

INSPECTION REPORT

LEALANDS HIGH SCHOOL

Luton

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109686

Headteacher: Mrs J. Smith

Reporting inspector: Mr I. Thompson
12271

Dates of inspection: 8th – 12th October 2001

Inspection number: 188437

Full 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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sundon Park Road Luton Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU3 3AL
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B. Butler
Date of previous inspection:	20 th May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12271	I. Thompson	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9724	B. Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19913	R. Garrett	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
20716	R. Grogan	Team inspector	Religious education	
14691	J. Hall	Team inspector	Science	
18261	A. W. Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
15051	L. Kauffman	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Equality of opportunity	
27368	M. J. Merchant	Team inspector	Geography	
12328	P. M. Mitchell	Team inspector	History	
4757	D. H. Morris	Team inspector	Music	
2141	J. Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education	
20412	D. Shepherd	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

8341	W. Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lealands High School is an average sized, 11-16 mixed comprehensive school situated in a residential area of north Luton. There are 901 pupils on roll. In recent years there has been an unusually high proportion of pupils leaving or joining the school other than at the usual times of admission or leaving. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about average. The majority of pupils are white but a substantial number are from ethnic minority backgrounds. There are 197 pupils whose home language is other than English, only one of whom is at early stage of learning English. Pupils' standards when they join the school are below average overall. Although the proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is above average, the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is below average. The school has recently had some difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified teachers. Although the curriculum can be covered, there has had to be some compromise in respect of subject qualifications and qualified teacher status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school with a good capacity to improve further. Standards are improving as a result of strong leadership and good teaching. Pupils' attitudes and personal development are good. The school is well managed and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides very clear educational direction and leadership.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Social and moral development are very good.
- Links with the community and partner institutions are very good.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils from all backgrounds mix well together.

What could be improved

- The use of assessment data to promote progress and to improve the quality of reports to parents.
- Teaching of numeracy across the curriculum.
- Provision for information technology across the curriculum.
- Provision for modern foreign languages.

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 made satisfactory progress overall. Teaching has improved. The provision for religious education has improved although legal requirements in respect of daily collective worship are still not met. Planning has improved and

development planning is closely linked to departmental planning. Staff are now more involved in decision making; consultation and communication are key features of management. Achievement is improving; standards of literacy have been raised and provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved. The number of exclusions has been reduced.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

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

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

Although standards of attainment are below average, overall achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' prior learning. Inspection evidence shows that there are recent signs of improvement in the rate of progress in Years 7-9 and data provided by the local education authority show that the school's results in 2001 were above local averages.

Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2000 were close to average in English but below average in mathematics and science. Compared with results for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds, standards were above average in English but below in mathematics and science. The effect of higher performance in English is that pupils' average points score for these three core subjects is close to the national average and has improved at a rate close to that found nationally, representing satisfactory achievement.

All pupils make similar progress, including those with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and the gifted and talented. There are individual exceptions to this. When appropriate support is not available for pupils who need it, their progress is affected. Some gifted and talented pupils are making very good progress.

In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C was below average. For five or more grades A*-G results were well below average. Pupils' best results, compared with other subjects studied, were in history, drama and German; worst results were in art and design and science. Compared with results for similar schools, pupils' average points score was below average. Nevertheless, the average points score improved at a faster rate than nationally. This is the more remarkable when considering that over the two years of the course there was about a 40 per cent turnover of pupils, so that the composition of the group taking the examinations was radically different from that at the start of Year 10. This degree of change makes comparisons with pupils' standards at the age of 14 unreliable. Many of the pupils who joined the school had experienced difficulties elsewhere. Lack of continuity, incomplete coursework and high rates of absence affected their examination performance. There was a consequent effect on the school's overall results. Provisional results for 2001 show an improvement and the school has set ambitious targets for further improvement in 2002.

Work seen during the inspection generally confirms the standards of tests and examinations in 2000. In work seen, standards are:

	Years 7-9	Years 10 and 11
Average in	Art and design; English; geography; history; music; physical education; religious studies.	Art and design; design and technology; geography; history; information and communication technology (ICT); physical education; religious studies.
Below average in	Design and technology; ICT; mathematics; modern foreign languages; science.	English; mathematics; modern foreign languages; science.

Achievement is:

	Years 7-9	Years 10 and 11
Good in	Art and design; English; history; ICT; music; physical education; religious studies; science.	Design and technology; ICT
Satisfactory in	Design and technology; geography; mathematics; modern foreign languages.	Art and design; English; geography; history; mathematics; modern foreign languages; music; physical education; religious studies; science.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The great majority of pupils show good attitudes to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in classrooms is generally good. Out of class behaviour is sometimes inappropriately boisterous.
Personal development and relationships	Good relationships throughout the school between pupils and between staff and pupils. Pupils from all backgrounds get on well together.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Teaching is at least satisfactory in the great majority of lessons. It is good or better in some two-thirds of lessons and very good, or inspirational, in about one lesson in four. Teaching of basic literacy skills is satisfactory but the teaching of number skills is unsatisfactory because there is no common approach across the school and opportunities to practice and improve are missed. The use of ICT to support learning is unsatisfactory across the school. Teaching is good in English, science and most

other subjects. It is satisfactory in mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages.

The strengths of teaching are in teachers' command of their subjects, which supports good planning, their selection of appropriate teaching methods and the way in which they manage their classrooms through the good relationships they have with their pupils. Such teaching leads to pupils learning well because they are interested in their lessons and work at a good pace.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range of opportunities provided is good. Pupils are offered a good quality curriculum with the exceptions that standards in modern foreign languages are affected because insufficient time is allocated for teaching and provision for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Provision for extra-curricular activities and careers education is good. The school benefits from very good links with the community and partner institutions.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school makes a considerable effort to ensure that the all pupils are socially and educationally included in the mainstream school activities.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory overall but there are some gaps in support for pupils at an early stage of learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory; provision for cultural development is good; provision for moral and social development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good standards of care. Procedures to promote good behaviour are very good. Monitoring of performance and progress are not as good as they should be because the use of assessment data is unsatisfactory.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	The school makes considerable effort to involve parents in their children's education with limited success. Information about progress, provided through reports, needs to be improved.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by the senior management team. There are some weaknesses in leadership provided by middle management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well apart from the provision for ICT across the curriculum and in Years 10 and 11.
The school's evaluation of its performance	At senior level, performance is analysed very well. However, the use of data in departments requires improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good strategic use of available resources. Spending is targeted effectively and the principles of best value are applied appropriately.

