

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WATFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS**

Watford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117573

Headteacher: Mr Martin Post

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sylvia Richardson  
1038

Dates of inspection: 5 - 9 February 2001

Inspection number: 188434

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18 years

Gender of pupils: Boys

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Hertfordshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C J S Brearley, CB

Date of previous inspection: 20.05.1996

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Watford Grammar School for Boys serves an 11-18 year old population in which about half the boys are given places on the basis of ability or musical aptitude. The vast majority of pupils at the age of eleven have average or above average attainment. The school is larger than average with 1131 boys on roll, of whom 317 are in the sixth form. The boys represent many races, religions and cultures. A significant minority of pupils has English as an additional language. Few, however, are at an early stage of learning English. The school is very popular and heavily oversubscribed and very few pupils join the school other than aged eleven and sixteen. There are very few boys entitled to or claiming free school meals, below the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.

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

This is a successful school with high expectations for all its pupils. Standards are high and rising and teaching is good, overall. Governors give a strong lead to the school. The newly appointed headteacher has a clear vision for the future development of the school and the confidence of staff and parents. As one Year 9 pupil observed: 'This school is a community, not just a place to learn'. Expenditure per pupil is well above the national average and value for money is good.

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

- Examination and test results are very good and continue to improve.
- The school provides an unusually wide range of high quality learning opportunities outside the classroom, which promote interest and enjoyment and contribute to the high standards achieved.
- Teaching is good overall.
- The school gives boys many opportunities to take responsibility. It is racially harmonious and relationships are very good.
- The school has high expectations of boys behaviour and hard work, and they rise to the challenge.
- The governors offer outstanding leadership, provide the school with a wide range of expertise and work very well in partnership with the head and other senior staff.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership.

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

- Aspects of teaching, particularly the use of questioning to deepen boys' knowledge and understanding, and the provision of a more interesting range of activities. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, although underway, need further attention from heads of department.
- The standards reached by some able pupils with English as an additional language, who need extra help with their English to obtain the highest grade passes in GCSE.
- Provision of a broader programme in design and technology.
- The time for RE in Key Stage 4 continues to be low, and the provision of RE for the sixth form is insufficient to meet statutory requirements. Assemblies still do not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

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

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

Since the school was last inspected in 1996, it has succeeded in maintaining the excellence for which it was praised at that time and has improved standards, overall, in terms of test and examination results. Its broader activities in the community have also increased, adding to boys' experience of service and achievement. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language has improved and this has had a beneficial effect in assisting pupils to achieve good GCSE results. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship. There has been good progress in monitoring and evaluating pupils' performance, but the monitoring of teaching still need more attention

from heads of department. Improvements in the curriculum have kept the school up to date with most of the changes required. However, there is more still to be done to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently broad in Key Stage 4 to meet the needs of all pupils and fulfil statutory requirements. Links with and knowledge of primary schools and their teaching methods have improved. Given the good leadership and management, overall, the school has the capacity to sustain these improvements and build upon them in the next phase of its development.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in national tests, GCSE and A level / AS Level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Key Stage 3 tests	A*	A*	A*	A*
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A levels / AS levels	A	A	A	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

By the age of 14, most pupils attain standards which are well above the national average in National Curriculum tests, placing the school in the top five per cent of performance in the country. Performance in GCSE, AS and A levels is also well above average, with the highest attainment in history, foreign languages (unusual among boys) and mathematics. The trend of improvement in the school's performance has been broadly in line with the national trend over the last three to five years. Results in GCSE in English dipped slightly last year. Comparison with schools in similar contexts is difficult in Key Stage 3 in particular, as the school has changed its criteria for entry for the last three years. The school performs well above average in comparison with schools with similar socio-economic circumstances, as judged by eligibility to free school meals. However, of the 164 schools in the country where places are offered on the basis of attainment at the age of eleven, the majority selects a much higher proportion of their pupils than this school does. Few schools offer places both to pupils who pass a selection test and also to an approximately equal group without reference to their ability. Available statistics do not therefore provide an appropriate national comparator of progress up to the age of 14, where results are particularly notable. The school has exceeded its targets for improvement in test and examination results regularly over the last three years, and targets have been raised as a result. Pupils achieve very well in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Parents are particularly pleased with the school's high expectations of what their sons can achieve.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The boys demonstrate daily outstanding commitment to the community of the school and very good attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is usually very good indeed. Boys are courteous and confident in talking to any adults and to each other. They work and play together very well.
Personal development and relationships	Boys very willingly undertake a wide range of activities to support others. They develop into self-reliant young men who make strong relationships

	with teachers and other boys and these promote their learning.
Attendance	Attendance is very high, with very few unauthorised absences

