

INSPECTION REPORT

Sholing Girls' School

Middle Road, Sholing, Southampton, SO19 8PH

LEA area: Southampton

Unique reference number: 116451

Headteacher: Mrs. N. Etheridge

Reporting inspector: David Williams
4288

Dates of inspection: 31/01/00 - 03/02/00

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	Sholing Girls' School Middle Road Sholing Southampton
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. S. O'Brien
Date of previous inspection:	13/05/96

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
David Williams	Registered inspector	Music	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? - The school's results and pupils' achievements.
Diane Willson	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Community links.
Adrian Jackson	Team inspector	English Drama	How well are pupils taught?
Nigel Bloodworth	Team inspector	Religious Education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
Sylvia Kopecek	Team inspector	Art Equal Opportunities	How well is the school led and managed?
Jeffrey Lord	Team inspector	Geography History	How high are standards? - Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
Anne Feltham	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages English as an additional language Personal, social, health education	
Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	
John Price	Team inspector	Design & Technology	
Roger Waddingham	Team inspector	Information Technology	
Terry Parkin	Team inspector	Science	
Margaret Harris	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sholing Girls' School is a comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 – 16. The school, which is over-subscribed, is larger than at the time of the last inspection. There are 1021 pupils, most of whom are from white European backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language (1.4 per cent) is slightly higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (16 per cent) is similar to the national average. About 20 per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs. This proportion is similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements (less than 1 per cent) is below the national average. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average. There are fewer higher-attaining pupils than average and more lower-attaining pupils than average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school where pupils achieve well overall in relation to their prior attainment. There is a positive climate for learning and the quality of teaching is good. Overall, standards are high. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils achieve particularly well in relation to their prior attainment in art and geography in Key Stage 4 and in English and modern foreign languages in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils do not achieve quite as well as they should in the GCSE courses in science, drama and physical education. Pupils who take responsibility within the school do so conscientiously and with care and consideration for others. The school is well led and managed with a clear focus on raising standards. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well overall.
- Standards are high in English and modern foreign languages in Key Stage 3 and in English, art and textiles, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education in GCSE examinations.
- The overall quality of teaching is good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievements, attitudes and behaviour.
- The school is well led and managed with a clear focus on improving standards.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral and social development.
- The school has very good links with the community.

What could be improved

- Pupils' achievements in GCSE courses in science, drama and physical education.
- The range of teaching methods and learning activities used to challenge pupils and enable them to work effectively as independent thinkers and learners.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has maintained the high expectations identified during the last inspection in May 1996. The school has responded effectively to four of the five key issues that were identified. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved and standards of attainment have risen in many subjects, including mathematics where standards at the end of both key stages are now in line with national averages. Good monitoring procedures have been put in place and there is now a good focus on raising attainment at departmental level. While there has been some progress in providing more challenging work for all pupils, the school needs to improve this aspect of teaching further, as it has already identified. The school has a clear commitment to improvement and has good capacity to continue this in the future.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	C	B	A

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
well below average	E

In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, standards are above the national average in English and are similar to national averages in mathematics and science. Standards overall in these subjects in Key Stage 3 in the last four years have been similar to the national averages. Results, overall, in GCSE examinations in 1999 and during the last three years were above the national average for all pupils and similar to the average for girls. They were well above the average for pupils in similar schools. In 1999 results in art, modern foreign languages and religious education were well above national averages while those in English and geography were above national averages. Results in science, design and technology, drama and history were below national averages and those in home economics, music and physical education were well below national averages. In other subjects results were similar to the national average. In most subjects pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. In science, drama and physical education in the GCSE examinations, however, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. During the inspection the highest standards were seen in English, art, geography and modern foreign languages. Standards of work in music in Year 11 and in history and design and technology in Year 10 meet national expectations and are higher than in the 1999 GCSE examinations. The school has high aspirations for its' pupils, sets challenging targets for results in GCSE examinations and achieves them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Almost all pupils have positive attitudes to the school and work well. A few pupils, mostly in Years 9 and 10, have unsatisfactory attitudes to work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well overall in lessons and outside classrooms. In most lessons and in assemblies behaviour is very good while the behaviour of a few pupils in some lessons is unsatisfactory.
Personal development and relationships	There are good relationships between pupils and they collaborate well. Pupils take responsibility conscientiously and respond very well to the good opportunities provided for their personal development.
Attendance	Attendance is above the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence is well below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. It is good in English and mathematics. In science teaching is satisfactory overall, good in Key Stage 3 and unsatisfactory in Year 11. 94 per cent of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better, 52 per cent was good or better, 21 per cent was very good or better and 6 per cent was less than satisfactory.

There are significantly more strengths than weaknesses in the teaching. Strengths include teachers' very good subject knowledge and their very good management of pupils. Teachers have high expectations of standards of work and of behaviour. Teaching helps pupils to learn effectively although sometimes pupils are not involved enough in lessons and there is not enough emphasis on their thinking and learning for themselves. Teachers plan lessons well and set clear objectives although they do not always explain how they will modify activities to suit pupils of different abilities. As a result, although most pupils acquire good knowledge, not all make as much progress as they should in some lessons. Teachers provide good feedback to pupils to help them to understand their strengths and weaknesses but do not always show pupils clearly enough how to improve their work. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well and the school satisfactorily meets the needs of different pupils. The vast majority of pupils take a strong interest in their work, concentrate very well and consistently work hard.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a curriculum that meets statutory requirements and is well balanced overall. The time allowed for most option subjects in Key Stage 4 is low.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs. They make good progress in their work.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes good provision for pupils with English as an additional language. They achieve well, with particular successes in Key Stage 4.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for personal development is good. The provision for moral and social development is very good and that for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a caring environment where pupils are valued as individuals. Whole school assessment information and target setting is used well to monitor performance.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has established a good working partnership with parents, who are well informed about their children's progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and senior management team provide a clear sense of direction and a strong focus on raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its responsibilities soundly. A few of the requirements for informing parents about special educational needs are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has good systems for monitoring and evaluating its performance and the quality of teaching and learning.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school has sufficient staffing and resources. Accommodation overall is satisfactory, but the accommodation for the creative arts is poor.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are directed well to support whole school priorities. When making decisions the school applies the principles of best value in a satisfactory way.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good quality of education provided by the school. • The school's expectations that pupils work hard. • The progress made by pupils in their work. • The good quality of teaching. • The overall good behaviour of pupils and the quality of relationships in the school. • The good level of support provided for pupils. • The good leadership and management provided. • The school's close links with parents and the ease with which they can approach the school with problems. • The ways in which the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more consistent approach to the way in which homework is set so that pupils may complete homework within the time allowed. • Clearer communication about some aspects of school life including how pupils get on in school and details of extra-curricular activities. • The small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour in some classes.

The inspection team agrees with almost all of the views expressed. Inspection findings confirm that the school is well led and managed. It provides a good quality education and expects pupils to work hard in order to make good progress as a result of the good teaching provided. Almost all pupils behave well and form good relationships with adults and other pupils. The team's findings are that there is a small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour, particularly in Years 9 and 10. The school's links with parents are good and there are good systems in place for parents to approach the school to discuss problems. The school provides detailed annual reports that gives parents clear information about how their children get on in school, although the school could do more to ensure that parents are aware of the good range of extra-curricular activities that are offered. In most cases homework is set consistently, but in a few cases teachers do not give enough thought to the time implications of the work they are setting. In other cases, pupils choose to spend more than the allocated amount of time on the work set. The team agrees that the school provides very good opportunities for pupils to become mature and responsible, except that more opportunities could be provided in lessons for pupils to think for themselves and develop independence.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In 1999, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests for fourteen-year-olds were above the national average in English and were similar to the national average in mathematics and science. Results were similar to the national averages for girls in all three subjects. In comparison with pupils in schools with similar characteristics, results in English were well above the national average and above the national average in mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils reaching levels 6 or above was higher than the national average for similar schools in English and similar to the national average in mathematics and science. Results during the last four years have been similar to those in 1999, although results in mathematics were below the national average in 1998. The trend in the school's results during this period has been broadly in line with the national trend. Assessments by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicate high attainment in modern foreign languages and information technology; average attainment in geography, history, art, music and physical education and low attainment in design and technology. These standards were confirmed during the inspection, other than in design and technology and information technology where standards are in line with national expectations. In design and technology, re-drafted and more appropriate schemes of work are having a positive impact on standards. In information technology, record keeping and the analysis of assessment data were not systematic and teachers' assessments in 1999 were not adequately standardised.
2. Results overall in the GCSE examinations in 1999 were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Standards have improved since the last inspection and the trend in the school's results has been above the national trend. Results in art, modern foreign languages and religious education were well above national averages and above national averages in English and geography. Results in mathematics, English literature and business studies were similar to national averages. Results in science, design and technology, drama and history were below national averages and those in home economics, music and physical education were well below national averages.
3. Pupils achieve well during their time at the school and more than 80 per cent of pupils continue their studies after leaving the school. On entry in Year 7 there are fewer higher-attaining pupils than average and, in most year groups, there are more lower-attaining pupils than average. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3 and, by the end of the key stage, attain overall standards in line with national expectations. In Key Stage 4, pupils make satisfactory progress overall and achieve broadly as expected in relation to their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 pupils achieve particularly well in art, English, geography and modern foreign languages and in the GCSE course in religious education. There are weaknesses in drama, science and in the GCSE course in physical education. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well, particularly in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and art. In 1999 pupils with statements of special educational needs achieved well, gaining on average seven GCSE passes at grades A* to G. The relatively small number of pupils from non-European backgrounds and those with English as an additional language also achieve well. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve especially well in art, history, geography, modern foreign languages and music.
4. Standards have risen in English since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress in their studies and achieve well in comparison with results in their other subjects. GCSE results in English over the last three years have been above the national average, although there has been a slight downward trend. GCSE results in English Literature, where pupils achieved results that were similar to those in their other subjects, were in line with the national average for all pupils but below that for girls. However, despite a fall in standards in 1999, results in English Literature over the last three years have been above the national trend. Overall standards have risen since the last inspection and pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Most pupils write well, particularly in response to set texts although the quality of their work is limited in some cases by a lack of knowledge of how to structure their writing effectively. Gifted and talented pupils

make good progress in the analysis of extended texts and in writing lengthy, detailed and sophisticated narrative. Lower-attaining pupils make particularly good progress in the development of their basic skills and all pupils have good basic fluency in reading and writing by the time they leave the school. In general, pupils respond well to the reading set by teachers although their independent reading is underdeveloped. Pupils use talk well to develop their understanding. Opportunities to use and develop drama skills within English are inconsistent and sometimes unsatisfactory.