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 school is approachable. • The school expects high standards. • Teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount and use of homework • Information about progress

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and that information about progress needs to be improved. In work seen during the inspection, the amount and type of homework was generally satisfactory but restricted in some subjects because there are not enough textbooks for pupils to take home.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Although standards of attainment are below average, overall achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' prior learning. Inspection evidence shows that there are recent signs of improvement in the rate of progress in Years 7-9 and data provided by the local education authority show that the school's results in 2001 were above local averages.

2. Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2000 were close to average in English but below average in mathematics and science. When results are compared with those obtained in schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds, standards were above average in English but below in mathematics and science. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the results of tests in all three subjects. The effect of higher performance in English is that pupils' average points score for these three core subjects is close to the national average and has improved at a rate close to that found nationally, representing satisfactory achievement.

3. Overall, girls did not make as much progress in Years 7-9 as boys in relation to their standards when they joined the school. Their performance in English was better than that of boys but the gap in performance was smaller than nationally. In mathematics and science, boys did better and the gap in performance was greater than nationally. The main reason for this is that many girls have low expectations of themselves and some show poor attitudes to learning. It also partly reflects the school's efforts to improve boys' achievement.

4. All groups of pupils make similarly satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and the gifted and talented. There are individual exceptions to this. For example, a girl who is at an early stage of learning English has difficulty in some subjects because specialist support is not available. Other pupils with English as an additional language are coping well because of the support they receive from teachers and their classmates; a gifted boy in Year 9 is making very good progress in mathematics because of the way in which the school has been able to meet his needs. A key feature of the school is the way in which pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds work well together.

5. In work seen during the inspection in other subjects, standards are average in art and design, geography, history, music, physical education and religious education. Standards are below average in design and technology, ICT and modern foreign languages. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in relation to their standards when they join the school and the school's value added data shows that an increasing number of pupils are making better than expected progress.

6. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C was below average. For five or more grades A*-G results were well below average. Pupils' best results, compared with other subjects studied, were in history, drama and German; worst results were in art and design and science. Compared with results for similar schools, pupils' average points score was below average. Nevertheless, the average points score improved at a faster rate than nationally. This is the more remarkable when considering that over the two years of the course there was about a 40 per cent turnover of pupils, so that the composition of the group taking the examinations was radically different from that at the start of Year 10. This degree of change makes comparisons with pupils' standards at the age of 14 unreliable. Many of the pupils who joined the school had experienced difficulties elsewhere. Lack of continuity, incomplete coursework and high rates of absence affected their examination performance. There was a consequent effect on the school's overall results. Provisional results for 2001 show an improvement and the school has set ambitious targets for further improvement in 2002.

7. Results in 2000 were above average in English literature and history. They were average in design and technology, drama and German and below average in all other subjects except art and design in which they were well below. Girls did better than boys but their average points score was further below the national average for girls.

8. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the age of 16 are below average in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and music. They are average in all other subjects. This shows an improving trend over previous years' examination results, particularly in art and design in which standards were very low, and represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' earlier learning.

9. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall in Years 7-11. The learning support teachers and the learning support assistants, who provide in-class support or who withdraw pupils for individual or group teaching for literacy and numeracy, are very effective. Teachers and pupils value them. They play an important part in the progress made by pupils who are experiencing difficulties in mainstream classes. As a result, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is in line with other pupils in the school. When pupils are given individual or small group support, they usually make good or very good progress.

10. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English generally make satisfactory progress. There are exceptions to this. A girl in Year 9 is having difficulty in science, because support is not available, and consequently is not making as much progress as her peers.

11. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress overall. In religious studies and science, gifted pupils make good progress because of the extension tasks that are provided for them. In mathematics, progress is very good because of the accelerated course arrangements the school has made to meet pupils' needs; in

art and design, talented pupils show exceptional skills in drawing and make very good progress in lessons.

12. Standards of literacy are broadly average. The quality of contributions made by subjects other than English to standards of literacy is satisfactory overall, and the provision for improving literacy standards is satisfactory overall. More often than not, subjects provide at least some good opportunities for pupils to practise literacy skills. In modern foreign languages, pupils are encouraged to present work well and copy accurately. Key words are displayed around classrooms and used as 'prompts' for pupils' replies. In religious education, pupils have frequent opportunities to discuss topics and make presentations. Speaking and listening standards have improved as a result. In physical education, question and answer sessions promote speaking skills and pupils are encouraged to evaluate their work. However, opportunities are missed in some departments. There is no clear policy for developing literacy in mathematics and standards are affected by pupils' literacy difficulties.

13. Attainment in number is below average. The contribution made by subjects other than mathematics to developing pupils' numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. The school does not have a policy for numeracy and most subjects do not make any planned provision for the development of numeracy skills. Some subjects are making an impact on standards of numeracy. In science, lessons are devoted to ensuring that pupils have the necessary skills needed to be able to calculate effectively, for example in Year 11 when dealing with velocity and acceleration. In art and design, good provision is made for the development of pupils spatial skills and understanding of symmetry and enlargement.

14. The rate at which pupils make progress is usually a result of the quality of teaching that they receive so that when teaching is good, the standards attained by pupils are higher than expected. The principal exception to this is in modern foreign languages where the amount of time allocated for teaching is insufficient to enable pupils to make the progress they should.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' attitudes to the school and to the work they do there are good. They are interested in their studies and keen to learn. In a Year 7 science, lesson pupils wanted to explain the findings of their experiment and did so with confidence. In an English lesson in Year 10, pupils worked with considerable concentration on a poem by Keats to develop a greater understanding of his writing. Pupils are able to discuss their work with enthusiasm, as for example in a Year 9 art and design lesson on the development of surrealist drawing. Most pupils work purposefully and with interest. Those pupils interviewed were enthusiastic about the subjects they study and had few dislikes. There is a close match between standards of teaching and pupils' attitudes: attitudes to learning are at their best when teaching is stimulating. Most pupils are able to maintain good levels of concentration throughout the lesson, as was the case in some history and German lessons seen during the inspection. There are some lapses when concentration wanes and pupils do not bother to listen, but overall attitudes are good.

16. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory overall. In lessons, pupils behave well, however, and standards are good with only a few instances of disruption. Pupils generally understand the rules and respond by behaving when they are managed effectively. Pupils interviewed considered that their behaviour had improved since the introduction of new procedures developed by the headteacher. Standards of behaviour as pupils move around the school are not as good as those during lessons. Pupils usually move sensibly along crowded corridors and stairs, although they are often noisy. Litter is a problem, which the pupils themselves acknowledge and dislike. Despite the school's firm handling of bullying, cases do occur. The number of exclusions, both fixed-term term and permanent, has fallen from the high level noted in the previous inspection report and is now average for a school of this size. Most exclusions result from violent behaviour.

17. Pupils respond well to the provision that the school makes for their personal development. Relations within the school are good. Boys and girls normally sit side by side and work well together. In mathematics lessons they co-operate well in

discussion. They also work well in groups. In a Year 8 music lesson, writing television jingles, pupils worked independently and efficiently to prepare and perform their compositions. Most pupils are aware of how their actions can affect others, and in particular how they can help. They take their responsibilities seriously. In personal and social education lessons earlier this term, pupils across the school compiled a list of what they saw as the school's strengths and weaknesses. This list was put to the Year and School Councils for discussion and action. A group of Year 9 pupils has trained as peer supporters to help younger pupils. Older pupils also help younger ones when paired reading takes place on several weekdays at lunchtime in the library. Some 50 – 60 readers and listeners take part. Sessions buzz with animated, purposeful learning. Such initiatives help pupils improve their literacy skills. Prefects take their duties responsibly. They have to earn their places through effort and behaviour.

18. Attendance at the school is satisfactory. The rate of attendance in the academic year 1999/2000 was 91.5 per cent, close to the national average. Authorised absence was 7.9 per cent, which is broadly average. Unauthorised absence was below the national average. This is much the same as the picture at the time of the previous inspection. Figures for the year 2000/2001 are very similar, but the rate of unauthorised absence was lower. Medical reasons and holidays taken during term time account for most authorised absence.

19. Pupils' behaviour has improved since the previous inspection, although for a group of pupils, a minority, it remains better in lessons than around the school. The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching, and of the learning such teaching promotes, is good throughout the school. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons and is good or better in 67 per cent. It is very good or better in 28 per cent but unsatisfactory in three per cent. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection was in an occasional lesson in a few departments across the school. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection when 16 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory overall and one in five lessons in Years 7-9. In this inspection, about one third of the staff taught lessons that were judged to be very good or better and at least one lesson of this quality was seen in every department. This is the more remarkable when considering that some teachers are teaching outside their main subject expertise and the high proportion of unqualified and relatively inexperienced teachers among the staff. High quality teaching was seen in lessons taught by both senior members of staff and newly qualified teachers.

21. In Years 7-9, teaching is satisfactory in geography, mathematics and modern foreign languages. It is good in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in art and design, history, ICT and religious studies. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching in all subjects.

22. The common weaknesses of the few unsatisfactory lessons are that lesson planning does not take sufficient account of pupils' earlier learning; tasks are not demanding enough; pace is slow and behaviour deteriorates leading to difficulties of classroom management. The result is that pupils do not work hard enough and do not make enough progress. In the great majority of lessons teachers use their knowledge and good command of their subjects to plan lessons that involve and interest pupils. For example, a very good Year 10 geography lesson on hazards was illustrated with a wealth of topical examples so that pupils increased their knowledge and understanding and high quality learning was evident. A common feature of planning is that teachers make clear to pupils what it is that they are expected to learn at the outset of virtually all lessons. Most make good linkage with previous lessons to consolidate pupils' learning and to check how much they have retained. There are a few occasions, for example in music, when lack of specialist knowledge affects the development in depth of lessons for older pupils but the overall effect on standards is small.

23. The best lessons show a combination of strengths that promote learning. For example, in an excellent Year 9 music lesson, very good planning of appealing activities produced outstandingly good learning. Clear organisation ensured that the needs of all pupils were met, talented pupils were stretched by the demanding work provided for them and pupils with special educational needs were well supported. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject was communicated to pupils. Very good control was maintained throughout a very active lesson. In an excellent English lesson, the teacher made it clear that high standards were expected and pushed pupils to achieve by the example of her own performance and positive feedback and guidance on theirs. Carefully planned materials contributed a great deal to pupils' involvement in the lesson. In a lesson in which almost half of the pupils were on the register of special educational needs, support was used well to ensure outstandingly good learning for all pupils. In a very well planned German lesson, it was clear that the teacher knew the pupils well and knew how to get the best from them. A very productive atmosphere was created by setting clear standards and managing activities so that pupils had to take part. The result was very good learning and an increase in pupils' confidence in their spoken use of the language.

24. Relationships are good throughout the school. Many teachers build upon the good relationships they have with their pupils to promote learning. In a very good Year 9 mathematics lesson, the excellent relationships developed between teacher and pupils since they entered the school were a key factor in high quality learning. Pupils were motivated to succeed; appropriately targeted support and encouragement helped them to do so.

25. Some of the most consistently strong teaching is in the art and design department. Lessons show good planning based on very good knowledge of the subject and related pupils' individual needs. Clear goals are set for lessons; teaching is confident and lively; high standards of behaviour are expected; resources are carefully chosen and well organised. This leads to consistently good learning and is raising standards in a department where until recently results were poor.

26. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy across the school is satisfactory. Although some opportunities are missed, the majority of departments provide at least some good opportunities to improve pupils' reading and writing and individual teachers provide appropriate guidance. The teaching of the basic skills of number is not guided by a school policy for numeracy and is unsatisfactory overall. The use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is also unsatisfactory because provision is inadequate. Although the school has made, and continues to make, efforts to improve provision, departments across the school do not have sufficient access to the equipment they need.

27. Teachers know and understand the needs of pupils on the register of special educational needs. Most use individual education plans effectively and take account of them in their lesson plans. Teachers who have volunteered to work in the social inclusion centre build effective relationship with pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. They are an important element in the efforts to maintain the interest of those pupils in their education at Lealands. The centre is sufficiently flexible to enable it to respond to the personal and social needs of pupils as they arise, and respond to them in appropriate and effective ways.

28. Although there are some weaknesses, teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now a strength of the school.

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

29. The school curriculum is mainly broad and balanced, providing a satisfactory range of learning opportunities across Years 7 to 11. It has many good features and some weaknesses. Well-planned schemes of work ensure a wide range of learning opportunities in most subjects, but the mathematics curriculum is largely determined by the choice of textbooks. A strength of the school is the curriculum support available to pupils from the learning support department and the social inclusion unit.