Pupils' hard work, very good behaviour and concentration make a major contribution to their academic success. The opportunities created for them to take responsibility enhance their personal development and contribute to an atmosphere in which effort is respected. In their lessons, pupils show appreciation of learning and scholarship. Attendance is generally well above average although in the week of the inspection it was lower than usual, due to an outbreak of 'flu.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In English, mathematics and science in Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching and learning were never less than satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good or excellent. The balance of the teaching observed during the inspection was good, overall, with boys making very good progress throughout the school. Over two thirds of lessons seen were at least good for teaching, and only one lesson of the eighty seen was unsatisfactory, as a result of inadequate planning and insufficient challenge. A quarter of lessons had very good or excellent teaching, a high proportion. Teaching and learning were very good in mathematics, history, French and German. Learning was at least satisfactory throughout the school; four fifths was good or very good, with boys' own motivation and application playing a large part in this success. The English, special educational needs (SEN) and English as an additional language (EAL) departments teach the skills of literacy very well. The concentration on number work in mathematics in Year 7 and the teaching of numeracy within geography make a significant contribution to the school's approach to the national numeracy strategy. Whilst there are contributions within some other subjects, teachers' planning for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy is not systematic and opportunities to reinforce their language and number skills are sometimes missed. Pupils with special educational needs and the school's most able boys have their learning needs well met in many lessons. However, pupils with English as an additional language, who receive very good specialist teaching, lack adequate support for and awareness of their language learning needs in many subject lessons, and this prevents some of them from achieving the highest grades in GCSE.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory, other than in design and technology and religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The present specialist teaching for pupils with special educational needs is of high quality but insufficient in quantity.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The present specialist teaching for pupils with English as an additional language is of high quality. Information generated could be used better by subject teachers when planning their lessons.

provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual,	Excellent moral, social and cultural provision. As at the time of the last inspection, provision in the curriculum for spiritual development and for
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moral, social and cultural development	collective worship remains unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well, except for the insufficient use of data about progress of pupils with English as an additional language.

The school works very well in partnership with parents, who express strong satisfaction with the opportunities offered to their sons. Whilst pupils cannot follow vocational courses within Key Stage 4 or the sixth form, there is an impressive range of other non-classroom activities, which broaden pupils' horizons and experiences. Areas of the curriculum which do not meet statutory requirements are religious education in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and design and technology in the lack of provision for food technology and textiles. A particular strength in the way the school cares for its pupils lies in the involvement of boys in the sixth form with caring for others, within the school and the community at large.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The newly appointed headteacher brings very good leadership and a vision which is open-minded and forward looking. There is a growing sense of direction in the newly-formed leadership team. There is wide variation in management expertise amongst subject leaders, from satisfactory to excellent.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors' knowledge of and commitment to the school is of the highest; they provide a steer on policy and hold staff to account for maintaining the quality of what the school provides. They bring broadly-based expertise from which the school benefits greatly.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation of teaching need more attention, but the governors' and senior managers' oversight of development priorities is very good.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: the school's resource management, forward-planning and current deployment of resources promotes learning.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate for the present numbers of boys, but some accommodation is cramped and some needs refurbishment. Despite a major investment in information and communication technology in recent years, the boys still need better access to the latest technology, especially in the sixth form. There is too great a variability between the ways in which different subject leaders address the monitoring of boys' progress and teachers' effectiveness. The school applies the principles of best value in an exemplary way, to the benefit of the boys' education.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers' high expectations of what the boys can achieve</li> <li>The quality of teaching provided</li> <li>The school's leadership and management</li> <li>How the school helps their sons to mature and become responsible citizens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils who have to walk from the New Field back to the main school after dark should be accompanied by an adult</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' perception of the school's effectiveness and particularly supports parents' views about the ethos of the school, which is a major factor in ensuring that boys achieve well and enjoy their school days. They agree that younger boys should be accompanied from

the New Field back to the main school, as their walk passes through a public park.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **Examination and test results are very good and continue to improve**

