

INSPECTION REPORT

MORNINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Wigan

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106528

Headteacher: Jane Lees

Reporting inspector: Peter Hill
6642

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th May 2001

Inspection number: 188220

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Mornington Road
Hindley
Wigan

Postcode: WN2 4LG

Telephone number: 01942 767704

Fax number: 01942 748054

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Cllr Stuart Shaw

Date of previous inspection: May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
6642	Peter Hill	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?</p>
31718	Denise Shields	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
1272	Ian Hocking	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well are pupils taught?
4664	Ian Birnie	Team inspector	Religious education	
13155	John Dixon	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
28079	Barbara Howse	Team inspector	English Equal opportunities	
4392	Jacqueline Emery	Team inspector	Music	
15904	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Art	
25195	Hilary Wilcock	Team inspector	Geography	
4512	Anthony Bailey	Team inspector	Physical education	
13620	George Leech	Team inspector	Science	
1759	Geoffrey Edwards	Team inspector	Information & communication technology Design & technology	
1752	Raymond Jones	Team inspector	History	

The inspection contractor was:

School Inspection & Consultancy

19 Marple Road
Charlesworth
Glossop
Derbyshire
SK13 5D

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	25
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Mornington High School is a 7-form entry, 11 to 16 comprehensive school situated in Hindley, an area of Wigan. Pupils come from predominantly local authority estates and older housing. Opened in the early 1960s and comprehensive since 1976, the school buildings also include leisure and community facilities. At the time of the inspection, building work was taking place to replace older and unsatisfactory provision. The school has 922 pupils on roll. At 0.5 per cent, the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is much lower than in most schools. Almost a third of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) and 41 pupils have statements of special educational needs. This is a much higher level than the national average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The local area shows significant deprivation and is the focus of local authority development. The number of pupils has reduced in recent years and the majority of pupils enter the school with levels of attainment, which are well below the national average. The school admits pupils, often mid term, who have moved from other schools. These are often poor attenders, and this has a significant effect on rates of attendance.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Mornington High School is a good and effective school with many strengths and few significant weaknesses. By the time they leave school pupils have made good progress. They have moved from attainment levels which were well below average when they enter school, to being almost in line with national averages when they leave. Teaching is good overall with significant amounts of very good and some excellent teaching. The headteacher's leadership and her clear vision for the school's future direction are very good and contribute significantly to its improvement. Governors' contribution to the school's strategic management is good and their commitment to further improvement is high. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is very well led and managed.
- Teaching is good overall with a significant amount of very good and excellent teaching.
- Pupils make good progress as they pass through the school. Attainment in English literature is above average.
- The school makes good provision for the arts, both performing and visual.
- The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and considerably strengthens and enhances the curriculum.
- The school has very good relationships with other schools and the local community.
- The provision for pupils' social development is very good and the development of pupils' moral and cultural development is good.
- There are very good procedures in place for ensuring pupils' welfare and protection. Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is very good.

What could be improved

- Attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils' standards in mathematics and the departmental management and ethos.
- The external condition of the main buildings, the pathways around the school, and the condition of the playing fields.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1996. Since then it has made good progress in meeting the Key Issues identified in the report. Although attendance continues to be an area of concern, the school has made good improvements in monitoring pupils' attendance rates and in promoting the need for regular attendance. Pupils' levels of attainment have risen, and, despite a need for further improvement, there has been a good improvement in the condition of the buildings and the quality of the accommodation, for example, the theatre and some internal refurbishment. There are good levels of display in many areas of the school. Improvements in design and technology and the use of ICT across the curriculum have been satisfactory although, as the school recognises, further improvement is needed in both areas.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	D	E	D	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

As a result of the decisive action taken by senior management there has been a notable improvement in standards this year, with higher results predicted on the basis of mock examinations. Over the last five years, whilst remaining below the national average, there has been an upward trend in pupils' attainment. During the inspection, the standards of work seen were above average in both key stages in English (where they are clearly above average in English literature), were below average in science in Key Stage 3, and average in science in Key Stage 4. Standards were below average in both key stages in mathematics. Overall, pupils achieve well and results are above those for similar schools, with Key Stage 3 English being well above.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good attitudes have a positive effect on the good progress that most pupils make by creating an environment where the vast majority of pupils want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. In a significant number of lessons pupils' behaviour and attitudes were judged to be excellent or very good.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils' relationships with each other and with staff are very positive. They collaborate well and often, when given the opportunity, take responsibility for their own learning.
Attendance	Well below average. The punctuality of a significant number of pupils is also poor, and this, coupled with the well below average attendance rate, considerably hinders the progress that these pupils make. Pupils who join the school after Year 9 are often poor attenders and this has a detrimental effect on attendance figures.

Overall, pupils' attitudes and values are good and this has a significant and positive effect on their learning. In a high proportion of the lessons observed pupils' attitudes and behaviour were very good and only rarely was there any unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils' attendance and punctuality, both for school and for lessons, continue to be a problem. For those pupils who miss school, and those who are often late, it impacts on their learning as it is difficult for the school to ensure that new knowledge, understanding and skills builds on previous work.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good with a significant amount of very good and excellent teaching. It has improved substantially since the previous inspection. During the inspection, in 7 per cent of lessons, teaching was excellent, in 21 per cent it was very good, good in 39 per cent, satisfactory in 29 per cent and unsatisfactory in only 3 per cent. The teaching of English is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4, in mathematics it is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4, and in science teaching is good in both key stages. Teachers' management of pupils is very good throughout the school and this is a major factor in the overall good quality of the teaching. Literacy skills are well taught. The use of key vocabulary, in the work undertaken to improve standards of spelling, is especially effective. Numeracy skills are less well taught. If the National Numeracy Strategy is to be fully implemented and instrumental in raising standards, some improvements are required in key principles. Teaching effectively meets the needs of all pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed. However, the work that many of these pupils do in lessons needs to be more closely matched to their individual needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good, with a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There is good provision for personal, social and health education. The teaching of literacy skills is good but the development of pupils' numeracy skills is not yet fully effective.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. It is efficiently and well managed with a good structure across the school. Departments have a central role in providing for pupils' special needs. However, in many lessons the work that pupils with special educational needs do needs to be matched more closely to their individual requirements.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is good overall. The provision for pupils' social development is very good, for cultural and moral development is good and for spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is good overall. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and the assessment of their levels of attainment and progress are very good.

The school has effective links with parents and they have a positive view of the school. The curriculum is broad and balanced with an effective choice at the end of Key Stage 3. However, as a result of a small number of courses being under-subscribed on occasions a subject has not, in the end, been available. The range and quality of the additional activities that the school provides are very good and considerably enhance the quality of pupils' education. The school's provision for caring for pupils is good, with some very good features including, procedures for assessment and the way in which their welfare is assured.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school is very well managed with the headteacher, very well supported by key staff, providing a clear educational direction and ensuring that the school's aims and values are well reflected in its work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well, being very aware of the school's strengths and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's evaluation of its performance is good and the action taken to meet the resultant targets is very good.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school is making very good progress in meeting targets and a major part of this is the very good use made of resources, carefully matched to the school's development plan.

The school is very well managed. The headteacher and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and have produced a very good school development plan to take the school forward. The school's senior staff play an important and very supportive role in the leadership and management. The vision and determination of the school's managers are major factors in the school's improvement. Staffing is generally adequate in meeting the needs of the curriculum, but, as with many other schools, coverage for absence is a problem for the school. The inspection found that the school works hard to manage the situation as well as possible. The accommodation, whilst being improved, still has a number of areas which are a cause for concern and which are unsuitable provision. The new building work is an important step forward in the school's development. This improvement needs to be continued in other areas, for example to improve the external condition of the main buildings, the pathways around the school, and the condition of the playing fields. The school management clearly and effectively implements the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Over 90% of parents who returned the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are making good progress. • The teaching is good. • They would feel comfortable approaching the school. • Their children are expected to work hard. • The school is well led and managed. • The school is helping their children to become more mature. 	<p>The responses to the parents' questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. However, around 20% of respondents felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They could be kept better informed about how their children were getting on. • Their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home.

The inspection team agreed with all the aspects which parents like about the school. The school is aware that there is a need to provide more detailed information for parents in the annual reports

At the meeting for parents before the inspection, a few parents were concerned about some aspects of the options system. The inspection found that the courses, which were the subject of concern, were, in the end, not viable as very few pupils had chosen them and, as a result, it was not possible for the school to run them.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 As a result of the decisive action taken by senior management there has been a notable improvement in standards this year, with higher results predicted on the basis of mock examinations. Over the last five years, whilst remaining below the national average, there has been an upward trend in pupils' attainment.

2 During the inspection, the standards of work seen were above average in both key stages in English (where they are clearly above average in English literature), and were below average in science in Key Stage 3, and average in science in Key Stage 4. Standards were below average in both key stages in mathematics. Overall, in national tests, pupils achieve well and results are above those for similar schools, with Key Stage 3 English being well above.

3 At the end of Key Stage 3, when compared with all schools nationally, pupils' attainment in English was above the national average, and below national averages in both mathematics and science. However, when compared with similar schools on the basis of the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' attainment in English was well above the average, above the average in science, and in line with the average in mathematics. Over the past four years there has been a slight upward trend in pupils' attainment in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science.

4 When compared with similar schools, the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 and above in English was well above the average, was above average in mathematics and was in line with the average in science. The percentage of pupils reaching level 6 was the same as for level 5.

5 At the end of Key Stage 4, when compared with all schools nationally, pupils' attainment at 5 or more grades A*-C in GCSE/GNVQ was below the national average. At 5 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ was below the national average. The results in 1 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ well below the national average. When compared with similar schools, the performance at 5 or more grades A*-C and 5 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ was above the average and 1 or more grades A*-G in GCSE/GNVQ, the results were average.

6 Literacy is successfully promoted across the curriculum. Standards of speaking and listening and presentation of work are good. There is a successful effort on the part of subject teachers to teach subject-specific terminology. Literacy is now becoming embedded in schemes of work, although this is variable, and key words are emphasised in classroom displays.

7 Pupils' numeracy skills are less well developed and introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is at an early stage of development. Standards of mental recall and manipulation of numbers are below average in Key Stage 4. However, it is clear that at the beginning of Key Stage 3, pupils are much more adept and at ease with mental mathematics.

8 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress with those pupils who have statements of special need making good progress. Those pupils who are higher attainers, including gifted and talented pupils, make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9 Pupil's attitudes to work, their behaviour and the relationships between adults and pupils are good. These strengths have a positive effect on the good progress that most pupils make because they help to create an environment where the vast majority of pupils want to learn. These findings confirm the views of parents, who consider that behaviour is good and that the attitudes and values the school promotes are much improved since the appointment of the new headteacher.

10 Overall, pupils' attitudes generate a good working atmosphere throughout the school. The vast majority are well-motivated learners who are usually keen to participate in all the activities offered. This is most notable during physical education, English, art and music lessons where pupils are always keen to do well and show considerable enthusiasm and pride in their work. Elsewhere, pupils answer questions, discuss their work and are generally eager to put forward their ideas. They usually concentrate well during class work. For example, during an art lesson, pupils sustained concentration whilst developing colour washing techniques, showing initiative as they adapted the techniques to improve their work. Pupils generally listen attentively, follow instructions well and settle quickly to their work. However, this is not always the case during mathematics lessons where, on occasions, a significant minority of pupils show inappropriate levels of interest and concentration in their work.

11 The overwhelming majority of pupils behave well both in the classroom and around the school. They are, in the main, courteous and welcoming to visitors and engage them in conversation. They know right from wrong and are, in the vast majority of instances, polite and courteous to teachers and their peers. Good behaviour is supported by a clear learning charter and code of conduct, which pupils understand and say is fair. At lunchtime the behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good. The dining area is usually full, but only occasionally are there instances of inappropriate behaviour with pupils pushing in the queues. Pupils say that overall behaviour and respect for school premises has improved since the appointment of the new headteacher. This is highlighted by the general absence of litter and graffiti.