5. Standards attained in literacy by the end of both key stages are good and pupils, including those with English as an additional language, make good progress, especially in their basic skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, for example, in spelling. Pupils use subject-specific key words well, in science for example, playing a card game to reinforce the meanings of key words. Pupils learn how to retrieve information from their reading effectively in history and geography and take notes from their reading in design and technology. Pupils write well in history, for instance in explaining the causes of the Russian revolution. Pupils make good progress through discussion in groups in art and mathematics and use role-play to explore different perspectives, for example on the building of the Aswan dam in geography.
6. Standards in mathematics have risen since the last inspection. Results have been similar to the national average in the national tests for fourteen-year-olds. Results in GCSE examinations during the last three years have been below the national average but have been rising and results in 1999 were similar to the national average. Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and attain standards in line with national expectations by the end of both key stages. Lower-attaining pupils make particularly good progress in the development of their basic numerical skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in understanding place order when multiplying and dividing by tens, hundreds and thousands. The highest-attaining pupils, however, make only satisfactory progress and do not reach the highest grades at the end of either key stage.
7. Pupils achieve satisfactory skills in numeracy by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and use their skills confidently in other subjects. They use calculators well at appropriate times, without relying on them for straightforward calculations. High-attaining pupils apply their knowledge well when entering data in spreadsheets in information technology. Low-attaining pupils use estimation well in science to predict results. In geography, effective use is made of graphs to record data. Pupils develop a good understanding of proportion through their portrait work in art. In Key Stage 4 pupils achieve good standards in numeracy and make good use of their understanding of percentages, graphs and the interpretation of data. In science, for example, pupils calculate germination percentages with confidence. In geography pupils use numerical analysis to examine local and world-wide data. In design and technology pupils use algebra as a tool to solve questions on Ohm's law. Pupils measure and estimate well in their textiles coursework.
8. In Key Stage 3 pupils achieve well in science and make especially good progress in investigative and experimental science. By the end of the key stage they achieve in line with national expectations. Science results in the GCSE examination in 1999 were below the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils achieve below national expectations and lower than might be expected from their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. Standards in Year 10 are similar to national expectations and reflect the more challenging targets set for this year group. While pupils with special educational needs make good progress during Key Stage 4 there is considerable variation in the progress of other pupils. A number of pupils, especially in middle-attaining groups make unsatisfactory progress especially in work on materials and life processes and living things because work is not matched closely enough to their abilities.
9. GCSE results in design and technology in 1999 were below the national average but the pupils achieved broadly in-line with their achievements in other subjects. Pupils in Key Stage 3 achieve in line with expectations although their overall subject knowledge, application and designing skills are weaker than their making skills. In Key Stage 4 the overall standard of work seen was similar to national expectations, but standards are significantly higher in Year 10 than in Year 11 because teaching time has been increased. Standards in information technology have risen since the last inspection and are now similar to the national expectations in both key stages. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate good levels of competence in basic

information technology skills. Pupils achieve particularly well in aspects of their work on communication and control and higher-attaining pupils in particular achieve very well.

10. Standards are consistently high in French, German and Spanish. Pupils make good progress, attain above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 and well above national averages in GCSE examinations. Pupils achieve particularly well in relation to standards in their other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in oral work particularly in expressing personal opinions. The most able pupils attain very high standards. Pupils' writing, listening and speaking skills are very highly developed. Although pupils read well they do not select and evaluate reading material for personal interest on a regular basis.
11. Standards in geography have risen since the last inspection and in the GCSE examinations pupils achieve high standards in relation to their other subjects. There are strengths in pupils' knowledge of places, processes and patterns and in their understanding of environmental perspectives. Results in history have varied in line with the prior attainment of the pupils and pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. Pupils achieve well in their knowledge of most historical periods. They have good understanding of different viewpoints in the past and use primary sources well.
12. In art standards have risen since the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are in line with the national expectation and by the end of Key Stage 4 standards are well above it. Pupils have good skills in painting, drawing and textiles but standards of investigation work are unsatisfactory. Standards in drama in the GCSE examination have been consistently below national averages since the last inspection and pupils achieve lower standards than in their other subjects. Pupils also achieve below expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. While pupils achieve satisfactory levels in interpreting texts, their lack of experience in drama and limited skills in spoken and written expression limits their progress. In music, GCSE results in 1999 were well below the national average, but results are usually similar to or above national averages. Standards in Year 11 are in line with national expectations and gifted and talented pupils attain high standards. Attainment in Year 11 is higher than that of the previous cohort because more pupils learn instruments beyond the classroom and have higher levels of technical skills as performers. Many pupils in Year 10 do not have these skills and the standard of their work is below national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are similar to national expectations and most pupils achieve well.
13. Attainment overall in physical education is in line with national expectations and pupils achieve well. However, results in the GCSE examination in 1999, the first cohort to take the examination, were well below the national average. The achievement of pupils currently following the GCSE course is below expectations. Overall, pupils' knowledge and understanding are good and their basic skills are secure and in line with expectations. In religious education results in the GCSE examination, which were well above the national average, have improved since the last inspection. Similar high standards are also found in pupils' work in Year 11 and for higher-attaining pupils in Year 10. Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 and in the core provision in Key Stage 4 are in line with those expected in the local Agreed Syllabus.
14. Standards in business studies are in line with national expectations. Pupils in Year 10 are developing satisfactory understanding of basic aspects of word processing, and those in Year 11 understand the key factors that influence business decisions and the conflicting constraints on public and private companies. Standards in personal and social education are high, with pupils producing work of very good quality in key elements of health, sex and vocational education.
15. The school has high aspirations for its pupils and uses test and examination results effectively to identify areas of weakness. It compares its results with those of other schools, including results for girls only. It also uses information about the prior attainment of its pupils to measure the progress made by its pupils in different subjects, particularly English, mathematics and science. As a result of this process it sets challenging targets for attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations. It has identified low attainment in science in Key Stage 4 and has begun to take action to improve standards by, for example, setting more challenging targets for pupils in Year 10. The school achieved its targets for GCSE in 1999.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and a positive approach to their work. They sustain their interest in the classroom well. The standard of behaviour around the school and in classrooms is good, overall. Behaviour is very good in assemblies and in most lessons. There are a few pupils, particularly in Year 9 and Year 10, who are casual or negative in their attitude to their work and who behave in an unsatisfactory way. In a few lessons this slows the pace of work and limits the progress of the class. Very few pupils are excluded from school and the number of exclusions is well below average.
17. The behaviour of pupils with learning difficulties is very good in withdrawal lessons. They are well motivated, listening and concentrating very well on their tasks. They try hard to apply strategies to help them with reading and writing skills and have positive relationships with the specialist teachers and special needs assistants. They are very keen to attend the homework club and to accept help with their class work. Some of the small number of pupils with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties are reluctant to participate in lessons and to communicate with the teachers providing them with extra support.
18. There are good relationships between pupils and they collaborate well together when required. The rare occurrences of bullying that are reported are dealt with effectively and pupils work in a pleasant atmosphere free from oppressive behaviour. There are good relationships with teachers and other adults.
19. Pupils show a good level of respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. They listen well to each other's contributions, as seen, for example, in the Year 8 conference on disability. They respect the school environment very well and respond well to each other in moving around the school site. Pupils take responsibility well when they are given the opportunity, for example, to be head and deputy head girls, prefects, form captains, environmental and school council representatives and equal opportunities monitoring prefects. Pupils play an active part in the range of clubs and activities provided for them and have good capacity for showing initiative and taking responsibility in the classroom. They demonstrate high levels of independence in activities such as geography and history fieldwork and the science club, for example. Pupils work well together in lessons when opportunities for group work are provided as, for example, in music where they collaborate to practise and improve their performing.
20. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to raise money for charities and help other people. For example, they raise funds for the Macmillan Cancer Appeal through a coffee morning, raise money for LEPR, build a 'soup mountain' for residents of a shelter for the homeless, make Christmas cakes and organise a Christmas party for local senior citizens.
21. Pupils' attendance is above the national average and the level of unauthorised absence is well below average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

22. The quality of teaching is good overall and has significantly more strengths than weaknesses. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of the lessons seen. It was good or better in just over half the lessons and very good or excellent in one lesson in five. Teaching was unsatisfactory in six per cent of lessons. In response to a key issue from the previous inspection the school has developed a systematic programme to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. In lessons observed during this inspection, the greatest proportion of good or better teaching, nearly nine out of ten lessons, was in Year 7. There was less unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4.
23. Teaching is good overall in English, mathematics, geography, history, information technology, modern foreign languages, music, personal and social education and religious education. It is satisfactory overall in

science, art, design and technology, drama and physical education. Teaching is good in science in Key Stage 3 and in art and drama in Key Stage 4. It is unsatisfactory in science in Year 11.

24. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and understanding effectively to enable pupils to learn and make progress. As a result, the vast majority of pupils acquire new skills and knowledge in a systematic way in almost all subjects. For example, in modern foreign languages, teachers' own skills in the language allow them to conduct very effective lessons predominantly in the foreign language. This provides a good role model for pupils and has a particularly positive impact on their achievements in the languages they study. In practical subjects, such as design and technology, music and art, teachers use their subject knowledge very well to develop activities that allow pupils to learn. Pupils in Year 8, for example, were helped to develop their understanding of Gospel music because of the way in which the teacher's knowledge of this style was used to develop appropriate learning activities for pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is less secure in a small minority of lessons. For example, in drama when taught as part of English in Key Stage 3, not all teachers are skilled at teaching and using dramatic techniques and pupils do not make sufficient progress in these aspects of drama.
25. The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory and lower-attaining pupils have made good progress, particularly in reading comprehension and spelling, through specific, targeted work including the use of an integrated computer learning system. There is consistently helpful attention to the teaching of spelling and the good use of key words within many subjects, which allows pupils to improve the accuracy of their spelling.
26. Clear and precise objectives are identified in the planning of many lessons. For example, very good planning in science is having a significant impact on standards in Years 7 and 10, where most pupils acquire new knowledge and work productively. Able and lower-attaining pupils are challenged in English through the use of demanding tasks on literature and through teachers' high expectations of the standards pupils will achieve. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to challenge in modern foreign languages where they are often excited by the work they undertake, work with interest and learn very effectively. In some lessons, however, objectives are not matched precisely enough to pupils' differing needs and this lack of suitable match hinders progress for different groups of pupils in many subjects including mathematics, science, information technology and drama. In mathematics and science more able pupils are not challenged enough and do not always understand what they need to do to achieve the highest levels. In some lessons in science and English expectations of middle and lower-attaining pupils are too low. As a result they do not work as productively as they might.
27. Many good examples of effective strategies were seen to involve pupils in their learning. These include whole class interactive questioning in mathematics and demonstration and modelling of how to write in a particular genre in English. Good practice also includes very effective use of well-planned group work in English, geography, history and music. This allows pupils to extend their thinking and learn for themselves through discussion. In a significant number of lessons, however, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' abilities to be independent thinkers and learners. This sometimes limits the range of teaching methods used and the teaching is sometimes over-directed. This does not allow pupils to use their initiative, to consider ideas, to reflect on their learning or think and learn for themselves.
28. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well, creating a good climate for learning and enabling pupils to sustain their interest throughout a lesson. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils in many lessons and the behaviour of pupils is often very good. As a result, pupils work very productively and at a very good pace. Despite good examples of information technology being used well to support learning in subjects such as modern foreign languages where, for example, pupils send and receive e-mails from a French school, insufficient use is made of information technology to support teaching and learning in subjects overall.
29. Teachers' assessments and the feedback given to pupils often provide good, clear indications of how well pupils have achieved but do not consistently show them how to improve further. In the best cases, for example in geography, targets are set and pupils are referred back to the targets in subsequent lessons to check and practise particular skills. In English, careful preparation for examinations alerts pupils to the

requirements of GCSE courses and ways in which they can improve. In the best cases thorough and consistent marking helps pupils to set their own targets for improvement. Some targets, however, remain at too low a level to lead to substantial improvement. In English, for example, some pupils consistently set targets related to accuracy rather than key aspects of the structure of their writing. This does not help them enough to develop their understanding of how to improve their abilities as creative and imaginative writers. Marking in science is inconsistent and assessment is not used effectively in Key Stage 4 to help teachers to plan work which is well matched to pupils' needs.

