

INSPECTION REPORT

ASTLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Dukinfield

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 106269

Headteacher: Mr J L Mayes

Reporting inspector: Mr A A Henderson
2941

Dates of inspection: 29th January – 2nd February 2001

Inspection number: 187799

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Yew Tree Lane
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Cheshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Councillor J Taylor

Date of previous inspection: 25th March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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15678	J Radford	Team inspector	English Drama English as an additional language	
21866	D Tracey	Team inspector	Science	
31779	V Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
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23709	A Powell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Staffing, accommodation and resources
5851	M Robottom	Team inspector	History	
23926	D Howorth	Team inspector	Geography Equal opportunities	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
17556	M Miller	Team inspector	Art Religious education	
19452	A Pearson	Team inspector	Physical education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision
12362	L Hindley	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Astley High School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 – 16, and is slightly smaller than most secondary schools. There are 864 pupils on roll, with more girls than boys, and numbers have increased since the previous inspection in 1996. Pupils coming into the school include a broad range of ability, but overall attainment has been below average. The attainment on entry of the present Year 7 is higher than in previous years, but is still below average. Just under 14 per cent of pupils are on the register for special educational needs which is below average. The proportion of pupils with formal statements is above average at 3.1 per cent. Six per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, in line with about half of schools nationally, although very few pupils come from homes where English is not the spoken language. The school serves a wide area which includes social and economic disadvantage; more than a fifth of pupils in the school are eligible for free school meals, which is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Astley High School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Standards are below average, but given their starting points, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. GCSE results are improving steadily at a similar rate to the national trend. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, as is leadership and management. The strengths of the school are balanced by some important areas for improvement. It is providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- An above average proportion of pupils leave school with 5 or more GCSE passes at A*-G grades.
- Standards in art are above average.
- Curriculum provision, including careers education and extra-curricular activities, is good.
- Links with partner institutions and the community are very good, and benefit pupils' learning.
- Financial planning and control are very good.

What could be improved

- Pupils' key skills in literacy, and particularly numeracy, are weaknesses which hinder their progress.
- Standards in mathematics are too low.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and subject performance are not systematic enough and require more rigour in order to raise standards.
- The effectiveness and quality of subject management is inconsistent in striving for improvement.
- Teachers' planning for, and use of, the 75 minute lessons, does not always ensure productivity and pace.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since its previous inspection in 1996, improvement has been satisfactory. GCSE results have steadily improved, but remain below the national average. Attendance has improved significantly from 1998 and is now in line with national figures. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are much as they were in 1996, whilst the incidence of exclusion has been reduced. In other respects, progress in tackling the key issues identified in the previous report has been satisfactory. Strategic planning for the school has been strengthened together with the successful elimination of the deficit budget. Some improvements have been made to the curriculum, but the effective use of time in lessons has not improved sufficiently. Sound progress has been made in the consistent application of the school's policy for behaviour management. Despite the school's efforts, the sharing of effective teaching and learning has been less successful, and needs further attention, together with the consistent use of the good data which the school compiles on pupils' prior attainment.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	D	C

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

Results in the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils aged 14 in 2000 were well below average compared with all schools, and also when compared with similar schools (that is, schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). Performance in English and science was well below average, and very low in mathematics. These results were not as good as those in 1999 because the attainment of those pupils taking the tests in 2000 was much lower than usual when they came into the school. However, over the past three years, results have been below average, and have not improved in contrast to the national trend. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9 (Key Stage 3) are below average overall, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory given their below average starting points. Standards are average in English, art, history and physical education. They are below average in all other subjects, except in mathematics and geography where standards are well below average, and are not high enough.

In 2000 the average points score for GCSE was below average, but was average when compared with similar schools. This is also the case for the proportion of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades, although appropriate targets set by the school were exceeded. In addition, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes across the full range of grades A*-G was above the national average, and for similar schools. Girls did better than boys, although the difference in their performance is not as great as the national variation. GCSE results show steady improvement over the past three years in line with the national rate. Results in subject vary considerably. In 2000, art, food technology and textiles results were marginally above the national average. In all other subjects, results were below or well below average. Compared with their other subjects, pupils did better in art, English, English literature, food technology, textiles, German, science and expressive arts. The least successful compared with other subjects were mathematics, geography, French, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Given their low levels of attainment at age 14, the overall GCSE results of these pupils in 2000 are considerably higher than expected, and represent good achievement. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4) during the inspection generally reflect the examination results, and are below average. The variation between subjects is clear: standards in art are above average, whilst they are average in English, design technology, ICT, history, physical education (non-examination) and religious education. Standards are below average elsewhere, except in mathematics and geography where they are well below average. Overall, with the exception of mathematics, these standards represent satisfactory achievement in relation to the pupils' attainment at age 14.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory – most pupils like the school and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. A small minority of pupils can be disruptive and have difficulty meeting school expectations in behaving responsibly.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good, and there is little oppressive behaviour. Pupils generally get on well with each other, and with their teachers.
Attendance	Recent significant improvements have raised attendance to the national average. Pupils' progress is affected by a high number of term time holidays.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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 and learning is satisfactory. Pupils' learning is satisfactory in response to teaching which is good or better in just over half of lessons seen. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 90 per cent of lessons. However, the incidence of less effective teaching was higher than usually seen, with one lesson in ten judged unsatisfactory, spread across nine subjects. Common features of almost all the unsatisfactory lessons were weaknesses in teachers' planning for the long 75 minute periods, and a lack of productive activity, often linked with deteriorating pupil behaviour, in the final stages. Teaching is especially effective in art and English; good teaching predominates in ICT, history, music, special educational needs, and in Key Stage 3 physical education. However, both teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in mathematics with considerable shortcomings which are founded in poor subject leadership and management. Pupils' learning needs are generally well met in most subjects, although many pupils have difficulty in sustaining their effort and concentration for the full 75 minute lessons. Whilst teachers plan their lessons satisfactorily, the full impact of otherwise satisfactory or good teaching is reduced by a lack of pace and sharpness in some lessons which affects progress, notably in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, geography and religious education. The school's strategy for teaching literacy requires further work, although the use of key technical words in subjects is helping to improve standards. There is no co-ordinated approach to teaching numeracy across the curriculum, and this lack of development is restricting progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Curriculum provision is good, and provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities, although some additional work-related courses would benefit some pupils. Careers education and extra-curricular activities are strengths. Links with partner institutions are very good, as is the contribution to pupils' learning made by the community.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum and make good progress, with most successfully completing GCSE courses by the age of 16. The inclusion unit successfully enables some pupils to continue their studies as an alternative to exclusion from school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are few pupils with English as an additional language, and none are at an early stage of language acquisition. Their progress is similar to pupils generally.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall satisfactory. Provision for social development is a strength, but spiritual development is insufficient.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for health and safety, together with child protection, are good. There is good support for pupils' personal development and their academic progress is monitored satisfactorily.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher, supported by a recently re-structured senior management team, is establishing a clear agenda for improvement. The pastoral system is effective, but there are weaknesses in subject management in mathematics and humanities. The monitoring of teaching and learning requires greater emphasis to help raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are conscientious and committed to the development of the school. They are aware of areas for improvement, and monitor finances effectively, but could be more rigorous in checking standards. Not all statutory requirements are in place.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's strategic planning has been strengthened. Test and examination results are regularly reviewed, but the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and subject performance is not yet systematic enough, and requires more rigour.
The strategic use of resources	Financial matters and principles of best value are very well managed. Levels of staffing, resources and accommodation are adequate. However, vacancies and long term staff absence have affected pupils' progress in some subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like the school. • They feel their children are making good progress in both academic and personal development. • Most believe teaching is good and pupils are expected to work hard and achieve their best. • They find the school approachable. • They feel the school is well led and managed. • They appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some feel they do not get enough information about their child's progress. • They are concerned that too little homework is set, especially in Years 7 to 9.

Inspectors generally agree with the positive views of parents, although judge that there is room for improvement in teaching. Inspectors agree that information about pupils' progress could be improved, for example, by wider use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades when reporting to parents, and marking pupils' work. The school should also explore improvements to parents' consultation evenings. Parental concerns about homework are partially justified, and the school should seek to ensure a more consistent approach to its use by subjects to ensure it supports and extends learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils come into the school their overall standards of attainment are below average. Results in national tests taken at age 11 in 2000 show that pupils' attainment in English and science is below average, and in mathematics is average. This has been the case for the previous three years. A wide range of ability is included in this entry profile, but there are very few pupils who are well above average when they join the school. This is confirmed by results of the standardised tests administered by the school in Year 7, which show that pupils are below average on entry, and that there has been little significant variation since the previous inspection.

2. The overall results in National Curriculum tests taken at the age of 14 in 2000 were well below average when compared with all schools. Pupils' performance, including for those with special educational needs, in English and science was well below average, whilst in mathematics it was very low. Results for both English and mathematics were not as good as those in 1999, and for science were similar. This is mainly because the ability of those pupils taking the tests in 2000 was much lower than usual when they entered the school. However, results over the past three years have been below average, and the rate of improvement has been below the national trend. When compared with the results of similar schools, (that is, schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), results in 2000 in English and science were well below average, and those in mathematics were very low.

3. Results in GCSE examinations overall have been well below the national average over the last three years, but have been showing steady improvement at a rate which matches the national trend. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher A*-C grades was below the national average, and in line with the average for similar schools. However, the proportion achieving five or more passes across the full range of grades A*-G was marginally better than the national average, and above average for similar schools. The school's average GCSE points score in 2000 was also below the national average, but average compared with similar schools. When comparison is made with those schools which had similar levels of prior attainment in the National Curriculum tests at age 14, the GCSE results achieved by the school in 2000 were well above average for five or more A*-C grades, five or more A*-G grades and for average points score. This indicates that pupils' progress improves notably in Years 10 and 11. Girls did better than boys in GCSE, although the difference in their performance is not as great as the national variation. Overall, the school exceeded its targets for GCSE in 2000, and has set itself further demanding targets for 2001.

4. GCSE results for almost all subjects in 2000 were below or well below the national average for grades A*-C. The proportion of pupils entered is at or above the national figure in all subjects except history, geography, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. This positive entry policy is a strength which ensures access to examination success for almost all pupils. Pupils do better in art, food technology and textiles than in their other subjects, where results were marginally above the national average in 2000. In all other subjects, pupils' average points score is below or well below the national average. Comparison of their results in all other subjects show that pupils did better in English, English literature, German, science and expressive arts, and the least successful subjects were mathematics, geography, French, history, ICT and physical education.

5. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards reflect the examination results and are below average. In Year 9 attainment is average in English, art, physical education and history. However, it is below average in all other subjects, with the exception of mathematics and geography where pupils are attaining well below average standards. In Year 11 the standards of work seen are below average overall, although there is considerable variation between subjects. Attainment in art is above average at this stage, and generally average standards are found in English, design technology, ICT, history, physical education and religious education. Attainment is below average in the work seen in science, modern foreign languages, music and the GCSE physical education course. It is well below average in mathematics and geography.

6. Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory as they move through the school, as a result of mainly positive pupil attitudes and generally satisfactory teaching. Given their mainly below average

starting points, pupils' achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is satisfactory in almost all subjects. Their achievement is good in art, physical education and ICT in response to good teaching and high expectation. In religious education, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because of past weaknesses in teaching and insufficient depth of work covered. In mathematics, pupils' achievement is poor as a result of weaknesses in subject management and teaching, together with a lack of continuity due to staffing absences. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' overall achievement continues to be satisfactory. At this stage, progress and achievement improves in English as a result of strong teaching and high expectation, and continues to be good in art for similar reasons. Generally, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the majority of subjects, because sound teaching ensures slightly more pupils than usual gain GCSE grades A*-G in at least five subjects. However, pupils are underachieving in religious education and geography at this stage. In mathematics, the same weaknesses remain, and in Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement and progress in the subject are poor.

7. Pupils with special educational needs usually achieve appropriate standards in mainstream lessons, small withdrawal groups, and in the recently established Inclusion Unit for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Standards in key skills

8. Generally, pupils' literacy skills are below average. This limits the rate of progress of some pupils in those curriculum subjects that rely on the skills of reading and writing. The school has made satisfactory initial progress in improving literacy, particularly in the teaching of specialist key words in subjects. A co-ordinator has been appointed to oversee the development of the school's policy across the school, and to ensure a more consistent approach to improved reading and writing in both key stages. Positive initiatives including paired reading schemes and structured writing aids are supporting progress well.