12 There are few documented instances of bullying, and pupils are aware that the school has appropriate procedures to deal effectively with any incidents that may take place. They considered that any incidents brought to the attention of teachers are usually dealt with effectively. There were 42 exclusions, including 5 that were permanent, in the year prior to the inspection these can be attributed to 27 pupils, some of whom were excluded on more than one occasion. Exclusions have increased since the last inspection but the school is well aware of this; the rise in the figures can be attributed to a number of pupils throughout the school who have challenging and frequently very disruptive behaviour. Some of these pupils join the school, often midway through the year, having previously been excluded from other schools. Taken overall, the school's strategy to support any pupil who has difficulty controlling their behaviour is successful. Teachers, in the main, deal with incidents in classrooms very well, and only rarely does poor behaviour interrupt the flow of the lesson. Much time and effort, on the part of the school, is given to supporting these pupils and their families and exclusion is only used when all other possible avenues have been explored.

13 Pupils, in the main, have good and constructive relationships with their peers and with adults. They generally collaborate well and sometimes take responsibility for their own learning. Examples of this were seen during drama lessons where they organise their own groups or design and technology lessons where pupils often decide which materials to use for their projects and collaborate well using the design equipment. Nevertheless, most pupils do not readily take responsibility for their own learning without prompting from their teachers; this was an issue raised during the previous inspection. Where they are offered, pupils respond well to opportunities to reflect on what they do and its impact on others. They do this well particularly where their own and others' feelings are concerned, such as during group or class discussion in English literature, religious education or

personal and social education lessons. These opportunities, however, are not consistently provided in all subjects.

14 The vast majority of pupils are interested in the life of the school and enjoy the extra-curricular activities, fund-raising and other activities, such as the Morny Awards. The lunchtime musical concerts make a valuable contribution to developing pupils' self-confidence and esteem. Pupils of all age groups perform together in front of their peers, without fear of ridicule, often to loud applause when appreciation is readily shown for a particularly good performance. A good range of opportunities is offered where pupils can take on responsibilities, for example in Year 9 where they have a duty rota for the reception desk; they enjoy this opportunity and are mature in their approach to the visitors they meet. The "Buddy" system in Years 7 and 9 provides opportunities for pupils to support those younger than themselves. Membership of the school council and the prefect system, for older pupils, all make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development; these opportunities are appreciated by the pupils.

15 A number of pupils enter the school mid-way through the school year with a history of poor attendance; this impacts on the overall attendance figures. Nevertheless, even when this is taken into account, published figures of 89.5 % for the 1999/00 year are still well below the national average although they have improved compared to those published at the time of the last inspection. Published figures include pupils taking study leave. Rates are better in Year 7 and 8 and deteriorate further up the school; this is in line with the findings of the previous inspection; for example, during the week of the inspection attendance in Year 10 was 85% (however 6% of absences were due to holidays). Poor attendance impacts on the continuity of learning and progress made by some pupils.

16 Punctuality is unsatisfactory; this was an issue raised at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils frequently arrive late in the morning; nearly 80 per cent of pupils on roll recorded one or more late mark during the 2001 spring term. They are undeterred by the detention system. Pupils frequently arrive late for lessons and as a result lessons are often late starting. This is most notable between lessons 1 and 2 and then 4 and 5, because pupils often have to travel some distance between buildings, but there is often a slow start to lessons at other times of the day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17 The quality of teaching is good with a significant amount of very good and excellent teaching. It has improved substantially since the previous inspection. 97 per cent of the 144 lessons inspected were judged to be at least satisfactory, with just 3 per cent found to be unsatisfactory. 39 per cent of lessons were good, a further 21 per cent were very good and 7 per cent were excellent. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching between Key Stage 3 and 4. The excellent lessons occurred in English (in Years 8, 9 and 10), drama (in Year 7), geography (in Year 9) art (in Year 8 and 10) and music (in Year 8). Out of the four unsatisfactory lessons, two occurred in mathematics in Years 7 and 9 and two in modern foreign languages in Year 10. When taking into account all the lessons seen within a subject department, teaching was judged to be very good overall in music in both key stages and in art and English in Key Stage 4. Teaching was judged to be good overall, in both key stages, in science, religious education, geography, physical education and drama. Teaching is also good in English, information and communication technology (ICT), and art, in Key Stage 3, and in mathematics in Key Stage 4. In other subjects, teaching across the department was judged to be predominantly satisfactory.

18 The better teaching promotes better learning and is characterised by teachers' good command of their subjects, particularly so in English, art, music, geography, and physical education lessons. Lesson planning is good and teachers are invariably well prepared for their classes. Basic skills are well taught through clear exposition and effective questioning of pupils.

19 In the vast majority of lessons, teachers manage pupils very well and expect good standards of behaviour. Notable examples of good practice are evident in English, science, music, art, modern foreign languages and physical education. The vast majority of pupils respond well to their teacher, to a large extent because of the good or often very good relationships that exist. This is a key factor that contributes positively to pupils' effort and pace of working. Teachers maximise the use of resources in all subjects and make effective use of the very good ICT provision to boost learning. In general, with the exception of design and technology, teachers make appropriate assessments of pupils' learning so that they can help them to overcome any problems such as misunderstandings. Such practice also enables pupils to be clear about how well they are learning. These features of teaching and learning are notable in English, religious education, art, physical education, and music.

20 Teachers regularly and appropriately set homework and rigorously check its satisfactory completion. This practice is especially good in English, mathematics, religious education and art and contributes well to pupils' learning.

21 Excellent teaching in three English lessons in Years 8, 9 and 10, was notable for the lively, interesting and motivating style of teaching allied to well-chosen and stimulating resource materials. The combination of these features resulted in exemplary behaviour from pupils and excellent gains in their learning.

22 Very positive relationships and highly enthusiastic teaching were evident in two Year 8 music lessons, resulting in pupils making good gains in their knowledge and understanding of blues music and in their ability to play and sing jazz. Excellent teaching in a Year 9 geography lesson was characterised by the excellent planning and highly effective use of an interactive whiteboard.

23 The teachers' very good subject knowledge and excellent rapport with pupils contributed substantially to two outstanding art lessons in Year 10. The work presented to pupils was challenging as was the teachers' questioning, leading to very good learning for all pupils. Pupils' response to both these lessons was also very good: their very high levels of concentration and motivation enabled them to produce work of high quality in collage and clay.

24 Unsatisfactory teaching in a mathematics lesson in each of Years 7 and 9 resulted from ineffective management of classes with high numbers of pupils with special educational needs. Two Year 10 lessons in modern foreign languages, one taught by a temporary teacher, were lacking in direction or interest and did not give pupils sufficient opportunity to acquire and consolidate skills.

25 The management of pupils with special educational needs is good with a very good strategy in place to ensure that departments have an important role in ensuring that these pupils have access to the curriculum. This structure has yet to be fully effective in ensuring that work is matched to the needs of all pupils, although this is developing well. Pupils with statements of special educational need are well catered for both in the classroom and when they receive individual support outside the classroom. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in many subjects including art, music, modern foreign languages and physical education.

26 The teaching of the basic skills of literacy is a particular focus of the English curriculum. The rules of punctuation are routinely taught and assessed. Grammatical features and conventions are explained and there is an emphasis on good presentation. Particularly effective is the use of key vocabulary in the work undertaken to improve standards of spelling, via the "Attack" programme. These skills are further developed in writing at length and for different audiences. These skills are also evident in other subjects, for example in the form of memory maps in geography and in narratives within research projects in art. There has been whole-school training on the issue of incorporating literacy in all subjects of the curriculum, culminating in the production of a Literacy

Policy. However, adherence to the school's Literacy Policy is variable and needs to be monitored to check on the degree of implementation across all subjects.

27 Numeracy is developed within mathematics and within many other subjects, including science, history and ICT. A uniform approach to the teaching of numeracy is being promoted through the school's Numeracy Policy document. The recent introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is beginning to influence the style of teaching being adopted in mathematics lessons. However, if the National Numeracy Strategy is to be fully implemented and instrumental in raising standards, some improvements are required in key principles, such as a brief and brisk mental starter, emphasis of mathematical vocabulary and ensuring that sufficient time is allowed for an effective plenary session.

28 In the vast majority of lessons, pupils' learning is good and reflects the quality of teaching experienced by pupils of all abilities, including the very few for whom English is an additional language but whose spoken English is fluent. Pupils readily acquire new skills and increase their understanding of concepts; this is especially the case in English and in science, history, religious education, physical education and music. English, physical education and music are notable as subjects in which pupils apply high degrees of physical and/or creative effort. When opportunities are presented, for example in English, science, ICT, physical education, art, design and technology, history, religious education and music, pupils demonstrate good capacity to think for themselves. Teachers mark work conscientiously and often give praise in recognition of good quality effort. In best practice they provide clear guidance as to how pupils can improve their work.

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

29 The quality and range of the curriculum is good with a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The school has a clear rationale for the curriculum. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. The teaching of literacy skills is good but the development of pupils' numeracy skills is not yet fully effective.

30 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, being efficiently and well managed with a good structure ensuring that all departments have a central role in providing for pupils' special needs. However, in many lessons the work provided for pupils with special educational needs to be more closely matched to their individual requirements.

31 The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is good overall, offering breadth, balance and relevance to all pupils. It provides a good balance between meeting the academic needs of the pupils and their social development. In Key Stage 4 pupils are required to follow a programme defined by the school, including all the statutory subjects and including an effective choice through the options structure. The school has extended its provision into vocational courses in conjunction with a local college.

32 Schemes of work indicate that curriculum planning in most subjects is sufficiently detailed to ensure that coverage of the programmes of study of the National Curriculum result in effective teaching and learning. Schemes of work generally provide balanced coverage across different aspects of the subject. ICT is generally well employed in a range of subjects across the curriculum.

33 The school makes sound provision for its pupils with special educational needs having developed an inclusive ethos. They are well supported by access to an appropriate curriculum and resources. The school's management structure for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs is good and ensures that, when fully implemented, departments have a major role in making sure that the subject curriculum meets the needs of these pupils. The few pupils with English as an additional language are also well provided for.

34 Inclusion is a strength of the school and continues to be an area for development. The school admits a significant number of pupils mid term. These pupils often take a time to settle to expectations of the school and as a result most of the additional funding provided to support inclusion is being targeted at Key Stage 4. The school plans to extend this to Key Stage 3 in the coming academic year.

35 The principles of equal opportunities policy are consistently emphasised to students through the school aims, assemblies, the curriculum, tutorial time, personal, social and health education and the student council. The school has produced and adopted an equal opportunities policy. The policy was produced by the equal opportunities co-ordinator in consultation with a consultative staff group and the governor with responsibilities for equal opportunities. All staff, including support staff, receives a copy of the policy. The policy is reviewed bi-annually and is intended to be used alongside policies for special education needs, anti-bullying, communications and behaviour management. All heads of department have produced an equal opportunities policy document as part of departmental documentation. Heads of department consistently audit their teaching materials to ensure adherence to the principles of the policy and avoidance of any racist, sexist or other discriminatory references. Heads of year also audit personal, social and health education schemes of work and monitor its teaching.

36 The school is aware that there is still a need to address the potential for stereotyping in some curriculum areas: for example the vast majority of girls study food technology, and boys resistant materials. The school actively promotes its aim of valuing the diversity and contributions of other cultures, in order to prepare students fully for life in a multi-cultural society.

37 The governing body is increasingly involved in monitoring the curriculum, through its curriculum committee, in close partnership with the headteacher. Governors are involved in the strategic planning of the curriculum, taking a keen interest in the school's development in this area.

38 The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These activities encourage active participation beyond the school day and in the wider community. They also help develop social skills. There are many opportunities for pupils to be involved in the performing arts, including drama and music and this is a very strong area, both during school time and as additional activities. The school has an extensive and highly popular programme of extra-curricular sport. There are many visits to places of interest, fieldwork and visits abroad, which enhance the subjects of the curriculum. The school invests a significant amount of time and other resources to enhance this aspect of the curriculum and works hard to encourage its pupils to participate in these activities. This ensures that it is a strength of the school.