30. Work is often supported well by homework that is challenging and varied, requiring pupils to undertake a range of activities that extend the work covered in lessons and allow them to increase their understanding of the topic being covered. Homework is frequently marked carefully and is used effectively as a firm basis for subsequent lessons. For example, in an information technology lesson on designing a package in which to sell popcorn, a clear class introduction based on previous homework led quickly to independent working in pairs where the open nature of the task resulted in high quality discussion by the pupils. Homework is usually well managed, although in some cases the time needed to complete tasks went beyond the time allocated, especially when pupils of different abilities were all given the same task and time limit.
31. Teachers enable pupils with English as an additional language to make good progress across the curriculum. All subjects have identified gifted and talented pupils and the good provision made for these pupils in English, modern foreign languages, science, design and technology and information technology is helping them to extend their learning.
32. The effective teaching for pupils with special educational needs is supported well by good planning between subject teachers and special needs assistants in, for example modern foreign languages, science and mathematics. Special needs assistants work closely with the subject teachers to adapt tasks and materials so that targets identified in individual education plans are properly addressed. In mathematics assessment data from the integrated computer learning system is used well to diagnose errors and to plan appropriate activities for individual pupils. As a consequence, pupils with special educational needs develop greater understanding, for example of multiplication of two and three digit numbers. Specialist teachers of pupils with special educational needs use a range of effective strategies to assess the literacy levels of pupils.
33. During withdrawal lessons for pupils with special educational needs, teachers who provide additional support liaise well with subject teachers to ensure that there is continuity within the curriculum for these pupils. Teachers who provide in-class support, however, do not always plan in sufficient detail with the subject teachers in advance of the lesson. Insufficient use is made of the targets set in individual education plans to support pupils with special educational needs, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. As a result, in a few lessons, a small number of pupils refuse to communicate and co-operate with teachers.

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

The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided for pupils

34. The curriculum meets statutory requirements for the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The curriculum is broad and balanced with appropriate time allocations for subjects except for most option subjects in Key Stage 4. In music and drama, for example, the inadequate time is adversely affecting standards, particularly for pupils of average and low prior attainment. The curriculum is well planned and includes good provision for pupils from non-European backgrounds and those with English as an additional language. It is inclusive and provides equality of opportunity. Overall it meets the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of pupils. Opportunities for pupils to learn and make progress are good. In Key Stage 4 pupils study a good range of subjects beyond the core curriculum, including information technology, physical education and religious education as GCSE subjects as well as personal and social education. These subjects enrich and broaden pupils' choices and experiences. In 1999, virtually all pupils were able to take their first choice of option subjects.

35. The school has effective strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy and has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Award. Approaches include the well-planned use of an integrated learning system for lower-attaining pupils where, for example, the rules of number are strongly and effectively reinforced. There are consistent and effective approaches to the spelling of key words in each subject. Individual subjects also use a range of effective strategies to improve pupils' literacy, such as the use of 'frames' to help pupils to structure their writing better. Different subjects also focus on aspects of numeracy, such as estimating, graphing and scale and proportion in Key Stage 3 and on the use of percentages, graphs and the interpretation of data in Key Stage 4.
36. The provision to meet the requirements set out in statements of special educational need is implemented well across the curriculum and in withdrawal groups. Pupils with statements of special educational need have full access to the curriculum, although the use of individual education plans by different subjects is inconsistent. It is best developed in science, mathematics and modern foreign languages because special needs assistants alert subject teachers to the plans. When pupils with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties are provided with segregated support every effort is made to ensure that they follow the same curriculum as the rest of their class.
37. The school's very good provision for personal and social education is well planned and managed. The content of the programme is sequenced carefully and responds very well to pupils' needs as they progress through the school. Modules on aspects including health, sex, drugs and vocational education are enhanced well through the use of lively and stimulating resources.
38. The school is well supported by effective links with the Careers Service. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of different career paths from Year 9 onwards. The Year Conferences in Years 10 and 11 make a valuable contribution to preparing pupils for the world of work and further education. Pupils also benefit from a well-organised work experience programme.
39. There are satisfactory systems in place for liaison with primary schools and outside institutions. The headteachers within the cluster group meet regularly and have worked together on issues such as bullying, behaviour and home - school agreements. Agreement has been reached on the transfer of information from primary schools on pupils' attainment, attitudes and personal development. The school has established particularly strong links with the local Sixth Form College, enabling pupils to be well informed and prepared for the next stage of their education.
40. There is good enrichment of the curriculum through extra-curricular activities. In addition to a sound range of extra-curricular activities in the arts and physical education, there is a good range of activities to support study and revision in Key Stage 4 and a homework club, which is appreciated by the pupils who attend. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of experiences beyond school including visits to museums, galleries and theatres, residential visits and foreign exchange visits.

How well the school cultivates pupils' personal development

41. The school makes good overall arrangements to cultivate pupils' personal development. The arrangements to promote pupils' moral and social development are very good and arrangements to promote spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. The school's aims clearly set out principles and values that emphasise the importance of these aspects of pupils' development.
42. Spiritual development is promoted well in religious education, where there are very good opportunities for pupils to explore and develop spiritual insights. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on a range of experiences and sometimes to question and search for meaning in their lives. Work across the curriculum, for example in art, geography, English and music, allows pupils other opportunities to explore spiritual issues. However, despite these good examples, the school does not make a sufficiently broad-based and planned provision for spiritual development across the curriculum as a whole. The quality of assemblies observed during the week was good. Assemblies make a good contribution to spiritual development and to the statutory requirement for collective worship although the school does not fully comply with these. The

class-based “thought for the day” provides a good opportunity to further develop spiritual insights but its effectiveness is inconsistent across the school.

43. The school has consistently high expectations of the moral standards it sets both in lessons and in the general life of the school. Adults in the school set very good examples and pupils are treated in ways that place great trust in them. Moral values and principles are developed very well through the personal, social and religious education programmes. Many examples of ways in which moral issues impact on teaching were seen across the curriculum where teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to consider and debate issues. In English, for example, lower-attaining pupils shared their opinions on using animals for scientific testing as a helpful preparation to writing an essay that presented alternative views.
44. As part of its provision for social development, the school provides very good opportunities for pupils to discuss issues of rights and responsibilities both within the school and in the wider community. The very good quality of relationships in the school contributes strongly to pupils’ social development. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to take responsibility and to use their initiative. The school’s prefect system, for example, offers very good opportunities for a great number of pupils to take on extra responsibilities. The School Council is an effective forum which pupils use to express their views and is especially valued by those pupils who take a leading role. Opportunities for group work in the curriculum and those in extra-curricular activities, including art, music, drama, physical education and public speaking competitions offer a good basis for social development. There are many visits to galleries, museums, concerts and theatres that support pupils’ social and cultural development. Pupils’ involvement in charity work, community service and work experience enhances provision for their social development. The school has a strong commitment to raising funds for different charities. Each year, Year 7 pupils visit ‘Avon Tyrell’ for a residential induction week. During the following year, as members of Year 8, they raise funds for the disabilities unit at this centre.
45. Opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of their own culture are good and there are satisfactory opportunities for them to study other cultures. Opportunities to explore cultural diversity are offered best in geography, music, art, design and technology and religious education lessons, where cultures originating outside Europe are well represented. Work in other areas of the curriculum focuses mainly on the European tradition.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

46. The school provides a caring environment where pupils are valued as individuals and are encouraged to show care and concern for others. The school’s arrangements to ensure child protection are secure. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and follow the correct procedures. The school’s very good personal and social education programme ensures that pupils are given good opportunities to learn about themselves, their health and safe living. The ‘Healthy Schools Award’ gained by the school is an indication of its success in this area. Overall, the school has good policies and arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of its pupils. However, during the inspection week, breaches of health and safety were observed in art, design and technology and science. The school took immediate action to remedy these failings.
47. The school has very good procedures for monitoring pupils’ behaviour. Pupils play an active part in discussing issues such as behaviour and have contributed well to the school’s Code of Conduct and its Mission Statement. Pupils with significant behaviour difficulties are supported well by senior pastoral staff. A minority of pupils whose behaviour is disruptive in class are provided with short-term help in the school’s exceptional needs centre. The school uses very effective measures to prevent bullying and harassment of individual pupils. Parents and pupils have been involved in devising an anti-bullying leaflet. The great majority of pupils report that bullying is not an issue in the school. The equal opportunities policy is very well monitored by the co-ordinator and by two prefects who have specific responsibility to monitor practice across the school and identify areas where improvements should be made.
48. There are good arrangements to identify and support pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are used effectively in science, mathematics and modern foreign languages but overall there

is insufficient awareness of how assessment and target-setting for pupils with special educational needs supports the adaptation and modification of the curriculum. Individual education plans for pupils at Stages 2 and 3 of the Code of Practice do not include specific targets against which progress in literacy and numeracy can be measured.