9. Standards of numerical proficiency across the curriculum range from weak to satisfactory in all years and overall are well below average. A lack of fluency with tables and hesitant mental arithmetic inhibits progress but Year 7 pupils, who have benefited from the National Numeracy strategy in their primary schools, demonstrate a greater confidence and competence with number than other year groups. In science, limitations in numeracy skills make it difficult for pupils to access higher parts of the science curriculum, particularly in physics. Specifically, pupils require direct teaching in order to carry out transformation of formulae and to establish meaningful approximations. The opportunities for pupils to use measurement skills and interpretation of data skills in other areas of the curriculum are broadly satisfactory. In geography, for example, pupils make good use of graphical skills for making comparisons between the climates of Manchester and Torquay and they are able to competently describe the differences. The overall impact and use of numeracy skills across the curriculum is patchy and unplanned. There is no systematic and co-ordinated whole school approach to developing numeracy skills across the curriculum and most departments do not have a strategy for providing the opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills. The development of a whole school approach to enhancing pupils' numeracy skills is included in the school's development plan.

10. The use of ICT across the subjects of the curriculum is insufficient. Nevertheless, English teachers make very good use of the internet to support pupils' learning. Pupils also apply their skills in science, design and technology, physical education and geography. The acquisition of key skills of literacy and numeracy by pupils with special educational needs is well supported by the use of ICT through specific structured learning programmes. The school has its own web site where pupils can get information about English, science, geography, history, business studies and ICT. The subject co-ordinator has set up a system to monitor the use of ICT by subjects, and has provided guidance to subjects which has the potential to raise standards across the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes to school are satisfactory. The vast majority like school and most have positive attitudes to their learning. When the teaching is effective, they listen attentively, are well motivated and co-operate well. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson where the boys and girls are taught in separate sets, boys showed excellent attitudes. They were totally engaged in the lesson, worked hard and, through perceptive comments, demonstrated their clear understanding of the lesson. On the other hand, usually if the teaching is unsatisfactory, there is a significant minority of pupils who are disinterested and whose attitudes towards their learning and behaviour are unsatisfactory. This has a

negative effect on their attainment and on that of others in the class. Pupils in both Years 8 and 9 expressed concern about the disruptive attitudes of two or three pupils in many classes making it difficult for others to learn.

12. Most pupils with special educational needs have a positive attitude to their work and respond well to extra support within the withdrawal groups. The school has recently set up an Inclusion Unit for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The setting of clearly defined ground rules at the beginning of each lesson, rigorously enforced where necessary, together with the provision of relevant, interesting work, helps to create a secure learning environment with positive effect on pupils' progress. Rewards for good behaviour, which are an integral part of the behavioural strategy, are effective and the sanctions are seen as fair.

13. Behaviour in school is satisfactory overall, and is showing signs of improvement. Both the permanent and fixed term exclusions were slightly below the national average last year, and so far this year the numbers are lower still. Behaviour in lessons again relates to the quality of the teaching. Mostly it is at least satisfactory and often good but, when the teaching lacks pace and challenge, pupils on occasion become disinterested, slow to respond to instructions, and sometimes rude. Even where the behaviour in lessons is very good, pupils often find it difficult to concentrate for more than an hour, and there is a tendency for attitudes and behaviour to deteriorate for the last quarter of an hour of some lessons. Behaviour around the school, though rather noisy and not always showing due consideration for others, is generally satisfactory. However, litter is a major problem which the school needs to do more to resolve.

14. Pupils feel safe in the school, and there are few incidents of bullying and no evidence of racial tension. Quite the contrary, with pupils showing great support and concern for a family of Chinese refugees with children in the school. Pupils show respect for the feelings of others and listen attentively to their peers when they are asked to read or demonstrate in class. Relationships between pupils and with the staff are satisfactory. Some relate very well to their teachers but prolonged staff absences cause some pupils to become disaffected with the lack of continuity in their learning and progress in some subjects, for example, in mathematics.

15. Pupils, especially in Year 11, enjoy taking on responsibilities and parents are pleased at the way the school helps them to become mature and responsible. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to show initiative and independence in physical education, ICT, expressive arts and music.

16. Attendance for the year 1999/2000 was satisfactory and at the national average. This is a significant achievement as attendance has been raised by almost 3 per cent from the previous year when it was well below the national average. Early contact with parents has been a key factor in this successful improvement. The incidence of pupil holidays in term time is high, however, and affects the continuity of pupils' learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The overall quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes is satisfactory. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, the teaching seen is good or better in 55 per cent of lessons – a lower proportion than is usually found. One lesson in six is very good or better, spread across the key stages, and featuring in ten subjects. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has strengthened with more good teaching than before, but there is need for continued improvement. Similarly, despite a marginal reduction in the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, the frequency is higher than usual with one lesson in ten judged less than satisfactory, and featuring in nine curriculum areas. The high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching seen during the previous inspection in mathematics, geography, music and modern foreign languages has been improved with recent appointments in these subjects. However, the impact of improved teaching is not yet realising sufficient progress in raising pupils' standards of attainment, and in securing a more consistent teaching standard across the school.

18. Teaching is notably effective throughout the school in art and English. Following recent appointments which have strengthened the subjects, good teaching predominates in ICT, music, special educational needs. Teaching is also good in history and in Key Stage 3 physical education. Elsewhere, teaching is almost always satisfactory, and examples of good teaching feature in all subjects. However, the quality of both teaching and learning in mathematics is unsatisfactory across the school with

considerable shortcomings which are founded in poor subject leadership and management. During the inspection unsatisfactory teaching was seen, spread across the key stages, in single lessons in geography, science, music, drama, special educational needs and religious education, in two lessons each in mathematics and physical education, and in three lessons in modern foreign languages. Lack of appropriate challenge in the work presented contributed to the weaknesses in modern foreign languages and physical education. Both in those lessons, and in virtually all the others which were unsatisfactory, the common weaknesses arose from teachers' insufficient planning for the 75 minute period. Their unsuccessful strategies to manage pupils' behaviour in the latter part of these lessons led to a lack of productivity, with the time available not being used profitably and insufficient gains in learning for pupils.

19. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding are generally good. Where expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high, there is positive impact on their rate of progress and attainment. This is notably the case in English, art and ICT where pupils are required to tackle demanding texts and activities.

20. Teachers generally explain to pupils what they are expected to learn. In the better lessons, for example, in English, ICT, music and art, good lesson summaries review pupils' progress and understanding. Teachers use a reasonable range of teaching strategies that are generally appropriate for the work taking place, and for the pupils concerned. Collaborative work features strongly in physical education, music and expressive arts. However, in some subjects, there is too much reliance on teacher-directed work which restricts the development of essential skills of research and independence. The discrete teaching of ICT is a good feature, although there is room for improved use in other subjects. English, however, is a notable exception to this, where very good use of ICT, for example, in a Year 11 lesson on the poetry of Simon Armitage, is promoting good learning and successfully supporting pupils' comprehension and extended writing.

21. Elsewhere, more attention should be given to the development of pupils' key skills of literacy and numeracy. The use of key words in subjects is developing well, and teachers in most subjects ensure pupils use and understand these words. The development of reading and writing is more uneven, except in English, as are speaking and listening. Opportunities to practise numeracy skills are not well developed. Mental and estimating skills are not widely promoted, and the weaknesses in numeracy are slowing progress in other subjects, for example, in science.

22. Teachers generally plan their work effectively, and tasks are mainly well matched to the needs and capabilities of a majority of pupils. Planning is a strength in ICT where good use is made of extension material to challenge the more able, for example, in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were designing their own menus. Equally effective, in a very different way, is the successful planning and organisation for separate classes for boys and girls in English in Years 10 and 11, which are successfully improving the learning and progress of both groups.

23. Despite this satisfactory planning by teachers, the full impact of the otherwise satisfactory or good teaching is adversely affected by a lack of pace and purpose towards the end of a significant number of lessons. As at the previous inspection, teachers do not always make the best use of the long 75 minute periods, and pupils find difficulty in concentrating and focusing on the tasks set for the whole lesson. As a result, behaviour deteriorates and this leads to conflict in some classes which undermines progress. Many lessons are not as productive as they should be, and this has particular impact in mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages, science and religious education.

24. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Work is regularly marked, often with helpful comments for improvement, but pupils are not always provided with a clear understanding of their learning and relative attainment because subjects make inconsistent use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades in their marking. This is particularly a concern in mathematics and modern foreign languages, yet is a significant strength in English and art. The use of homework is satisfactory overall, and is having positive impact on pupils' learning in English and geography. There are weaknesses, however, in mathematics, religious education and GCSE physical education.

25. The management of pupils in the classroom is generally satisfactory. Relationships are mainly good, and teachers set positive examples, relating well to their classes and providing general support and encouragement. Discipline is mainly good, although teachers have to work hard to maintain full control in

a minority of lessons, and time is lost on checking the behaviour and concentration of some pupils who find difficulty in tackling the long periods.

26. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught both in withdrawal groups and in the Inclusion Unit. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the pupils' needs, and match their teaching styles and learning resources to meet them. The consistent approach to learning, the use of praise and encouragement, high expectations, and the teachers' expertise in specialised techniques have a positive impact on the pupils' learning and progress and on their personal development. Support assistants are effectively deployed, and work closely with the class teacher. More assistants are needed to meet the wide range of needs across both key stages.

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

27. Curriculum provision is good overall. The community makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning and the relationships with partner institutions are very good and ensure the continuity of pupils' education. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall. They are good in English, geography, history and physical education, but are unsatisfactory in mathematics and religious education, and the provision for literacy and particularly numeracy require improvement.

28. Statutory requirements are not fully met. Some pupils who do not take design technology in Years 10 and 11 are not disapplied from the National Curriculum. In other respects, the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant, although in Years 10 and 11 work-related courses are, at present, limited to too few pupils. The time allocated to art in Years 7 and 8 is lower than the national average, and that given to religious education in Years 10 and 11 makes it difficult to cover the short GCSE course effectively. The curriculum is taught in lessons that are 75 minutes long. These present a challenge for most subjects, and both pupils and teachers have some difficulty using the time as productively as they might. Consequently, standards are affected adversely.

29. The curriculum provides equally for boys and girls, and for pupils of all abilities and includes the full range of National Curriculum subjects as well as personal, social and health education, and religious education. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils take drama. Pupils in the higher sets in Year 9 take either French or German as a second language for one period per week. This arrangement, whilst enriching their curriculum, is not leading to improved standards. In Years 10 and 11 pupils can take up to ten GCSE subjects. Pupils take double award science with some taking three separate sciences. All pupils take English literature and can take a short GCSE course in religious education. Since the previous inspection vocational and work-related education have been introduced and this has improved the range of the provision for some pupils.

30. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They have appropriate access to the National Curriculum. The Code of Practice is fully implemented and all pupils from stage two have individual education plans, and these form the basis of their learning and assessment of their progress. The Inclusion Unit effectively enables some pupils to continue their studies as an alternative to exclusion from the school.

31. The school's policy for teaching literacy skills requires further development to ensure improvement in the quality of learning across subjects. In numeracy the lack of a whole school approach is holding back consistent development in teaching numeracy skills, and is affecting standards across subjects.

32. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. The pupils who take the three separate sciences have additional lessons outside normal school time. A number of subjects provide extra support for GCSE coursework and there are clubs in five subjects and a homework club. ICT facilities and the library are available at lunchtimes and after school, and are well used. There is a school choir and instrumental tuition is available for guitar, brass and percussion. The provision of extra-curricular sport is a strong feature, and the recent renewal of the Sportsmark Award is confirmation of this. There is a good range of activities available throughout the year and inter-form competitions and a sports day ensure a high participation rate. These are supplemented with two activity days each year that include many recreational pursuits. Many staff contribute to the extra-curricular provision and this work does much to enhance the pupils' learning experiences.

33. The school provides a programme of personal, social and health education that is well planned and taught by all tutors. No lessons took place during the inspection but the pupils described them as interesting and useful. A number of visiting speakers contribute to the programme. It includes drugs education and aspects of sex education. Some elements of sex education are delivered through science.

34. The careers education and guidance programme is good. It is supported effectively by a careers adviser and there is a good careers library that is well used. The programme has a practical focus on the selection and application for further education, training and employment. Work experience is very good and almost all pupils receive a Trident certificate for successfully completing the two weeks.

35. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good. Effective links with local industry and businesses provide the work placements and employers provide mock interviews for pupils in Year 10 prior to the work experience. They also support an industry day. Local services and theatre groups are involved in personal, social and health education, and a local college provides an National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) course in sports education at the school. The community and two league football clubs use the sports facilities during the evenings and at weekends.