39 The promotion of spiritual development is satisfactory. Religious education, focusing as it does on living belief systems, makes a major contribution and is a strength in the curriculum. In English, issues arising in the novel and in pupil reflective writing, provide opportunities for thinking through personal values. Similarly, drama, when it presents instances of the controversial human relationships, makes a key contribution. Art also makes a distinctive contribution, reaching out to work with other subjects in representing human experience to pupils. A series of paintings on the theme of homelessness, displayed in the humanities area, is illustrative of this. Further examples of the promotion of spiritual development are to be seen in history and geography.

40 The school's promotion of pupils' moral development is good, providing pupils with the opportunity to engage in reflective discussion regarding ethical dilemmas. In science and in geography pupils have the opportunity to discuss issues to do with the care of the planet and the impact of technologies on the environment. Ethical issues also feature strongly in English, biology, history, the creative arts and particularly in religious education at Key Stage 4. The programme of

personal, social and health education provided by the school for all pupils, presents further opportunities for pupils to consider their own values and attitudes.

41 Social skills are promoted very well through a variety of strategies including the school's code of conduct, high expectations of pupil behaviour and courtesy and the quality of inter-personal relationships encouraged between pupils and between pupils and staff. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to be involved with the local community. These and other areas achieve a special focus in the provision of a programme of personal, social and health education. personal, social and health education is taught by the form tutors who use a meticulously prepared scheme. The outcome of the investment made by staff to social development is good and is having a noticeable positive effect on the attitudes of pupils. Pupils are courteous to the visitor, helpful, friendly and well mannered. In classrooms and about the school, they exhibit good inter-personal skills in their dealings with each other.

42 The cultural development of pupils is good, particularly in music, art and drama. All other subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to study their own culture and the culture of others. This is seen as an important area for pupils' development, especially as the vast majority of the school's pupils come from a white UK heritage. The performing arts have a high profile and are a strength of the school. Overall the school's emphasis on all aspects of cultural education, including multi-cultural and the arts, is strong and there are well-developed plans to build on these strengths and explore ways in which they can be used to form a centre of excellence.

43 A good personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is provided throughout the school. It includes topics such as citizenship, dealing with bullying and healthy eating, as well as providing guidance on relationships, drug abuse, and sex education, set within a sound moral framework. A number of personal, social and health education lessons were observed during the inspection, and in these, teaching was good overall. Pupils say they enjoy these lessons and feel they benefit from the range of topics covered. Time during the morning registration period is often not well used to support the elements of the personal, social and health education programme.

44 Careers guidance is provided from Year 9; the school benefits from good support from the external careers advisory service. In Years 10 and 11, the provision for careers guidance within the personal, social and health programme is good. Pupils are introduced to the business world and gain valuable experience in real job applications and interview techniques. They are well prepared for two weeks' work experience which is organised on a rotational plan, for Years 10 and 11, in conjunction with Project Trident. There is a well-stocked careers library and pupils have access to a suitable range of careers software.

45 The local community makes good use of the school's facilities for adult education. An on-site facility is used by an artist in residence to run courses, including art therapy. Effective links with local businesses and industry provide many of the placements for work experience. Representatives from the police, the armed forces and charitable organisations are among guest speakers welcomed to the school. The school also takes part in community events; for example, the choir sings at the local senior citizens' sheltered housing centre and at local shopping precincts at Christmas.

46 There are very good links and liaison with support services, curriculum advisory teams and a range of additional external agencies, thus ensuring that specialist help is available. There is good liaison with local primary schools, further education colleges and with initial teacher training institutions.

47 Collective worship is provided daily for each pupil. There is a policy for collective worship which sets out the approach the school adopts and the responsibility of staff for the provision of

worship. Collective worship provides an opportunity to centralise the values of the school and the ethical stances it wishes to help pupils develop. The year assembly is a secure vehicle for this aim.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48 This aspect of the school's provision is good, but within this there are some very good features; a number of areas have improved since the previous inspection.

49 Procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are very good as a result of the adoption of a range of effective strategies for measuring and tracking the attainment and progress of every pupil in the school. A standard scheme for marking recognising both pupil achievement and the effort made is well applied across all departments. The outcomes of standardised tests are recorded and circulated to all departments, as are outcomes of National Curriculum standard attainment tasks and teacher assessments at ages 11 and 14. Each department has well-structured guidelines to ensure effective moderation of assessments is undertaken at the end of each key stage. The school's "pegging point" programme allows each pupil's progress to be measured in terms of National Curriculum levels throughout Years 7-9 and thereafter on the basis of projected GCSE grades.

50 The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is good overall, although there is some inconsistency in the quality of response across individual subject areas. Every subject area is required to carefully analyse their GCSE performance and produce an action plan to raise attainment on the basis of identified issues of concern. The quality of analysis is of a high standard in most subject areas, although the chosen courses of action require greater precision and more rigorous evaluation of outcomes in some cases. In science, an imaginative response to the under-achievement of both boys and girls has led to the setting up of single sex teaching groups in an attempt to rectify this situation.

51 Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good. A commercial value-added programme is used. This provides information that uses independent test results in Year 7 as a basis on which to project future attainment. This information is regularly updated within departments using the pegging point programme using teachers' assessments of National Curriculum levels as an "at a glance" indicator of pupils' progress through each year at the school. This work is supplemented by information from the local education authority. This data is used very effectively to set targets within each subject area. This data is applied well in English, history, science and mathematics. In other subject areas the use of the data is more variable. The data provided by both the value-added programme and the local education authority allows the school to compare its pupils' progress and attainment with that of other schools in the local area so giving the school useful insights into its effectiveness. The senior management team provides good leadership in this process. A deputy headteacher provides carefully prepared data on attainment to subject co-ordinators to allow them to track progress and set challenging individual attainment targets. At present, not all departments are making effective use of this information and practice in interpreting and applying the data is variable.

52 The school has a good pastoral system that effectively supports pupils. Because heads of year and form tutors stay with the same pupils, for the five years they are in school, they know them well. They are able, on an informal basis, to effectively monitor pupils' personal development, although there are few written systems in place. Regular meetings take place with personnel, at all levels. This ensures that those directly involved in the care of pupils are aware of any concerns. Generally a good level of support and guidance is provided through the form tutor period. Here time is usually well used, but this is not always the case and on occasions pupils sit and chat rather than following the planned pastoral work.

53 Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare are very good. There is good liaison with the primary schools whose pupils transfer to the school. A well-organised induction programme ensures pupils settle quickly into the routine of new school life. Although there is no school nurse based at the school, a member of the administration staff has responsibility for any accidents or illness; arrangements are very good and pupils speak highly of the care they receive. An appropriate number of staff have received emergency first aid training. The medical needs of pupils are very well catered for. Supervision arrangements at breaks and lunchtimes are effective. The arrangements for child protection are good. The designated member of staff has undergone training and has detailed knowledge of local procedures; any concerns or issues are dealt with sensitively. Key staff members are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about pupils in their care. However, there has been no recent child protection training for all staff, to ensure they have up-to-date knowledge of the possible signs and symptoms of abuse. Procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils and staff have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good. Detailed audits and risk assessments together with staff training have taken place and there is also regular liaison with the local education authority's health and safety representative. Despite the schools very good attempts to identify and address health and safety concerns, this is proving very difficult because of the age and condition of the school buildings.

54 A very appropriate and clear code of conduct and learning charter forms the basis of the school's behaviour expectations. It is clearly understood by pupils. In the main, all teachers have a consistent approach to rewarding pupils and to dealing with incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils value the relatively new reward system and understand the need for sanctions to be used: they feel it is firm but fair. Appropriate behaviour, effort and achievement, in all aspects of school life, are regularly rewarded. Parents are also able to celebrate their children's achievements as letters are sent to them as part of these new arrangements. There is a detailed anti-bullying policy; procedures to eliminate bullying and harassment are good. Pupils and parents express confidence that any incidents brought to the school's attention are dealt with promptly. The programme of work for personal, social and health education indicates these lessons are used well to raise pupils' awareness of bullying issues.

55 The school tries hard to support pupils whatever their ability, social background or behaviour. It is generally very successful in this aspect of its work. Many of the pupils who enter the school, having previously been excluded from another, remain to complete their education. Through gaining funding for a number of projects, help has been given to pupils who have become disillusioned with education; the school has successfully enabled them to attend courses or work placements elsewhere and therefore gain qualifications. Other projects have supported pupils with severe challenging behaviour, to those who are most vulnerable. The community inclusion worker plays a significant and successful role supporting them through one-to-one counselling and organised team-building activities such as the outward bound event which took place during the week of the inspection.

56 Arrangements to consistently monitor attendance throughout the school have improved and are good. Pupils are effectively monitored through the pastoral system and regular meetings, which take place between the heads of year and the educational welfare officer (EWO). The school is very aware of those pupils whose attendance is not regular. Procedures to promote attendance are satisfactory and have improved since the previous inspection. First day contact is made to parents of an identified group of pupils known to truant. Opportunities are taken, through letters, to remind parents of the need for their children to attend school regularly and on time. Good attendance is rewarded but there are no rewards for pupils whose attendance has improved. There are few repercussions, however, if pupils arrive late at the start of the school day. Attempts to reduce the number of late arrivals have had little impact; pupils do not generally regard the detention system as a deterrent.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57 Parents consider the school has improved in a number of areas since the appointment of the new headteacher. They express a positive and supportive view of the school and the changes that have been made. Many say that teachers are approachable and suggestions and concerns are dealt with to their satisfaction. The school tries hard, through various initiatives, to involve parents in their children's education. It regularly seeks the views of parents through questionnaires, completed at parents' evenings, and, as a result of suggestions made, it has altered its practice; for example there is now a published homework timetable. It also consults regularly with parents, for example over the contents of the new communications policy. A number of parents use the school's facilities as they attend the adult education classes during the evenings, but there is no direct involvement during the school day. When homework is set and where they are able parents generally support the work their children do at home. Where their children are directly involved, for example in musical concerts or prize-giving evening at the end of the school year, attendance is generally good. Although the Friends of Mornington School Association is relatively new, support for the events which are organised is growing; money raised benefits the school financially, for example to buy additional learning resources. Despite the school's attempts to involve parents in aspects of school life and their children's education, for example, requests for helpers in the school library, there is often a limited response. Whilst parents give much verbal praise and support for the school's work, there is little or no day-to-day direct involvement from them. Overall the effectiveness of the school's links with parents is satisfactory.

58 The quality and range of information provided for parents is satisfactory. Parents of pupils whose attitude to work or behaviour is giving cause for concern are kept well informed about how the school is trying to help their children. They are invited to regular meetings or telephoned with information. They are fully involved in review meetings and most support the attempts made by the school to help their children. Regular newsletters and day-to-day information, as well as school planners, keep parents informed about school life and what their children are learning. Parents are invited to information evenings covering such topics as drug awareness or examination revision strategies for pupils in Year 11. The new school brochure, to be published in September 2001, is extremely well presented and provides prospective parents with a clear overview of the school. The governors' annual report to parents is concise but does not contain all the required information. Annual reports to parents about their children's progress, despite isolated examples of good practice, are inconsistent in content. They rarely state what pupils know, understand and can do; detail is focused on a pupils' overall attitude to work. There is often limited information in them to keep parents clearly informed about the progress their children are making.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

59 Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff are very good and are ensuring a developing and improving school. The school is very well managed with the headteacher, who is very well and effectively supported by senior staff, providing a clear educational direction and ensuring that the school's aims and values are well reflected in its work. The vision and determination of the school's managers are major factors in the school's improvement. The efficient and effective management is successfully promoting improving standards in both teaching and learning.