49. The school has high expectations of pupils' regular and punctual attendance. There are rigorous systems in place to monitor and follow up any concern. Pupils who maintain one hundred per cent attendance each half term are rewarded with certificates and the tutor group in each year with the highest attendance each week is awarded a shield.
50. Whole school assessment information is used very well to monitor the performance of different groups of pupils, including those who are identified as underachieving. Detailed analysis is undertaken of performance in the national tests for fourteen-year-olds and GCSE examinations. The information gathered is used to measure improvement in pupils' attainment and to identify subjects that should be improved. For example, underachievement in science in Key Stage 4 has been identified by the school and strategies for improvement, including improved planning and target-setting, are already having a positive impact in Year 10 where standards are in line with national expectations. In design and technology the analysis of strengths and weaknesses in GCSE examination results has led to an increase in the time allocated for the subject, which is also having a positive impact on standards in Year 10. The assessment of pupils' standards at the end of Key Stage 3 is accurate in almost all subjects except information technology where assessments were over-generous. The assessment of standards in design and technology confirmed low attainment and led to changes in the curriculum in Key Stage 3. As a result, standards are now in line with national expectations. Record-keeping and the analysis of assessment data within departments are satisfactory overall. In English, for example, data is used well to target support for individuals and groups of pupil and in geography assessment data is evaluated effectively to identify areas for improvement. In science, however, the assessment of pupils' work is not monitored sufficiently closely and in information technology assessments are not sufficiently standardised. In art the good range of available data is not used fully to analyse progress during the key stage, while in music the system for recording assessments does not allow easy identification of individual strengths and weaknesses in different aspects of the subject. Assessments are used well in preparing annual reports to parents and in the very good National Records of Achievement. The school uses its assessment procedures very well to identify pupils with special educational needs and talented and gifted pupils. Whole school data is also used very well at annual reviews for pupils with statements of special educational needs.
51. The school has good procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress, including detailed analysis of effort and attainment and the identification of targets for improvement. Time is allocated for individual tutorials to discuss progress and any particular concerns are followed through with the senior management team. However, the use of registration time is inconsistent in quality and, although there are examples of good practice, it is not consistently used effectively to support pupils' personal development or academic progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school and its work. They believe that the school is well led and provides a good standard of education. Pupils are expected to work hard and are helped by the good quality of teaching to make progress and to become mature and responsible. Parents say that the school has established close links with them and that they can approach the school with any problems or concerns they may have. Some parents express concerns that the amount of time spent on homework is sometimes excessive. A few are not satisfied with the quality of information about their children's progress. Most believe that behaviour in the school is good although some are concerned about the small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour, particularly in Year 10.
53. The inspection team agrees with the majority of parents' views. The school provides a good quality of education and expects pupils to work hard in order to make good progress. Almost all pupils behave well

and form good relationships with adults and other pupils. The team's findings are that there is a small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour, particularly in Years 9 and 10. The school's links with parents are good and there are good systems in place for parents to approach the school to discuss problems.

54. Parents receive good quality information about the school. Each half term they are sent a very informative newspaper, 'Contact', which keeps them up-to-date about the life and work of the school, and celebrates pupils' achievements and successes. Regular contact is maintained through pupil organisers, where parents comment or raise issues. The school's prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are of high quality. The school provides good annual reports that provide parents with clear information about how their children get on in school and set appropriate targets. However, the school could do more to ensure that parents are aware of the good range of extra-curricular activities offered. In most cases homework is set consistently, but in a few cases teachers do not give enough thought to the time implications of the work they are setting. In other cases, pupils choose to spend more than the allocated amount of time on the work set. The team agrees that the school provides very good opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility, particularly in the general life of the school.
55. Induction arrangements for pupils entering the school at age eleven are effective and appreciated by parents. During their time at the school, consultation evenings are arranged twice a year and parents are kept well informed about opportunities for their children's further education through close links with local colleges. Information evenings are held for parents on subjects such as information technology, basic skills and drugs education. Parents' involvement in the home - school agreement and their support of it indicate the good level of commitment to support learning at school and at home. The Friends of Sholing School offer good support to the school through their social events and fund-raising activities. Parents of pupils with statements of special educational needs are appropriately involved in reviews of their progress. The policy for special educational needs does not clarify the arrangements that parents should follow if they wish to complain about the provision made by the school and recently parents have not been informed systematically when their child is added to the register of pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The headteacher and senior management team provide the school with good, strong leadership. They share a very clear vision and sense of direction for the future of the school and work collaboratively and effectively. Other staff with key management roles, including Heads of Year, also work effectively to achieve the schools' priorities. These are firmly focused on promoting high standards, improving the quality of teaching and learning and maintaining high standards of behaviour. The governing body and senior management team, together, provide positive support and professional challenge to staff. This contributes well to a common sense of purpose and gives good direction to the work of the school. The school's aims and values are explicit and are well reflected in its strong commitment to high achievement, respect and care for others. Arrangements for line-management, with members of the senior management team being linked with departments, are very effective. The senior staff make good use of their regular formal and informal contacts with heads of departments to review progress towards targets for performance, to monitor progress in improving the quality of teaching and to provide support for development.
57. The governing body carries out its statutory responsibilities soundly in most respects. For example, it is actively involved in the annual analysis of examination results. There is an appropriate and efficiently organised range of governors' committees including a key strategic planning group, which has been established recently. Governors have good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and of the action that the school is taking to remedy weaknesses. They play an important part in planning and target-setting and are well informed and involved in the life of the school through, for example, their links with year groups, attendance at school functions and support for pupils' reading.
58. The headteacher and governors are actively involved in monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs. The well presented governors' annual report provides a very good account for parents of the arrangements that the school makes and the outcomes for pupils with special educational needs. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs, including the use of additional

funding from the LEA. However the annual report does not identify all of the provision made by the school. While the school identifies and reports on the curriculum areas that pupils with physical disabilities cannot access, it does not set out its long-term arrangements to improve the situation.

59. Since the last inspection and in response to the key issue that required the school to monitor the quality of teaching, a thorough and effective monitoring strategy has been implemented. Regular lesson observations have resulted in a whole school focus on the quality of teaching and learning. The monitoring of teaching is good overall and very good in modern foreign languages. The school takes effective action as a result of its' monitoring although in a few cases further development is needed. In physical education, for example, there is a need to share good practice more widely within the department, while in music there is a need to focus classroom observation more precisely on identified areas. The good practice of the Heads of Year observed at the time of the last inspection has been maintained and has been further developed through improved arrangements for regular and effective monitoring of pupils' behaviour and academic progress. The school's comprehensive monitoring of test and examination results identifies strengths and weaknesses in different subjects and enables the school to develop strategies to improve performance, although the monitoring of pupils' work in drama in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in attainment in science in Key Stage 4 are being improved by the setting of more challenging targets for pupils in Year 10. In design and technology the use of re-drafted schemes of work and an increase in teaching time is improving standards in Year 10. The school needs to ensure that these improvements are carried through into work in Year 11. The school has effective systems for reviewing its progress towards its targets.
60. The last inspection report also required the school to improve the coherence of departmental development plans through focusing on the raising of standards. The school has improved the quality of its planning. The three-year school development plan is well structured and identifies appropriate priorities based on the key focus of improving standards. Departmental development planning is good overall and very good in mathematics and modern foreign languages where clear measurable targets are set annually and regularly monitored. In a few cases there are weaknesses where plans are not sufficiently well focused on raising standards. In design and technology, for example, targets are set but the plan does not identify fully what needs to be done to achieve them. In the physical education plan there is insufficient focus on raising standards of attainment, particularly by the more able pupils and by those undertaking the GCSE course.
61. There are sufficient experienced and well-qualified teachers to cover the full range of subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The shortages identified in the previous inspection report, for example in history and religious education, have been appropriately addressed. Special needs assistants are very well trained and have appropriate specialist qualifications. They have very good expertise in subjects including mathematics, French and food technology. Administrative and other clerical staff are also well qualified and contribute positively to the work of the school. Induction procedures for new staff and arrangements for the continuing professional development of staff are good and well co-ordinated. Professional development opportunities include an increasing and appropriate emphasis on addressing the specific needs of staff identified through the school's programme of monitoring of teaching. The school fails to meet fully the DfEE requirements for teacher appraisal, although the programme in some departments is up to date. The school has good strategies in place to meet the transition to performance management through a range of effective and appropriate procedures for monitoring teaching and identifying and addressing professional development needs. Accommodation in most subjects is adequate and pupils learn in suitable surroundings that are adequately resourced and very well maintained. However, the accommodation for the creative arts, which is poor, results in some teaching taking place in inappropriate non-specialist accommodation. Curricular opportunities are restricted and pupils' achievements and experiences are therefore adversely affected. Resources are adequate, well used and respected by staff and pupils. The school uses new technology well, for example in routine administration, analysing data and for electronic mail, although not all subjects plan sufficient use of information technology within the curriculum.
62. The school manages its finances well. Routine financial matters are dealt with promptly and efficiently and financial control is effective. Strategic financial planning is also good. Good financial modelling is used to determine staff and other costs when developing the school budget plan and spending is targeted well to

reflect the strategic priorities outlined in the school development plan. The school systematically compares its standards and costs with other schools. For example, the costs of ancillary staff are compared with another school in order to ensure that the school obtains value for money. The school also challenges itself through considering the wider use of its resources. For example, a review of the cost implications of making the school's fitness suite available to the wider community led to the conclusion that this would not be cost-effective. The school has appropriate procedures for competitive tendering and focuses on obtaining services that provide best value. For example, the contract for school cleaning was placed following discussions to ensure value for money and safe working practices. Governors have satisfactory understanding of the principles of best value and operate effectively by, for example, reviewing expenditure proposals made by the senior management team. As a result of an evaluation of cost-effectiveness it was decided to lease, rather than buy, computer equipment. Effective discussions with parents about spending priorities take place through the significant parental representation on the governing body and through discussions with members of the Friends of Sholing School. Parents have also been consulted about subject choices in Key Stage 4 and about the school's policy on homework.

63. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. During their time in the school they achieve well and, by the time they leave, attainment is above the average for all pupils and similar to the average for girls. The quality of teaching is good and expenditure per pupil is below the national average. This is an effective school that gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. The governors, headteacher, senior management team and staff should:

- (1) raise standards of attainment and pupils' achievements in GCSE courses in science, drama and physical education (*Refer to paragraphs 8, 12, 13, 26 – 29, 82 – 83, 94 – 96, 130 – 132.*)
and
- (2) ensure that pupils of different abilities are more consistently challenged and enabled to work effectively as independent thinkers and learners by:
(*Refer to paragraphs 26 – 29, 72, 78, 91, 96, 100, 105, 110, 115, 120, 131.*)
 - broadening the range of teaching methods in many lessons to include challenging questioning, investigatory and other problem-solving activities;
 - matching work more closely to pupils' individual needs and assessing pupils' work against precise learning objectives;
 - providing more consistent guidance for pupils on how they should improve their work and set more challenging targets for improvement;
 - ensuring that all pupils have more consistent, high quality opportunities to make progress in drama in Key Stage 3.