36. The relationships with partner institutions are very good. Lessons are provided in a number of subjects for primary pupils in Years 5 and 6 during two days each year. The English teachers have observed the literacy hour in the primary schools and, as a result, are amending the curriculum in Year 7 to ensure greater continuity. The school hosts a sports day for the primary schools. Academic and personal records are transferred effectively and the programme of transition is very good. The links with Cromwell School for pupils with severe learning difficulties are good, as is the relationship between the school and the local further education college which provides the vocational education. New links are beginning to develop with a local technology college that should prove beneficial for the school.

37. The school's responsibility to provide for pupils' personal as well as academic development is recognised in its published statement of aims and values. These tend to place more emphasis on the moral and social aspects than the spiritual and cultural, and this is reflected in the provision which is made through the subjects of the curriculum as well as the general life of the school. There is no agreed whole-school policy for pupils' personal development, and no means of monitoring the provision so that responsibility rests with individual departments. Consequently there is considerable variation in the quality and extent of the contributions which are made by subjects.

38. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The school does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all its pupils. Collective worship does take place in some Year assemblies, and assembly themes also contribute to pupils' moral and social development. Good use is made of local clergy and Christian youth workers to lead assemblies from time to time, but assembly themes are not planned well enough in advance and largely depend on seasonal and topical issues for their content. Few subjects make any significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. In art and physical education, pupils are able to discuss and reflect on their own and others' work. Some music lessons generate a sense of excitement and the religious education curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has good provision for consideration of belief and matters of faith.

39. The provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. Expectations of behaviour are clearly set out in the school's code of conduct and are reinforced by teachers in their daily interactions with pupils in lessons. Personal responsibility is emphasised in aspects of the personal, social and health education curriculum, which deal with such matters as sex education, parenthood and substance abuse. Sportsmanship and fair play are emphasised in physical education lessons, and in design technology pupils are taught to value patience and tolerance. Moral issues are also dealt with in other subjects. Moral implications of data protection and use of the internet are dealt with in ICT. In art, pupils discuss how artists represent moral issues in their work. Pupils studying French in Years 10 and 11 use texts which deal with moral and social issues, such as the plight of the homeless.

40. The school provides well for pupils' social development. The school's close relationship with its partner institutions gives many pupils the opportunity of working with other young people whose life experiences are different from their own. Year councils take the initiative in organising charitable activity. Pupils spontaneously and successfully gave their support to members of the school community who

were recently threatened with deportation. Other opportunities for pupils to accept and exercise responsibility exist, such as the paired reading scheme and prefect system. Personal responsibility is strongly emphasised in physical education lessons and there are good opportunities for pupils to work co-operatively in most subjects.

41. The overall provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have regular planned private reading opportunities in the library, which makes a good contribution to their cultural development. Good provision exists also in modern foreign languages through its programme of regular visits to France and Germany, and in particular, through the well-planned annual 'Bahnhof' day which provides authentic experience of a German railway station. Theatre and drama workshops take place from time to time. In music, the wide range of musical styles experienced by pupils includes examples from different cultures. In design technology, some pupils investigate cultural influences on textile design, and food technology provides experience of recipes from different parts of the world. A good range of extra-curricular sporting and other activities are provided. There is currently insufficient coverage of major world faiths other than Christianity in religious education and there is little evidence of the school using the opportunities presented by the cultural diversity of the local community, which was also the case at the time of the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. The school's procedures for care and guidance are mainly good, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. The provision of the breakfast bar is an example of the school's care and sensitivity to the needs of the pupils. Arrangements for dealing with child protection issues are good and all staff are made aware of procedures to follow. No health or safety hazards were observed though there is a small number of minor concerns of which the school has been made aware. Risk assessment takes place regularly.

43. The personal support and guidance provided through the pastoral system is generally good. However, staff changes and long-term absences have made difficulties for some of the pupils in Year 10. However, the head of year and the key stage co-ordinator ensure that the pastoral system remains effective. Much of students' personal development is monitored informally. The use of a log book is particularly useful for tutors getting to know the new pupils in Year 7. Academic performance is carefully monitored by form tutors and class teachers. The effectiveness of tutor periods varies and they are not always well used.

44. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. The school has made great strides in improving pupils' attendance, largely through 'phoning home on the first day of unexplained absence. Holidays in term-time are discouraged. There is some inconsistency in the way the registers are completed, particularly with regard to punctuality. The school works closely with the education welfare officer to improve attendance and all those involved have reason to be proud of their success. A strengthening of registration procedures is needed to ensure all staff apply them consistently.

45. The "behaviour for learning" policy has very clear procedures laid down which are made known to pupils and their parents. Rewards and sanctions are usually applied consistently. The merit system is generally effective with the younger pupils, but the older ones react more positively to such things as letters of praise sent home. Educational visits which the pupils enjoy are organised at least annually and those out of school time are not open to pupils who have seriously misbehaved. The use of the inclusion unit is helping those with behavioural difficulties, and the sensitive help given enables those pupils to remain in school and leads to fewer being excluded. There are relatively few bullying incidents, and they are well dealt with, with the result that pupils are confident that bullying is not a major issue in the school.

46. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is satisfactory overall. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in setting out whole school policies, but is not yet consistently applying them.

47. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory, but inconsistent. A good database has been established, which simply and clearly gives full details of each pupil's attainment from Key Stage 2, to Key Stage 3, with target predictions for GCSE. This information is being used effectively in English, science, geography, history, ICT and physical education, but its use is unsatisfactory in

mathematics, religious education and modern foreign languages.

48. There is similar inconsistency in reporting to parents, where not all subjects relate grades to National Curriculum levels to ensure that standards are clearly indicated or GCSE grades, and some provide little guidance for improvement.

49. The system for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs, and the regular review of individual education plans and statements is very good. The monitoring and assessment of progress in the small withdrawal groups is very good, and there is regular, effective liaison with appropriate external agencies and specialist centres.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. Most parents are pleased with the education the school provides and feel their children make good progress. Almost all feel comfortable approaching the school with suggestions or concerns. They feel their children are encouraged to work hard to realise their full potential. They are pleased with the range of activities available to pupils outside lessons. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are given every opportunity to be involved and informed about their progress.

51. Although the school stresses the importance of its partnership with parents, many have a reluctance to become very fully involved. The parent/teacher association meets monthly. It is a worthwhile forum for discussion but few people attend the regular meetings and there is only limited support for its functions. Fewer than 10 per cent of parents responded to the recent questionnaire and only eleven attended the pre-inspection meeting. As in many schools, parents tend only to contact the school when problems arise, and this lack of active involvement perhaps indicates general satisfaction.

52. A minority, however, feel they are not sufficiently well informed about how their children are getting on. Many parents would like improved consultation, especially when the time available with each teacher is so limited. The school does not hesitate to contact parents when they have concerns or when a pupil has done particularly well, but parents of average attainers also want information. Annual reports are satisfactory but lack consistency between subjects and can sometimes be confusing for parents. The prospectus does not comply with statutory regulations because it does not compare the school's examination results with those achieved nationally, nor does it publish attendance rates.

53. Pupils' homework is timetabled and tracked through planners. This allows parents to check what has been set and to see that it is completed. Parents are asked to sign the planners every week but they do not all do so consistently. A significant number of questionnaire respondents and some parents at the pre-inspection meeting were concerned that not enough homework is set, particularly in Years 7 - 9, and what is set sometimes lacks challenge or consists simply of "finishing off". Inspection findings suggest that this is the case in some subjects. Overall, the school's partnership with parents is satisfactory but could be strengthened.

54. The special educational needs department has good relationships with parents, who are fully informed of the statutory requirements laid down by the Code of Practice. Extensive contact takes place both formally and informally, with parents having direct access to the co-ordinator for special educational needs, and this supports pupils' progress well.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, with some strengths together with some key areas for improvement. Recent staff changes have resulted in a new management structure which places the school in a better position to enter the next phase of its development.

56. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities and provides the school with good and valued support. Their business is discharged effectively through a clear committee structure and appropriate programme of meetings. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and have strong links with the headteacher and staff. They effectively monitor the school's finances, are involved in its strategic planning, and understand where improvements are needed. Statutory duties are mainly fulfilled, including setting challenging targets for the headteacher and the school's examination performance. Some

statutory curricular requirements are not fully met in design technology and religious education, and there are shortcomings in the school prospectus relating to admissions, attendance and examination results. The governors' action plan in response to the previous report was positive, and most of the weaknesses have been tackled. However, governors have not been sufficiently searching in checking that teaching and learning has improved, and that standards are high enough.

57. The headteacher has been successful in leading the school through a period of considerable development since the previous inspection. The positive agenda for improvement put in place after the inspection has been partly successful, but has not had sufficient impact in raising standards. Considerable effort and energy has been given to successfully eliminating a substantial budget deficit, and in planning for the imminent relocation of a special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties within the Astley structure. This has slowed the rate of progress in other areas, particularly in improving standards. The work undertaken in this vital area has been hindered further by considerable staff absence and discontinuity in key areas. As a result, despite regular review of test and examination results, not all subjects are yet making sufficient use of the good data available on pupils' prior attainment to plan effective work and set targets for improvement. The recently established new line management structure should build on the previous positive work of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The new team should focus sharply on review and evaluation, and enable the school to develop its strengths and target areas for support and improvement within and across subjects.

58. Heads of Year are effective and ensure pupils are well supported in the school. Subject management and leadership is good in English, art and physical education. Recent appointments have strengthened the position in modern foreign languages, ICT and music. Subjects are mainly well organised and administered, although there are weaknesses in leadership in history and geography, whilst in mathematics both leadership and management are poor. Most heads of subject are effective managers, although for most their monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning are not yet well developed. As a result, in the majority of departments, there is insufficient debate about teaching skills and how pupils learn. Not enough is being done to promote improvement in teaching and to raise standards. Strategies such as the regular scrutiny by subject heads of pupils' books and teachers' marking, or their observation and review of lessons were not evident in the majority of subjects. Planning for improvement is inconsistent, as is the use of assessment and data on pupils' prior attainment in reviewing progress and setting targets. This uneven pattern of subject management is a weakness which should be systematically tackled by both subject heads and senior management within the school's newly agreed arrangements for performance management.

59. The special educational needs department is very well managed. The new co-ordinator gives clear educational guidance, promotes high standards and ensures that daily routines run smoothly and consistently. Staff in the department are committed to improvement. All departmental procedures and expected outcomes arise from a comprehensive analysis of assessment data. Good use is made of ICT to process and present individual education plans efficiently and effectively.

60. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. The school's strategic planning has been strengthened, and is now closely linked to the budget. Most issues identified in the last report have been tackled. A key area for improvement has been the school's development plan which clearly targets appropriate areas for improving attainment. The provision of extensive data on pupils' attainment to support target setting and improvement, and the consistent application of the school's policy for behaviour management are key factors in this process. There have been improvements in curriculum, although the effective use of time in lessons remains a concern. Despite the school's efforts, the sharing of effective teaching and learning has been less successful, and requires further consolidation. Progress has been made in improving GCSE results and attendance, whilst reducing the incidence of exclusion, and successfully eliminating the deficit budget. The school has the capacity for further improvement. A rigorous approach by senior management and subject heads to ensure accountability and collective responsibility for standards will accelerate this improvement.

61. Most teachers are suitably qualified for the subjects they teach and there is a good range of well experienced and recently qualified staff. However, there are serious shortfalls in a number of curriculum areas due to unfilled vacancies and staff absence, and these have slowed pupil progress and adversely affected standards, particularly in mathematics. There is a vacancy in geography, and there is long-term absence of teachers in history and modern languages. The school has only limited success in recruiting

and retaining sufficient specialist supply teachers. The level of technical support in science has not improved since the previous inspection and remains insufficient. Procedures for the induction of new staff are good. Staff development is closely linked to the school improvement plan and a high percentage of teachers has attended in-service training this year.

62. The accommodation is adequate though its quality is variable across the subjects of the curriculum. While accommodation is good in several areas, for example in science, ICT and special educational needs, it is unsatisfactory in others. There are insufficient rooms in mathematics to give each teacher a permanent base and one room is too small for a full class. Only one room is dedicated to the teaching of religious education, so many lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms with a subsequent loss of subject identity. The geography and history mobile classrooms are far from ideal and rather cramped. In physical education, the all-weather pitch enhances the facilities for outdoor games but the playground cannot be used for physical education because it needs resurfacing. Music still has no practice rooms. The food technology room is in need of refurbishment. Flat roofs continue to leak after heavy rain and there is water damage to the gym walls. The library has recently been refurbished and now offers pupils an attractive and comfortable environment for reading and research. It is well stocked with a wide range of fiction and general non-fiction, and a good start has been made in improving the quality of the subject sections. However, some subject sections still contain outdated stock and there is a shortage of specialist books, for example, in art and religious education. The library is a popular place with pupils and it provides good support for the development of their literacy skills.