1. Watford Grammar School for Boys is partially selective on the basis of boys' performance in tests. Forty per cent of the pupils in the last three years have been offered a place on the basis of this attainment. A further 8 per cent of boys come to the school on the basis of known musical aptitude, and the remainder because they have a sibling connection with this or the sister school, or because they live near the school. This balance changes in the sixth form, when about 40 boys are admitted each year on the basis of the results they have achieved in GCSE examinations, and they come from schools that may be distant from Watford. There have been changes in the basis of entry since the time of the last inspection, when the percentage of pupils who gained places in the school on the basis of ability was significantly higher. These year groups have not yet reached an age to affect the school's examination results, but in Key Stage 3, the first partially selective group attained notable results in 2000.
2. When pupils arrive at the school at the age of 11, their attainment is, for the most part, at least average and many are above average or well above average. In summary, about half of the pupils' attainment on entry is well above national expectations for results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. In GCSE, the criterion for entry to the school in the sixth form (currently seven higher grade passes at GCSE) means that these pupils are also attaining well above average standards. The significant minority, who enter for reasons other than test and examination results, have average or below average test results, and a proportion, which is just below the national figure – about 12 per cent compared with about 16 per cent nationally - have special educational needs. Another significant minority – about 17 per cent - speak languages other than English at home, and their attainment in writing English is not so well advanced as that of their peers.
3. This, then, is the basis of attainment against which the judgement is made that boys make very good progress here. The examination and test results show that the school builds upon their prior attainment, and, in most cases, ensures that very good progress in learning is made. It is not, however, reliable to compare this school with the 163 other grammar schools, the majority of which select all of their pupils on grounds of attainment. When compared with schools with intakes from similar social backgrounds, the school performs very well above average.
4. When pupils were tested at the age of 14 in 2000, their performance was consistently well above the national average, and indeed, was in the top 5 per cent of schools in the country. Almost all pupils achieved at least the nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science, and most achieved above or well above this. However, there was a small slip in results in 2000, which, whilst it did not affect the overall upward trend, was of concern to the school. It was largely caused by a reduction in the percentage of pupils reaching Level 6 in English, where the proportion of those performing at least one level above national expectations reduced from 90 per cent in 1999 to 75 per cent in 2000.
5. Standards in mathematics have been maintained at a high level in the period since the last inspection, with over two-thirds of pupils attaining at Level 7 or better. In science,

attainment during Key Stage 3 varies between average and very well above the expectation for pupils' ages. By the age of 14, however, over three-quarters achieve one level above the national expectation and over one third achieve two levels above. One National Curriculum level is equivalent to two years further progress beyond the national average.

6. In their other subjects, pupils generally achieve levels which compare well with the national expectation for 14 years olds, and in most cases, very well. For example, performance in languages and in history and geography is two levels above the national expectation for a high proportion of the boys; in the case of geography and modern languages, it is well over half the pupils who achieve such levels. Inspection evidence confirms these results, as attainment in lessons was at least in line with these grades. Standards in art, at the age of 14, although above the national expectation, are below the school's average.
7. In GCSE courses, examination results have also been maintained at levels which are well above the national and local averages. They are not as high as at the age of 14 and this is due to three main factors. Departments' lesson planning and preparation do not sufficiently recognise the learning needs in relation to the writing of pupils with English as an additional language. Teachers do not make adequate use of the specialist teaching and information about these pupils. Secondly, for a number of pupils with special educational needs, some teachers make inadequate use of Individual Education Plans. Thirdly, in some subjects, GCSE requirements are adhered to too closely, with the result that they act as a boundary, limiting the further progress of pupils who achieved Level 7 or better in Key Stage 3 national tests. These pupils, who could extend their learning further, are constrained by this.
8. There is a well above average proportion of boys who achieve A\* and A grades in their GCSE examinations, with the result that the average total points score is high. However, it is not as high as in some other schools because few boys have taken more than nine subjects at GCSE. This is a matter of school policy which is under review at the moment.
9. It is worthy of special note that of the 189 entries for French and German in 2000, 184 boys achieved higher grade passes, of which over half were at A\* or A grades. This is not only well above the national average, but a notable achievement for boys, whose performance in languages is often below national averages and well below the averages achieved by girls.
10. There has been consistently high achievement at A level, with the vast majority of pupils going on to university places or to employment with training. In the last five years, the percentage of pupils gaining A and B grades at A level has averaged 55 per cent (58 per cent in 2000, when the national average was 33.5 per cent). The results in 2000 were very good with an overall pass rate of 97 per cent, 10 per cent higher than the national figure.
11. Targets for examination improvement have been exceeded year on year, with the result that they have been increased for 2001 and 2002. The school analyses results at all levels very carefully, but does not use sufficiently the available analyses of how well pupils with English as an additional language have fared. This results in a small proportion of boys not achieving as much as they might.