30. The quality of the curriculum in Years 7-9 is satisfactory overall, including all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious studies. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when insufficient time was provided for religious education. The design of the curriculum has had to take account of the availability of suitably qualified staff in modern foreign languages. Consequently, time allocated to French and German is insufficient to meet the demands of the National Curriculum programmes of study up to age 14, nor is there the opportunity for able linguists to learn a second foreign language. This deficiency needs urgent attention. Timetable constraints are affecting continuity of learning in mathematics in Year 7, where pupils are taught in different groups for half of their lessons. All pupils have separate lessons in ICT but the cross-curricular use of ICT is variable between subjects. This is unsatisfactory and similar to the situation at the time of the previous inspection.

31. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. It includes a core curriculum for all pupils, with a choice of either full or short courses at GCSE in a

modern foreign language, physical education and religious studies, plus a choice of three options. ICT has been dropped from the core curriculum in Year 10, which deprives those pupils who have not chosen ICT as an option of their entitlement to it. Monitoring is not in place to ensure that the necessary ICT skills are being taught across the curriculum. Standards in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 are affected by the fact that pupils do not have a secure foundation for their studies, as a result of the shortage of time for the subject in the earlier years. A successful alternative curriculum provides a skill-based vocational course to meet the needs and interests of a small group of pupils, whose needs are not met by the mainstream curriculum. Opportunities to follow vocational courses are not available within the options, now that the GNVQ course in manufacturing is being withdrawn.

32. All pupils in Years 7-11 follow well-planned courses in personal and social education taught by form tutors in one lesson each week. The programme is reviewed each year and a thorough audit has been done against National Curriculum guidelines, to assist planning for education in citizenship. Themes for the first five weeks of the year are common across the school, focusing appropriately on school values, the code of behaviour and sanctions, and giving pupils the opportunity to set themselves targets. It is an effective programme tailored to pupils' stage of development, from induction in Year 7 to preparation for further education and work in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, the programme of drugs awareness, sex and relationship education, developed in consultation with governors, parents and pupils, supports pupils well as they move through adolescence into adulthood.

33. Provision for careers education is good. The school has a carefully planned programme that includes all year groups and allows enough time for topics to be covered properly. For example, pupils consider how to match option choices to possible careers or training courses in Year 9. They pursue this in greater detail in Year 11, learning about the opportunities available locally, or further afield, which suit them best. Pupils interviewed think the guidance they are given is constructive and helpful.

34. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. It is acknowledged to be at the forefront of special educational needs in the local authority and has attracted wide interest from schools in the area. The learning support centre, along with the social inclusion centre and the pupil support initiative in Years 10 and 11, are central to the very good effort that the school is making to ensure that all pupils are socially and educationally included in the mainstream school activities. The special educational needs co-ordinator, the student support manager and the social inclusion centre manager, work well together to ensure that the provision is effective and has a positive impact on pupils and the work of the school. Two learning support assistants run a breakfast club on four mornings a week. This provision is primarily for pupils with special educational needs, but is increasingly used by other pupils, who benefit from both the breakfast provision and the early access to resources for completing their homework.

35. Provision for the teaching of the basic skills of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Most subjects provide opportunities for pupils to practise

literacy skills. However, there is no policy for developing literacy in mathematics and standards are affected.

36. Provision for the development of numeracy skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is no school policy for numeracy, with the result that the way in which departments tackle the teaching of basic skills varies so much as to be ineffective overall.

37. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities. Sport is well represented, providing a range of team games. Many subjects provide clubs for pupils to get help with homework and extend their knowledge. The library, ICT rooms and careers service are open at lunchtime and after school. Pastoral support is also available in the social inclusion centre and through the peer support system. In the week prior to the inspection, the school production of 'Guys and Dolls' had had a very successful run, involving two casts and over one hundred pupils.

38. There are strong links with the local community and highly constructive relationships with partner institutions. Many local companies support the school in work-related education, work experience and the Young Enterprise scheme. Good links have been formed with the Luton Council of Churches, whose representatives are involved in religious studies lessons and a Christian club, as well as helping in the inclusion centre. Primary head teachers think highly of the school's curricular links, such as the transitional project in humanities, the master classes in mathematics and the summer school for basic skills. The local partnership of schools is very effective in promoting smooth transition between the different phases of education. Further education institutions make presentations in Year 11 assemblies, and Luton University organises a business studies project for interested pupils in Year 11. The school has good relations with local agencies such as educational welfare, health and psychology, police and social services, holding weekly meetings. A number of local community groups use the facilities outside school hours.

39. The school makes good provision for the personal development of pupils. Provision for moral and social education is very good. The cultural education provided is good and the opportunities for spiritual development are satisfactory, but no greater than at the time of the previous inspection.

40. Provision for spiritual development is strong in religious studies but weak across other subjects. Pupils gain a sense of worship and a respect for what is held sacred from their study of major world religions and exploring fundamental questions about the purpose of life. Assemblies usually prompt spiritual or moral reflection but they are not all acts of collective worship, nor are they provided daily for all pupils. Some good examples seen during the inspection included pupils considering the importance of feelings in English, marvelling at chemical reactions in a technology lesson and at the detail of onion cells viewed through a microscope.

41. The school places strong emphasis on moral development through its insistence on the "4Rs" of respect for oneself and others, for learning and the environment. Teachers are good role models for the school's values in the way they

treat pupils and encourage mutual respect. These values are developed in assemblies and the thought for the week themes, one Year 10 class starting the day with an excellent discussion of the rights and wrongs of the sale of kidneys. The “4Rs” feature in each year’s programme of personal and social education, along with the code of behaviour and strategies to combat bullying and prejudice. Sex education is well taught in the context of relationships, involving religious studies alongside science and physical education. Moral issues are discussed widely across the curriculum. For example, in history pupils discuss the degradation of slavery; in science they consider the ethics of nuclear deterrents and in technology they focus on recycling and sustainable development.

42. Social education is a strong feature of the school’s provision. There is a strong emphasis on social inclusion and support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, fostering harmonious relationships that will benefit pupils’ learning. Pupils are encouraged to care for each other. Twenty Year 9 pupils have been trained to offer peer support to Year 7 and senior pupils listen to junior pupils practising reading. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. All Year 11 pupils who meet the requirements can serve as prefects. Pupils can have their say in the School Council and get involved in projects such as ‘Caring for the Environment’. Aspects of citizenship are taught in personal and social education, such as human rights and responsibilities, democracy and the law. Across all subjects there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills through group work, class discussions and class presentations of pupils’ work.