63. Resources are generally satisfactory, and reflect the recent increase in spending following a period of severe budget restraint. There are adequate supplies of textbooks for class use in most subjects, apart from mathematics where pupils have to share. In religious education the range of resources does not cover major religions and is therefore unsatisfactory. Many rooms are well equipped, for example, with television and video facilities. However, there is a lack of computers in subject areas and pupils have to share equipment in design and systems, which has an adverse impact on their learning.

64. Systems for financial planning are very good. The budget is carefully planned each year, and is very well administered by the bursar using a modern computer system. The hard work of the headteacher and bursar has ensured that the budget is secure. Forecast implications are clearly understood with a budget surplus being carried forward to support the imminent integration of Cromwell School into the Astley structure. The bursar, who is also a governor, provides regular budget statements to the governing body, and the school's systems are very secure. The principles of best value are applied very well, and specific grant is always used for its designated purpose.

65. The school receives below average funding per pupil. Attainment on entry is below average, and the school serves an area of relative disadvantage. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as are pupils' attitudes and personal development. There are some shortcomings in management, but overall this is satisfactory. Although examination results are below average, they are improving at the same rate as the national picture, and they represent satisfactory achievement given pupils' starting points. Taking all these factors into account, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of educational provision in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- 1) Improve the attainment and progress of all pupils by:
 - further developing the systematic teaching of literacy skills through all subjects; *
(see paragraphs 8, 21, 71, 74 – 77)
 - developing a whole school strategy for teaching numeracy skills, and *
 - systematically and consistently teaching numeracy skills through all subjects. *
(see paragraphs 9, 21, 31)
- 2) Improve pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics by:
 - ensuring clear direction, leadership and management in the subject;
(see paragraphs 6, 18, 58, 89)
 - improving teaching by making it more challenging and consistent;

(see paragraphs 85, 88)

- using data on pupils' prior attainment to set them targets and check on their progress.
(see paragraphs 47, 82)

3) Improve productivity and pace in teaching and learning by:

- reducing the length of the teaching period to more closely match the pupils' capability to concentrate and focus on the work presented;
(see paragraphs 13, 25, 28)
- ensuring that teacher planning properly reflects the length of the teaching period, and includes a range of teaching and learning styles.
(see paragraphs 18, 23, 28)

4) Strengthen the impact of line management procedures by developing the responsibility of senior managers for:

- rigorously monitoring and supporting subject development across the school; *
(see paragraph 57)
- ensuring effective use of data on pupils' prior attainment for setting targets for improvement in subjects, and for tracking progress across the school, and particularly in Key Stage 3; *
(see paragraphs 47, 57, 58)
- identifying and sharing widely the good range of successful teaching and management in the school. *
(see paragraphs 18, 58, 60)

5) Improve the quality and consistency of subject management generally, and particularly in mathematics, geography and history, by:

- developing responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in subjects;
(see paragraphs 58, 112, 117, 123)
- identifying those aspects of teaching and learning which require improvement;
(see paragraph 58)
- making more effective use of assessment information and data; *
(see paragraph 47)
- improving subject development planning with clear links to school priorities and budget. *
(see paragraph 58)

In addition to the key issues, the following should be included in the action plan:

- improving pupils' spiritual development; *(see paragraph 38)*
- ensuring that statutory requirements are properly met for design technology, religious education, a daily act of collective worship and the school prospectus; *(see paragraph 56)*
- improving the quality of information provided for parents regarding their children's progress and standards. *(see paragraphs 47, 52)*

* *issues identified for improvement in the current school development plan.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	131
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	14	39	36	9	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	864	-
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	190	-

Special educational needs

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	113	-

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.7
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	79	88	167

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	29	30	38
	Girls	51	29	33
	Total	80	59	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	48 (55)	35 (50)	43 (45)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (28)	15 (24)	19 (9)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37	21	33
	Girls	60	26	33
	Total	97	47	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (67)	28 (51)	40 (58)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (26)	10 (25)	9 (18)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	71	88	159

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	20	64	64
	Girls	32	81	84
	Total	52	145	148
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	33 (30)	91 (88)	93 (95)
	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	32 (30)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	-	-
	National		-

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	-
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	5
Indian	7
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	7
Chinese	2
White	812
Any other minority ethnic group	22

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	31	3
Other minority ethnic groups	-	-

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)	51.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	110

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	23.8
Key Stage 4	20.1

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	1860950
Total expenditure	1830940
Expenditure per pupil	2250
Balance brought forward from previous year	123978
Balance carried forward to next year	153988

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	865
Number of questionnaires returned	52

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	48	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	40	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	46	10	0	19
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	50	19	6	0
The teaching is good.	30	55	5	5	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	37	18	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	34	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	30	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	50	11	4	8
The school is well led and managed.	30	57	3	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	44	2	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	54	4	0	8

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

ENGLISH

67. Results in English in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were well below average compared with all schools and also with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. They were considerably lower than results gained in the previous year, but similar to the school results in science and higher than those in mathematics. Girls did better than boys. The 2000 results are not consistent with those of recent years and reflect the lower than usual attainment on entry to the school of the year group taking the tests. In both English and English literature at GCSE in 2000 results were below average. The great majority of pupils gained A*-G grades, but the proportion attaining A*-C grades was below average when compared with all schools. Although girls did better than boys in both subjects, all the boys gained grades A*-G in English literature. Most pupils entered the school with levels of attainment which were below average and so these results represent satisfactory achievement. This is particularly the case in GCSE English literature as the numbers taking the examination in 2000 were above average.

68. Work seen during the inspection from pupils at the ages of 14 and 16 is average. The majority of pupils, both boys and girls, express themselves clearly and fluently in short oral responses and also in sustained presentations. Drama lessons play an important part in helping pupils to acquire the confidence to put forward their ideas and in some lessons the standards of speaking are above average. In class discussions pupils can support their viewpoints effectively with reasons and references to the books and plays they have been reading. Most pupils are attentive listeners. They are appreciative of others' contributions and they usually work together constructively in group tasks. The majority of pupils attain average standards in reading. Both boys and girls enjoy reading aloud and pupils of all levels of attainment read with expression, coping well with unfamiliar words. Younger pupils are given time and encouragement to read regularly for pleasure, and the paired reading programme provides effective support for those Year 7 pupils who need extra help to improve their reading fluency. Pupils of all ages respond positively to the fiction and non-fiction texts they study, including Shakespeare's plays and poetry by modern and pre-twentieth century writers. By the end of Year 11, the majority of pupils have a firm understanding of how themes, plot and character are developed, and they appreciate the different ways in which language can be used to charm, challenge, inform and persuade the reader.

69. By the age of 14 the majority of pupils attain average standards in writing. They write in a lively way for a wide range of purposes and use ICT effectively in presenting their work. Most pupils have learnt how to improve the clarity and accuracy of their writing through redrafting so the final version is usually carefully presented with legible handwriting and appropriate punctuation. However, although key words are usually spelt correctly, the spelling of familiar words is weak. Higher attainers write at length, selecting their words with care. A strength of their writing is the way in which they can adapt their style for different purposes, for example, in describing the experiences of a young wartime evacuee, and in analysing the requirements for a successful poster. Middle attainers, too, effectively analyse characters in their descriptive writing, but they do not develop their points in sufficient depth when presenting both sides of a case. The work of lower attaining pupils has weaknesses in handwriting, spelling and sentence structure but it is improved when pupils use specially produced learning materials such as spelling prompts and writing frames. Older pupils also write effectively in a wide variety of forms which include responses to poems, short stories, notes and media writing. The GCSE coursework of higher and middle attainers is well structured and of a good length, with judgements underpinned by carefully chosen quotations. Pupils have a clear understanding of different literary genres and an ability to adapt their own style accordingly. Although middle attainers write in less depth, their work is competent and shows a sound knowledge of the set texts. There are some weaknesses in spelling but punctuation is accurately used. Lower attaining pupils working towards the Certificate of Achievement present their work well and their final drafts are much improved in sentence structure and accuracy of spelling.

70. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment in literacy is below average. The combination of good teaching, generous provision for English within the curriculum, and the effectiveness of setting arrangements from Year 8 onwards enables pupils to make good progress as they move through the school. The standards of pupils' work, including those for whom English is an additional language, improves to average by the time they reach the age of 14 and this progress is sustained during the next two years. The school has responded positively to the challenge of improving boys' attainment at GCSE

and has introduced all boys' and all girls' classes in Years 10 and 11, set according to prior attainment. Pupils in these classes achieve very well because the good relationships within the classroom give them confidence to put forward their ideas in discussion, and the rigorous, well targeted teaching inspires them to give of their best. As a result, the standards seen in lessons are higher than previous GCSE results would suggest. Pupils with special educational needs develop their language skills successfully as a result of extra help, good resources and teaching methods which are well matched to their requirements.

71. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and make a strong contribution to their achievement. Standards of behaviour are good. Pupils listen with interest and respond well, especially when teachers provide opportunities for them to contribute to the lesson through a range of activities. Pupils usually settle down promptly and sustain interest and concentration in their work for most of the time, although many pupils, particularly the younger ones, find the lessons too long. Pupils work well together and show their appreciation of other people's achievements. For example, Year 7 pupils listened very intently to a talk given by one of their classmates and were quick to applaud her efforts. Independent learning through ICT is an impressive feature of work in English, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils of all levels of attainment complete individual assignments, submit their homework by electronic mail and use the English department website to pursue their studies.

72. Good teaching underpins pupils' learning. As at the time of the previous inspection there is no unsatisfactory teaching, and teaching is good in almost three-quarters of lessons, a small amount being very good. Homework is set and marked regularly throughout the school and pupils are provided with clear advice on ways to improve their work. In the most effective lessons, teaching is very well focused and expectations are high. Teachers have a clear knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and plan the lesson activities effectively to provide both challenge and consolidation. There are brisk reviews of previous work, no time is wasted and the purposeful pace of the lesson keeps pupils alert and attentive. Teachers make very good use of the board to record key points and useful summaries. Lessons are well supported by high quality resources, many of them produced within the department. Above all, there is a very good understanding between teacher and pupils so that pupils enjoy their lesson and work very hard. This is particularly the case in the classes in Years 10 and 11 where the boys and girls work separately. Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good, it is sometimes because activities are not planned carefully enough to produce the desired outcomes, and sometimes because pupils' involvement is reduced through overlong explanations. Endings of lessons also pose problems as pupils find it difficult to sustain concentration for the length of time required. Consequently, time is wasted when activities end earlier than they should do, and opportunities are often missed for a final recap in which both teacher and pupils evaluate what has been learnt. However, there are many more strengths than weaknesses in the teaching, and these are leading to pupils' improved progress.

73. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The department is well managed and teachers work very well together as a team. Planning is very good, and this is especially evident in the high quality of the schemes of work and the effective way in which assessment data is used to provide precise targets for pupils. The department has responded positively to the challenge of raising attainment by implementing a range of flexible setting arrangements from Year 8 onwards, and standards have risen, particularly in Years 10 and 11. A media studies course has been introduced for older pupils. New technology is used in a very effective and imaginative way to support pupils' learning. Priorities for the future include improving the national test results in Year 9 to the level attained in 1999; improving the proportion of pupils who gain grades A*-C at GCSE and exploring ways in which the principles and practice of the National Literacy strategy can be adapted for use in a secondary school.

Key skills: speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum

74. The school has made satisfactory progress in developing and implementing strategies to improve literacy skills. Although the school policy on literacy has yet to be formally adopted, most departments have a clear focus for developing literacy in the teaching of specialist key words which are prominently displayed around the classrooms and emphasised in lessons. In addition, initiatives such as the paired reading scheme in which pupils in Year 10 act as tutors to Year 7 pupils, the library lessons for younger pupils, and the use of structured aids to writing are making a positive contribution to the raising of standards of literacy. However, the introduction of practices to improve reading and writing is still at an early stage and is inconsistent across departments.