**The school provides an unusually wide range of high quality opportunities outside the classroom, which promote interest and enjoyment and contribute to**

### **the high standards achieved**

12. The range of activities that the school offers to its pupils is impressive. Take-up by pupils is high and the boys express strong support for the programme. It contributes significantly to their excellent attitudes to the school and to learning, and promotes their personal development and excellent relationships, both with staff and with their peers. A broad range of sporting activities is well supported, as are drama, music and an excellent programme of trips and visits directly linked to the curriculum. The musical activities, for example, benefit the community; there are concerts held in the local hospice and primary-age pupils join the orchestra for performance practice. Trips and visits enhance pupils' programmes of learning through language exchanges, work placements, challenges from industry, Theatre in Education presentations. Individual speakers help to develop boys' respect for scholarship.
13. The most impressive activities are directly linked to improving boys' opportunities for learning and personal development. Older pupils act as mentors for younger ones and make serious commitments in supporting them, for which they receive training from the SEN co-ordinator. They assist with clubs and productions and they also promote the interests and deal with the concerns of the younger boys through an active and influential School Council. As prefects, they assist with the smooth running of the school, demonstrating that they are responsible and mature young men who can be relied upon to act as role models for younger boys.
14. Access to the learning resource centre, with a very good careers library and computer suite, also makes learning attractive, though the sixth form does not yet have adequate access to its own dedicated study area and suite of computers for research and coursework.

### **Teaching is good, overall**

15. At the time of the last inspection, 92 per cent of the teaching seen was at least satisfactory, but 8 per cent was unsatisfactory; 21 per cent was good or very good. In this inspection, all lessons seen, with only one exception, were at least satisfactory and over two thirds were good or very good. In a quarter of the lessons, there was very good or excellent teaching. This represents an important improvement since the time of the last inspection. The quality of teaching was highest in the sixth form, where teachers' own very secure and often erudite subject knowledge provided the challenge which boys appreciated. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject inspired the boys in a number of classes seen.
16. The vast majority of teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They select materials which are often very stimulating; for example, the use of a text by Pat Barker in the sixth form. School-produced materials, for example, for a Year 10 chemistry class, are of good quality and act as a careful guide through the course. Teachers focus closely on ensuring that the boys achieve high levels of examination success without the school becoming an examination factory: the leavening provided by out-of-class activities to which the staff dedicates much time prevents this happening and ensures that boys enjoy their whole day. Access to the library's extensive resources also adds a dimension to what goes on in classrooms, and frequently is used as a means of ensuring that the teachers' high expectations can be fulfilled, even when some boys require longer to consider their work.
17. Teachers' high expectations are constantly conveyed to pupils. In a sixth form German lesson, for example, even the unfamiliar structures of the German education system

were explained in German, and boys took part in discussions about what was required of them for British universities. Pupils were expected to annotate text, take notes which they would subsequently use for revision and begin the process of absorbing the complex vocabulary of a sophisticated context quickly in class.