43. The school makes good provision for cultural education, providing a wide range of out of hours learning, opportunities for playing a number of sports, and residential visits to Germany in Year 9 and to Snowdonia in Year 10. English and drama make a particularly strong contribution to cultural development, arranging theatre visits to London, workshops for visiting authors, debates and ‘readathons’. The school has a good reputation for drama productions. Multi-cultural education is satisfactory. There are good opportunities in art and design to study the art and artists of different cultures and in religious education, where lifestyles of different faiths are studied. History gives pupils vicarious experience of past societies and design and technology looks at food and textiles from different cultures. There is scope for more appreciation of pupils’ own cultural backgrounds.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school places a high priority on looking after the pupils in its care and does so well. General procedures to ensure the welfare of all groups of pupils are good. Heads of year and tutors stay with pupils during their time at the school and come to know them well. This knowledge of pupils and their needs is backed by careful records of pupils’ personal development, which helps teachers to provide personal support when this is needed. All groups of pupils receive good support. The social inclusion centre gives sensitive help to pupils with behaviour problems in Years 7-9 who do not settle easily into classroom routine. The centre works closely with the learning support team. Its methods are flexible and contribute to its success. Pupils work for varying periods of time in the centre itself. They then return

to the classroom where frequent monitoring visits by members of staff from the centre provide reassurance both to pupils on the programme and to subject teachers. A mentoring scheme to give similar support to pupils in Years 10 and 11 is due to start shortly, funded by Excellence in Cities.

45. Child protection procedures are good. There is clear guidance for all members of staff and good liaison with other agencies involved. There are good procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety, both within the school and on visits outside. Some potential hazards were drawn to the attention of the school during the inspection. The school's procedures to record and monitor attendance are generally good. Levels of unauthorised absence have fallen since the school began to contact parents early on the first day of absence.

46. Procedures to promote behaviour and discipline are very good. Clear guidelines for members of staff set out how the school wants to encourage good behaviour and manage discipline. Expectations are high. There is an increased emphasis on achievement, which is liked by pupils. The help and support provided through the social inclusion centre is an important part of these procedures. The school has a strong policy on bullying and has recently established a peer support group. Despite this, instances of oppressive behaviour still occur, though pupils think there are fewer of them, and that the school handles such matters effectively. Standards of behaviour in the school have improved since the introduction of these procedures and the firm and consistent way that members of staff apply them.

47. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good. The collection and analysis of available data by the school is very good. Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results, reading tests and nationally standardised tests are combined to build up a clear picture of pupils' attainment when they arrive at the school. These are given to staff so that they have a clear picture of the attainment of pupils they are teaching. These results are added to as pupils move through the school. Satisfactory procedures are in place for assessing pupils' attainment in most subjects. They are good in art and design, science and religious education. They are unsatisfactory in mathematics. The use of National Curriculum levels is not a strong feature of many subjects. Assessment procedures to determine the needs of pupils with special educational needs are very good, as are the procedures for annual reviews in which parents are involved.

48. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. The school has an effective system for reviewing progress, setting targets for pupils and identify under-achievement. However, the use of the data collected to monitor progress and set targets is not yet well established in subjects. Few subjects are using the data they have to effectively monitor pupils' progress as they move through the school. Target-setting is not a strong feature of assessment and few opportunities are given for self-assessment by pupils. As a result, the quality of the information for parents in reports does not give a clear picture of what pupils can and cannot do and need to do to improve their standards.

49. Pupils' personal development is monitored efficiently. This applies to all pupils, not just those supported by the social inclusion centre. The personal and

social education programme gives good guidance on a range of issues preparing pupils for adult life. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress does not make effective use of the extensive range of information that is available on their progress and potential. The setting of targets is often imprecise and is not closely matched to what pupils need to do to improve their performance in each subject. As a result, the quality of educational and personal support and guidance which the school gives pupils to help them to do as well as they can, while satisfactory overall, is less effective than it could be.

50. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school continues to look after its pupils well. Since that inspection, procedures to promote and monitor good behaviour have improved. Levels of fixed-term exclusions have fallen as a result.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Parents have a broadly positive view of the school. Most parents are pleased with the school. Almost all parents who returned the questionnaire considered that the school expects their children to work hard and to do as well as they could. However, this view was not echoed at the parents' meeting where parents present thought that their children did not achieve their full potential. Some of the parents who returned the questionnaire and who attended the parents' meeting have concerns about the amount of homework that pupils get, about the information they receive about progress and about whether the school works closely with them. The inspection team considers that in general the homework set is appropriate, but that in some subjects, science and modern foreign languages in particular, the fact that there are insufficient textbooks for pupils to take home does restrict the type of homework which can be set. Inspectors consider that the school does try to work closely with parents but its efforts get a limited response. However inspectors agree with parents' concerns that the quality of information about progress is not satisfactory.

52. The school tries hard to involve parents more closely in the work of the school and has been concerned to increase their involvement since the previous inspection. These efforts met with limited success then and this continues to be the case. Parents' views are sought through questionnaires. Pupils' organisers have been re-designed to make it easier for parents to communicate with the school. New parents are given a clearly presented and comprehensive briefing before their children start at the school. The school is quick to contact parents if there are concerns or problems with a pupil. Parents are also told when their children have done well, individually by letter and more generally, through the newsletters.

53. The impact of parents' involvement and the contribution that they make to their children's learning are both satisfactory. Although the level of attendance at parent consultation evenings differs between year groups, it is satisfactory overall. Most parents sign pupils' organisers and many use them to explain absence or to contact the school with queries. More parents now telephone the school promptly when their children will be absent. Parents support fixtures and come to the school's

productions. The Friends of Lealands School Association is active socially. The money raised helps the school, with the running of the mini-bus for example.

54. The very good contact that the special educational needs department has with parents is a key feature of its provision. The department has set up a multi-agency initiative that draws all visiting specialists together as a team. This farsighted initiative ensures that information on the needs of, and the progress made by, pupils on the register of special educational needs can be shared openly. This then enables relevant agencies to focus, in a well-informed way, on individual pupils and their families, and so maximise the support available to them.