75. Speaking and listening are well supported in many areas and the majority of pupils are able to express themselves fluently when talking to visitors, and in class and group discussions. In mathematics pupils are articulate in putting forward their ideas, and in drama they adapt their speech to different contexts with a reasonable degree of success. In physical education where pupils are encouraged to talk about their work, a group of girls in Year 11 gave a clear evaluation of the progress they were making in their two week fitness programme. Pupils' listening skills are being well developed in modern foreign languages through the extra listening classes which the department has introduced. There are good opportunities for reading aloud in English lessons, but not enough in history. Most pupils can read well enough to cope independently with the materials they use in their lessons, and departments such as history and English make good use of texts which have been specially modified.

76. The range of writing undertaken varies across departments. In geography pupils use environmental themes such as rainforests as subjects for poetry, and there are some good examples of extended writing on sustainable development and reports on the San Salvador earthquake. Pupils write for a variety of different purposes in English, and in modern foreign languages older pupils make good use of authentic texts as a basis for extended writing. Pupils use word processing effectively in the redrafting of their work, and in subjects such as science, design and technology and music they make good use of writing frames to structure and clarify their information. However, although attention is paid to the accurate spelling of specialist key words there is no whole school approach to the correction of mistakes in the spelling of everyday words and therefore many basic spelling errors are not picked up during the marking of written work.

77. The school is in a sound position to make further progress. The literacy co-ordinator gives clear overall educational direction and a literacy project leader has also been appointed. Teachers have received initial training and members of the English department have visited local primary schools to observe the implementation of the National Literacy strategy. Subject departments generally recognise their responsibility to improve pupils' language skills and have made a positive response during the period of planning.

Drama

78. Observation of drama work during the inspection was limited to two lessons in Years 8 and 9, and to one lesson in Year 10 where two groups of pupils were working on presentations in preparation for the GCSE examination in expressive arts. Based on that limited observation, standards are below average at age 14 and match the national average at age 16. This judgement reflects the recent change in the provision of drama for younger pupils and the effective, well established programmes of study for older pupils.

79. Until the beginning of the present school year, younger pupils had drama lessons as part of their English course. However, a drama department has now been established, and new schemes of work have been introduced. Pupils in Year 9 have found it difficult to adjust to the different ways of working, and in the lesson seen the attitudes and behaviour of the majority of pupils were poor. As a result, the teacher did not manage to get through the work which had been planned, the teaching and learning was unsatisfactory, and pupils underachieved. They responded very slowly to instructions, and although a few pupils showed interest in the lesson and worked hard, most of the class did not make enough effort and many pupils were discourteous to the teacher. In Year 8, however, pupils respond positively to the challenge of learning new techniques and make good progress. Lesson routines are firmly established and pupils know what is expected of them. They work together constructively and contribute confidently to the different activities. For example, in the "hot seating" session they were attentive listeners and their questions showed that they had a firm grasp of the important events in the life of the person under scrutiny.

80. Pupils in Year 10 achieve well. They work together effectively, for example, in creating dance routines, and are receptive to critical comments from their teachers and fellow pupils. Pupils' mature attitudes make a strong contribution to their achievement. In the lesson seen, the good relationships between teachers and pupils had created an atmosphere of trust so that pupils worked responsibly in their groups and teachers were able to spend time profitably with each group, acting as a sounding board for ideas and offering suggestions for improvement. By the end of the lesson most pupils had made good progress in planning their presentations in writing and working them out in practice.

81. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is better in the examination classes than in the lower school where the weaknesses stem largely from inexperience and from pupils' negative attitudes. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and an enthusiasm for it. Both drama and expressive arts provide good opportunities for pupils' social and cultural development through the groupwork in lessons, the programmes of dance, drama and music in the expressive arts course, and the pantomime performances given to local primary schools. Older pupils also benefit from the links with the local arts college. However, arrangements for drama and expressive arts are unsatisfactory. Drama is an isolated department consisting of a single, inexperienced teacher, and there is no formal overall responsibility for expressive arts.

MATHEMATICS

82. The attainment of pupils aged 14 in the 2000 national tests was well below the national average, and very low compared with those achieved by pupils in similar schools. Pupils' test results in mathematics were significantly lower than those achieved in English and science. The 2000 results are the poorest since the previous inspection and indicate a considerable decline, particularly in comparison with the 1999 results that were below, rather than well below, national averages. Except for 1999, there has been a downward trend in performance, whilst nationally there has been an upward trend. Although girls have previously produced better results than boys, in 2000 there was little difference in their performance. The 2000 teacher assessments of pupils' attainment differed from test results by a considerable margin; more pupils obtained the national average levels than indicated by the teacher assessments, indicating weaknesses in the assessment procedures.

83. Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils obtaining grades A*-C in GCSE examinations has been consistently well below the national average. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the average points score in mathematics was well below average, and the proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C grades was half that seen nationally. However, the proportion achieving within the A*-G grade range was in line with the national average, indicating that most lower attaining pupils achieved results consistent with their ability. Although boys' results were higher than girls', the difference was small, and most boys and girls performed significantly less well in mathematics than in their other subjects.

84. During the current school year there have been a number of major changes in the mathematics department. In the inspection week the overall performance of the department was better than the 2000 examination and test results might suggest, but the changes have not yet been in place long enough to be reflected in pupils' attainment. In all years, the standard of work in lessons ranges from very weak to well above the national average but is still, overall, well below the national average. This is mainly because, over a lengthy period of time, most pupils have not been required by their teachers to produce an adequate volume of work. The degree of discontinuity, caused by a significant number of timetable and staffing changes due to long term absence, is a further factor that leads to many pupils either missing or failing to complete work. Consequently, progress across the school has been poor and pupils are underachieving. This is particularly the case with pupils in middle ability sets.

85. In work seen during the inspection, higher attaining Year 9 pupils demonstrate that they have a satisfactory grasp of handling data and competently calculate the various measures of average. They understand correlation and draw lines of best fit on scatter diagrams. All groups are familiar with the more common geometric shapes and their properties, and higher attainers successfully apply Pythagoras' theorem to find the unknown side of a right-angled triangle. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils broaden their range of methods for solving triangles to include the trigonometrical ratios and the sine and cosine rules. In algebra, lower attaining pupils show that they can recognise and simplify similar terms and solve straightforward equations, and higher attaining pupils extend their competence to include the solution of equations of increasing complexity, including quadratic equations. However, there is inconsistent provision that derives directly from variable levels of teachers' expectations and planning. This is particularly the case in some lessons for average and just below average pupils in which, because the work is undemanding, learning is neither consolidated nor extended. Consequently, although many pupils make satisfactory progress in some individual lessons, the level of sustained progress over time is poor. In most lessons pupils have the opportunity to practise their number skills but for many pupils, including some higher attaining pupils, weaknesses and carelessness with arithmetic sometimes inhibit progress, even though they understand the new work being done. The benefits of the National

numeracy strategy are evident with Year 7 pupils who are showing a greater confidence and competence with the application of mental arithmetic. There is little investigative work in any of the year groups and pupils are not given the opportunity to routinely use ICT to enrich and support their learning in mathematics.

86. In lessons there is no discernible difference in the performance of boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs are integrated well into appropriate groups. Some pupils with special needs are in classes in which there is inconsistent provision and lower expectations, and consequently their progress, like their peers, is unsatisfactory. However, those in the lowest attaining groups with smaller numbers make satisfactory progress, and this is exemplified in the percentage of pupils who gain a GCSE certificate within the A*-G grade range.

87. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in mathematics lessons are generally satisfactory, but a minority of pupils requires frequent teacher cajoling and skilful handling to be kept on task. Some older pupils indicate that they have a better and more positive approach to the subject because of some of the recent changes. There are few examples of very good quality written work, and the presentation of solutions varies from class to class. In many exercise books, including those of higher attaining pupils, there is a significant amount of poorly presented and incomplete work. Learning is impeded by untidy written work and, because it lacks structure, it does not foster understanding and retention. In addition, and particularly in algebra, a lack of systematic, academically rigorous presentation inhibits progress and learning.

88. The impact of teaching on the quality and quantity of pupils' written work done before the inspection, combined with the performance data that shows pupils are significantly under-achieving, indicate that the overall strength and quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching seen ranges from unsatisfactory to very good across the year groups. During the inspection two in five lessons observed were good, and the rest were very good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory in equal proportions. Most teachers have a good command of the subject, but their planning does not always apply this command to take account of pupils' prior learning and the amount of time available in each lesson. In the best lessons the teachers set realistic, timed tasks that provide appropriate levels of challenge and utilise the whole of the lesson time. They are energetic and ensure that, because lessons have a planned structure, consolidation is accompanied by the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. For example, a higher attaining group of Year 11 pupils responded positively to these features in their revision lesson on factorisation and were able to extend their understanding and competence to deal with questions on quadratic equations at higher GCSE level. In less successful lessons, because the teacher fails to generate enthusiasm and does not provide a structured programme, the pace is pedestrian and lacking in challenge. In such lessons there is little involvement of pupils in explaining the work, and the lack of lesson structure leads to a loss of focus and deteriorating levels of concentration, particularly in the final stages of the lesson. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, a lack of pupil management skills combines with these weaknesses and results in very limited learning and progress. For example, a lower attaining group of Year 11 pupils failed to advance their knowledge of co-ordinates and straight line graphs because the teacher lacked pupil management skills and failed to use an appropriate range of strategies. The pupils became progressively more disaffected, particularly in the final stages of the lesson, and consequently made little or no gains in knowledge or skills. There are inconsistencies in the quality and frequency of marking pupils' work and assessment procedures are not sufficiently developed to establish individual pupil targets that speedily identify under-achievement and help to raise standards.

89. Leadership and management in mathematics has been poor. As a result of this, and a significant lack of continuity in teaching resulting from staff absence, there is an overall lack of consistency in the department and different groups of pupils experience different standards. There is a lack of cohesion. The causes of these inconsistencies are not being managed. This is because there is inadequate monitoring and evaluation and a lack of prescription in procedures. There is, therefore, a lack of shared, clear educational direction for the subject. The development plan already incorporates many areas in need of development, but the targets require a much sharper focus and more demanding time limits. Improvement since the previous inspection has been poor.

SCIENCE

90. In 2000, the pupils' results in national tests at age 14 were well below average. They were also well below average for those schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the past four years

although test results have declined the trend remains broadly in line with national figures. Higher attaining pupils performed better in 2000 than in 1999, and boys did better than girls. Pupils do better in their science tests than in similar mathematics tests. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was below the national average. Nearly all those pupils entered for GCSE separate science examinations achieved at least a grade within the A*-G range. Boys continue to do better than girls. Again GCSE science results are similar to English, but superior to those of mathematics.

91. The range of inspection evidence, including samples of pupils' work, indicates that by the age 14 standards are below average for their age. Changes to the delivery of the science curriculum in this age range ensures that pupils' knowledge and understanding of physics, chemistry and biology improves as they get older. For example, more able pupils understand how joints in the body work and why they are important. Average attaining pupils are able to recall observations seen during chemical reactions. Lower attaining pupils can make simple experimental predictions and devise means of testing whether they are true. Practical skills are limited when pupils enter the school and progress in this area is rather slow. In work seen in Years 10 and 11 standards are also below average for their age. However, pupils continue to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of scientific theories and concepts. Higher attaining pupils can draw the correct structural formula for a series of related alcohols. Average attaining pupils understand how electricity is produced in a power station. Lower attaining pupils have some idea of how the heart pumps blood around the body. Scientific enquiry skills are emphasised but poor mathematical ability limits progress in this attainment target.

92. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In lessons pupils acquire knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts at an appropriate rate. This is a result of satisfactory teaching and pupils' attitudes. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is also satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils make satisfactory progress in most of the attainment targets of the National Curriculum. In some lessons, where the management of pupils and time is better, pupils make better progress and learn at a faster rate. Year 11 pupils made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of hydrocarbon chemistry in such a lesson. However, throughout the school, low levels of numeracy make it difficult for pupils to access higher aspects of the science curriculum, such as, calculations of power in physics. This results in lower levels of achievement than would be expected. Pupils use of ICT has improved and this is increasing pupils' interest and motivation in science. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards targets set for them, with suitably matched work being provided for them in most lessons.

93. Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory overall. The majority of pupils are well behaved, responsible, and have good relationships with teachers which supports the learning process. However, some pupils are inattentive, and lack motivation and interest. They do not co-operate readily with teachers, particularly towards the end of lessons. In some classes the behaviour of a minority of pupils hinders the progress of the majority.