65. In addition to the key issues identified above, paragraphs 17, 28 – 30, 33 – 34, 42, 46 – 51, 54 – 55, 58 – 61, 69 – 70, 74, 87, 89 – 92, 98 – 101, 103 – 106, 110 – 111, 113 – 116, 120 – 121, 125 and 129 – 132 contain less significant weaknesses. The governing body should consider these for inclusion in the action plan.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURE: COMMUNITY LINKS

66. The school's links with the community are very good. They make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. At the end of last year, the school's commitment to enriching the life and work of the school through its links with the community was rewarded with the School's Curriculum Community 2000 Award. This award reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that pupils receive a diverse range of opportunities and experiences to enable them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of society, the world of work and citizenship.
67. Pupils' learning is enhanced through the influence of a wide variety of visitors from across the community and many visits to the local area and beyond. Visits to the school by speakers from different religions and the visits pupils make to a number of places of worship are instances where learning and attainment are enhanced by links with the wider community beyond the school. Annual Science Fairs, Arts Festivals and Sports Fayres involve a broad cross-section of the local and wider community. Pupils in Key Stage 3 take part in an enrichment programme, for three days each year in the summer term. This involves a visit to a different area in the South of England. For example, a trip to Salisbury, including the cathedral and its surroundings, enabled pupils to produce a publicity package for Salisbury as it approached the millennium. As a result, the pupils produced and directed their own video, and performed their own 'Salisbury Anthem' and dance. The school has established good links with local industry and commerce. A range of contacts, including Year 9 Enterprise, Year 10 and 11 Conferences and Work Experience in Year 10 are well supported by local businesses and make a significant contribution to the curriculum and to students' attainment and personal development.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	145
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	19	35	38	5.5	0.5	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 - Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1021
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	159

Special educational needs	Y7 - 11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	203

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	7.3	School data	0.1
National comparative data	7.9	National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	0	206	206

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Girls	155	135	122
	Total	155	135	122
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75	66	59
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30	33	20
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Girls	144	136	139
	Total	144	136	139
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70	66	67
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38	37	29
	National	31	37	28

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	0	188	188

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	Girls	90	178	185
	Total	90	178	185
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48	95	98
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.8
	National	37.8

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	4
Indian	9
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	6
White	995
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	2	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	375

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.6
Key Stage 4	21.9

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	2,171,530
Total expenditure	2,141,724
Expenditure per pupil	2,147
Balance brought forward from previous year	66,661
Balance carried forward to next year	96,467

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1021
Number of questionnaires returned	283

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	56	12	4	<1
My child is making good progress in school.	46	50	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	54	6	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	52	16	7	2
The teaching is good.	38	57	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	48	17	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	44	8	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	28	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	55	13	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	48	47	3	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	51	5	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	49	14	1	11

(Some responses do not add up to precisely 100% because of rounding to the nearest whole figure)

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN SUBJECTS

ENGLISH

68. GCSE results in 1999 in English were above the national average for all pupils and in line with the national average for girls. Results over the last three years have been above the national average although there has been a slight downward trend. Results in English Literature were in line with the national average for all pupils and below that for girls. Results over the last three years have been above the national trend despite a fall in 1999. In the national tests for fourteen-year-olds in 1999 results were above the national average for all pupils including those reaching the higher levels. The results were in line with the national average for girls. Overall standards have risen since the last inspection and pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in the subject. In the GCSE examinations pupils achieve high standards in comparison with their other subjects.
69. Standards are above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 and pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Lower-attaining pupils make particularly good progress in the development of their basic skills, including spelling and reading comprehension. All pupils achieve good standards in spelling and have good basic fluency as readers and writers, although much of their writing is not technically well constructed. Pupils are most confident in the writing of narrative and in response to their set reading. They are less skilled at writing in non-narrative styles and when using a range of poetic techniques. Pupils of all abilities respond well to the reading of Shakespeare's plays and a good range of other literary texts. Pupils' choice of texts is not wide enough in their independent reading. Pupils listen attentively to the teacher and each other and, when given the opportunity, use talk very well to explore and develop their ideas, discussing different points of view thoughtfully and sympathetically. Pupils do not achieve satisfactory standards in drama because opportunities to develop the drama programmes of study within English are inconsistent and sometimes unsatisfactory.
70. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils attain above national expectations and their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. Most pupils make good progress especially in their work related to published texts. Lower-attaining pupils write sustained responses to texts by Shakespeare, Hardy, Dickens and pre-twentieth century poets. Higher-attaining pupils write lengthy, detailed and sophisticated narrative and analysis of set texts. They write well in a range of styles, for example creating a theatre programme with its' commentary, notes, cast list and advertisements. The writing levels achieved by many pupils in middle and lower groups, however, are limited by weaknesses in constructing sentences: for example, in the linking and development of ideas within and between sentences and paragraphs and in the use of more formal styles to express their views. Pupils listen attentively and, when given sufficient opportunity, use talk to develop their understanding. Lower-attaining pupils, for instance, shared their opinions on using animals for scientific testing as a helpful preparation to writing an essay that presented alternative views.
71. Other subjects make good contributions to pupils' achievements in literacy. The quality of work on developing literacy in Key Stage 3 is a strength of the science department and provides pupils with special educational needs very good access to the programme of study. Pupils use subject-specific key words well in many subjects. Pupils learn how to retrieve information from their reading effectively in history and geography and take notes from their reading in design and technology. Pupils write well in history, for instance in explaining the causes of the Russian revolution. Pupils make good progress through discussion in groups in art and mathematics and use role-play to explore different perspectives, for example on the building of the Aswan dam in geography.
72. The quality of teaching is good. It was good or better in more than half the lessons seen and very good in a third of the lessons. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject, which is used particularly well when working with literature. Teachers use a good range of strategies to help their pupils to learn effectively. For example, through using the assessment of pupils' GCSE work to identify key weaknesses, writing was modelled and structured to enable all pupils to write in more detail. Criteria for good writing were shared with pupils in a Year 7 class who then used the criteria effectively to evaluate the success of others' writing and to improve their own. Well-structured collaborative group work, at which the pupils were very

experienced, was used to enable them to clarify their understanding of different poems about war and to compare the poets' different views and purposes. Teaching which was less successful tended to use a limited range of strategies, dominated by teacher talk, and gave fewer opportunities for pupils to explore meaning for themselves. Thorough and consistent marking and target setting give pupils a good understanding of how to improve the accuracy and presentation of their work. However, many are weak in judging the success of the purpose, organisation and style of their work. Many pupils do not know how to widen their selection of books for independent reading, an issue raised in the previous inspection. Many also do not know how to improve as speakers and listeners and teachers' monitoring of their progress as speakers, listeners and readers is unsatisfactory. Teachers have high expectations of many pupils which helps the most and least able to make particularly good progress. Lower-attaining pupils make good progress in basic skills as a result of ambitious target setting, monitoring and concentrated attention by teachers, supported by the use of an integrated computer learning system. However, expectations for some pupils in middle and lower groups are not sufficiently high and they make less progress than might be expected. The management of pupils is very good and contributes to the creation of a climate for learning where time is used well. Pupils behave very well, concentrate for whole lessons and take a strong interest in the tasks they are given.

73. There is good, thoughtful leadership of the department and a strong commitment to improvement through monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The use of data to target support for individuals and groups has contributed to higher standards for those pupils.

MATHEMATICS

74. GCSE results in 1999 were broadly in line with the national average. At the time of the last inspection standards were below average and there has been a steady improvement in standards over the last four years. In the national tests for fourteen-year-olds in 1999 results were similar to the national average. Most pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in mathematics and make good progress. The highest-attaining pupils, however, make only satisfactory progress and do not reach the highest grades at the end of either key stage.
75. Standards attained by the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils develop sound strategies for solving problems and conducting investigations. They use and apply mathematics, extending and articulating their thinking effectively. For example, pupils in Year 7 produced work on patchwork quilts, displaying the information logically and interpreting their individual findings according to an initial hypothesis. Pupils' numerical skills are satisfactory by the end of the key stage. Pupils' knowledge of number is firmly established in Year 9 as seen, for example, when graphing algebraic functions. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in their number work through using an integrated computer learning programme. In Year 8 lower-attaining pupils use their knowledge of number well to multiply and divide by large numbers. Pupils have sound understanding of algebra, shape, space and measure. They demonstrate algebraic routines using the correct terminology. Pupils in Year 9 successfully calculate the area of regular shapes and extend this to the surface area and volume of some compound figures. Pupils understand the difference between representative values when handling data and apply a variety of statistical methods, which provides good reinforcement of the use of number. The standard of presentation in exercise books is good with neat, accurate diagrams and graphs supporting learning.
76. Standards attained by the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and make good progress during the key stage. They work well within the open-ended tasks required for the GCSE examination but are less confident in extended work across the other attainment targets. Average-attaining pupils extend well their knowledge of number to standard form and index notation. High and average-attaining pupils use algebra in a satisfactory way by, for example, formulating expressions from simple data and solving simultaneous and quadratic equations. They apply appropriate skills for checking their work. Lower-attaining pupils develop satisfactory skills in reading and interpreting data in a variety of straightforward formats, making appropriate calculations

where necessary. They plot graphs of the relationship between two sets of data and accurately interpret their results. Pupils develop a good understanding of shape, space and measure and higher-attaining pupils work well with Pythagoras' Theorem and trigonometry. They calculate accurately the areas of sectors and segments of circles and the surface area of cylinders, cones and spheres. Attainment in handling data is sound. Low-attaining pupils understand the theory of probability and determine the outcome of simple events. High-attaining pupils distinguish between and calculate the probability of dependent and independent events.

77. Other subjects make good contributions to pupils' achievements in numeracy. In Key Stage 3, high-attaining pupils apply their knowledge well when entering data in spreadsheets in information technology. Low-attaining pupils use estimation well in science to predict results. In geography, effective use is made of graphs to record data. Pupils develop a good understanding of proportion through their portrait work in art. In Key Stage 4 pupils achieve good standards in numeracy and make good use of their understanding of percentages, graphs and the interpretation of data. In science, for example, pupils calculate percentages confidently and in geography pupils use numerical analysis to examine data. In design and technology pupils use algebra as a tool to solve questions on Ohm's law.
78. The quality of teaching is good. In more than half of the lessons observed teaching was good or better. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and their competence in teaching basic skills leads to pupils' increasing mathematical accuracy. Teachers engage pupils effectively in discussion to develop understanding of key issues before beginning a new topic. There are clear expectations of high standards of attainment and of behaviour by pupils. Time is used effectively and activities are sequenced well and planned appropriately to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. This ensures that pupils maintain concentration and work productively. Pupils' good attitudes and responses to mathematics lead to them making good progress. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson in Year 8 where pupils were not managed well and made unsatisfactory progress. In a minority of cases, teaching is not consistently challenging and opportunities are missed to capitalise on newly taught skills. Because teaching methods often emphasise direct instruction, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning, to establish and test hypotheses and pose questions. In some lessons work is not well matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities, particularly the gifted and talented pupils. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning and planned opportunities should be provided for all pupils. Homework is set regularly, but sometimes without sufficient consideration of the school's policy on time allocations.
79. The department is led and managed well, with clear educational guidance and support being provided. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Challenging targets have been set and these have been supported by appropriate strategies. The department has made very good progress against the key issues raised by the last inspection report.

SCIENCE

80. GCSE results in 1999 were below the national average. The trend in results over the last four years has been below the national trend and very few pupils attain the higher grades. In the national tests for fourteen-year-olds in 1999, results were similar to the national average. By the end of the Key Stage 3 pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in science and most pupils make good progress during the key stage.
81. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain in line with national expectations. They achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils' make sound progress during the key stage in investigative and experimental science. In Year 7 they make good progress because carefully planned lessons allow the effective development of basic skills such as appropriate vocabulary, measuring and graphing. In materials and their properties, higher-attaining pupils understand the properties of acids, and describe chemical changes during neutralisation reactions. Pupils with special educational needs explain clearly the effect on food webs of removing certain animals. They make good progress in their understanding of life processes and living

things. For example, light sensors are used well by lower-attaining pupils when studying physical processes to model the effect of the moon orbiting the Earth. These pupils then used the data that they collected to explain the concept of day and night cycles.

82. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are below national expectations. Few pupils attain the highest grades at GCSE and attainment in Year 11 remains low, but standards of work in Year 10 are similar to national expectations and reflect the more challenging targets set for this year group. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 draw on their good understanding of life processes and materials to solve complex problems involving osmosis, although pupils lack confidence in their recall of factual information. In contrast, pupils of similar ability in Year 11 have difficulty in explaining the electrolysis of a copper sulphate solution using ionic representations. Most pupils in Key Stage 4 do not have satisfactory understanding of the structure of investigative and experimental science. For example, they cannot make appropriate predictions for the outcomes of practical work. Pupils in Year 11, however, have good data handling skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and the achievement of lower-attaining pupils is generally good. For example, they make good use of evidence to make comparative judgements, for instance about the relative effectiveness of indigestion powders. However, the progress made by a significant number of average-attaining pupils is unsatisfactory because work is not matched closely enough to their abilities.
83. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and unsatisfactory in Year 11. The quality of work on developing literacy in Key Stage 3 is a strength of the department and provides pupils with special educational needs very good access to the programme of study. Relationships between teachers and high-attaining pupils in particular are also a strong feature. As a result, pupils in Key Stage 3 and higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 have very good attitudes towards science and are enthusiastic participants in lessons. A newly developed model for planning is having a significant impact on standards where it is applied, for example, in Years 7 and 10. However, work is not always well matched to the needs of different ability groups. This results in work which is insufficiently demanding for the more able, but too challenging for middle-ability pupils. This places unrealistic demands on their understanding, restricts their progress and sometimes results in unsatisfactory attitudes towards the subject. Teachers have good questioning skills and have responded positively to the observation made in the previous inspection concerning pupils' poor recall by beginning most lessons with a short and effective recapitulation session. Pupils respond very well to this approach. Marking is inconsistent and formal assessment tends to occur only at the end of a unit of work, so too little diagnostic data is available to support effective day-to-day planning. This is particularly significant for higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 who are taught by different teachers for the various aspects of the subject. End of unit assessment is good, and pupils are set clear targets and therefore understand how they might improve their work. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in classroom practice in Key Stage 3 and Year 10 and in strategies for supporting pupils with special educational needs.
84. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The school has responded effectively, if slowly, to the previous inspection report and the effectiveness of the management of Key Stage 3 in particular has shown considerable improvement. The head of department supported by her line manager monitors performance effectively and clear evidence of improvement exists, but the assessment of pupils is not monitored sufficiently closely. The co-ordination of investigative and experimental science within and across key stages is weak and restricts pupils' progress. The department action plan identifies the need to improve standards of the more able pupils and reflects the good capacity for managing improvement in the department.

CREATIVE ARTS

85. Art, drama and music, as at the time of the last inspection, are organised and managed as a faculty of creative arts. At the time of the last inspection insufficient time was provided to successfully teach the requirements of the National Curriculum in art and music in Key Stage 3. In response to this, the school has increased the time for these subjects to satisfactory levels. As a consequence, however, drama is no longer taught as a specialist subject to all pupils in Key Stage 3. All pupils are taught drama within English

lessons. Pupils who do not study a second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9 receive further specialist drama teaching. Because of the inconsistent provision within English, standards in drama in Key Stage 3 are below expectations and pupils who study drama as an option in Key stage 4 do not have a secure base from which to develop.

86. Leadership of the faculty is satisfactory. The faculty works well as a team and there is good level of collaboration, for example on school productions. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in ensuring that planning for each subject is distinctive and subject specific.
87. Accommodation for the creative arts is poor. The faculty is housed in an old building, which lacks adequate teaching and storage space for all of the subjects. In drama the unsatisfactory quality of studio facilities limits pupils' experience. In music there are insufficient specialist classrooms and a significant minority of teaching takes place in non-specialist rooms where resources are not easily available and facilities are inappropriate. In addition there are insufficient small spaces for pupils to work in groups to develop and improve their composing and performing skills. In art spaces are too limited for the full range of practical work, such as sculpture, and the additional non-specialist accommodation is unsuitable for the needs of the subject.

ART

88. GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average. The trend in results during the last four years has been above the national trend and overall standards have risen since the last inspection. Standards in art and textiles in Key Stage 4 are high in comparison with most other subjects in the school.
89. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. A few able pupils achieve exceptional performance. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. In Years 7 and 8 standards are rising. Throughout the key stage pupils acquire good technical skills especially in drawing, painting and printmaking. They produce a good standard of finish in single pieces of work though their investigation work, especially in sketchbooks, is weak. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the work of artists they study such as Hockney and Van Gogh. However, they do not sufficiently extend their knowledge more broadly to cover a range of periods, artists and designers and their skills of comparison and analysis are not well developed. Higher-attaining pupils have good knowledge of, and skills in, portrait drawing with pastels, where they make good use of direct observation, proportion, tone and modelling with colour to achieve high standards. Some lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 work in cramped and unsuitable accommodation and, as a result, the standard of their work is barely satisfactory overall.
90. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are well above national expectations and pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils' skills in painting and drawing are good with many making strong use of colour and producing bold expressive work. They use art historical sources well in their coursework and by Year 11 they carefully select and research the work of artists. Pupils know a satisfactory range of styles and artists including Picasso, Gauguin and African art. They develop their ideas and themes to a satisfactory conclusion though, except for the most able, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to experiment with ideas and make substantial investigations in their sketchbooks. Pupils studying textiles develop good skills in design and making. They choose a broad range of fabrics with different colours and textures and combine and layer these well to interpret their own responses to the themes they study. They make high quality, imaginative, well-crafted jewellery, millinery and period-inspired corsetry. Pupils compare their work well with fashion designers and fine artists and learn about the work of contemporary costumiers who work in television productions. The standard of their investigatory drawings and studies is unsatisfactory and work in portfolios is not well presented. However, overall standards in art and textiles are high and there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

91. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Key Stage 4. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of art and textiles are good, especially their knowledge of techniques and materials. This has a direct impact upon pupils' development of skills and technical expertise and on their interest in the subject. Pupils have especially positive attitudes towards painting, drawing, printmaking and textiles, where they are well motivated, interested in learning and make good progress. Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour and abilities to learn new skills are high. Most pupils behave well, concentrate on their work, listen to the teacher well and carry out tasks effectively. However, teachers' expectations of pupils' skills in experimentation, the development of ideas and investigation are too low, especially in Key Stage 3. As a result, pupils do not regularly use their sketchbooks in class to try out and develop their ideas and experiment with alternative methods. Information technology is not used sufficiently often to research information or experiment with imagery. Teaching methods such as demonstration have a positive impact on pupils' learning and understanding, but the range of methods and strategies overall is too narrow and in some lessons pupils' interest was limited. Overall, teachers' use of art historical resources to enhance knowledge and understanding, though improving, is not consistently and frequently used across the key stages. Many pupils therefore do not develop a sufficiently broad or in-depth knowledge of art to be able to talk about and integrate new ideas into their own work. Basic skills are taught effectively. Homework is regularly set and teachers' written comments give pupils a good level of encouragement and self-confidence. However, specific guidance is not always provided to help pupils understand how to improve their work. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and this contributes well to pupils' self-esteem and social development.
92. The management of art and textiles is satisfactory. There is a good level of monitoring of teaching, which has led to the identification of issues for improvement and action required. There is good analysis of GCSE data leading to target-setting and the raising of standards. In Key Stage 3, although there is a good range of data available, this is not used fully to analyse progress across the key stage. Art makes a strong contribution to the school environment through good displays of work, which positively celebrate pupils' achievements. Residencies, gallery visits and projects make a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development.

DRAMA

93. GCSE results in 1999 were below the national average for all pupils and well below the national average for girls. Standards have risen since the last inspection when they were well below the national average, but trends in results over the last four years have been below the national trend. In the GCSE examination, pupils achieve lower standards than in their other subjects and standards in drama are low in comparison with other subjects in the school.
94. Pupils achieve below expectations in Key Stage 3 where drama is taught only to lower-attaining pupils. Pupils do good work in interpreting scripts but their lack of experience in drama and limited skills in spoken and written expression limit their progress. Opportunities provided for pupils in drama in Key Stage 3 are inconsistent and in some cases the level of provision is unsatisfactory.
95. Standards in Key Stage 4 are below national expectations. Overall pupils do not achieve well enough, although many make satisfactory progress and achieve well in their practical skills, where they build on previous limited experience, skills and knowledge. Some evaluate their work well and at length both in drama and theatre studies. However, pupils often lack the strategies and specialist language to undertake more precise evaluation. The time allocated to drama is below average.
96. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was satisfactory. It was good in Key Stage 4 where effective use is made of the limited time and accommodation to develop pupils' practical skills. Teaching, particularly in Key Stage 4, demonstrates good subject knowledge, experience, commitment and management of pupils. These strengths allow all pupils to develop their confidence and understanding of drama. Pupils' learning is at its best in practical, whole class sessions where they are given clear guidance on what to achieve and where they work collaboratively, particularly in Key Stage 4. In these lessons they are given good

opportunities to develop their ideas independently and work creatively. Monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress is unsatisfactory. Although pupils evaluate their work at some length they do not understand well enough how to improve their work. Teaching and learning activities do not always match tasks sufficiently well to the needs and abilities of different pupils.

MUSIC

97. GCSE results in 1999 were well below the national average. Standards were similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. However, the number of pupils entered for the GCSE examination over the last four years has been relatively small and results have varied from year to year in line with pupils' prior attainment. During this time the trend in school results has been broadly in line with the national trend.
98. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are broadly in line with national expectations and the vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and the few from different ethnic groups, achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Many pupils in Years 7 and 8, in particular, are working at levels that exceed the national expectations. The quality of singing is strong in many classes in Key Stage 3 and in extra-curricular activities. Pupils in Year 8 gave a stylistic and lively performance of music in Gospel style. Pupils in Year 7 used their voices to compose melodies that fitted a pre-composed chord sequence, learning how to match melodies and harmonies through careful listening. They understand the structure of popular songs and accurately identify different sections while listening. When performing, pupils maintain independent parts accurately and many comment discriminately on the quality of performances and compositions, suggesting ways in which the music could be improved. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 perform fluently and fit chords with melodies when composing. However, the music making of many middle and lower-attaining pupils, especially in Year 9, lacks sufficient expression because their performing techniques and listening skills are insufficiently well developed.
99. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are broadly in line with national expectations and pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Attainment in Year 11 is higher than that in the 1999 GCSE examination because more pupils learn instruments beyond the classroom and have higher levels of technical skills as performers. Many pupils in Year 11 are working at levels that exceed the national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils achieve especially well in composing and performing, where their music making is expressive and technically secure. Other pupils compose and perform less complex music to satisfactory standards and some use computers very effectively to enhance their compositions. Although higher-attaining pupils achieve well in the listening requirements of the GCSE examination, standards are lower than in composing and performing. Many correctly identify simple musical features and styles but most pupils are less secure in identifying and describing more subtle differences between musical styles and have limited ability in describing differences between contrasting performances. Many pupils in Year 10 do not have these skills and the standard of their work is below national expectations. The time allocation for music in Key Stage 4 is below average and contributes to the difficulty that many pupils have in attaining high standards.
100. The quality of teaching is good. It was good or very good in nearly half of the lessons seen and satisfactory in the others. Very good subject knowledge is used well to teach lessons that appropriately integrate composing, performing and listening activities. The best teaching was in Years 7, 8 and 11 where pupils were well motivated and developed their composing and performing skills in a practical way which required them to listen critically to their music making. In Year 7 pupils were taught to compose melodies which fitted chord sequences by singing the melodic ideas while listening to the harmony. In Year 8 pupils learned about the characteristics of vocal music in Gospel style while rehearsing and improving their performance of the music. In Year 11 pupils were encouraged to use their aural abilities to make critical decisions to improve the quality of their composing and performing. Strengths of these lessons were the well-structured sequence of activities that were appropriately matched to pupils' abilities and the very good emphasis

placed on pupils' self-discipline and motivation. In other lessons, where teaching was satisfactory, the focus on direct music making was maintained, but the sequence of activities was not always well matched to the differing needs or abilities of pupils. In a few cases more able pupils were not challenged sufficiently. The unsatisfactory behaviour of a few pupils in a minority of lessons, although adequately managed, did not always allow the lesson to be fully focused on the high quality learning seen in the best lessons. The department makes a sound contribution to the teaching of basic skills with, for example, subject specific key words being identified to enable pupils to discuss and write about music in an appropriate way.

101. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils opting for music in Key Stage 4 has increased significantly. The management of the department, including the monitoring, evaluating and improving of performance is satisfactory. Classroom monitoring would be improved by focusing observations more explicitly on identified aspects of teaching. Good strategies are in place for assessment, including pupils' self-assessment but the department should further develop the system to record pupils' attainment and progress over time in the different aspects of the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. GCSE results in 1999 were below the national average but similar to other subjects taken by the same pupils. The trend in results in the new examination courses during the last two years shows an improvement in standards but results have remained below the national average.
103. In Key Stage 3 standards are in line with national expectations and most pupils make satisfactory progress, although their overall subject knowledge, application and designing skills are weaker than their making skills which are consistently satisfactory and often good. High-attaining pupils achieve well, and make good progress in their research, designing and making activities. They show good technical knowledge, and use information technology well to present investigations in, for example, topics on healthy foods and decorative lamps. Average and lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain satisfactory standards in their practical work. They demonstrate good practical skills, for example in kneading and portion control when making decorative bread rolls. They also measure, cut and combine hard and compliant materials to produce lamps, novelty mechanical displays, fabric masks and bags to a satisfactory standard of fit and finish. Pupils understand the design process and make satisfactory and occasionally good presentation drawings but they lack fluency in their sketching techniques when generating initial design ideas.
104. In Key Stage 4 the overall standard of work seen was in line with national expectations, but standards and progress are significantly higher in Year 10 than in Year 11. The additional curriculum time provided in Year 10, combined with improvements in schemes of work, have played a major part in this improvement. Pupils in Year 10 create satisfactory and often good research and design work, for example in mechanical toy projects in graphic and resistant material specialisms. Well made artefacts such as jewellery boxes are well matched to pupils' design specifications. In food technology pupils show a sound understanding of how cook / chill products are produced and apply tasting and testing methods correctly. Work in graphics products is strong in Year 11, where pupils make good progress in research, illustration and use of information technology in designing publicity materials for food outlets. Elsewhere in Year 11 attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. For example, pupils' practical skills are sound in electronic products but their subject knowledge lacks depth. Standards vary considerably in resistant materials and practical work shows limited competencies.
105. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In a significant number of lessons it is good. Teachers' subject knowledge, their management and organisation of pupils and resources and the quality of feedback given to pupils are clear strengths. In resistant materials and food, good questioning techniques keep pupils alert and responsive. Pupils' learning is at its best when teacher demonstrations are delivered at a good pace such as in electronics. Progress is most pronounced where objectives are clear and where good assessment feedback and target setting occurs, for example in resistant material and graphic specialisms in Key Stage 4. Teachers successfully improve pupils' basic skills and technical vocabulary but their use and promotion of

information technology is a weakness. Whilst work for different ability levels is identified in schemes of work, this is less evident in classroom practice and in homework other than in food technology in Key Stage 4. Teachers support and guide pupils well but do not provide sufficient challenge and opportunity to develop independent learning skills. As a result many average and higher-attaining pupils remain too dependent on their teachers. Day to day assessment practice has improved, but assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 does not accurately identify higher levels of attainment. Pupils' attitudes to their teachers and the subject are positive and most work productively and at a good pace, especially on practical tasks.

106. The department is well led. Internal monitoring of teaching and learning and the involvement of a member of the senior management team has highlighted strengths and weaknesses and has been instrumental in bringing about positive change. Extra teaching time provided in Key Stage 4 has begun to raise standards and improve the progress made by pupils in Year 10. The rotational timetable in Key Stage 3 still has an adverse effect on continuity, however. The development plan is not sufficiently focused on raising standards and while numerical targets are set, the identification of what needs to be done to achieve the targets is incomplete. Accommodation and resources meet the needs of the curriculum apart from the inadequacies of the textiles room.

GEOGRAPHY

107. GCSE results in 1999 were above the national average. Results over the last four years have been consistently above the national figures and standards have risen since the last inspection. Standards in geography are high: in GCSE examinations pupils achieve high standards in comparison with their other subjects.
108. Standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3, where pupils' achievements are high and standards have improved. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the places they study, including their own area, and good knowledge of human and physical processes such as the impact of volcanoes on people's lives. They describe well the differences between Southampton and other places and the reasons for some of those differences. They use geographical terms confidently in their discussions and have good understanding of issues such as the environment and recognise that people have different viewpoints. Able and talented pupils achieve very high standards, for example, in describing the complexity of factors involved when explaining the population distribution of Brazil. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their recording of geography. Pupils' skills in developing their own classroom enquiries, however, are underdeveloped.
109. Standards are above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 4 and pupils' achievements are high. Pupils have good knowledge of geographical terminology and good knowledge of the case studies required for examinations. They achieve well in their coursework with some exceptional performances demonstrating a high level of personal initiative and commitment. Pupils have good understanding that people hold different viewpoints about developments such as the Aswan Dam and that there are reasons for these viewpoints. They understand that there are moral and cultural issues related to such developments and physical and human impacts that may have a positive or negative effect. They co-operate well in groupwork where they take part in good focused discussions and debate.
110. The quality of teaching in geography is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to ensure that pupils have good knowledge of geographical terms, places and processes. They mark pupils' work carefully, use questioning very well and set specific targets for improvement. Teachers use a good range of methods, including well organised groupwork, and resources such as videos, maps, photographs and poems, which sustain pupils' interest and concentration on work. The teaching of lower-attaining pupils is occasionally outstanding through a very positive approach and constant reinforcement of achievements in knowledge, for example, of favelas (slum areas) in Brazil. Good use of enquiry in fieldwork is not matched, however, by equivalent opportunities for pupils to develop their own enquiries in the classroom. In a small minority of lessons teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' abilities to listen to each

other and respond appropriately.

111. The high standards and achievements in geography are based on good leadership of the department. There is a clear vision allied to the teachers' enthusiasm for geography and their commitment to improvement. The department's monitoring strategies are good and good evaluation is made of assessment data to identify aspects to improve. Information technology is used well to support administration and teaching. Good improvements have been made in its use with pupils, especially the Internet but it is not systematically planned for in schemes of work. Good progress has been made on the issues raised in the previous inspection report.

HISTORY

112. GCSE results in 1999 were below the national average. Results in the previous two years were above national standards. Standards in Key Stage 4 are low compared with others in the school but pupils' achievements are satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment and results in other subjects.
113. Standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3, where pupils' achievements are good and standards have improved. Pupils have good knowledge of the periods they study. They write careful descriptions of aspects such as factory life or the ways in which life was different for separate groups in society including the rich, the poor and women. Pupils use a good range of resources effectively to gain information. They are beginning to draw inferences from these sources and combine the information they have found, though the research skills of lower and middle ability pupils are underdeveloped. Pupils enjoy their research and the presentation of their results. Pupils are confident in using primary sources but less confident in the relationship of primary with secondary sources and in the interpretations of history. They understand that there is often a range of causes involved in historical events, for example, in the stalemate in 1914, but fail to categorise or prioritise these sufficiently. Able pupils achieve very high standards of explanation in discussing the issues involved in nineteenth century protest, for example, and demonstrate a good level of empathy in writing letters from different perspectives in the past. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their recording of history.
114. Standards are below national expectations by the end of Key Stage 4 but pupils' achievements are satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. Standards are in line with national expectations in Year 10. Pupils have good knowledge of the major periods they study, such as the USA and Nazi Germany. They draw links between features of American society in discussing prohibition and reflect well on the perspectives of different groups, such as the temperance movement and women's suffrage, and the values and attitudes they held. Pupils understand how Hitler maintained his power and they make effective use of sources to research for information about the techniques he used and draw inferences about people's reactions to these techniques. Pupils achieve well in their coursework but their notes and understanding of events such as the Peace Treaties and the interrelationship of events between the wars are less secure than other aspects of the examination.
115. The quality of teaching is good. Good subject knowledge allows good examples to be given and connections to be drawn in lessons using, for example, films about prohibition or details about King John. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods, including groupwork, and resources including CD ROMs, the Internet, databases of primary sources and videos. The methods used, combined with good management and relationships, enable pupils to sustain their interest and reach a high level of discussion with their peers. The marking of pupils' work is very good and good targets for improvement are set. These are well supported by the good use of questioning in lessons. Teachers are less effective at setting specific learning objectives that would further refine the activities and challenge pupils' thinking. Further development is needed in the support of lower and middle-attaining pupils' research skills and in historical topics such as the teaching of international relations between the wars.
116. There is good, thoughtful leadership of the department which is supported well by the effective link with the

senior management team. Teachers have a clear commitment to improvement and a good interest in their own subject and its wider contribution to the school curriculum. There is good monitoring of the department, which leads to the identification of areas for improvement for teaching and planning. Information technology is used well to support the administration of the department but is not systematically identified in schemes of work. Resources are adequate overall but the range should be extended to include A level standard texts for the more able in Key Stage 4. Schemes of work cover progression in history well but lack specific learning objectives. There has been good progress made on the issues raised in the previous inspection report.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

