Stage 3, but not as high in Key Stage 4 for all pupils. Many take an ICT GCSE, where results at GCSE are very good indeed. However, those who do not sometimes show lower levels of confidence in using computers or lack sufficient knowledge about commonly used programs such as spreadsheets. Overall, the school is not fully meeting the requirement to provide opportunities to all pupils to develop their use of ICT in subject contexts, or to cover the National Curriculum ICT requirements at Key Stage 4. All Year 10 pupils will be following an ICT GCSE short course from September 2001.

37. The school makes provision for pupils to take part in a daily act of collective worship. There are three assemblies a week for each pupil, one key stage and two whole-school. On the two remaining days, pupils are expected to participate in a class assembly where the tutor makes use of the published 'thought for the day' to draw pupils' attention to the topics worthy of reflection. Whilst this provision is good, the requirements of a daily act of collective worship are not met. During the inspection, a total of ten assemblies, including those led by tutors in their form rooms, were observed and only one met the requirement. Whilst some of these assemblies provided a good experience for pupils, especially in relation to the presentation of moral issues, others missed opportunities to explore pertinent issues in sufficient depth.

**Information to parents, particularly about progress, is limited and there is scope for improving communication with parents**

38. A significant minority of parents returning the Ofsted questionnaire felt that they did not receive enough information about their daughter's progress. Many of the parents of pupils in Year 7 also felt that they were ill-informed about how well their daughters were settling into their new school. This concern was also raised at the meeting between inspectors and parents. The school is aware of the need to keep parents well informed and last year introduced interim reports in the first term for parents. However, this has not been done this year as a result of instructions from teachers' professional associations about additional demands that are placed on their time.
39. The school is aware that one annual report per year is not sufficient information and is planning to provide more regular updates through termly progress reports. The school has also, rightly, judged that the format for reporting in the main school (Years 7–11) does not enable sufficient detail to be provided on pupils' progress and on what they need to do in order to improve. A new format has been developed and is now being used to produce reports. This format tackles some of the concerns of parents, although the school does not provide sufficient guidance on the need to identify more precisely what pupils know, understand and can do.
40. A number of parents were also unhappy about the closeness of working relationships established with them by the school. Inspection evidence indicates that this may be due

to their worries about lack of information on progress. However, it is not helped by the unreliability of pupil-post, which was an issue noted by some. Some parents also felt that the student planner was not used as effectively as it could be as a vehicle for communication between school and home, a view reinforced by inspection evidence. There is scope for the school to examine these issues in order to establish better links and communication. There is certainly a strong commitment from the headteacher and governors towards creating good links with parents. As a result of this, the above issues are being tackled, with the good start having been made on improving the quality of reports to parents.

**Middle managers are well focused on their specific areas of work but their involvement in monitoring and evaluation and whole-school initiatives is not as strong**

41. Heads of department are committed to their subjects and to maintaining high standards of achievement. They have established good teamwork and a supportive ethos in their areas. A stronger recent focus on monitoring performance in examinations has made heads of department more aware of their accountability role. However, there is varied practice in terms of monitoring of teaching and learning with scope for greater rigour being established in the way in which teaching and learning are looked at. The key stage co-ordinators do not yet have a strong role in monitoring and evaluation of their areas of work and the work of form tutors for example.
42. The strong focus of most middle managers on the work in their areas has detracted somewhat from the development of a wider role in the development of the whole school. This is changing with a better input of heads of department in school development planning and the links being made between departmental development plans and whole-school development plans. Overall, there is good scope for the school to develop the roles of middle managers further in terms of their input into shaping the development of the whole school and in implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of whole-school policies.

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

43. In order to improve the school's educational provision and to raise standards even further, the headteacher, senior management team and governors should:
  - (1) Improve the quality and sufficiency of accommodation by continuing to seek funds to:
    - remove the huts and replace them with permanent accommodation;
    - improve specialist accommodation, especially for design and technology, but also for science and ICT;
    - replace the dining hall.(paragraph numbers: 30–34)

- (2) Meet legal requirements by:
- ensuring that all pupils follow an approved course in design and technology in Key Stage 4;
  - developing the use of ICT across the curriculum;
  - ensuring that all assemblies, including those that are tutor-led, contain an act of collective worship.
- (paragraph numbers: 35–37)
- (3) Improve the quality of information to parents and hence communication with them by:
- improving the quality of reports and providing detailed information on what pupils know, understand and can do as well as setting targets for improvement;
  - ensuring that parents receive information sent by the school;
  - providing feedback to parents of Year 7 pupils about how well they are settling in;
  - using student planners effectively as a tool for communicating with parents.
- (paragraph numbers: 38–40)
- (4) Further develop the roles of middle managers by:
- developing their role in monitoring and evaluation of their departments and key stages;
  - seeking ways of involving them effectively in whole-school developments;
  - improving their roles in monitoring and evaluation of implementation of whole-school policies.
- (paragraph numbers: 41–42)

Note: Most of the issues above have already been identified as priorities in the school development plan.

#### **Minor Issues:**

44. In addition to the key issues identified above, the school should include the following minor issues in the action plan:
- (1) Further improve pupils' standards in scientific investigational work so that these are as good as pupils' subject knowledge and understanding (paragraph number: 5).
- (2) Build on the very good teaching in the school which successfully promotes pupils' active involvement in lessons in order to further improve the quality of teaching and learning in all lessons (paragraph number: 12).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	48	36	7	0	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	643	237
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	8	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	15

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.4

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	0	130	130

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	130	130	129
	Total	130	130	129
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (99)	99 (97)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	100 (98)	100 (99)	97 (80)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	130	130	130
	Total	130	130	130
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	98 (99)	100 (100)	98 (100)
	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	0	129	129

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	0	0	0
	Girls	127	127	128
	Total	127	127	128
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	98 (96)	98 (97)	99 (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	66 (65.5)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	0	104	104

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	0	28.2	28.2 (26.2)	0	3.0	3.0 (4.0)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	860
Any other minority ethnic group	12

### ***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	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	48.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	128

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.7
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	28.1
Key Stage 4	25.8

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	2,152,000
Total expenditure	2,138,100
Expenditure per pupil	2,455
Balance brought forward from previous year	112,800
Balance carried forward to next year	126,700



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	888
Number of questionnaires returned	415

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	40	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	36	1	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	53	1	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	57	11	1	1
The teaching is good.	42	53	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	44	26	5	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	43	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	27	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	18	53	17	4	7
The school is well led and managed.	47	43	3	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	43	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	37	5	0	4

### Other issues raised by parents

A number of parents raised concerns about accommodation both in the meeting with inspectors and in writing on the back of the Ofsted questionnaire. Inspection findings indicate that parents are right to be concerned about this issue.