94. Teaching is satisfactory overall. However, the proportion of good teaching is low, and unsatisfactory teaching accounts for about one lesson in ten. Staff are well qualified and are committed to the education of the pupils with some lessons being taught voluntarily outside the normal school day. They work hard to establish good relations with pupils. However, some less successful lessons are not well adapted to the needs of the pupils and this results in problems with pupil behaviour. Management of pupils and time is a weakness, particularly towards the end of the 75-minute periods where the teachers often struggle to maintain pupils' interest and motivation. As a result pupils do not learn as effectively as they might. Day-to-day assessment does not generally highlight pupils' strengths and weaknesses or show them how to improve. The structure of most lessons would be improved by more clearly conveying learning objectives to pupils and checking outcomes.

95. Management is improving and shows some good features. There are good procedures in place for measuring pupils' capabilities and this information is used effectively in the department's curriculum planning. Provision for ICT, accommodation and learning resources have improved and these are raising the profile of the department. The department functions well on a day-to-day basis. Teachers work well together as a team. The technician works hard and efficiently to ensure the smooth running of the department, but the level of technical support has not improved since the previous inspection, and is insufficient. Schemes of work for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have been improved. However, there is no direct observation of teaching in the department which would serve to share good practice and improve

unsatisfactory teaching.

96. Since the previous inspection the department has made satisfactory progress. In order to improve further the department needs to make sure that day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is more effective. Teaching needs to be more closely monitored so that its quality improves.

ART AND DESIGN

97. GCSE results for 2000 were in line with the national average for both A*-C and the highest A*-A grades. All pupils entered gained at least grade G. The previous inspection reported above average results for 1995. However, this was with a relatively small entry. In 1996, entry numbers trebled and results fell to below average. Since then, whilst entry numbers have been largely maintained, the trend has been one of steady improvement to meet, and fractionally exceed, the national average. In 2000, art was one of the best performing subjects at the school. On average, pupils gained nearly half a grade better in the subject than in others taken at the same time. Girls did particularly well achieving nearly two-thirds of a grade better.

98. In work seen, the standards of pupils in Year 9, at the end of Key Stage 3, is average. Achievement is good. Teacher assessments in Year 9 show a good understanding of the standards expected and accurately reflect what pupils are achieving and are confirmed by inspection findings. Marking and methods of assessment generally are good and undertaken with professional care. Pupils in all year groups consequently know what they have to do to improve. Their subsequent work shows they act on their teacher's advice. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs, including those recognised as being particularly gifted or talented in art, make good progress. The teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of such pupils well and they are effectively supported, on an individual basis, in lessons. Standards of pupils' work in Year 11, at the end of Key Stage 4, are above average. and they make good progress, and are achieving well. This reflects the improving trend in GCSE results.

99. There is a firm focus, through the teaching, on the development of pupils' key skills in art. Preparation work is thorough and the use of sketchbooks for this purpose is a strength of the department. Pupils are given good opportunity to experiment and develop their techniques and creative imagination using a variety of media. Their understanding and use of colour is particularly good, for example, in Year 7 free expression work arising out of self-portraits. In Year 8, work based on the Austrian artist *Friedensreich Hundertwasser* also involved good understanding of pattern and design. By Year 9, pupils have developed a sound sense of composition, are confident in observed and freehand drawing work and show a properly developed sense of perspective in their sketchwork. However, progress and learning in Years 7 and 8 are limited by a lack of curriculum time for the subject. In these years it is only half the national recommendation with fortnightly lessons. Although basic artwork skills are covered well, depth of study suffers. For example, pupils' critical and analytical skills are underdeveloped, art history and multicultural art elements do not get the expected coverage and there is limited opportunity for three-dimensional work in clay. For example, in a Year 10 ceramics lesson, pupils were having to be taught basic skills which are normally expected to be secured by the end of primary or early on in secondary school. Whilst they learnt quickly, this has implications for the breadth of the foundations being laid for pupils opting for the GCSE course, and their potential to achieve higher grades. However, in Years 10 and 11, established skills are developed well and there is some fine work to be seen, for example, in designs based on *William Morris* and fabric work involving wax resist techniques. Here the cross-curriculum links with textiles in design and technology are particularly strong.

100. Teaching in art is good. As a result, learning is never less than satisfactory and is mainly good across all year groups. Teachers are all specialists and they show good, professional knowledge and understanding and share their personal skills well through practical demonstrations in lessons. Expectations are good, and teachers' support and encouragement of pupils raises their self-esteem. Pupils gain confidence in their own abilities and attitudes to the subject are mainly good. Effective use is made of the 75 minute periods and there is generally a steady, secure, self-motivated pace to lessons. Pupils are willing to talk about and discuss their work with interest and enthusiasm. They value each other's achievements.

101. Leadership and management of the department are good, as is the commitment to continued improvement on the part of all art teachers. Some improvements are required to resources. Computer

hardware has recently been acquired, however, software and CD-ROM resources have still to be developed fully to make effective use of this. The department's computers, as yet, lack internet connection to enable research work by pupils. Library reference resources require improvement to properly support independent learning. Some multicultural art resources are in place but require further development. There are, currently, no curriculum trips or gallery visits for the pupils. Whilst the older pupils taking GCSE are encouraged to undertake these on their own as part of 'homework' not all pupils have the opportunity for such curriculum enrichment experiences.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. In 2000, GCSE results were below the national average overall for A*-C grades but above for A*-G grades. Girls' results were closer to the national average than boys' and results for both were above the national average for A*-G grades. Individual specialisms experienced varied success with food technology and textiles above the national average for A*-C grades and graphic products well below the national average. The results compare very favourably overall with the school's overall results, and when prior attainment levels are considered, pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

103. Current standards of work at the end of Year 9 are below average and match recent teacher assessments. Girls perform better than boys particularly at the higher levels. Improvement is seen through the key stage and design folders show a range of presentational skills to illustrate the work, including some use of ICT. A good range of ideas is seen in a Year 7 plastics project designing a logo, a Year 8 festive food project where neat sketching, graphs and charts are used to present information, and where good well-dimensioned labelling was used in a Year 9 storage project. Overall, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Practical work is usually of a good standard. Weaker work shows poorer standards of written work; presentational skills are underdeveloped, and work is sometimes incomplete with labelling or titles missing.

104. Current standards at the end of Year 11 are broadly average overall and reflect the improvement seen in examination performance. Standards in the different aspects of design technology are variable, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory in most areas. Coursework folders show a broad range of presentational skills and techniques including colour, shading, freehand sketching, commercial material and ICT to illustrate ideas. Evidence of good research is seen in a graphics project investigating greeting cards, and in systems and control where the internet was used in researching a clock project. Where work is weaker it is mainly due to limited research, and poorer quality presentations using a restricted range of skills. Practical work is usually of a good standard.

105. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with a proportion of good teaching seen at both key stages. The better lessons, where learning is increased, have good pace, set clear objectives, use appropriate teaching strategies and have good pupil management. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were increasing their three-dimensional sketching skills, a Year 9 lesson where pupils were engaged in producing a quality outcome in food technology, and in a Year 11 textiles lesson where pupils were using cultural influences in a cushion project. Satisfactory lessons have many good features but can lack sufficient pace. On occasion, pupils are uncertain of how well they are performing, and some work lacks sufficient challenge. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory and often good progress especially in practical work. Their attitudes to the lessons are nearly always good and they work well in groups and share workplaces willingly. They usually respond well to questions and can discuss their work confidently. Literacy support is evident with the use of key words in all areas and relationships are always good. Instances of inattention and distraction during teacher explanations or demonstrations are dealt with effectively.

106. Assessment procedures are in place, but are in the early stages of development to include National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, assessment is linked to examination board criteria and pupils generally have an awareness of how they are performing in each specialism. Marking of work is regularly completed but is not always as informative as it could be. Homework set is usually linked to classwork or coursework.

107. The curriculum meets requirements at Key Stage 3 and a revised course now ensures progression across the different aspects of the subject. At Key Stage 4 statutory requirements are not met as all pupils do not take a design and technology subject. In the option system a good range of specialisms is

offered. Electronics is part of the Key Stage 3 course but pneumatics is yet to be introduced. A graphics module at Key Stage 3 would contribute to the learning experience as would the implementation of CAD/CAM facilities.

108. The department is efficiently led and issues from the previous inspection have been addressed fully or in part. There is a good team approach in the department despite the isolation of one specialist room. Development planning has improved but there is still a weakness in medium and long term planning. The department is developing an improved assessment system at Key Stage 3 which covers curriculum requirements. Monitoring of standards and progress needs a sharper focus than at present.

109. Accommodation is good in resistant materials which has a large working area for practical and design activities. There is no specialist provision for textiles or graphic products, and the food technology room is in need of upgrading. Some rooms are rather cramped when large classes are present, and this limits practical activities. Technician help is available in both areas. The dust extraction system in the materials preparation room is inefficient.

110. Since the previous inspection satisfactory improvements have been made in examination results, and in increased use of ICT, including the internet for research. Control and electronics have been introduced at Key Stage 3, and increased opportunities provided for in-service training for staff. Further improvement is needed in Key Stage 3 assessment procedures, and in development planning. There is also need to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently monitored and developed across the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

111. In 2000 the results of the teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils, based on good procedures, indicated that their attainment was well below average. The GCSE examination results in 2000 improved from 1999, but were still well below the national average, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. On average pupils obtained one grade less in geography than they achieved in their other subjects, and the results indicate considerable underachievement. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.

112. Since the previous inspection there has been no teacher with specific responsibility for geography and the subject has lacked leadership. During this inspection a vacancy was being covered by a supply teacher who had been in the school for three weeks.

113. The standard of work seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of pupils' work are well below the national average by the end of Year 9. Taking into account the pupils' very low attainment on entry, this represents satisfactory achievement. This progress is the result of satisfactory teaching and learning, and the generally positive attitudes of pupils to their work. Teachers know their subject well and are competent in teaching literacy and numeracy. As a consequence all pupils develop their geographical knowledge and skills. Pupils use maps and photographs of the local area to describe land use changes over time. Higher attaining pupils draw accurate climate graphs, and interpret these to account for the development of tourism in Majorca. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs use different worksheets to enable them to complete these graphs and make satisfactory progress. Pupils consider the impact of human interaction with the environment. In work on tropical rainforests higher attaining pupils produce good written descriptions of the exploitation of these regions and its effect at a local and global scale. Average and lower attaining pupils do not always respond well to good marking and continue to produce one word or one sentence answers to questions. In Year 9 pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the relationship between physical and human geography in lessons on the causes of flooding in northern Italy. They acquire new knowledge of the indicators of economic development and they compare employment structures to levels of development. However, they are not challenged to consider this concept in terms of population structure and growth. The use of ICT in geography to enhance pupils' learning has developed since the previous inspection, for example, in using the internet to obtain weather statistics and examining patterns over time.

114. Pupils begin Year 10 with well below average standards and by the end of Year 11 standards of work seen are well below average. These standards are the result of some satisfactory teaching and learning. However, some unsatisfactory teaching and the negative attitudes of a significant number of

pupils cause underachievement. For example, in a lesson on pollution in Japan learning was confined to answering questions from a worksheet and copying a map. Some pupils, particularly boys, soon lost interest, were consistently inattentive, and became difficult to manage. The lesson lost pace because of the attention they demanded, leading to unsatisfactory learning and underachievement. The contrast in attitudes is demonstrated by the good achievement of a lower attaining pupil who, in response to good marking, drafted and re-drafted fieldwork to attain a high mark. Pupils use a variety of good resources, carefully matched to their needs, to extend their basic skills of map reading in relation to the amenities for tourists in Torbay, and their understanding of the structure and location of industry in Japan.

115. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally satisfactory. It is clear that in most lessons many pupils cannot sustain their concentration into the last part of the long lessons. The effort teachers make to manage this situation detracts from the pace of learning. Consequently, time is not used effectively.

116. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and has improved since the previous inspection. Of the eight lessons seen, three were good, four were satisfactory and one was unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, teaching was either good or satisfactory and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. In Years 10 and 11 it varies from very good to unsatisfactory. The strengths of the good teaching include good classroom management, careful planning, and the use of a variety of different resources to match the learning needs of all pupils. This occurred in a lesson on Japanese industry. The satisfactory teaching lacked challenge and context; for example, climate graphs were not related to climatic regions. The unsatisfactory teaching lacked variety, challenge, pace and the management and control of pupils was not effective. As a result, learning is not as effective as it could be.