60 The governors fulfil their responsibilities well, being very aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are very supportive of, and committed to, the school. The area surrounding the school is recognised as one for improvement. The school's governors are very aware of the developments in the community, the way in which they will effect the school and the way in which the school and the community will benefit. This is a considerable strength, enabling the governing body and the school's managers to work effectively, together with the local authority and other agencies, to shape the future direction of the school. The headteacher and governors have a

clear understanding of the school's needs and have produced a very good school development plan to take the school forward. The school's aims and values are very well reflected in its work.

61 The school's evaluation of its performance is good and the action taken to meet the resultant targets is very good. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching has recently been an area of considerable development. The headteacher and senior managers have all recently undertaken a management review as a part of an advanced performance management system. They are very committed to using the findings to improve personal effectiveness to the benefit of the school. This review has been a very important and high level aspect of last year's work with targets being set for all senior managers.

62 The strategic use of resources is very good. The school is making very good progress in meeting targets and a major part of this is the very good use made of resources, carefully matched to the school's development plan, and clearly taking into account other initiatives in the surrounding area.

63 The headteacher, governors and the senior administrative officer work together very effectively to ensure that funds are targeted carefully to match the school's needs and to support agreed educational priorities. Departments must cost priorities, justify bids for funds and developments must be clearly linked to the school's identified priorities. Heads of departments are responsible for monitoring their individual budgets, which they do effectively. Specific grants, such as those for the promotion of educational inclusion, are managed well and properly allocated. The headteacher and governors have secured a significant amount of additional funding, which is being used to enhance the school's provision. The governing body's very prudent financial management has turned the previous years' deficit into a small working surplus. Day-to-day oversight and monitoring of the school's delegated budget is excellent; systems ensure that the headteacher and governors have an accurate picture of the school's financial resources and how they are being used.

64 Staffing is generally adequate in meeting the needs of the curriculum, but, as with many other schools, coverage for teacher absence is a problem for the school. During the last year, staff illness and turnover have contributed to some difficulties in a number of areas. The senior management team has worked hard to ensure that, in these difficult circumstances, pupils receive the best teaching possible. The inspection found that the school manages the situation as well as possible and ensures that temporary staff are well supported.

65 The accommodation, whilst being improved, still has a number of areas which are a cause for concern and which constitute unsuitable provision. The new building work is an important step forward in the school's development and will considerably enhance accommodation for art and modern foreign languages. This improvement needs to be continued in other areas, for example the external condition of the main buildings, where the cladding is deteriorating, the pathways around the school, where drainage and sinking paths are a problem and the condition of the playing fields and hard playing surfaces. The school's managers and governors are very aware of the need to develop the environment and have been very successful in enhancing the school and especially the internal provision, a very good example being the development of the theatre.

66 Overall, there are adequate resources for the delivery of the curriculum. They are very good for English and music, good for ICT, art, geography and indoor resources for physical education, but are unsatisfactory for religious education and the outdoor provision for physical education is judged to be poor, mainly because of the state of the grassed areas and hard surfaces. Dog owners regularly exercise their animals on the playing fields, constituting a possible health and safety hazard.

67 The school management clearly and effectively implements the principles of best value. The management and governing body are very aware of the need to ensure that they are effective,

analysing and measuring the school's performance in relation to other schools and providing as high a level of education as possible.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68 In order to improve the standards, the governors and headteacher should:

- improve attendance and punctuality; (paragraph 56)
- improve mathematics standards, management and departmental ethos; (paragraph 81, 83, 92.)
- improve the condition of some parts of the building both externally and internally, pathways around the site and the condition some areas of the playing fields. (paragraph 65, 66, 105, 178)

Other items governors may wish to include in their Action Plan

- Improve the special education needs provision, group sizes and composition (mathematics group) support in groups.
- Up-to-date child protection training for all staff

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	146
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	21	39	29	3	0	0.5

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	911	N/a
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	203	N/a

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	41	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	331	N/a

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	87	107	194

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	49	45
	Girls	72	54	52
	Total	121	103	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (45)	53 (51)	50 (37)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (18)	32 (21)	24 (8)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	40	47	40
	Girls	63	54	52
	Total	103	101	92
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (57)	52 (67)	49 (37)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (21)	31 (25)	12 (7)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	91	100	191

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	22	78	83
	Girls	43	93	96
	Total	65	171	179
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	34 (23)	90 (89)	94 (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	33 (30)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	903
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	37	5
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	304

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Financial information

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

	£
Total income	2563186
Total expenditure	2532597
Expenditure per pupil	2730
Balance brought forward from previous year	-15077
Balance carried forward to next year	15512

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.7%
---	-------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	22

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

987

Number of questionnaires returned

156

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	51	10	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	51	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	55	7	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	47	16	4	3
The teaching is good.	33	61	1	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	50	16	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	44	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	36	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	52	10	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	39	52	2	3	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	54	3	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	44	8	3	10

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

ENGLISH

69 There are good standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Although last year's English language results were below the national average, scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of lessons indicate a higher level of attainment. Standards of attainment in Key Stage 4 literature are above average with examination results exceeding the national expectation. These standards are particularly impressive in the context of relatively low levels of attainment when pupils enter the school. Girls achieve better than boys at both key stages but boys are narrowing the gap.

70 Pupils' progress is good at Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. There is significant progress throughout both key stages in terms of the standards, complexity and variety of work produced. This encompasses a very wide range of tasks including speaking and listening, reading and writing and includes creative writing, poetry, personal reflection, exposition, newspaper work, ICT, dialogue, drama and literacy work. The focus throughout the school on literacy contributes to this progress.

71 There are high expectations of students. This is particularly evident in the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and, indeed, some pupils with statements of special educational need, in the higher sets. Pupils' achievement and progress are closely monitored through the pegging system, which measures pupils' effort and achievement. The department has been creative in the way pupils have been grouped (e.g. all girl groups in Year 10), in the drive to raise standards and levels of attainment. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs is progressing well. More targeted learning support would help progress even further.

72 Teaching is satisfactory or better with the majority of lessons being good or very good. Three lessons were judged as excellent. Overall, teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at key Stage 4. Teacher style is enthusiastic, engaging and engenders positive response from students. Subject knowledge is good and teachers have high expectations of what pupils in all groups can achieve. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and classroom management is very effective. Assessment is regular and involves students in self-review. Form tutors and parents are informed about student progress through the pegging system. Learning aims and objectives are highlighted and explained. Effective incorporation of literacy skills, which nearly always is in the context of the lesson theme, is particularly effective is the use of key vocabulary. Excellent attitudes to learning are nurtured and high levels of positive behaviour endorse these. There are many opportunities for personal reflection and development and focus on spiritual, social, cultural and moral education (e.g. "What makes me happy" and "Disability" projects). Teachers use a good range of teaching methods and strategies. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent. The variety of learning opportunities is very wide with corresponding variety of methodology and stimulus materials.

73 Leadership of the department was judged to be outstanding in the last inspection and that is certainly still the case. The head of department provides inspirational leadership to his team and is a role model in the classroom. There is high quality, comprehensive, up-to-date and pertinent documentation which is contributed to, shared and utilised by all. An effective team approach has been developed and is a strength. Teachers share their good practice and problems and also provide support for each other. The head of department effectively monitors teaching. Support for new staff is very good and there is high quality work set for supply staff.

74 English is taught in a suite of rooms, which is gradually being refurbished as part of the whole-school programme of improvement. The learning environment created by the English team is very good. Well-presented pupils' work is displayed, celebrating good work from a wide range of pupils, key vocabulary, concepts and themes, (e.g. "Titanic" and "999" themes). The wide range of resources (including ICT) are used well and excellent stimulus booklets are frequently produced in house, for example "Disability" and compilations of pupils' short stories. Teachers use their own experiences as a real resource and stimulus.

75 The curriculum is comprehensive, appropriate and suitably challenging in both key stages. There are supportive and detailed schemes of work with suggested stimulus material. Standardised assessment tasks are undertaken and teachers plan collaboratively sharing what works well. The content of the schemes of work reflects the aims and values of the School.

76 Results at both key stages continue to be good, particularly in the context of comparisons with similar schools, and there is a rising trend. Progress continues to be more marked at Key Stage 4, particularly in literature. Lower attaining students are making progress in extended writing and this is promoted by the use of the Record of Achievement folder in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 coursework file. The weaker spelling, identified in the last report, is a continuous focus and has been specifically addressed via the "Attack" programme. Multi-cultural issues have been successfully addressed in schemes of work and within learning materials.

77 The department continues to be outstandingly led and well managed.

Literacy across the curriculum

78 A whole school literacy policy, produced by a staff working party and the governor's Curriculum Committee, has been adopted by all departments throughout the school. The school has worked hard and made great efforts to translate the policy into practice. Supportive strategies include a literacy working group, whole-school staff training led by the literacy co-ordinator, a Summer literacy School for prospective Year 7 students, Year 7 literacy audit, departmental spelling lists and the introduction of a literacy hour for some groups.

79 A literacy focus is evident in much of the display around school, especially the use of key vocabulary. There is a clear literacy focus in English lessons and significant evidence of literacy awareness in most areas of the curriculum, although this is variable.

80 The literacy co-ordinator needs to continue to audit the literacy focus across the curriculum in order to ensure consistency and reinforcement of literacy skills.

MATHEMATICS

81 At the end of Key Stage 3, the results of the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils in 2000 are below the national average but similar to those of pupils in similar schools. Fifty-three per cent of pupils gained level 5 or above (against a national average of 66 per cent); 32 per cent gained level 6 or above (against a national average of 42 per cent). There is no difference in the results of boys and girls at this key stage.

82 Evidence from lessons observed and from scrutiny of the work of pupils in Year 9 indicates that standards are slightly better than those of last year. By the end of Key Stage 3, many pupils have acquired the expected level of knowledge, skills and understanding across all aspects of mathematics and especially in written computation, including manipulation of fractions and decimals. They have learned about various averages, such as the mean, median and mode and can represent data in the form of a pie chart. Most pupils can calculate the probability of simple events and interpret graphical

representations such as a line graph of a journey and the time taken. The impact of the recent introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is already evident in the mental skills demonstrated by Year 7 pupils; for example, they can accurately subtract 3.2 from 4 and multiply 44 by 7. Higher attainers can multiply 0.372 by 1000 and express 0.35 as a fraction in its lowest terms.

83 At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results for 2000 are below the national average compared with all schools and close to the average when compared with similar schools in Wigan. As a result of the decisive action taken by senior management there has been a notable improvement in standards this year with higher results predicted on the basis of mock examinations. This is also supported by the work seen during the inspection. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

84 Year 11 pupils are able to complete and extend a numerical pattern to the n th term; higher attainers can use algebra to prove such predictions. Most pupils can evaluate an algebraic formula, sketch and plot a quadratic graph and calculate the probability of compound events. They are less successful when, for example, expanding algebraic expressions involving brackets. Pupils' coursework indicates very good presentation, for example, in the structuring of tables that make clear the relationships between the number of regions created by lines that cross each other.

85 Despite notable improvements over recent months there has been insufficient progress since the previous inspection of five years ago. Aspects of work identified as strengths, five years ago, have not been sustained. For example, standards of attainment were judged then to be in line with national expectations and pupils' attitudes to the subject were judged to be very positive.

86 The standard of teaching observed during the current inspection is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. However, in Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching and learning is variable, ranging from one very good lesson to two where unsatisfactory teaching resulted in negligible gains in pupils' learning. A key factor common to both these lessons was the high number of pupils with special educational needs for whom additional classroom support was not available. Insecure classroom management and control of pupils also intensified the demands placed upon the teacher, resulting in unsatisfactory attitudes, concentration and behaviour from pupils. In Key Stage 4, teaching is good or very good in just over half of the lessons and satisfactory in the remainder.

87 In both key stages, teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. They plan and prepare lessons carefully and have clear intentions as to what pupils will learn. Lessons begin promptly and proceed at a brisk pace that keeps the vast majority of pupils engaged in their learning. Classes are managed well in most lessons. Teachers' good quality exposition and questioning is logically structured to promote good learning. Teachers make effective use of some good quality textbooks and worksheets. The use of computers makes an appropriate contribution to pupils' learning both in mathematics and in ICT. In a few lessons, teachers give appropriate attention to developing pupils' literacy skills, for example by emphasising spellings of key vocabulary, but this aspect of mathematics requires more emphasis.