55. The quality of the information provided for parents is unsatisfactory overall. This is because the information parents are given in annual reports about their children's progress does not consistently include details of National Curriculum attainment targets or levels to enable parents to know how well their children are doing. Teachers' comments do not always tell parents what their children can and cannot do and what they should do in order to improve in each subject. The targets for improvement which pupils are given tend to be too general and not specific to the individual child in each subject. By contrast, the quality of the general information that the school provides about itself is good. Both the prospectus and induction information for new parents are helpful. Frequent newsletters keep parents up-to-date with life at the school and pupils' achievements.

56. The overall picture is similar to that given in the previous inspection report. The school continues to try to involve parents and meets with mixed success. The format of annual reports was then changing to the computerised version currently in use.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The school is well led and managed. In the year since her appointment, the headteacher has provided very clear educational direction and has already secured improvements. Staff, pupils and parents are all aware that the overriding priority is to raise standards. The school development plan shows that this is based on a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher understands the process of change and is skilfully managing improvement at a sustainable rate. She has developed a strong commitment to improvement through consultation and the involvement of all staff in the development process. There is a common sense of purpose. The school's aims and values are reflected in its policies and the effort that teachers put into their work. The headteacher is well supported by other members of the senior management team whose individual strengths are recognised and deployed to complement those of their colleagues. Overall, the management structure works well and enables strengths to be recognised and weaknesses to be identified. The headteacher and senior staff are aware of all the matters for improvement identified by this inspection and are already planning to deal with them. Policies have been revised and provide effective guidelines for important aspects of the school's work. For example, the staff handbook contains a clear and succinct policy for equal opportunities, which

covers gender, inclusion, and ethnicity. The only major weakness is the lack of a policy to guide the development of numeracy across the curriculum and this is affecting standards. Indicators of the success of the senior management team's approach are the good relationships that pervade the school and particularly the way in which the quality of teaching has been improved through rigorous monitoring and effective support. As a result of the way in which the headteacher has brought the staff together and established a strong sense of purpose, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

58. Much has been done in a relatively short time to improve leadership and management at departmental level. However, there remain some weaknesses of both leadership and management. For example, although day-to-day management of science and geography are good, there are weaknesses in long term planning, particularly in the use of assessment data to improve standards in Years 10 and 11 and to set clear direction for the departments. A number of heads of department have only been in post for a short time, for example mathematics and history, and although planning has begun and some improvements have been made, much remains to be done. This is reflected in the way that improvements in standards can be seen in Years 7-9 but not yet to the same extent in Years 10 and 11.

59. The governing body has a very good working knowledge of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces. This is partly the result of attachments to departments, which provide governors with first hand information, and regular reviews of performance. Governors play an active role in monitoring and supporting the work of the school. They work with the senior management team to identify matters for improvement. Rigorous but realistic targets are set and progress towards them is monitored as part of the drive for improvement. The governing body has a broad network of contacts with the local community. This gives the school an effective means of consulting opinion and identifying concerns and supports the school's other efforts to consult parents, for example through questionnaires. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection in tackling the key issues. The provision for religious education now meets requirements. However, there is now insufficient time allocated to modern foreign languages and the statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and those relating to the teaching of ICT across the curriculum are not met fully. Development planning is now much better and staff are more closely involved in the process. Although further improvement is needed, standards have improved. The number of exclusions has been reduced.

60. Financial planning is good. The school manages its budget well and has good procedures to monitor and evaluate value for money of spending through comparisons with other schools and internal monitoring of the effectiveness of spending. Day-to-day financial administration is efficient and supports the management process well. The school is very good at finding alternative sources of funding to supplement its budget. For example, the school has recently acquired additional funds from the Excellence in Cities initiative. It is too soon for this to have had an effect on standards, but careful plans have been drawn together with an associated monitoring and evaluation process. Given the quality of teaching and the

firm foundation for improvement that has been established, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

61. The school makes effective use of new technology for administration and financial management. At senior management level it is also used very well to record and process performance data. However, this good practice has yet to be fully adopted by department managers to track performance and identify underachievement.

62. The overall match of staff to the needs of pupils and the subject curriculum is unsatisfactory because of continuing shortages of specialist teachers in some areas of the school. The school has had considerable difficulty in recruitment of qualified staff. It is a tribute to the quality of teachers who have been appointed and the system of monitoring and supporting teaching that the effect on standards has been minimised. Nevertheless, the staffing situation is unsatisfactory overall. The English department still has to rely on the valuable services of two non-specialist and one unqualified teacher. This makes monitoring, moderation and co-ordination more difficult and is an obstacle to raising standards as rapidly as may be. The modern foreign languages department has sufficient staff to provide the existing curriculum, but that curriculum is itself inadequate because of the shortage of staff and difficulties of recruitment. In music one teacher is a non-specialist and an unqualified teacher provides two further periods. Their contribution is valuable but, because they lack a specialist's depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject, there is some impact on standards. The provision of specialist teachers in other subjects is satisfactory. The match of the number of non-teaching staff to the needs of the curriculum is inadequate. There are sufficient administrative staff for the school's needs and day-to-day administration runs smoothly. However, technician support is spread very thinly in design and technology, and technicians in science are very hard pressed for time to fulfil laboratory duties and the requirements for practical work. Learning support assistants provide very effective support for pupils with special educational needs. Nevertheless, there are not enough of them and there are times when, despite teachers' best efforts, pupils without support struggle to keep up in lessons. Teachers and classmates support pupils who have English as an additional language as well as they can. However, those who are at an early stage of learning English require specialist support but none is available.

63. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. A staff development policy is in place and the effectiveness of training is monitored. Training is planned, after consultation with subject leaders, and is always linked to school and department development plans and to individual needs. A separate budget is provided for training and staff are required to evaluate any training they have received on returning to school. They are also asked to disseminate information to colleagues. Support for newly qualified teachers, unqualified teachers and those on the graduate training programme is planned through the school's induction programme; they feel well supported by the school and the departments. The school has well-developed links with several training institutions and one new teacher was a trainee last year.

64. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory overall in spite of the school's best efforts to cope with increasing numbers through some inventive reorganisation of offices and storage space to create room for teaching. In science, two new laboratories are very small and pupils' progress is affected in large classes. Congestion during practical lessons is common. The preparation room is too small for the department's needs and the safe storage of chemicals is difficult. Music lessons suffer some distractions from the close proximity of the practice rooms. In design and technology, shared use of areas and lack of storage space affect learning. Drama teaching is affected by the need for access through its space. The boys' and girls' toilets are in need of repair and are unpleasant. Conditions in the dining room are cramped but efficient staff management enables lunches to be taken with reasonable civility. There is very good accommodation for physical education, good areas for English and the library is large enough for whole class learning. The accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is very good and has a good level of resources with appropriate books, very good learning schemes and a generous number of computers with appropriate software.