117. Without any leadership the teachers in the department have produced a good programme of study and the quality of the curriculum in geography is good. Since the previous inspection they have improved the assessment procedures and homework provision. Teachers have enhanced the learning opportunities for pupils by extending the use of ICT, placing more focus on key words and developing different work to match the needs of all pupils more effectively. However; these have not yet improved standards. At the present time there is no formal monitoring which would help to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

HISTORY

118. GCSE results in 2000 were below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in history in 2000 were well below the national average, and declined noticeably from those in 1999. However, there was a higher proportion of the highest A* grades than the national figure. For A*-G grades, the results in 2000 were marginally lower than the national average, mainly achieved by girls. Overall, however, there was little difference between the performance of boys and girls, and fewer boys opt for history in Key Stage 4.

119. The standards of work seen are close to average by the end of Year 9. This is much better than indicated by teacher assessments for 2000 and 1999, where the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was well below average. This reflects weaknesses in the application and moderation of the teacher assessments. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils make secure progress and develop their historical understanding and interpretation of sources. High attaining pupils develop some good extended writing on topics such as the Slave trade. Average and lower attaining pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and very good materials, which have been designed to meet their needs. Pupils of widely differing abilities in a Year 9 class were able to follow complex developments in public health where well-designed materials were used which engaged their interest. Standards of speaking and reading are good, and there is evidence of good application of a literacy policy with the use of key words supported by wall displays. Overall, pupils achieve well during this key stage. In Key Stage 4 standards of work seen are average. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 studying for GCSE achieve well as a result of good, experienced teaching. Their progress and learning is supported by well structured materials and a relevant curriculum which engages their interest by raising many issues of an ethical and moral nature, such as those from the history of medicine and the Holocaust.

120. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. Their needs are clearly identified in lesson plans, which are matched by the use of very good materials and textbooks. In larger, mixed ability classes, however, teachers need more in-class support to enable them to assist all

pupils effectively. More able pupils are often stretched by the extended work included in the course booklets, which are very good compilations of materials on topics such as the Romans. Well-constructed course booklets are also used well in Key Stage 4 to help students of all abilities, and separate homework booklets are also effectively used.

121. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, with just a few exceptions. Behaviour is barely satisfactory in a few classes in Year 9, caused by disruption by a few pupils and made worse by the length of lesson, which can lead to some loss of concentration. In most classes across the school, however, attitudes are good, with positive levels of interest and sustained concentration, as a result of firm control by teachers and a range of stimulating tasks. Since the previous inspection, more opportunities have been provided for pupils to work more independently on topics, with a few using the internet for research.

122. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages. Teachers are very well qualified and experienced, and organise their lessons well. They set a good pace, and challenging tasks generally make use of the long lessons effectively. Very good teaching materials are well used with mixed ability classes, although use of visual material could be extended still further. Teaching methods have become more varied since the previous inspection, with more discussion and pupil participation. One class in Year 7 was stimulated by good teaching, involving a video and questions, to write good responses about the Battle of Hastings. Teachers have made good progress since the previous inspection in their use of assessment. All teachers mark thoroughly and set homework regularly. There is still a need to achieve more consistency in using National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, and in reporting them to parents.

123. The department has good policies and procedures, but requires more positive leadership. Standards achieved could be higher if there was more communication between teachers, and an effective process of monitoring teaching and learning to identify good practice and to share ideas. Since the previous inspection there has been satisfactory progress in improving teaching methods, materials and assessment, but examination results have been inconsistent. Accommodation still needs to be improved, although display material now reflects pupils' achievements. Some progress has been made in the use of ICT, but staff need training in its further application to teaching and learning. The department needs more cohesive management to achieve more consistent results.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

124. GCSE results in 2000 were significantly better than in 1999, but were well below the national average and lower than in most other subjects in the school. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C was well below the national average but the proportion achieving at least a grade G was average. Boys achieved better results than the girls in contrast with their relative performance nationally.

125. The standards in work seen are slightly below average by the end of Year 9. This is better than indicated by teacher assessments for 2000 and 1999 which were below average. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are higher than those in Year 9 because changes in staffing and the introduction of a new scheme of work this year are raising standards generally, but Year 9 pupils are starting from a relatively lower level. Pupils mostly acquire sound technical skills in each area of the subject, including using computers for control. Those with special educational needs make particularly good progress because thorough individual teaching ensures that they all achieve competence and confidence in using computers. Pupils are able to understand some of the ethical and social issues involved in the use of this technology, such as privacy and effects on employment. The more able pupils are able to use computers to address specific problems through, for instance, modelling, and some are able to explain the suitability of particular software for a purpose. However, pupils' application of their skills to other subjects is not sufficiently developed. Overall though, pupils achieve well during the key stage.

126. Pupils studying for the GCSE examination in ICT make good progress. By the end of Year 11 the standard of their work is average for pupils of this age. This is a considerable improvement on the GCSE results for 2000, and is the consequence of a very well planned scheme of work introduced when these pupils started their course, together with good teaching. This has also ensured that both girls and boys

have positive attitudes to the subject and are making similarly good progress. Nearly all pupils present their work well and thoroughly execute all aspects of their coursework. Most are able to explain why specific software is appropriate for particular tasks and can explain changes they make in the design and implementation of systems. Those pupils who are not studying for an examination in this subject make more limited progress because the application of ICT to other subjects is, in many cases, unsatisfactory. Therefore, overall, pupils' achievement is only satisfactory during this key stage.

127. Teaching is good. No lessons observed were unsatisfactory and a majority were good or very good. The high quality of the teaching of GCSE classes is a key factor in the good progress made by pupils. In these lessons expectations are very high. Pupils are encouraged to develop individual projects independently and are also given support materials and a clear structure to ensure that they are able to respond to the good pace of the lessons. Within relatively large classes, the teacher and the technician ensure that pupils are well supported individually and, as a result, pupils of different abilities, including those with special educational needs, learn well. In some lessons in Key Stage 3 there are insufficient computers for each pupil to work separately, and the class organisation does not ensure sufficient independent working. Whilst pupils are able to work at their own pace, work sheets need to ensure that slower pupils do not miss applying their technical skills because this is the last task on the sheet and some do not complete it.

128. Pupils mostly enjoy their ICT lessons and work hard, although in some lessons in Key Stage 3 their effort reduces towards the end of the 75 minute lessons. GCSE groups work well independently. Clubs are provided for pupils to extend their use of computers at lunchtimes and after school and these are very well attended with all the computers in use. Many pupils use this time to search for information through the internet.

129. The good management of the subject is a key factor in the improvements made recently. There is a clear vision for the future and effective strategies for improvement are either implemented or being put in place. Recently acquired computers have helped to improve standards but access to facilities remains a significant factor in the unsatisfactory provision in some subjects, particularly where specialist equipment is required, such as in music, and for computer aided manufacture.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

130. In 2000 GCSE results were below average. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in French was below average, reflecting some improvement on results in the previous two years, although almost half the pupils entered achieved passes at grades F or G. Girls' results were well below average, whereas boys' results were closer to average. Compared with their other subjects, pupils achieve less well in French. Results reflect serious long term staffing difficulties which sorely affected the continuity of learning and led to considerable pupil disaffection.

131. Standards in work seen during the inspection are below average by the age of 14, at the end of Key Stage 3, and confirm teacher assessments. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are better than in Year 9 because a new scheme of work is ensuring that what pupils learn enables them to progress at a satisfactory rate. However, such changes are too recent to have had a real impact on raising standards in Year 9 where other factors, such as pupil disaffection and low teacher expectations, result in underachievement, particularly among higher attainers. Pupils develop their listening and speaking quite well when they have good opportunities to practise these skills, although the level they reach is relatively low. Most pupils do not readily identify details from a tape, they lack confidence when they speak and responses are brief. Reading is underdeveloped because pupils' experience is limited to understanding short sentences in worksheets. In writing, although they learn basic grammar structures, most pupils do not readily produce sentences of their own and higher attainers do not make enough progress in writing short paragraphs.

132. Standards in work seen are below average by the age of 16, at the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils achieve better when the teaching is good. For example, higher attainers in Year 11 are achieving particularly well because they have regular opportunities to practise and develop all the skills, the work they do is stimulating and challenging and expectations are high. However, there is some underachievement among girls and boys in middle sets because unsatisfactory teaching demands too little of the pupils in terms of pace and the level of work. These pupils are not doing well enough in speaking and listening in particular.

German

133. In 2000 all pupils entered for GCSE achieved a pass at grades A*-G, although the proportion achieving passes at grades A*-C was below average and marked a decline on the broadly average results in 1999 and 1998. Results in German are closely in line with most subjects in the school. At the time of the previous inspection, results were well above average, but since then long-term staff absence has had a detrimental affect on pupils' attitudes and on standards achieved.

134. Standards in work seen at the end of Year 9 are below average but show signs of improvement. At this stage, writing is relatively strong because pupils start to write sentences from early on, and most pupils gradually build up some knowledge of basic structures. Pupils in the top set can write a short account about eating habits; average attainers write sentences about hobbies while lower attainers label visuals and adapt model dialogues. Pupils do some reading of worksheets but they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop this skill. When they have good opportunities to listen and respond to German spoken on tape or by the teacher they develop these skills reasonably well. Average and lower attaining pupils identify some details from tapes, but they do not speak with much confidence even when working from a written prompt. In Years 10 and 11, speaking and writing are relatively strong in the higher sets because pupils develop a better understanding of the structure of the language and learn to use tenses more appropriately. Lower attaining pupils achieve some success in listening and reading, but irregular attendance has an adverse affect on their learning.

135. In both languages pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when the teacher uses appropriate strategies and tasks are suitably matched to pupils' capabilities. Some good practice was observed both in mixed ability classes and in the lowest set in Year 9.

136. Pupils' attitudes overall are satisfactory. They range from very good to unsatisfactory and are directly linked to the quality of teaching. Attitudes are generally more positive in Years 10 and 11, and many pupils attend extra lessons at lunchtime and after school to practise and improve their oral performance. However, pupils preparing for GCSE in German who have endured a long period of staff absence are becoming increasingly frustrated and demotivated. Behaviour in lessons is generally satisfactory, although a significant minority of average attaining girls and boys in Years 9 and 10 often misbehave and disrupt the learning of others in the class. Older pupils cope better with the long lessons. There is good support for the annual trips to France or Germany. Opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in their language lessons are just being introduced on a regular basis.

137. Teaching in modern foreign languages is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching in both key stages in French and German, and one Year 11 German lesson observed was very good. However, there is a small but significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching in French in each key stage, largely due to poor management of pupils, lack of pace, and work not well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers generally plan their lessons well to include a variety of oral and aural activities that involve the pupils actively in their learning. Visual aids are sometimes used very effectively to stimulate interest and encourage pupils to speak spontaneously; a good example of this was a Year 11 German class of average attainers who, after watching a short video clip, were able to give a full and confident account in the past tense of the holiday experiences of a well-known television personality. Teachers speak their languages fluently but there is inconsistent practice. Teachers do not always make the best use of the 75 minute lessons and pupils are inclined to lose concentration in the final ten or fifteen minutes. Marking is patchy and pupils are sometimes praised too highly for mediocre work so that they do not have a clear picture of their progress. Current assessment procedures are unsatisfactory, but a new system is ready to be introduced in Years 7, 8 and 9 that will inform pupils accurately about how well they are doing in terms of National Curriculum levels and lead to effective target setting.

138. Modern foreign languages are just emerging from a period of several years without a head of department and other on-going staffing difficulties. During that time, issues raised at the previous inspection were not addressed. In the short time she has been in post, the new head of department has already had a considerable impact on the work taking place, and leadership and management are now sound. Changes in policies and practice have been made, schemes of work have been produced and priorities for further development have been drawn up. She is leading her team of five teachers, four of whom have been appointed in the last three years, by example. There is much work still to be done. Formal and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be in place so that weaknesses are identified for improvement. Very good practice needs to be shared, in order to narrow the gap that exists between the best and least successful practice and so raise standards.

MUSIC

139. Teacher assessment for 2000 showed that standards at the end of Year 9 are below average in music. Girls did better than boys but the difference between them was in line with national figures. There were no pupils taking the GCSE examination in music in 2000.