88 Very good teaching was observed in a lesson involving pupils in Year 8 learning about number patterns, and in two lessons in Year 10 where pupils were engaged in a piece of coursework. This high quality of teaching is characterised by very good relationships, with high levels of mutual respect between the teachers and pupils, and by the teachers' enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject, which impacts significantly upon pupils' attitudes and learning. A positive and productive ethos exists in such lessons. Teachers deal sensitively with pupils' misconceptions and their high expectations of their pupils are rewarded by the good standards of presentation in pupils' written work. Teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' learning and use this information to determine the next steps in learning.

89 In most lessons the majority of pupils behave well and show at least satisfactory attitudes to learning. However, in almost half the lessons seen a significant minority of pupils show unsatisfactory concentration, interest and on occasion, poor behaviour. The incidence of such attitudes is related to the quality of teaching. Thus the key challenge to the department if it is to improve learning and thereby raise attainment, is to improve pupils' attitudes by presenting mathematics as a subject to be enjoyed. This is an achievable objective given that some lessons clearly manifest the aim of making learning enjoyable. The school now needs to ensure that all members of the department benefit from such existing aspects of good practice.

90 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in most lessons and especially when additional support is available. In a Year 8 lesson the effective work of the classroom assistant contributed to the good teaching and learning that took place. On other occasions, when additional support staff are not present, the outcomes are less certain and depend greatly on the skill of the teacher both to manage the class and to give individual attention where it is required. In some lessons, notably in Key Stage 4, these skills are very apparent whilst in a greater number of lessons, especially in Key Stage 3, such expertise is less evident.

91 Those very few pupils for whom English is an additional language are nonetheless fluent in English and participate fully in class discussions and achieve similarly to their peers. Homework is set as established practice; it is checked rigorously and contributes well to learning.

92 The department is soundly led and managed but has been unsuccessful in bringing about sufficient improvement since the last inspection. Departmental documentation is of a good standard. Strategic planning, orchestrated by the senior management, is good, resulting in an action plan that identifies appropriate areas for development and the requisite resources. Good systems have been introduced for checking the work of the department and its outcomes, including analysis of test results. Staff work hard and are committed to raising standards. Accommodation is satisfactory and is enhanced by good quality classroom displays.

93 The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is at an early stage of development. It is beginning to influence the nature of teaching and learning, but greater emphasis needs to be given to some key principles of the strategy. Standards of mental recall and manipulation of numbers are below average in Key Stage 4 as is evidenced when Year 10 pupils make unnecessary use of calculators. However, it is clear that those at the beginning of Key Stage 3 are much more adept and at ease with mental mathematics.

94 Across the school, suitable opportunities are planned for pupils to use and apply numeracy within other subjects, for example when plotting and interpreting graphs in science, and in ICT when entering pupil questionnaire returns into a database and then displaying it by using a broad range of graphical representations. Such opportunities enhance and bring relevance to pupils' learning.

SCIENCE

95 Standards of work seen during the inspection were below the national average in Years 7 to 9 and approaching the national average by the end of Year 11. These standards represent good pupil achievement in relation to standards on entry and result from the positive attitudes and very good behaviour of the pupils and the very good organisation and good teaching in science.

96 In 2000, national test results for 14 year olds improved greatly over the previous year but were still below the average when compared with all schools. Compared to schools in a similar social context the results were above average at both National Curriculum levels 5 and 6. Value added scores show that progress, from entry to the end of Year 9, is slightly above the average for the authority as a whole. The work of pupils from Years 7 to 9 seen during the inspection shows that

some pupils attain well above the national average but most are below. Taken over the last three years there is little difference in attainment between boys and girls.

97 Following their National Curriculum Tests, Year 9 pupils were engaged in experimental work to establish the principles of scientific investigation. They showed a good knowledge of these from previous years. However a middle-attaining group were less secure with input and output variables and did not remember that acids give off hydrogen when metals are added. In a high attaining group in Year 8 the pupils could confidently and correctly explain the different levels of organisms in food chains and food webs. A lower attaining Year 8 group, using learning materials carefully matched to their needs, learned the same material almost as well.

98 Results for 16 year olds in GCSE examinations in 2000 were significantly better than in the previous year. However the results were below national averages at grades A*- C with girls doing better than boys. Results in grades A*- G were similar to the national average for both boys and girls. Work seen in school would suggest that results this year should equal, and possibly improve, on those of last year. New schemes of work and the high standard of scientific investigation work will help in this.

99 Scrutiny of Year 11 scientific investigation work shows that pupils have a thorough grasp of predicting, measuring and controlling variables in a fair test. The evaluation of results is good. These skills were also observed in the experimental work of Year 10. For example, one pupil, when invited to design an experiment for finding the point of neutralisation between an acid and an alkali, described the whole procedure before the teacher had chance to ask for the "first step". Pupils understand the principles of circulation. They can use molecular structure to explain the different forms of heat transfer. An average group in Year 10 were not sure of the function of an ammeter and whilst they could understand that more cells in a circuit would give a greater reading on the voltmeter they could not explain why adding more bulbs to the circuit also caused a greater reading.

100 The good rates of achievement made by pupils over the five years is greatly to do with their positive attitudes to learning. In all lessons pupils were co-operative, well behaved and attentive. Pupils were generally keen to answer questions with any rare reluctance being from shy, higher attaining pupils. Pupils' standard of presentation is good.

101 Whilst there is a considerable degree of setting of groups, it is flexible and most classes have pupils who are on the register of special educational needs or have statements. All teachers are made aware of pupils' needs by the subject special educational needs co-ordinator. Learning material matched to their needs is available ensuring that all pupils have access to lesson content. Additional support in lessons is provided for pupils with special educational needs. Higher attaining pupils are extended through the use of additional independent projects.

102 The department makes a good contribution to both literacy and numeracy skills. Key words are available on notices thus assisting pupils with their spelling and examples of extended writing are evident throughout all years. There is emphasis on graph work, including line of best fit, from Year 7 onwards and the use of extrapolation as a diagnostic tool in Year 10. Percentages are also used for comparative purposes. Many pupils use their own or the schools' ICT facilities and pupils as well as staff use "powerpoint" presentations in class.

103 Teaching is good overall. No lesson was observed where the teaching was less than satisfactory. In most lessons it was good and in some very good. Strengths in teaching include the quality of class management, the pace and challenge in lessons, teachers' subject knowledge, high expectation and appropriate lesson content. There were occasional weaknesses in challenge and lesson timing. A common weakness is the quality of marking, which, although regularly done, rarely involves more than a brief admonition or encouraging remark. Homework is regularly used both to

reinforce and extend class work. Teachers' knowledge of the needs of the pupils in their classes is commendable.

104 Since the last inspection, new schemes of work have been introduced across all years. These have been well received by pupils and staff. They are regularly monitored and revised. An extensive departmental record system is in place and data is used to monitor pupils' progress, inform staff and parents and set targets for both pupils and teachers, including pupils on the GCSE C/D borderline. Staff development includes monitoring of lesson plans, mutual observation of lessons to share good practice and "teaching and learning" days. All teachers are annually seen to teach by a member of senior management and/or head of department. Single sex teaching has been introduced for part of Year 9 to investigate the differences in learning between boys and girls and as a management strategy. Both staff and pupils of both sexes think it a success to date.

105 Teaching staff and dedicated technicians work hard to maintain sub-standard laboratories as very pleasant learning environments. Impressive displays include extensive pupil contributions. More storage space is needed and there seems to be a timetable imbalance to the disadvantage of science in Years 7 to 9. There is still no subject office or additional technician support.

ART AND DESIGN

106 By the end of Key Stage 3 the attainment for the majority of pupils is in line with national expectations. When attainment is below national expectations it is usually found in Year 9 classes with the more disaffected pupils for whom the subject has little attraction. Pupils are given the opportunity to experience a wide variety of creative experiences and as a consequence the majority of pupils show an interest in their work. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils are capable of drawing, painting and printing and have an appreciation for the use of colour, line and tone. Some three-dimensional work is also created using clay, cardboard and a variety of materials. In addition pupils demonstrate good research skills when completing homework assignments. Pupils are more than willing to discuss their work and a significant proportion show pride in their achievements, which is a reflection of the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils are also given an opportunity to develop their work using computer generated art applications.

107 At Key Stage 4 the attainment of pupils in the year 2000 was well above the national average for GCSE *A - C grades, with a 100 per cent pass rate for *A - G grades. GCSE attainment is well above most other subjects in the school. In the three years from 1998 the attainment of girls has been better than that of boys. The reason for this imbalance could be related to the structure of the course which involves a significant amount of coursework completed over the two years of Key Stage 4. The style and demands of the course, together with a requirement for research skills and sustained effort over a long period of time, could prove a disadvantage to certain pupils.

108 Across both key stages the majority of pupils are articulate and many can understand and use technical language when discussing their work. Coursework provides evidence of reasonably good research skills in the form of written extracts and annotations, often produced using computers. The quality of teaching resulted in 60 per cent of lessons observed being excellent to very good, 30 per cent being good and 10 per cent satisfactory. As direct consequence of effective teaching, the general attitude of the majority of pupils is good, generating a positive impact upon the progress made in lessons across both key stages. A minority of pupils in Key Stage 3 find sustained concentration, problem solving, extrapolation and an understanding of aesthetics difficult. Relationships in lessons are good. Pupils are more than willing to share materials and ideas and are willing to assist in the distribution and collection of equipment in lessons. The best lessons are challenging and well planned in order to provide all pupils with opportunities to progress and to attain levels of achievement commensurate with their abilities and aspirations. Pupils with special educational needs are well served through sensitive teaching. Classroom organisation and management is very effective in providing good learning opportunities for all levels of

ability. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures in order raise creative and visual appreciation and awareness. All classrooms within the department contain excellent displays Interesting work is being undertaken by Year 8 pupils who have been using images from photographs taken during a walk around the locality, the photographs then being used to illustrate the journeys made by the pupils. Year 9 pupils have produced some illustrations based on the work of the artist and designer H.R.Giger. Year 10 pupils have produced some interesting ceramic models based on a study of characterisation of a human head.

109 Assessment is particularly effective as an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. Assessment includes a certain amount of pupil self-assessment and therefore when questioned the pupils were well aware of teacher expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Work is marked at periodic intervals, usually linked to the completion of a project.

110 The management of the department is very effective in promoting high standards in lessons. The teachers work as an effective team. The quality of the work of the pupils on display in the art department and around the school is very good promoting high standards, creating interest in the subject and celebrating achievement. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum

111 The last inspection report concluded that provision was required for the more able pupils. The time is now appropriate for strategies to be considered which will further develop the skills, knowledge and understanding of the more able pupils in both key stages, and, in particular, those in Key stage 4 capable of reaching A* –B grades in GCSE examinations and the advanced levels of GNVQ.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

112 Standards in design and technology on entry to the school are low. In the year 9 National Curriculum teacher assessment results of pupils in the school 2000 a little under one-third of the pupils reached the national expectation, level 5 or above. By the age of 16 standards in design and technology are variable: overall they are below, or in some instances significantly below, both the school and national averages at grades A*-C. Girls reached higher standards than boys and in particular at grades A*-G.

113 The 2000 GCSE results at the age of 16 in design and technology graphics and textiles were similar and slightly above the school average at grades A*-C. There were broad variations in both numbers of entry levels and composition of groups in terms of boys: girls. Results in design and technology resistant materials and child development were low.

114 In all of the short courses (equivalent to half a GCSE entry) results were overall disappointing and significantly low in design and technology graphics and food.