65. The provision of resources for learning is unsatisfactory in many subjects. Spending on resources has been constrained by the need to manage a budget deficit from previous years. Nevertheless, much of the shortage of textbooks reported in the previous inspection has been improved, with the exception of modern foreign languages and music, which requires more textbooks and recorded music to support learning. Many departments require additional access to computers to support learning. Resources in science are unsatisfactory. There are insufficient funds to replace large and expensive equipment and this dictates how the curriculum is taught. Inadequate access to computers is also holding back learning in science. The ratio of computers to pupils is below the national recommendation. In modern foreign languages, textbooks are old fashioned and need updating. There are not enough for pupils to use for homework. Whilst the proportion of library books has improved since the previous inspection, it is still below the figure recommended by the School Library Association.

66. The library continues to be a well valued resource for learning that is used well. The clearly labelled shelves, proximity of computers and a good range of books, make it a satisfactory learning environment. Library staff do well to encourage use of the library by pupils and staff; the library is used by a flourishing breakfast club and lunchtime usage is high.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. In order to raise standards further, the school should:

- (1) Improve the use of assessment data to:
 - identify underachievement at an early stage;
 - support planning of teaching;
 - improve the quality of progress reports to parents.(Paragraphs: 48, 49, 55, 77, 87, 96, 109, 158)

- (2) Improve the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum.
(Paragraphs: 13, 26, 36, 83, 87)
- (3) Revise the structure of the curriculum to:
 - improve the provision for ICT across the curriculum so that statutory requirements are met;
 - improve provision for modern foreign languages.(Paragraphs: 14, 30, 59, 129, 132, 134, 136, 144, 155, 157)

The following should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- the provision of resources for learning, particularly up-to-date textbooks and equipment for the use of ICT in departments.
(Paragraphs: 51, 65, 96, 110, 139, 140)

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

68. The learning support centre, social inclusion centre and the student support initiative in Years 10 and 11, are central to the very good effort that the school is making to ensure that all pupils are socially and educationally included in mainstream school activities. The special educational needs co-ordinator, the student support manager and the social inclusion centre manager, work well together to ensure that the provision is delivered effectively and has a positive impact on pupils' progress and the work of the school.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	160
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	34	63	48	5	0	0
Percentage	6	21	39	30	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	901
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	161

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	236

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	197

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.9
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	93	85	178

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	53
	Girls	63	43
	Total	115	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (69)	54 (41)
	National	63 (63)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (36)	17 (11)
	National	28 (28)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37	61
	Girls	46	42
	Total	83	103
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	47 (46)	58 (51)
	National	64 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (20)	28 (20)
	National	31 (31)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	84	84	168

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	22	66	75
	Girls	31	73	79
	Total	53	139	154
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	32 (38)	83 (83)	92 (89)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	32
	National	38.4

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	17	76.5
	National		N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	77
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	10
Indian	31
Pakistani	11
Bangladeshi	8
Chinese	1
White	704
Any other minority ethnic group	51

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	8	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	30	2
Other minority ethnic groups	8	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	506

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.1
Key Stage 4	20.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2 472 225
Total expenditure	2 429 231
Expenditure per pupil	2 752
Balance brought forward from previous year	(76 418)
Balance carried forward to next year	(33 424)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	901
Number of questionnaires returned	396

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	57	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	31	56	4	1	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	52	10	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	55	13	5	5
The teaching is good.	21	63	6	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	53	13	3	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	52	4	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	44	3	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	20	53	14	3	9
The school is well led and managed.	24	56	5	2	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	54	5	2	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	43	9	5	16

Other issues raised by parents

The parents of some pupils new to the school were unable to answer all questions, because the survey was carried out early in the term.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- The leadership of the head of department, particularly in relation to raising standards.
- Teaching is good overall and particularly good in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers' shared commitment to the subject, and capacity to improve further.

Areas for improvement

- Use of time in some lessons.
- Use of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

69. Standards of attainment are average at age 14 and below average at age 16. These standards represent good achievement by pupils in Year 9 given their below average attainment on entry to the school. They represent satisfactory achievement by current Year 11 pupils given their performance in National Curriculum tests in 2000. The difference in attainment and achievement by these different groups of pupils arises from the major staffing difficulties experienced by the department in recent years. These were only substantially resolved in September 2001, although the department still relies on the help of non-specialist teachers, particularly in Years 10 and 11. There is consequently a legacy of uncertainty and lack of confidence among older pupils, which is affecting their rate of progress and the standards they reach. In the circumstances, the head of department has done well to ensure standards have not fallen, as is clear from current standards and recent results.

70. In 2000 pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was in line with pupils' performance nationally, and above average in comparison with pupils in similar schools. Provisional performance figures for 2001 show a similar picture. Performance was better in English than in mathematics or science, where pupils' performance was about the same. The trend of results for pupils taking these tests is in line with the national rate of improvement.

71. English GCSE results for the award of A*-C grades in 2000 were significantly below average. English literature results were significantly above average, the difference arising from the fact that fewer pupils were entered for this examination. In both courses, results for A*-G grades were above national averages. Provisional results for 2001 in English show improved A*-C grades and above national average A*-G grades, but a drop in English literature results. Results in both years suggest

that pupils achieved as well as might be expected compared with all schools, but not as well as pupils in similar schools. Pupils taking media studies in 2001 gained provisional results which were close to average for A*-C grades and all obtained a grade within the range A*-G.

72. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average at the age of 14. Higher attaining pupils are capable of sophisticated, fluent and accurate writing. Their reading can be pleasantly expressive, showing good grasp of vocabulary and understanding as, for example, when reading aloud from, or commenting on, Leon Garfield's demanding and ironic story 'The Apprentices'. Such pupils are also confident speakers and sensitive listeners. Middle attainers read and write competently but their reading and writing lack liveliness of expression and they are uncertain about how to comment on the evidence they use to make a point. Lower attainers often reply to questions willingly, but their replies are brief and undeveloped. Their writing also lacks development. Nevertheless there are strong indications of improvements in knowledge about language and its use as a result of the head of department's introduction of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9. Pupils tackle specialist terms readily and use them appropriately: in one lower attaining Year 9 class, pupils could describe 'homophones', understand the use of 'imperatives' and recognise different 'typographical features' of a text.