140. Teacher assessment results are borne out by standards seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9. Taking all components of the music curriculum into consideration, pupils' attainment in Year 9 is below average. Composing is the weakest element, but both performing and listening, although stronger, are also below average. Pupils in Year 9, in pairs, perform simple parts of a Bob Marley reggae piece on the keyboard. Chord patterns played by one pupil are well established with the bass part played by the paired partner. Although a few find it difficult, the majority of pupils hold a steady beat, and fit the syncopated rhythms together well. Most pupils are working at level 4 and a little above and this represents satisfactory achievement. Good collaborative work is evident here as pupils teach each other their part, and some have confidence to play their rehearsed performance to the remainder of the class. Standards in Year 10, the only year following a GCSE course in music, are also below average. Most pupils lack a good musical background, and have only elementary performing and composing skills. Given this, their achievement is satisfactory. The teacher is right to continue to encourage all pupils to take up the free instrumental lessons offered by the school. Lack of computers and specialised music software, which would allow pupils to hear and amend their compositions immediately, is undoubtedly hindering progress at this stage. Sufficient numbers of computers would allow better progress in composition in Years 7 to 9. Listening skills in Year 10, although below average, are improving. Work on programme music showed that pupils can choose a good range of words to describe the music heard. Writing more freely about how the musical effects are achieved presents more of a problem, revealing a lack of knowledge about composing techniques.

141. The head of department, in post for a year, is beginning to have an impact on standards and plans for the development of the subject are good. In response to good teaching, pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress and achieving well in the majority of lessons. Progress in Year 7 suggests that in spite of coming to the school with a very limited experience of music they are already making good progress. They sing well, having learnt a song about the elements of music last term, and this term they are learning songs from 'Harold' to present to local primary schools. These songs are mainly in unison but there are occasional opportunities to add other brief parts, which they do well. The teacher challenges them to improve their performance by focusing on detail, using clear diction and considerable energy. Their achievement in lessons and ultimately over time is due to good teaching, which in the majority of lessons is helping them to develop good musical skills consistently. Teaching in these lessons, is characterised by very good subject knowledge, a wide variety of activities and fostering of good behaviour and relationships. Teachers are good practitioners and their musical performing skills enliven lessons, enabling them to demonstrate with highly appropriate and amusing examples, as shown in a Year 10 lesson on 'Programme Music'. Pupil's response in these lessons is good, with good behaviour and attitudes: the majority of pupils are keen and enthusiastic to succeed. They well recall musical information about what they have done, and composers and music they have played and listened to. They behave responsibly when re-arranging the room and moving keyboards, although time would have been saved if the keyboards were sited permanently. In a small number of lessons, however, where the practical work is not well managed, pupils are not developing the practical skills, to the standard of which they are capable, and are underachieving. Learning is limited to factual and theoretical knowledge. In these lessons, in spite of a variety of activities, too long is spent at desk-bound work, and the 75 minute lesson becomes a burden for the teacher, and for the pupils who find it difficult to sustain

concentration. A few pupils with poor attitudes and behaviour are also having an adverse effect on progress in these lessons, as too much of the teachers' time is spent dealing with them. As a result, learning overall is satisfactory.

142. Pupils receive good feedback and advice on how to improve from their teachers in practical sessions, and opportunity is given for some self-evaluation. Class reflection and review are not used yet, though, and pupils do not really understand what their grades mean. They are not building an accumulated knowledge of what makes a good performance and composition and how their own work relates to this. Use of reflection and review and of the new levels of attainment in music will allow the teachers and pupils to set individual targets for improvement.

143. Extra-curricular activities make a good contribution to the life of the school, even though at present these are limited. The young choir has an energy and enthusiasm that is infectious, and they sing well with good quality tone and intonation. A concert at Christmas also included work prepared by instrumental teachers. A very small number of pupils have instrumental lessons. Those who do enjoy good quality teaching and make good progress. Such lessons during the day have to be taught in a Head of Year room, as the recommendation for small practice rooms at the previous inspection has not been realised.

144. Music is presently taught as part of the expressive arts GCSE course in Year 11. Pupils who take this enjoy it. The lesson observed involved pupils working at a mixture of disciplines including some music. Pupils behave maturely with considerable dedication, devising work for their controlled test. They were making very good use of the last opportunity to receive advice and feedback from the teacher. Although there are three teachers involved with this course, there is no one with overall responsibility to supervise its continued development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

145. The GCSE course in physical education was introduced in 1998. Initial results in 2000 were well below average but all pupils achieved at least a G grade. Pupils' performance in physical education was similar to that achieved in their other GCSE subjects. Few girls initially chose to take the subject and so it is not possible to make a reliable comparison between boys' and girls' results. The numbers of girls choosing the subject is now increasing.

146. Standards of work during the inspection are average by the end of Year 9, and pupils achieve well in relation to their low starting point at the beginning of Year 7. Boys reach above average standards in football because they work well together in devising and adapting practices to improve their performance. Girls reach average standards in netball. Pupils know how to warm up and can suggest and lead appropriate safe stretching exercises. Most pupils have a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, and those who choose to follow a course in health related fitness work at levels normally expected of older pupils.

147. In Year 11 standards seen in core physical education are average. Girls' capacity to devise and evaluate their own exercise programmes is above average, and they reach higher standards than boys in this aspect because their attitudes to learning are better, and the teaching is very good. The inspection evidence shows that the attainment of most of the pupils who follow the GCSE course in physical education is below average. Considering their low starting point this, nevertheless, represents satisfactory achievement, except in the case of a minority of pupils whose unsatisfactory attitudes to learning restrict their rates of progress. Standards in practical activities are higher than in theoretical aspects.

148. Most pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9. This is because the teaching is mostly good, and most pupils have positive attitudes to their work. Participation rates are noticeably high. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 are able to build on a sound foundation of basic skills and good working practices established in Year 7. All groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make similar progress. In Years 10 and 11, progress is more uneven, although it is satisfactory overall. Progress is too slow where the attitudes of a minority of pupils are poor, and the learning activities are not sufficiently challenging. Participation rates are not as consistently high as in Years 7 to 9. Where pupils have a keen interest and commitment, the teaching capitalises on this, for example, in girls' fitness lessons and

results in very good progress and effective learning. A good programme of extra-curricular activities is provided by specialist teachers, with some support from non-specialist colleagues, and this helps many pupils throughout the school to improve their standards further. The school has recently been re-awarded the Sportsmark in recognition of its efforts here. Teams and individuals achieve reasonable success in competition at local and area level.

149. The majority of pupils are co-operative and generally behave well when taking part in physical education. High rates of participation in lessons and extra-curricular sporting activity indicate their interest in, and enthusiasm for, the subject. In most lessons, boys and girls co-operate well with each other. Pupils readily listen to advice from their teachers and talk to each other in devising ways of improving their performance. In Year 9, pupils naturally take responsibility for leading each other in warm up activities because this aspect of their learning has been well developed from Year 7. Pupils concentrate well in practices, even when not directly supervised by the teacher. The attitudes of a minority of pupils, mostly in Years 10 and 11, are not so positive and this has an adverse effect on both progress and their achievement

150. The overall quality of the teaching and learning that it promotes is satisfactory. In two of the fourteen lessons which were observed, the teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9, where it is mostly good, and occasionally very good. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall but more inconsistent with the quality ranging from unsatisfactory to very good. In Years 7 to 9, subject knowledge and understanding are very secure, teachers have good relationships with pupils, and lessons are well planned to provide the right level of challenge. Effective demonstrations and explanations ensure that pupils clearly know what to do to improve and make progress, and teachers use their subject knowledge well to analyse pupils' performance. In a Year 9 football lesson, pupils made very good progress because the teacher's explanations were very clear and pupil groupings were well managed, so that they were each capable of working well independently. The teacher's interventions were brief, providing good cues to enable the pupils to increase the challenge for themselves. These strengths are also evident in the teaching in Years 10 and 11, but occasionally pupils fail to make sufficient progress in lessons. This happens where the teacher does not have detailed specialist knowledge of the activity or because the learning activities are not sufficiently well planned to sustain pupils' interest and concentration for the whole of the lengthy GCSE theory lesson. Marking of end of unit tests in GCSE theory work helps pupils to improve, but the quality of marking of pupils notes and day-to-day work in their files is inconsistent. Homework is not being used to extend and develop pupils' learning.

151. Since the previous inspection, good progress has been made with the issues which were raised at the time, as well as in response to recent changes in the National Curriculum for physical education. Recent changes in management responsibilities within the department have been well handled. Assessment procedures are now very good and make good use of ICT in their administration. The department now needs to make better use of the information gained from the assessment of pupils' work in order to set more precise and challenging targets for pupils. The statutory curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is enhanced by the inclusion of extra programmes of study in health-related fitness and orienteering. Although the recently installed artificial pitch has led to improvements in the quality of provision, for example, by enabling hockey to be introduced, the poor condition of the hard play areas restricts their use. The department has been involved in a pilot scheme to improve the quality of teaching through mutual observation of lessons. This has resulted in some improvement, but needs to be developed into systematic programme of monitoring lessons in order to identify and share the good practice which exists, as well as eliminating the unsatisfactory teaching. Development planning needs to be linked more closely to the overall school targets for improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

152. Until recently religious education was a non-examination subject. Consequently, there have been no examination results. However, in 1999 the short course GCSE was introduced. About half the current Year 11 are expected to enter the examination in 2001. All pupils currently in Year 10 are expected to enter the examination in 2002.

153. Over the past two years the religious education department has experienced significant difficulties. The previous head of department was absent on long-term sick leave and the department was temporarily co-ordinated by the remaining specialist teacher. The organisation and management of the

department suffered as a result. However, a new, permanent head of department was appointed in January 2001, and has been quick to analyse and identify the strengths and some significant weaknesses of the department. Strategies are being drawn up to take the department forward and there is, potentially, good capacity for, and commitment to, improvement.

154. In work seen, attainment of pupils in Year 9, at the end of Key Stage 3, is below the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Achievement is unsatisfactory. In Years 7, 8 weekly lessons are provided. In Year 9 this is reduced to one per fortnight (half the time recommended by the Agreed Syllabus), and continuity of learning is a significant problem for pupils in this crucial year. The provision of adequate time for the subject was a key issue at the previous inspection which the school has not completely resolved. Past weaknesses in planning have meant that the department's scheme of work has not met the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. In particular, coverage of the major world religions, such as Buddhism and aspects of Islam and Hinduism, has been unsatisfactory. Consequently, there are some important gaps in the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject.

155. Attainment in Year 11, at the end of Key Stage 4, is mainly average. However, there are significant variations. In one upper band group, consisting entirely of girls, attainment was good. Here, mature consideration was given to factors affecting marriage and relationships and when reflecting upon religious approaches to love and forgiveness. Group discussion work showed the girls had a good grasp of the Christian biblical perspective of marriage, as being concerned with loneliness and completeness. In another lesson attainment was unsatisfactory as, for example, pupils had difficulty in explaining or understanding concepts of 'morality' or 'permissiveness' in religious contexts. Overall, in Years 10 and 11, achievement is unsatisfactory. This is for two main reasons. First, there is a noticeable lack of work for the courses in folders or exercise books. Pupils do not have a secure enough base of notes or recorded work from which to secure their learning. Secondly, very little work has been properly marked. Pupils are given satisfactory verbal guidance in lessons. However, in the past, this has not been backed up with the written help and advice necessary for pupils to know how to improve their work. When asked, pupils do not know their potential GCSE grades or level of attainment. This is a serious weakness in the teaching, which the new head of department has identified and is starting to remedy.

156. Teaching was good or very good and learning satisfactory or better in two-thirds of the lessons seen during the inspection. However, when placed in a broader context they are satisfactory overall. There are some significant strengths in the teaching. For example, teachers have good, professional subject knowledge and understanding, and the way in which they communicate stories such as the *Good Samaritan* through a study of Christian art is very compelling. Here, the work of South American and European artists was used very effectively to enable pupils to understand Jesus' teaching concerning racism and bigotry. In contrast, record keeping by teachers has been poor. There is insufficient evidence in markbooks or pupil record sheets to support or justify reports to parents. Reporting does not provide sufficient information on attainment or progress or guidance as to how pupils can improve. The necessary reforms are part of the new head of department's development planning. Learning is also significantly affected by the long 75-minute periods. Although teachers pace the lessons well, pupil concentration wanes during the last third of the lesson and there can be significant disruption from a minority of uncooperative pupils.

157. Other factors, which are affecting standards and require improvement, include proper resourcing for the subject. Although some new textbooks have been recently purchased there are still insufficient to support the required scheme of work. There are inadequate artefact resources to support learning about the major world religions. Library reference material is insufficient to support independent research work. The department lacks the resources to properly contribute to the pupils' ICT education. Half the lessons have to be taught in non-specialist rooms. There is consequently a lack of display space and problems storing and transporting books and resources around the school. Such factors also play their part in lowering the status of the subject in the eyes of the pupils.