115 Standards of work seen during the inspection were variable. They were average in approximately half of the lessons and below average in the remainder. At the age of 14, pupils use a broad range of hand and machine tools safely for designing and making food and textile products and items from resistant materials such as wood, metal and acrylic. Skills in electronics are developing well. Pupils follow the design process but rely heavily on teachers to prompt them and independent learning skills are not well developed. As they move through Key Stage 4 they become more independent learners. Ideas are appropriate when designing, but lack flair and imagination and pupils do not always evaluate their work as they proceed, but rather at the end, testing projects against original specifications. The use of ICT as a design and manufacturing tool is beginning to improve the presentation and standards of completed work. Pupils have a basic knowledge of nutritional principles and plan and make simple dishes from staple foods. Pupils communicate their ideas graphically and formal drawing skills are often satisfactory: however, due to the rotational course

structure these skills are not readily transferred across the federated areas that deliver the design and technology curriculum.

116 At the age of 16 the standards of work seen were variable. Many pupils apply correct methods of investigation, research and modelling. The good quality skills learnt in graphics lessons are evident in many of their major projects. In hospitality and catering pupils have an understanding of some industry-related systems and recognise the need for quality control. They show a thorough knowledge of health and safety and hygiene requirements. Their analysis and application of pre-packed food recipes is comprehensive as dictated by the course, which is provided by the nearby college. Higher attaining pupils in design technology resistant materials had produced a good range of well-conceived solutions in response to their fund-raising project incorporating a mechanical and electronic system.

117 Pupils make satisfactory and occasionally good progress against standards on entry. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others and in particular between the ages of 14 and 16 because of high levels of skilful individual support. The poor attendance of some pupils restricts their progress. Although teachers make significant efforts to enable pupils to catch up with work they have missed, they cannot fully compensate for the carousel timetable at Key Stage 3. A significant majority of pupils have a good attitude to learning and clearly enjoy the work, particularly the practical aspects. They are keen to do well, listen attentively and take pride in quality outcomes. They clearly enjoy sharing their success with visitors. Behaviour is at least satisfactory and often good; a minority occasionally spoil the concentration of others by immature behaviour and or calling out unnecessarily in lessons.

118 The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and occasionally good. In these lessons teachers have supportive styles, they know the pupils well, insist on good behaviour and work with commitment to help pupils make progress. Unfortunately the department has been beset with high levels of staff absence which though soon to be resolved, has hindered progress. Pupils' work is regularly marked and homework set in accordance with the school's policy. However, final assessments of design and make assignments are often left until the end and planning in one area does not always assist with a new project elsewhere. There is presently little opportunity for pupils to research a variety of customs and cultures and further develop positive and mature attitudes.

119 Leadership and management of design and technology are good. This has contributed to the good degree of improvement since the previous inspection. The new head of department provides a clear sense of direction for colleagues by his example and through a number of key initiatives, for example, alterations to working areas and extending curriculum opportunities. There is much better provision of ICT equipment to support learning and to meet the requirements of computer-assisted design and manufacturing. However, there is further scope for improvement especially within specialist teaching areas and equipment.

120 Development planning identifies a number of priorities, but targets are imprecise; they are not costed and do not indicate what is expected in terms of improvements to pupils' performance. Some group sizes are large and place considerable pressure on some teaching areas and resources; for example, the number of cookers in food technology is a limiting factor. The technician makes a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the provision in design and technology resistant materials.

DRAMA

121 Attainment at Key Stage 3 is good. Attainment at GCSE last year was below the national average. However, standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that standards of attainment

are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Girls attain better than boys at both key stages. This difference in attainment is reflected in the option take-up and in the quality of preparation work and performances observed in class.

122 Pupils make good progress throughout both Key Stages 3 and 4. This progress is shown by pupils' class work and performance in assessment tasks which cover preparation, improvisation skills, use of techniques and conventions, and evaluations of pupils' own work.

123 A good level of achievement was observed in all lessons with pupils demonstrating appropriate organisational, preparation, presentational and performance skills.

124 Teaching is good throughout both key stages, with effective, enthusiastic and engaging teaching style. Planning is detailed and encapsulates a brisk pace, high expectations and exciting and involving stimuli. There is continuous focus on students' self-discipline, co-operation, collaboration, creativity and self-confidence. Good practice is celebrated and respect for the needs of others is nurtured. Lesson content focuses on pertinent and sometimes sensitive issues. They have managed the situation very well and are monitoring standards. There is very effective collaboration with the English department, including team teaching as was seen in a Year 10 lesson focusing on the staging of "Educating Rita" and in the Drama Theatre. The development of pupils' communication skills, confidence and self-esteem will help raise attainment and academic performance across the curriculum.

125 The temporary leadership of the department has been effective during a very difficult period of the prolonged absence of the head of department. Particularly helpful has been the creative use of staffing to cover the curriculum.

126 Drama is taught in four mobile classrooms, which are in poor condition. However, staff still manage to create a quality learning environment, enhanced by informative display, which supports learning. Pupils make the most of the very limited "props" and resource materials available for improvisations. The drama department has access to a newly refurbished Drama Theatre. There are plans for much greater use of the theatre and reorganisation of mobile classrooms next term.

127 The curriculum is broad and balanced and enables students to develop socially, spiritually, culturally and morally. There is full access to the curriculum for all students. Extra-curricular and involvement in productions enhance the curriculum. Lesson planning is good but departmental documentation needs to be reviewed and revised.

128 The school has invested significantly to improve the accommodation for drama. Staffing problems have been managed effectively and non-specialist teachers well supported. Option take-up for drama next year has almost doubled and this reflects the efforts of the department throughout this difficult period.

GEOGRAPHY

129 The GCSE standards at Key Stage 4 are below the national average. The percentage A*-C grades is lower than the national average although the percentage of pupils achieving a C grade is similar to the national average. However the percentage A*- C grades increased over the last 3 years. The percentage A*- G grades is lower than the national average and has decreased over the last 3 years.

130 The National Curriculum Key Stage 3 teacher assessment results show standards are below the national average. The percentage has varied over the last 3 years and the trend of improvement is

below with the national trend. However, when compared with levels of attainment on entry, pupils make satisfactory progress.

131 Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4 when compared with their levels of attainment on entry. In both key stages, pupils' written work demonstrates knowledge of patterns and processes, for example, in the work seen on changes in river valley formation in Year 7, the distribution of volcanoes in relation to tectonic plates in Year 9, and in Year 10 patterns of urban development and reasons for locational change in the iron and steel industry of the United Kingdom. The work of higher attaining pupils shows they are able to extend their ideas and knowledge with more opportunities for independent learning. The use of geographical enquiry skills is limited at Key Stage 3. In Year 8 pupils do collect data in the study of weather but more recording and data analysis are needed. Similarly, more fieldwork should be developed to promote active and positive learning.

132 The overall quality of teaching in both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. In a significant number of lessons it is very good, and in a tenth of lessons, excellent. A strength of the department is the sound knowledge and understanding of the subject by the staff to be able to plan the content of lessons and their willingness to adapt and try new teaching methods. Pupils are given opportunities to develop basic and key skills. Pupils in Year 7, studying cause and effect of flooding in Bangladesh practised reading, language expression and sentence construction. In Year 9, pupils working in groups to produce a 'memory map' of Japan had to listen carefully to each other and express information specifically to allow others to draw accurate maps and diagrams. Teachers need to provide work for pupils with special educational needs, which is more closely matched to their aptitudes. The use of ICT is becoming a major strength of the department with the recent acquisition and frequent use of the interactive white board and bookable computer room. ICT is allowing pupils to build on knowledge acquired in earlier lessons and increase locational knowledge. A further strategy to improve pupil performance is the use of revision guides with Year 11 and now through the Year 10 course to clarify and simplify the subject content and show links within the syllabus.

133 Pupils generally show respect for each other, listening well to others, although lower attaining pupils do not always maintain concentration through the full lesson. Higher attaining pupils are more competitive and retain a good pace of working. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good but the control of the behaviour of a minority of pupils with more informal approaches results in less challenging tasks which then affect pupils' progress. The setting of homework was variable and needs to be monitored.

134 Departmental co-ordination is very good. The new leadership in the department is enthusiastic and developmental, leading a hardworking and committed team. The Key Stage 3 scheme of work has been modified and a new syllabus chosen for Key Stage 4. This emphasises the contribution of geography to pupils' overall education. The head of department is aware of the effect of changes in the Year 10 curriculum plan reducing the numbers choosing geography which has resulted in a wide range of ability in each group. This has obvious consequences for teaching and learning styles. All priorities from the department development plan have been put in place including the commitment to formative assessment. However, a more focused assessment system should be developed to analyse prior attainment, set quantitative and specific geographical written targets linked to National Curriculum descriptors at Key Stage 3 and identify specific skills and content at Key Stage 4. This would lead on from the school's pegging assessment system.

135 Although some of the classrooms are small the displays of pupils' work alongside famous quotations, Oxfam posters and satellite world maps, provide an attractive and thought-provoking environment. Recent refurbishment of classrooms and a new humanities office with resources for staff and pupils, including geographical periodicals, newspapers, CD ROMs and new textbooks, provide a good resource basis.

HISTORY

136 Teacher assessments in 2000 indicated that pupil attainment at the age of 14 was broadly in line with the national expectation. However, inspection findings indicate that pupil achievement at the age of 14 is a little below the levels expected of pupils of this age group. Nevertheless, this represents a significant achievement given the below average levels of literacy of pupils on entry to the school, which inhibit the progress of pupils in lower attaining groups. Pupils across the attainment spectrum record history by writing in a range of genre such as biographies, diaries, letters, newspaper articles and even an obituary of the entrepreneur Richard Arkwright! Pupils can successfully extract historical information from textbooks or other printed sources although they get insufficient opportunities to make use of local records, field visits, CD ROMs and the Internet as sources of information for historical enquiry. Year 9 pupils are gaining valuable insights into complex historical issues such as the personality of James I and his suitability as a leader.

137 In the GCSE examinations of 2000, 46.3 per cent of pupils gained passes at grades A*-C which was below the national average of 57.5 per cent. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-G was broadly in line with the national average: Pupils' results in history have improved sharply over the past five years with pupils gaining higher points scores in GCSE history than in most other subjects they study. In 2000, there was a marked gap in performance between girls and boys with girls gaining much better results at grades A*-C than boys. This gap is far wider than that which pertains nationally. Inspection findings indicate that the skills of historical enquiry and interpretation skills gained in Years 7 to 9 are well utilised at Key Stage 4. This was evident from the good insights pupils had of conditions on the home front during the World War II blitz. Given the low level of attainment of many pupils on entry to the school, the GCSE results are sound and reflect careful preparation for the examination whereby pupils are set targets, become familiar with the format of examination questions and undergo a well-structured revision programme.

138 There is a significant difference in pupils' progress across different attainment groups. Although pupils in lower attaining groups make satisfactory progress in the acquisition of new learning through both key stages, they frequently find it difficult to recall what they have learned in previous lessons. There are missed opportunities for the application of strategies to reinforce and consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding within these groups. In contrast, pupils in higher attaining groups and special needs pupils in small groups make good progress in the acquisition of historical knowledge and understanding.

139 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In over half the lessons seen, teaching was good or very good. Not all teachers are subject specialists and there is also supply teaching covering classes taught by an experienced teacher on long-term sickness absence. Specialist full-time teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to support good quality pupil learning. The quality of learning taking place in lessons taught by non specialist and supply teachers is significantly less impressive owing to limitations of depth of coverage of the programmes of study but nevertheless is of a satisfactory standard. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to expand their literacy skills, although opportunities for pupils to make extended oral contributions through debate, presentations or role-play are limited. Numeracy skills are enhanced through chronological work and timelines but opportunities to develop graphically skills are missed. Word processing of pupils' written work is well developed but there is scope for more use of ICT in historical enquiry. The planning of lessons is sound but most lessons are teacher-led with few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as independent learners. Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils and tasks set contain an appropriate level of challenge. In the best lessons seen very good teaching was characterised by careful planning of a range of stimulating and demanding enquiry tasks. This was apparent in a very good Year 9 lesson where pupils worked in pairs in a thought-provoking exercise where they took the

part of one of the participants in the discussions leading up to the Treaty of Versailles and made the case for their stance at the Conference.