18. Departments such as English, mathematics and science are very self-critical, and they review their work regularly to achieve improvement in methods and outcomes. Departmental planning is seen as a tool for raising standards. In mathematics and science, for example, data on boys' progress is well used in order both to check on the adequacy and pace of progress, and to monitor for teachers' further training needs. However, a general weakness in planning is teachers' insufficient awareness of the language learning needs of boys with English as an additional language, particularly as it affects their standards in writing.
19. Careful planning has been particularly evident with the introduction of new courses as part of the recent National Curriculum changes and for Curriculum 2000. This results in good understanding of new course requirements and also gives clear evidence of consistent departmental approaches to teaching method. For example, the languages teachers use their own fluent knowledge of their languages as their chosen teaching medium. However, where courses are shared with the sixth form of the sister school, the lack of match in timings creates problems for pupils in both schools, with the result that some pupils regularly arrive late for the start of lessons and valuable course time is lost.
20. There are currently, despite the introduction of performance management, too few opportunities for teachers to see each other teach and to learn from the very best. There is, therefore, an overall standard of competence which benefits the boys, but in some cases a lack of the range and depth which would further challenge and stimulate pupils, particularly the most able. The effect is that learning is at its best, in most cases, where the boys' high levels of intellectual interest, motivation and advanced learning skills push the pace of learning forward. Boys voluntarily undertake research, look laterally at information and deepen their knowledge through examples such as reading ahead, consulting the internet in advance of a lesson, or asking very probing questions of their teachers. Hence, learning and subsequent achievement exceed the quality of some of the teaching. For example, in better than four out of every five lessons seen, learning was graded as at least good and much was very good.
21. The use of questioning to deepen boys' understanding ranges from excellent to satisfactory. In the very best lessons seen, for example, in a sixth form English lesson on a Shakespearean topic, the use of university tutorial methods, including intense and probing questioning, quickly helped the boys to develop their understanding of the characterisation, context and styles used. They were then able to evaluate their own essays better and come up with ways of improving them. In a Year 7 music lesson, the same effect resulted from the questioning, as boys worked in small groups. They were consistently challenged and responded by drawing on existing knowledge to the full. This allowed several pupils to break through to higher levels of understanding of the lesson theme. It also ensured that all concentrated particularly well on achieving good pieces of finished work for performance.

**The school gives boys opportunities to take responsibility. It is racially harmonious and relationships are very good**

22. Boys understand the policies of the school on such matters as anti-bullying and racism, and they are content that these policies work well. Bullying, they say, is rare,

and racism absent. Inspection evidence concurs with this view; the boys' mature and sensible behaviour towards one another is a source of great strength to the school. There are many other examples where pupils of all ages take responsibility for ensuring that all in the school are well cared for and supported as needed. The youngest boys in the playground, playing football at break, call out 'Hold it!' as an adult passes, and stop their game until the adult has safely passed. They take group work and pair work very seriously in lessons. There were many examples during the inspection week when, in the learning resources centre, large numbers of boys of all ages worked in groups or individually in complete harmony, taking advantage of resources and very high quality adult support with good humour and a sense of mutual respect.

23. Parents commented on the growing maturity of their sons as they went through the school and the sense of community service which they develop, including their very good attitudes to helping those younger than themselves.
24. Prefectorial activities develop a strong sense of responsibility to the community of the school. Prefects see themselves as role models and work hard to fulfil this role well. They have taken initiative, negotiated with staff and governors when issues have come up through the school council and have influenced school policy. Their conduct within the School Council is responsible, and boys of all ages put forward their considered views with maturity. They listen to each other and a tone of mutual respect is fostered across the age groups.

**The school has high expectations of boys' behaviour and hard work, and they rise to the challenge**

25. Teachers have high expectations of what the boys can achieve both in and out of class. The school as a whole, in its policies and practices, sets the tone of high expectations. Parents appreciate the impact the school has on boys' behaviour and attitudes to work.
26. The boys are regularly faced with challenging ideas, whether it be in terms of a topic under scrutiny, or how to organise their work in better ways, or how to express ideas appropriately. There were many examples during the inspection week of occasions when pupils rose to an intellectual challenge, for example, when within strict time limits, proof by induction was sought in a Year 13 mathematics lesson. In a Year 11 English lesson, pupils rose to the challenge of making a presentation to the class, who managed to offer a mature critique of the words and phrases used. This led into a valuable short discussion about gender connotations in certain words and phrases, and the boys showed by their reactions that they were stimulated into considering their own vocabulary, and thinking for themselves.
27. Pupils' ability to concentrate for long periods on occasions is a contributory factor to their ability to respond to staff expectations. Even the youngest classes combine this with very good personal organisation. A Year 8 Latin class was able to spend an uninterrupted half hour on the forms of nouns, spontaneously making references to their books whilst they listened, and taking notes which were clearly laid out and would serve as an excellent basis for revision.
28. Very good learning skills develop as the boys go through the school and these assist them in responding well to challenges. In a number of situations, it was evident that pupils had read ahead in their work, without being asked to, before the lesson or at home. On other occasions, the value of their interest in books and the information to be gathered from the Internet stood them in good stead.