117. Pupils' overall attainment has risen in several aspects of their work since the last inspection. They are now very confident users of a range of information technology resources and pupils of all abilities demonstrate a good level of competence in their basic skills of using word processors, spreadsheets and the Internet. Teachers' assessments in Key Stage 3 from the past two years also show an improvement in standards. Pupils achieve well and their overall standards of work in both key stages are in line with national expectations and above it in aspects of their work on communication and control. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress, and those with English as an additional language make good progress. The good achievement of higher-attaining pupils is particularly significant with high standards and very good progress in both Key Stage 3 and the newly introduced GCSE course in Key Stage 4.
118. In Key Stage 3 pupils show high levels of competence in formatting text, importing images and designing layouts in their work on communicating information. Pupils in Year 9 use these skills well, for example, in designing a questionnaire although, overall, pupils do not consider a wide enough range of audiences for their communication work. When handling information, pupils show good competence in selecting information from CD-ROMs in history lessons and in homework in a range of subjects. They recall a good range of appropriate terms and enter data correctly in spreadsheets, but they rarely check its accuracy or choose the layout for themselves. They make good progress in entering formulae to carry out simple calculations, although higher-attaining pupils need more opportunities to create and use models. Pupils show a sound understanding of the use of computer sensors. In work on control pupils make good progress in entering a simple series of commands to control a model and in recording them as a procedure.
119. In Key Stage 4, pupils continue to make good progress in using computers for communicating information. They combine text and graphics well to produce information leaflets and reports. GCSE pupils show high achievement in devising an interactive story book for younger pupils and in drawing organisation charts as part of a business simulation. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress in using spreadsheets to graph and analyse data in a project on fitness. In music, pupils enhance the quality and range of their composing through the good use of specialist sequencing programmes. Lower-attaining pupils show sound achievement in their use of spreadsheets to calculate simple formulae. Progress by the majority of pupils in work on modelling, measurement and control is limited by the lack of systematically planned learning opportunities across the subjects they study.
120. The quality of teaching is good overall with significant strengths in Key Stage 4. Specialist staff demonstrate good knowledge of the examination board requirements in the GCSE courses and their understanding of the teaching of basic computer skills leads to good progress by most pupils. The quality of teachers' planning is more variable with lesson objectives clearly explained to pupils in Key Stage 4, but insufficient reference to the requirements of higher levels of the National Curriculum in Key Stage 3. Teachers maintain good relationships with pupils who respond well and settle quickly to their work with good interest and well-developed skills of independent working. Lessons often have good pace. For example, in a lesson on designing a package in which to sell popcorn, a clear class introduction based on

previous homework led quickly to independent working in pairs where the open nature of the task resulted in high quality discussion by the pupils. Teachers give good oral feedback to pupils during lessons, but the marking and annotation of work in Key Stage 3 is insufficiently rigorous with previous teacher assessments of Year 9 work being over generous.

121. The day-to-day running of the department is effective, with resources well managed and maintained by the full-time technician. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 has insufficient detail and needs to include clearer objectives and a wider variety of more challenging tasks. Record keeping and the analysis of assessment data are not systematic and teachers' assessments are not yet adequately standardised. The monitoring of teaching within the department is developing well, and now needs to be combined with a more structured approach to reviewing the quality of pupils' work. Not all departments identify sufficiently precisely how they plan to cover the appropriate parts of the programme of study.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French, German and Spanish

122. GCSE results in French, German and Spanish in 1999 were well above the national average and trends in results in recent years have been above national trends. Pupils achieve high grades in modern foreign languages in comparison with those in their other subjects. Teachers' assessments for fourteen-year-olds in 1999 show pupils' standards to be above the national average. Overall standards have been maintained since the last inspection and pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in the subject.
123. All pupils study French when they enter the school in Year 7. Pupils of average and above average ability are offered the opportunity in Year 8 to study either German or Spanish as a second foreign language. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations in the three languages. All pupils make good progress in modern foreign languages, including those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. The most and least able pupils make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are very highly developed, with lively exchanges in the foreign language characterising work in the majority of classrooms.
124. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is well above the national expectation in all three languages, with the most able pupils attaining very high standards. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in relation to their attainment by the end of Key Stage 3. Their work is confident, fluent and accurate and they have very good knowledge and understanding of grammatical structures. Written coursework is a particular strength, with pupils developing their own interests and producing work which is creative and often highly original.
125. A particularly successful feature of oral work is that pupils express personal opinions from the early stages of their language learning, with increasing sophistication as they progress through the school. Pupils' writing skills are of a high standard, with pupils of all abilities writing extensively and accurately. Although pupils read well, with good reference skills, they do not select and evaluate reading material for personal interest on a regular basis. Some pupils are, however, broadening their reading through access to magazines and to e-mails from exchange partners in France, innovations since the previous inspection. The great majority of pupils have very positive attitudes and enjoy their work in class. They participate with enthusiasm in all aspects of lessons and produce high-quality homework. In some classes they are developing very effective learning skills and use reference materials well, producing work that reflects high levels of personal investment. Many pupils are sufficiently confident to ask questions about points of grammar and also about cultural differences.
126. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good and excellent teaching. Subject knowledge is strong, with a specialist teaching team who conduct lessons predominantly in the relevant foreign language. Most teachers create a classroom climate in which pupils are prepared to take risks, enabling them to work confidently and to learn from each other. Effective assessment procedures enable pupils to receive clear feedback on their performance and useful targets for improvement. In the best lessons, pupils' literacy skills are enhanced by foreign language work, which enables them to reflect upon their own language. Impressive

outcomes of good teaching observed during the inspection week include younger pupils joining their teachers in energetic songs and conducting independent survey work; humorous collusion as pupils in Year 11 tried to outdo each other in asking questions in the foreign language and Key Stage 3 pupils shrieking with delight in the learning resources centre when they received e-mails in French from pupils in a partner school in Le Havre.

127. The department is very well led and managed. Effective systems for monitoring are in place and development planning is very good. The modern languages team's priority for future development is the establishment of updated schemes of work which ensure an increased consistency of approach to the provision of motivating independent and group activities. The rapidly developing use of information technology and expanded reading and research opportunities are already enabling this very successful department to secure further improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

128. GCSE results in 1999 were well below the national average. This was the first year in which pupils had been entered for the examination. Pupils achieved lower standards than in their other subjects. Assessments by teachers of pupils' standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show a spread of attainment below that expected, although in lessons their attainment was in line with national expectations. Overall attainment is similar in both key stages to the standards reported at the time of the previous inspection.
129. The attainment of most pupils by the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. In games, where overall attainment is in line with expectations, pupils have secure individual skills. Pupils' work in gymnastics is sound. They perform a range of simple actions and, by the end of the key stage, plan and perform sequences of appropriate quality and complexity. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of all aspects of their work are strong. In a health related exercise lesson, for example, pupils devised a fitness programme using their knowledge and understanding of appropriate exercises and relevant muscle groups. Some more able pupils however showed lower than expected knowledge of the principles of exercise.
130. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment in the core physical education programme for all pupils is in line with national expectations. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in some aspects. For example, in a tennis lesson, they made good progress in learning to serve, and applied this well in small-sided games. In other activities, their basic skills are sound, but their understanding and application of tactics within games are limited. Higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should in some activities. For example, few were able to show the application of simple defensive tactics in basketball lessons. The vast majority of pupils show good attitudes towards the subject. Most are enthusiastic and committed to performing. When given the opportunity, they show good initiative by, for example, accepting responsibility for aspects of their own learning, such as leading warm up activities. In a small number of cases, a lack of commitment to learning and improvement hindered their progress. The attainment of pupils following the GCSE course is below that expected and they make unsatisfactory progress, in part due to a lack of commitment to learning and to improving their skills, knowledge and understanding. In a basketball lesson, for example, pupils' achievement was adversely affected by casual attitudes from a significant number of pupils, and in theory work their notes do not show the expected depth of understanding.
131. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teaching was good or very good in a small number of lessons and it was unsatisfactory in one lesson. Teachers' knowledge of, and relationships with, pupils are good. This plays an important part in encouraging and motivating pupils to participate fully in the activities. Teachers' expectations of pupils' responses are high, although in a small minority of lessons, students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve high standards, with activities encouraging participation rather than focusing on new learning. There were several good examples of the teachers' use of assessment levels to help pupils understand what it was they had to do in order to improve, which succeeded in helping pupils to achieve high standards. Where teaching was most successful teachers used a good range of teaching

strategies to apply their skills in appropriate activities, and the pupils had a very clear idea of what they were expected to achieve. In a fitness lesson, for example, the teacher allowed pupils to assess their knowledge and understanding of exercise in such a way that reinforced the learning intentions set at the start of the lesson. In order to improve teaching further, the department should identify and share good practice, particularly with reference to raising expectations of all pupils through teaching strategies that expect the pupils to accept responsibility for aspects of their own learning.

132. Overall the leadership and management of the department is satisfactory. The head of department has made a sound start in the administrative and organisational aspects of her role in the relatively short time she has been at the school. Staff form a committed team and have made sound progress in addressing many of the issues raised at the time of the previous inspection. Systematic monitoring of teaching is in place but is yet to make a significant impact on raising standards. The department needs to focus its development on raising standards of achievement for all pupils, with particular reference to more able pupils and those following examination courses, and evaluating the impact of teaching on improving performance.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average. The recent trend in results has been above the national trend and overall standards have risen since the last inspection. Standards in the GCSE examination are high in comparison with others in the school although the pupils concerned achieve similar standards in their other subjects.
134. Standards attained by the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with those expected in the local Agreed Syllabus. This is broadly the same as in the previous inspection report. Standards achieved in the lessons observed were broadly in line with the levels expected and pupils make good progress in their studies. Pupils achieve a satisfactory standard in both exploring and responding to human experience and investigating religious tradition. For example, pupils in a Year 8 class learnt about Jewish food laws by designing games to be played by younger pupils which would teach them about the food laws. Another class grappled with the possible symbolic meaning of biblical stories.
135. Standards of attainment in the GCSE course are well above average in Year 11 and broadly in line with expectations in Year 10. Standards are lower in Year 10 because of a change in the organisation of the subject and in the range of ability of the pupils studying the subject. Pupils who do not follow a GCSE course follow a course leading to school accreditation and standards are in line with local expectations. The standard they attain is higher than reported in the last inspection when a lack of curriculum time limited attainment. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress, achieve well and attain standards above expectations. Lower-attaining pupils achieve appropriate standards for their ability and make satisfactory progress.
136. The overall quality of teaching is good. During the inspection a third of lessons were good or better and one lesson was unsatisfactory. Teaching is supported by a good scheme of work and effective joint planning. Almost all of the teaching is provided by specialist teachers and their subject knowledge and expertise are a strength. Lessons have clear objectives that are communicated clearly to pupils. This enables pupils to understand the balance between the knowledge and attitudes being developed in lessons. Lessons start well, proceed at a good pace and provide a good level of challenge for the more able pupils. The pace of lessons is particularly good in the GCSE course. Pupils' learning is supported well by the use of key words that are displayed in classrooms. Pupils' attitude to religious education is good and in some cases very good. They respond well to the content of the lessons and show respect for the religious traditions they are studying. Pupils are interested in what they were doing, concentrate well and work hard to acquire new knowledge and better understanding. The very good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils are a strong feature of the lessons and pupils behave very well as a result. During the inspection a narrow range of teaching styles was observed although these were appropriate for the topics being covered and the scheme shows a wider range of methods used over time.
137. Religious education is well led and good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The subject is well monitored and the information gained is used well to improve performance. This includes evaluating

examination results, reviewing schemes and monitoring teaching. The lack of curriculum time reported in Key Stage 4 at the time of the last inspection has been improved to provide a good course for all pupils. The school enters higher-attaining pupils for the GCSE course on limited curriculum time and achieves very good results. The increased numbers following the course in Year 10 include pupils who will find it difficult to achieve as well on the limited time available.