140 The majority of lessons are taught at a brisk pace, which sustains pupil interest. Good use is made of the limited range of textbooks available, which are supplemented by good quality pupil worksheets and information sheets. Classroom management and control is good, drawing on sound pupil-teacher relationships based upon mutual respect which creates a classroom environment conducive to good quality learning. Teachers make good use of learning support assistants to ensure that pupils with special educational needs learn at the same rate as other pupils in the class. Pupil behaviour is good and most pupils have a positive attitude to learning. Marking is carried out regularly and teacher comment is generally informative and encouraging. Homework reinforces classroom learning and supports good pupil progress through both key stages

141 The department is soundly led on a day-to-day basis and has coped well with the long-term absence of a key member of staff. Curriculum plans cover the National Curriculum and the GCSE syllabus and fully meet statutory requirements. However, changes to the option system at Key Stage 4 have led to a marked decline in the number of pupils studying history with only one teaching group in the current Year 10. The varying levels of pupil attainment in this large group make it difficult to extend learning opportunities for the most able whilst still meeting the learning needs of lower attaining pupils. The planning of opportunities to meet the spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of the pupils is good. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and evaluating examination and test results are good but reports to parents are insufficiently subject specific and do not inform parents what their children can and cannot do in history. Department development plans require revision to make targets, priorities and the means of achieving them much clearer and verifiable.

142 Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress. There has been a very significant improvement in GCSE results and the use of paired and group work in lessons has been extended successfully. Future staffing uncertainties make it difficult to estimate the department's capacity to continue improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

143 Standards on entry are below average. By the age of 14 and 16 standards in ICT are currently unsatisfactory but improving rapidly.

144 In the 2000 statutory teacher assessments approximately two thirds of the pupils at the age of 14 reached the national expectation, level 5 or above. The girls' results were very slightly better than the boys'. Overall the results in ICT were very similar to those in English and above those in mathematics and science.

145 In the work seen during the inspection, standards of work are getting better and at the age of 14 are generally satisfactory and with a minority unsatisfactory. Pupils develop their ICT skills in their work in a range of subjects, for example when presenting coursework in history and modern foreign languages, in art when transferring images from a digital camera and for composition work in Year 9 music. Good use is made of the Internet, for example in English when researching book reviews and in art to increase the pupils' knowledge and skills of art and artists. Presentational skills were enhanced in geography and science by good use of a digital projector. Display on the walls in modern foreign language records email links with a school in Barcelona. Where standards are unsatisfactory it is partly attributable to the provision, which is variable and hinders opportunities for pupils to learn and regularly practice the full range of ICT skills. Presently Years 8 and 9 receive 2 per cent curriculum time and this equates to one lesson on alternate weeks, compared to the recent introduction of one lesson per week for Years 7, which is helping to raise and accelerate standards.

146 In the 2000 GCSE examination at the age of 16, standards in ICT were well below the national average for grades A*-C, but close to the grades A*-G. A little over three times the number of boys were entered for the examination compared to girls. All of the girls obtained A*-G, including half at grade A*-C. At the age of 16 the standard of work is variable; progress is unfortunately slowed this year in Year 11 for those not receiving dedicated time devoted to ICT. Following recent improvements in resources, standards and progress are getting better. Pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software, with particular attention paid to the aspects of data handling and word processing. Other pupils lack the ability and are provided with few opportunities to reflect critically on the content of their work.

147 Cross-curricular examples include art GCSE sketchbooks and good levels of importing, cutting and manipulating images and text. In Year 10 geography, good use of ICT extends fieldwork studies to show changes in village development, pending a visit to Parbold. Some pupils use software applications with confidence and thoughtfulness, for example, in the developing use of resources to support the control aspects of design and technology.

148 At all key stages, learning is generally satisfactory. The majority of pupils clearly enjoy lessons and readily attempt all work set. Presentation skills are generally good. In lessons, pupils in general show respect for the equipment with no visual evidence of deliberate misuse or vandalism.

149 Teaching in lessons for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 was at least satisfactory and occasionally good. Where teaching is good lessons move at a crisp pace and pupils are enthused by clear tasks. Good levels of independence and collaboration between pupils were observed. Standards of behaviour were good. Teachers involved in the delivery of the discrete ICT lessons have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject knowledge in-hand. The content of lessons was appropriate to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study. However, expectations need to be raised if teachers are to match national expectations. The poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils studying ICT key skills leads to unsatisfactory progress; also a similar number of higher attaining pupils found the content of the course undemanding.

150 There have been a number of improvements since the previous inspection report, in particular the major expenditure committed to improving the overall school resources. The development of ICT to support the pupils' attainment in other areas of the curriculum has been extended, but there are still areas for development. Staff development in ICT, provided by New Opportunities Funding, is planned for later this year.

151 The leadership, management and day-to-day administration of the work in ICT lessons are very good, but the co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is not yet secure. The subject co-ordinator has yet to get to grips with any potential ad hoc initiatives in various departments, which militate against co-ordinated strategic progress, which has yet to be established. The current mapping arrangements have yet to confirm the quality of the overall breadth, balance and continuity of provision, including the monitoring of ICT teaching.

152 Within the pleasant and recently well-appointed computer suite, the resources are good, with a positive effect on learning and standards. The original and existing ICT accommodation, in terms of ventilation, needs to be urgently addressed. Good use is made of the provision and extension of the network in the library. The technical assistant provides a very valuable contribution to learning and greatly helps the smooth running of ICT, including supervision of the extremely well attended lunch-time and after-school opportunities.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

153 Attainment in modern foreign languages has shown a gradual improvement since the last inspection. In 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in French was just below the national average, and the proportion achieving grades A*-G was higher than nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades was very low. There was a very significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls: whereas girls achieved results which were more or less in line with the national picture, boys' results were significantly below. Both boys and girls achieved slightly less well in French than they did in the other subjects they took, but in both cases the difference was less than is the case across the country as a whole.

154 At the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is overall below the national average. Higher attainers attain appropriate standards for their age in listening and writing, but many do not reach the national expectation in speaking. The differences between the attainment of boys and girls at each level are not significant. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make largely satisfactory progress throughout the key stage in most areas of the work, but progress is unsatisfactory in speaking. Pupils who begin Spanish as a second language at the beginning of Year 9 make good progress.

156 At the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils achieve standards broadly in line with the national average, and some exceed it, but in the majority of cases speaking remains below what should be expected. Average and lower attainers attain standards which are below, and in some cases well below the national average. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment overall is much more marked at the end of Key Stage 4 than two years earlier. Progress throughout the key stage is less satisfactory for lower attainers than for some average and higher attainers, and progress in speaking is again unsatisfactory.

157 Most pupils have positive attitudes to their language learning, and behaviour in languages lessons is almost universally very good. Pupils listen and concentrate well, are polite when their peers are speaking, and participate well when they are asked to work in groups or pairs.

158 During the inspection, all the lessons seen in Key Stage 3 were satisfactory or better, and half were good or very good. Lessons seen in Key Stage 4 showed a wider range, with a small proportion of lessons which were unsatisfactory because they lacked focus and clarity of purpose. Most lessons are well planned and have pace and variety, and there is evidence of pupils using ICT to support their learning in modern foreign languages. Good use is made of group and pair-work, and of a range of teaching aids to retain pupils' interest. However, as at the time of the last inspection, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of those they teach. In particular, they do not make sufficient use of the target language in their lessons. They do not speak the language enough themselves in class, and many do not have high enough expectations of the pupils in terms of what they ask them to say in the language. This is a major contributory factor for the lower level of speaking skills evident in the lessons seen, and certainly affects the higher grades attained in GCSE examinations. Where the lesson is conducted in the target language, as in a lower-attaining Year 9 class, which contained a series of short activities and language games, confidence in speaking grew perceptibly with the pupils' enjoyment of the lesson.

159 The curriculum offered by the school in modern foreign languages satisfies statutory requirements. Spanish has become a popular choice as the language which pupils choose in Key Stage 4, but the arrangement of option choices makes it difficult for the keener linguists to study two languages to GCSE level. The languages' curriculum is enhanced by a range of trips, excursions, and until recently an exchange with a school in France, all of which contribute well to pupils' personal development. Up-to-date assessment on pupils' progress is retained by the department and is used to inform planning or to develop the curriculum in languages for the pupils' benefit.

160 The modern foreign languages department is staffed by highly experienced teachers who work together well as a team. The head of department is ably supported by the second in command. There is a scheme of work which sets out what should be taught at each age and stage, but which requires more clarity of detail about suggested strategies for teaching the material, assessment and ICT opportunities to support what is taught. The departmental handbook contains very good advice on languages classroom activities and ICT use, and these should be incorporated into what teachers are required to teach in the classroom. Policies on literacy and on special needs are good. At present, there is no formalised system for the head of department to monitor the teaching in the department or to scrutinise the work produced by pupils. This is an area, which is shortly to be addressed.

161 Accommodation for modern foreign languages teaching is poor, but a new teaching block will alleviate this problem in the very near future. Despite the very poor state of the present building, modern foreign languages teachers have made sure that their teaching spaces, although small, are colourful and stimulating, with good displays of pupils work and commercially-produced language materials. Resources are adequate, although the French textbook is now out of date and library stock is unsatisfactory.

MUSIC

162 Standards in music at the end of both key stages are good and slightly above the national expectations.

163 In both key stages standards of singing are generally good. Pupils sing with enthusiasm, good diction and volume. They can follow a simple part well and pitch is usually accurate. One Year 8 class sang "O Happy Day" with particularly impressive energy and enjoyment and individual pupils in Years 10 and 11 showed appreciation of style, good tone quality and harmonic balance. (The latter returned from study leave to take part in a lunch time concert). There were some examples of good ensemble playing from pupils in Key Stage 3, using keyboards, glockenspiels, guitars, drums and voice. Whole-class ensemble playing of 12 bar blues and improvised sequences were most impressive in Year 8, and small group ensembles, performing songs composed by each other, displayed very good examples of teamwork in Year 9. Good compositions were noted in both key stages and pupils in Key Stage 4 are confident using Cubase. It was not possible to observe composition classes in Year 11, but taped examples were of a good standard. The school now needs to extend the use of ICT for composition throughout Key Stage 3. At both key stages pupils make good use of technical terms and satisfactory attainment in listening skills. One group of Year 10 pupils able to recognise style, timbre, instrumentation and a few, country of origin, in a lesson on ('World music'.) Good levels of performance were achieved in all instrumental lessons and ensembles observed. A particularly good standard was attained by a Year 7 drummer who has only had three weeks tuition.

164 The music department has made good progress since the last inspection and successfully addressed most areas of concern. There have been enhanced performance opportunities for pupils, schemes of work have been reviewed most effectively, lesson expectations are now very clear and shared with pupils and there is a good 'bridging' unit for Key Stage 2/3. Teaching has become even stronger and the use of ICT has been further developed. Accommodation is very much improved, as are resources and the learning environment in general. These have really impacted on the quality of work and enthusiasm of the pupils. GCSE grades have been steadily rising, whilst high numbers of entry have been sustained. Wider opportunities for instrumental provision and take-up still need to be addressed.

165 The quality of teaching is always good and frequently very good at both key stages. It is an energetic, hardworking department with an imaginative and enthusiastic approach. Lessons are well planned and organised with good use of resources especially the use of Cubase as a tool for

improving standards in composition. They have clear learning objectives and content is varied, well balanced and practical, with appropriate challenge for all ability levels. Teachers have good subject knowledge and musical skills and provide interesting stimulus, such as the use of their own improvisations or the taped compositions of past pupils. Instructions and explanations are clear, such as the difference between 'rhythm' and 'pulse' and questioning techniques are good, providing opportunities for pupils to share their ideas with confidence. Lessons are generally well paced and only occasionally was teacher exposition, or a particular section of a lesson, too long. The development of pupils' performance skills is a strength of the department, as is the good variety of teaching and learning styles observed. The selection of music for performance and/or analysis is generally appropriate and suitably challenging - for example, the World Music selections with Year 10 and the Gospel Songs with Year 8. In the training of the choir, however, there could be a greater variety and challenge in repertoire selected and, in the teaching of ensemble singing, in general, there could be more attention to posture and, consequently, tone colour. The quality and use of on-going assessment is good. Verbal feedback is particularly helpful and aids progression, especially in composition and performance skills. Marking is positive and supportive but could be more diagnostic. There is very good use of pupil self-assessment at the end of each unit of work and good use is made of well- displayed expectations for each level of achievement. There is quality teaching in a variety of instruments including voice, guitar, keyboards, woodwind and drums, providing appropriate challenges and infectious enthusiasm. There is a lack of provision for the teaching of brass and strings, however, and a need for more percussion tuition. The school might consider expansion in these areas.