29. In almost every lesson seen, these skills could be brought to bear to improve the quality of learning and to give every boy the best chance of a good experience in lessons because of the quality of behaviour and the attitudes evident throughout. A Year 8 lowest set in mathematics, for example, worked at a cracking pace in their lesson on linear and quadratic functions. The boys thoroughly enjoyed the experience of working in the way the teacher recommended, playing their role in what became a team activity. The very good relationship with the teacher allowed them to share in his sense of enjoyment in their success. The boys maintained their concentration throughout and showed a high level of persistence in their search for the correct solutions. The high level of challenge in the activity stimulated the boys into thinking mathematically, using a variety of methods and drawing regularly on earlier work.

**The governors give outstanding leadership, provide the school with a wide range of expertise and work very well in partnership with the headteacher and other senior staff**

30. The structure of the governing body and its committees works very well indeed, bringing a strong sense of direction and a questioning of the work of the school to its activities, to the benefit of the educational opportunities available. Governors hold the senior staff to full account, but share with the senior staff a faith in the school and a confidence in its values. Governors give a great deal of their time to ensuring that they bring rigour to their debate through good preparation.
31. Much of the developmental work of the governing body is done in committee, an approach worked through with close attention to detail, with resulting very clear and measured outcomes. Committees work in cross-consultation as a result of long-established systems for the development of priorities and purposes. Governors bring a wide range of relevant expertise to these committees, and probe the background preparation done by staff, to ensure that there are no obvious pitfalls which need to be re-considered. They assist the staff with research within and beyond the school and clearly come to meetings very well prepared.
32. The governors fulfil their monitoring role very well. They conduct departmental reviews, visit classes and monitor performance closely. They try, using good staff information, to predict the needs of the school in the future, so have well-developed site and buildings planning on a seven-year cycle. Relationships with heads of department are good so a commonality of objectives is evident. Governors' sensitivity to the fine line between monitoring and managing is part of the reason why this relationship works so well and encourages a willingness amongst staff to discuss their priorities and concerns.
33. They have paid close attention to the recommendations of the last inspection and have monitored the outcomes of staff planning. They are fully aware of the pace of improvement in standards and have set reasonable targets, which they have explained well to parents. The annual report of governors to parents is a model of clarity and breadth.

**The headteacher, who gives very good leadership, has a clear vision for the future development of the school**

34. Although relatively newly in post at the time of this inspection, the headteacher's view of the school's needs benefits from his earlier experience as deputy head. His sense of priorities is strong, and he is gradually introducing changes in management which will enable fulfilment of his vision, over time. This is the right approach for a school imbued

with strong traditions and well-expressed values. He has won the confidence of staff and parents and is respected in his new role.

35. In reaffirming priorities, he has given pre-eminent status to curriculum development and change. Performance management is now in place, with better systems for monitoring pupils' progress as it links with teachers' effectiveness. Governors have had full involvement with him in establishing policy for performance development. However, the monitoring of teaching is not yet sufficiently embedded in the life of the school and the headteacher is aware of the need for further development of this aspect of school improvement systems.
36. The headteacher is establishing a new leadership team with revised roles and this is coming together well. The team is mutually supportive and hardworking. Each team member has accepted a range of specialist areas of work, and is developing them well. Finance and resources are well managed, long-term planning is thorough and most curriculum issues are well in hand. There are good working relationships between members of the leadership team and relevant governors and staff.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**Aspects of teaching, particularly the use of questioning to deepen boys' knowledge and understanding, and the provision of a more interesting range of activities. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, although underway, need further attention from heads of department.**

37. More detailed planning lesson by lesson is needed to ensure that every lesson provides the challenge evident in the best. In some lessons, planning is very sketchy, and teachers build in insufficient safeguards to monitor that they are sufficiently challenging pupils. In these lessons, the quality of learning is as good as it is because of the boys' own motivation, very good behaviour and application.
38. In some lessons, which were satisfactory in all other ways, there are too few plans for activities to extend and deepen learning and lead to better facility with skills such as investigation and problem-solving. In particular, some teachers' use of questioning is limited to eliciting factual responses. Whilst there is no evidence of acceptance of superficial answers, in some lessons teachers miss opportunities to lead the learning forward at a fast enough pace. The best lessons probe continuously to ensure that pupils understand fully the underlying concepts related to work in hand and can follow up their interests into new areas of learning.
39. In some lessons, for example, a session with Year 10 pupils, in which some good work was produced, pupils were left too long on a single task, so that the pace of the lesson reduced and they began to lose concentration. They could well have coped with another example, which would have broadened their view of the topic in hand.
40. Lack of experience of investigations affected the progress and outcomes for a Year 11 mathematics class, because the boys lacked the opportunity to draw on prior work. They followed a routine established as part of a previous investigation without really knowing why. This problem would be obviated by the provision of a wider range of activities in their lessons, providing greater interest and a more balanced programme. Lack of opportunities to learn from evaluating their own work reduced the amount of progress made in a Year 7 drama lesson. Although teaching and learning were at least satisfactory, the opportunity for extension was missed as, although the teaching offered

some evaluation of techniques, it did not extend into discussion and self-evaluation, which the boys would have coped with well.

41. These relatively minor problems, which should be seen against the background of good and very good teaching, would be overcome if all heads of departments routinely set up a monitoring and evaluation programme for the planning and teaching of all teachers. This is underway in a number of subjects and teaching in those subjects is more consistently good than in the rest.

**The standards reached by some able pupils with English as an additional language, who need extra help with their English to achieve the highest grade passes in GCSE**

42. In many lessons, assumptions are made that all boys, as a result of careful placement within sets, will cope equally well with all aspects of the learning. Many pupils with English as an additional language certainly do write as well as their English mother tongue peers, and sometimes better. However, those at earlier stages of learning English need more attention to their particular language learning needs if they are not to take longer to reach high grades in GCSE and AS/A level. In particular, they need to have support from subject teachers to gain command of technical vocabulary and the styles of writing most appropriate for particular types of task.
43. Some of the boys who are at earlier stages of English language learning lack confidence in writing. A small proportion also experience problems within the curriculum as a result of their different cultural backgrounds. Whilst the presence on the staff of an experienced and specialist teacher of English as an additional language, and of teachers from some ethnic minority groups, helps pupils greatly, the lack of awareness amongst some teachers of the implications of different cultural traditions for learning is an avoidable obstacle.
44. There is also more work to be done to ensure that teachers analyse and use available data about pupils' progress well, so that there is no confusion between pupils of lower attainment and those whose learning may take place at a slower pace because of a language learning issue.

**Provision of a broader programme in design and technology**

45. The school acknowledges that the provision of design and technology, especially in Key Stage 4, does not meet the letter of the most recent national recommendations. Whilst there is reasonable representation of the 'hard' technologies, such as resistant materials, the opportunities for pupils to work in a range of technologies, including food and textiles, are restricted.
46. It is also the case that opportunities to work at the higher levels of attainment in these subjects are restricted. Both the time given to design and technology and the access within Key Stage 4 are too limited. There are too few opportunities for design and technology to be seen as a medium through which boys can deepen their understanding of the physical properties and working characteristics of different materials. Boys are missing out on opportunities as described clearly in the National Curriculum.