166 The quality of learning is good in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, pupils are able to sustain concentration and work independently, using instruments, working in small groups or by themselves. Pupils are enthusiastic about music, both in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. For example, in Year 9, several boys willingly worked in their lunchtimes to prepare a performance of an original composition and pupils from all year groups flocked to attend a lunchtime concert prepared by other pupils. In both key stages pupils make good progress in the development of performance and composition skills. In particular, some very good progress was observed in Year 9, layering and texturing a pattern of riffs and in Year 8, improvising 12 bar blues. Satisfactory progress is made in the development of listening skills at Key Stage 4. Good progress is made by the majority of pupils in acquiring knowledge about musical language and the application of technical terms. All pupils make good progress using keyboards and in Key Stage 4, good progress was noted using Cubase for composition. With the additional computers these opportunities will now be developed in lower Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported with appropriately differentiated stimulus, tasks and parts and especially good progress was noted in a Year 10 class with some pupils who have learning difficulties. Gifted and talented pupils make very good progress. A variety of extension activities are provided to challenge their ensemble playing and many performance opportunities are provided.

167 The music department has an exciting energy and clearly works well as a team. It is well led and managed and peripatetic lessons are well organised. Documentation is well presented and there is a comprehensive policy and good, well-balanced schemes of work with clear learning objectives for each project. ICT is an integral part of the music curriculum and literacy is fostered by the appropriate use, and encouragement, of technical terms and key words, highlighted in well-displayed wordbanks. There is a wealth of extra-curricular musical provision, including two choirs, a small wind band, keyboard and computer activities and a variety of pupil-organised groups. The numbers of girls attending choir practices are high and particularly encouraging. The school now needs to look at the provision of a greater variety of organised ensembles, such as a percussion group, using a wider range of instruments. Likewise, and linked to this, the school needs to look at a greater breadth of instrumental tuition to include brass and stringed instruments. The school provides many performance opportunities throughout the year, both within school and outside in the community and pupils have benefited from workshops with visiting artists. The department has been particularly

successful at fund raising and must be congratulated on its enterprise. The successful bid for the excellent new recording studio is an outstanding example of this, but each internal lunchtime concert generates funding.

168 Music has a positive image around the school. Resources are excellent, with a designated new recording studio, a good stock of keyboards and a very good computer suite. Glockenspiels are of a good quality as are the drum kits. The school could now look at extending its range of drums and percussion instruments. Music is taught in good, suited accommodation with a range of practice and storage rooms. The lack of soundproofing is not a problem because of the co-operation between the staff involved and their organisation of mutually agreed appropriately planned activities when timetabled at the same time.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

169 Overall standards in physical education are above national expectations. Good progress is made in both key stages by pupils of all abilities, including those with special needs. At the end of Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments show overall standards in physical education at the national average with many pupils achieving standards well above average. Observation of lessons during the inspection confirmed the accuracy of teachers' assessments and revealed that pupils frequently achieved high standards as a result of the perseverance and practice of pupils, coupled with skilled, knowledgeable and effective teaching.

170 By the age of 14 pupils have acquired knowledge, understanding and developed skills in a range of activities. Pupils achieve well in games and athletics; for example, in cricket and rounders, pupils demonstrate that they can effectively transfer skills gained in isolated practices into a game situation. In athletics pupils can soon demonstrate the mastery of very basic techniques in triple jumping and hurdling. There is no significant difference in standards which boys and girls achieve; these standards show overall improvement since the last inspection.

171 Since 1996 GCSE results have shown consistent levels of improvement but in 2000 at the end of Key Stage 4 they dropped below national averages; 39 per cent achieved A*-C and 100 per cent achieved A*-G. The department's prediction for 2001 is that pupils' successes will be higher. The uptake of students studying this course has increased and it attracts both boys and girls in equal numbers. In GCSE groups, pupils have learned to refine their techniques in selected activities and are beginning to acquire a sound knowledge of the requirements of fitness and the ways to test it. Many opportunities arise for pupils to progress from past practices, through planned and progressive programmes of study. In most lessons pupils are encouraged to evaluate; they offer informed opinions of their own and others' work, developing the skills of movement analysis. At the age of 16, pupils have made good progress in a range of activities including aerobics and dance, where pupils are creating their own dance motifs, performing and evaluating, showing an improvement since the last inspection.

172 The overall quality of teaching is good in both key stages, with some very good lessons seen. Schemes of work are well structured and show progress, both lesson to lesson and across the key stages. Individual lessons are effectively planned and objectives are clearly defined and shared with pupils. Pupils are in no doubt what is required of them. Teachers always leave time for pupils to review their work during the lesson. Pupils reflect on their progress against lesson objectives so enabling appropriate targets for improvement to be identified for the next lesson for both teacher and pupils. This is good practice. Detailed explanations and clear expectations are a feature of every lesson. This practice generates pupils' interest in the activity and assists them to learn.

173 Teachers are confident, motivated specialists who have secure knowledge and understanding of their subject. In all lessons teachers' knowledge and expertise have a positive significant influence

on learning. They are effective in planning and organising tasks that are well paced, match pupils' capabilities and contain appropriate challenges. Teachers effectively use a variety of teaching styles in the same lesson, ranging from whole-class direct, to group work, individual tuition and pupils' exploration. At Key Stage 4 pupils are given opportunities for independent learning and applying their knowledge to new situations. More opportunities for pupils to discuss their work are introduced and teachers contribute well to the development of pupils' literacy skills, through their use of technical language in their question and answer sessions.

174 Where opportunities arise pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example, through creating dances, evaluating a partner's performance or coaching pupils in athletics. Relationships are of a high order and are the platform from which high quality teaching and learning can spring. Discipline is firm but relaxed, promoting high motivation and good order. It allows teachers opportunities to concentrate on certain groups while others remain purposefully engaged. Emphasis on safe practice is a feature. Pupils' consistency of uniform dress is to be commended, and is an outcome of the perseverance of teachers' demands to retain high quality standards. The number of non-participants is generally low, but there are exceptions and they are normally gainfully employed as coaches, referees, observers or recorders with appropriate work sheets provided.

175 Pupils' attitude to learning is very good across the key stages and this has a positive effect on learning. They arrive on time, change quickly, and readily engage in the tasks presented. Their interest and enthusiasm is evident across all age groups. In almost all lessons seen, there is a high degree of co-operation displayed by pupils, who are well behaved, motivated and concentrate on the tasks presented. Where this breaks down, pupils' attention goes and they fall off task preventing good learning from taking place, resulting in lower standards, attainment levels and lack of progress. Pupils are generally seen to be capable of persevering and working hard physically, in all activities where expectations are high and they rise to challenges. They respond quickly to questions and show confidence in demonstrating to others what they can achieve.

176 The department, which is led by an enthusiastic and effective head of department, is well supported by his male and female colleagues. Together they make a very strong team, which is committed to delivering a balanced curriculum. Substantial documentation has been developed collectively; this provides a very good basis to support teaching and learning. Arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting are in place, and assist with future planning. A systematic monitoring of assessment procedures, units of work and programmes of study, has taken place and now has to be adapted to meet the new national requirements for levels in physical education. Time allocation for the coverage of National Curriculum Programmes of Study in Key Stages 3 and 4 only just allows for the end of key stage descriptors to be achieved. Apart from GCSE, ICT is not used extensively to enhance teaching and learning.

177 Indoor facilities for physical education are good and are managed well. The school shares a sports hall, gymnasium, dance studio and squash courts with the Leisure Services Department and the administration works harmoniously.

178 Tennis courts have been resurfaced and access to fields improved considerably, but the surrounding area has been badly pitted. Grass pitches are waterlogged and the hard play area requires attention and is still marred by litter, mentioned in the last report, and broken glass, a health and safety hazard.

179 Liaison with primary schools could be more effective. It works well with higher education establishments and clubs. The over-emphasis on certain parts of the curriculum, referred to in the last report, has been dealt with.

180 A comprehensive year round programme of extra-curricular activities is a very strong feature of the department; this serves to enhance pupils' social development as well as their practical skills. The programme provides open access clubs, team practices and matches. The programme attracts a high percentage of boys and girls who have had success in competitions. It represents a substantial commitment of time by the physical education staff, supported by one or two other teachers. The variety, regularity and quality of this additional provision have positive effects on pupils' attainment and attitude and makes a considerable contribution to the life and ethos of the whole school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

181 Religious education is a well-managed and rigorously taught subject which makes a significant contribution to the school's aims and purposes. Teaching is provided for all pupils at the school in accordance with the requirements of the Wigan locally agreed syllabus; three pupils are withdrawn from the taught programme following requests from their parents.

182 In Key Stage 3, in a majority of lessons observed, the standards achieved by pupils are good when set against Agreed Syllabus expectations and are never less than satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 pupils study for a GCSE short course certificate in religious education. Results achieved in the examination have shown an improvement from 15 per cent of candidates achieving A*-C grades when the course was introduced three years ago, to 50 per cent achieving these grades in the most recent examination. Six pupils were entered for the GCSE religious studies examination in the year 2000, when the proportion achieving A*-C grades was in line with the national average for the subject. The standards represented in these results reflect the strong development of the subject since the last inspection.

183 In almost all lessons observed in Key Stage 3, the quality of pupil learning was good. The attitudes and responses to the taught programme were such as to ensure a most positive ethos in the classroom. In Key Stage 4, while occasional examples of less than satisfactory attitudes were observed, learning was good overall. At both key stages pupils make real gains in knowledge and understanding of the core beliefs of living world religions. In Year 7 pupils were learning about the significance of the Haj for Muslims and went on to deepen their understanding of "journey" and "special place" in their own experience. They were able to use terms such as monotheism and pilgrimage in discussion. In Year 9 pupils were researching key Christian beliefs about Jesus from video presentations of hymnology and Gospel songs, leading to a clarification of theological statements about who Jesus is for Christians. In Year 10 pupils were reflecting on human suffering and a range of difficult questions regarding the Passover events in Jerusalem and beliefs about the meaning of the suffering of Jesus. Pupils make good progress in learning about religion and the investigative classroom ethos provides many opportunities for pupils to 'learn from religion'.

184 Teaching was invariably good in all lessons observed and very good in a quarter of those lessons. The quality of classroom management is a positive feature of lessons. Previous teaching is drawn on to ensure a continuity of learning; homework is used creatively in subsequent lessons; the pace of teaching is demanding of pupils who are constantly challenged to think, research, discuss, recall and argue. The school's concern to develop thinking skills is strongly supported by the teaching style adopted and by the learning environment created which is well described as "a community of enquiry".

185 The aim of religious education teaching is to ensure that the encounter with living religions supports pupils in the development of their own beliefs, values and attitudes. In this, the subject makes a significant contribution to the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is noteworthy that parents commented positively on this at the pre-inspection meeting.

186 The subject has progressed since the last inspection and is now in a position to further review its achievements. Teaching has a creative dimension which should be further developed, for instance in respect of impressive innovations in the areas of pupil self-evaluation, inter-departmental curriculum strategies and developments in the use of ICT. Currently, there is a major reliance on department produced learning resources. Provision of a range of texts would enrich learning particularly at the external examination level. Classroom subject bases are crowded and adversely affected by the lack of the facility of a storeroom. The extension of learning resources in the school library should be investigated.