**The time for religious education (RE) in Key Stage 4 continues to be low, and the provision of RE for the sixth form is insufficient to meet statutory**

**requirements. Assemblies still do not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory.**

47. Since the time of the last inspection, the school has increased the time available for religious education in Key Stage 3. There is better provision for RE in Key Stage 4 as a result of the increase in the length of the school day. However, this is still insufficient to meet the recommendations and requirements of the local syllabus for religious education, and very few pupils take up the opportunity to gain a GCSE pass in RE. The course for pupils who are not preparing for GCSE does not lead to any external accreditation, a missed opportunity.
48. In the sixth form, although there are opportunities within the lecture programme for boys to receive some religious education and to consider matters of belief, these are not planned systematically throughout the two-year cycle. Because of boys' other commitments, some of the opportunities which are available may be missed completely by some boys.
49. Provision for an act of collective worship has not been improved since the time of the last inspection, when it was a key issue. There is no policy on the role of the registration period and tutor contact in this context. Whilst many assemblies contain stimulating and relevant material, which contributes to pupils' spiritual development and understanding of belief and beliefs, they do not constitute an act of worship. The school has, however, been very sensitive to the multicultural dimension of its population and the range of religious practices within which boys live and this is reflected in speakers' approaches to the spiritual side of assemblies. A good example was seen when a visiting speaker discussed the nature of God in a range of religious contexts, stimulating quiet discussion as boys left assembly.
50. In lessons, opportunities to increase boys' access to spiritual development are not planned systematically, although they do occur, as when, in music or literature, there are moments of reflection on ideas and belief. The lack of systematic planning reflects the fact that most teachers do not regard this as part of their role. This throws the responsibility back to tutors, who generally use tutor time well to help boys organise their work, discuss matters of general knowledge and current affairs or encourage reading for pleasure. The school needs to consider how it will develop this important aspect of the boys' education, as a matter of priority.

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

51. In order to improve on the school's current successes and to maintain its high standards, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
  - (1) improve aspects of teaching by encouraging all teachers to use as wide a range of methods, materials and activities as possible, in order to:
    - develop the use of in-depth questioning to extend the most able boys and reinforce the understanding of all;
    - lead boys into more work which pushes out the boundaries of their knowledge and skills;
    - encourage them to follow up additional lines of enquiry beyond the boundaries of the syllabus;

and increase the regularity of monitoring and evaluation of teaching by heads of subject; (*Paragraphs 20, 21, 37 to 41*)

- (2) improve the standards reached by some able pupils with English as an additional language, who need extra help with their English to obtain the highest grade passes in GCSE, by:
  - providing extra help with their English out of class; more focused teaching and support for them in class, to ensure that they reach their potential high levels of success;
  - making sure that all staff are aware of and use the data available about these boys' language learning needs;
  - identifying the specific English language learning required by each subject; (*Paragraphs 18, 42 to 44*)
- (3) provide a full programme of design and technology, including food and textiles, which are currently unavailable; (*Paragraphs 45, 46*)
- (4) plan urgently to deliver the statutory requirements in religious education, collective worship and provision for spiritual development by:
  - increasing the time for religious education in Key Stage 4;
  - making provision for religious education for all members of the sixth form;
  - providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, as urged at the time of the last inspection and required by legislation;
  - systematically planning opportunities for spiritual development in lessons. (*Paragraphs 47 to 50*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	21	43	31	1	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	814	317
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	16	5

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	137	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	193

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	3	School data	0.1
National comparative data	6.3	National comparative data	0.4

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	161	

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	155	153	152
	Girls			
	Total	155	153	152
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	96 (100)	95 (98)	95 (97)
	National	63(65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	75 (94)	88 (94)	78 (87)
	National	28(35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	159	153	155
	Girls			
	Total	159	153	155
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (96)	95 (96)	96 (94)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	84 (76)	80 (89)	79 (85)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

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

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	150	157	157
	Girls			
	Total	150	157	157
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	93.7 (94.3)	98.1 (98.1)	98.1(98.1)
	National	47.4(46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.7 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	54.7 (54)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	158		158

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	21.8		21.8 (20.85)	5.7		5.7 (3.7)
National	Not available	Not available	18.2 (17.9)	Not available	Not available	2.7 (2.8)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	11
Black – other	0
Indian	115
Pakistani	60
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	20
White	869
Any other minority ethnic group	49

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	6	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	318

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.1
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26.9
Key Stage 4	22.6

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3,315,387
Total expenditure	3,531,912
Expenditure per pupil	3126
Balance brought forward from previous year	552,127
Balance carried forward to next year	335,602

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1131
Number of questionnaires returned	381

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	41	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	38	5	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	45	4	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	45	10	2	3
The teaching is good.	54	41	2	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	42	9	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	31	6	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	18	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	46	12	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	60	35	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	42	2	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	38	5	0	3