73. In work seen during the inspection, standards are below average at the age of 16. This judgement matches the pattern of results in recent years and represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests in 2000, and given the uncertainties over staffing already referred to. It reflects the fact that although stability has been restored, there has not yet been sufficient time for the legacy of the past to be erased. Some spoken responses by higher attaining pupils in Year 11 are above average standard. This was particularly the case when they made comparisons between characters in a complicated text, like Dickens' 'Great Expectations', and explained the parallel stories or links between the plot strands in the novel. Middle attainers often lack confidence and spoken replies can be brief and unextended. They lack a wide vocabulary to explain accurately what they mean. This was evident when tackling Keats' (admittedly difficult) sonnet "When I have fears that I may cease to be": replies were stuck in the language of everyday opinion. Lower attainers too have difficulty responding with more than one word replies. Reading aloud shows similar variation in the quality of expression and accuracy of delivery, and there are difficulties in understanding arising from lack of experience of a wide range of reading among middle and lower attainers. Higher attainers show some ability to quote appropriately and they often write at length and in great detail. Care is taken over presentation of coursework. Nevertheless, written expression is not always fluent or accurate. Such flaws affect attainment at the higher grades. Among middle and lower attainers, problems of spelling, sentence punctuation and clarity of expression persist. The limitations in reading, writing and speaking hold down standards of attainment to below average overall.

74. The quality of contributions made by other subjects to standards of literacy is satisfactory overall, and the strategies for improving literacy standards are satisfactorily effective. More often than not, departments provide at least some good opportunities for pupils to practise literacy skills. In science, for example, marking

often encourages improvement in spelling and expression, and there are opportunities for reading aloud and taking part in discussion. Opportunities can also be missed, however. In modern foreign languages, pupils are encouraged to present work well and copy accurately. Key words are displayed around classrooms and used as 'prompts' for pupils' replies. Speaking is developed through role-play. However, there is insufficient time to develop pupils' ability to write freely using subordinate clauses or more idiomatic use of language. This restricts the progress of higher attainers in particular. In religious education, pupils have frequent opportunities to discuss topics and make presentations. Reading aloud takes place around the class. Speaking and listening standards have improved as a result. There is a good range of writing opportunities, but insufficient extended writing, or writing that pupils can use to consolidate their learning. In art and design, the department employs a 'key word bank' to support pupils' notes about artists and their biographical writing. In physical education, question and answer sessions promote speaking skills and pupils are encouraged to evaluate their work. However, written GCSE work is below average standards because of presentation and short answers. Teachers' own presentation does not always provide an appropriate model for their pupils. In mathematics, there is no literacy policy and therefore no consistency of approach across the department. Some teachers are displaying key words for use in lessons, others are not. A concerted effort is needed because standards in mathematics are being affected by pupils' literacy difficulties. Very good support is provided for those with reading difficulties through, for example, the paired reading scheme that is run by volunteer staff and pupils. Other withdrawal lessons for particular pupils help them make rapid progress in spelling with the aid of 'Star Spell' software.

75. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall. They are very good when teachers keep pupils working at a cracking pace on interesting activities. A Year 7 pupil solved the mystery of which vowel to choose after the letter 'c' with a delighted 'Oh, I get it!' In another Year 7 class, a pupil, challenged to produce a more interesting sentence including an apostrophe, responded with 'Jim's book had an exquisite front cover.' Year 9 pupils were interested and involved in work on homophones because the teacher used whiteboards to involve the pupils actively in thinking, recording and responding. There was much shared interest and enjoyment of Leon Garfield's story 'The Apprentices' because the teacher read well, chose good readers from the class, and explained the humorous ironies of the story. Year 10 pupils were absorbed by the activity of matching quotations from 'Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry' to the novel's themes using high quality materials prepared by the teacher. She was transforming their attitudes to work by her energy, commitment and praise for their work. In other lessons, attitudes and behaviour are always satisfactory and usually good. There were no instances of disruptive or bad behaviour in any of the lessons observed during the inspection, reflecting teachers' good classroom management and good relationships with the pupils.

76. The quality of teaching is good overall. A particular strength is teachers' use of challenging texts which, besides those already referred to, range from Willis Hall's 'The Long and the Short and the Tall' to Tennyson's 'Ulysses'. Such texts make demands on pupils' understanding and provoke discussion about language, character, relationships and important moral issues. Teachers also provide well

presented, stimulating extracts, worksheets and other materials which help pupils to understand their learning and make an appropriate written response. This applies particularly to lower attainers and those with special educational needs who benefit from the way work is structured for them and make good progress as a result. Teachers make effective use of a variety of methods to encourage and reinforce learning, including short tasks, question and answer sessions, paired and group work, and quiet writing. Higher attainers are appropriately stretched and pupils at an early stage of learning English are well supported, with the result that all pupils make similarly satisfactory progress overall and progress in Years 7-9 is good. Teachers have taken on the introduction of the National Literacy strategy with commitment and energy and, as a result, pupils acquire basic skills and knowledge about language particularly well in Years 7 to 9. Some teaching shows excellent talent. In a Year 10 class, the teacher's ability to convert the language of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' into 'pupil-friendly' language and, with pupil help, perform the central fight scene, went a long way to convert pupils' attitudes to Shakespeare and help them to understand the complications of text and plot. In a Year 7 class, the teacher's use of challenging tasks, high expectations ('At least one question from each of you, and more from those who can... and you know who you are!'), and an excellent performance as 'The Witch's Daughter' kept pupils highly enthusiastic and learning rapidly. Teaching of this quality is raising standards in Years 7 to 9 already and gives cause for optimism about higher standards in Years 10 and 11 in the future. An area for improvement is the use of time in some lessons. Teachers sometimes misjudge the time an activity will take or miss an opportunity to 'short-circuit' an activity when too many illustrations are given. Sometimes over-explanation reduces the impact of valuable information. On these occasions the pace of the lesson is slowed and learning affected.

77. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good. The department has tackled the issues raised in the previous report, put standards on a rising trend and implemented the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy. These things have been done in the face of difficult staffing problems. The good leadership of the head of department has been significant in giving clear direction to the department's work. Her audit of Years 7 to 9 is a model of clear analysis. One area for improvement, however, is the use of assessment information to monitor the progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11 in order to ensure that all pupils are achieving as well as they should be. The department's capacity for further improvement is very good.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Planning for lessons and introduction of National Numeracy Strategy.
- The provision for gifted pupils.
- Improving standards at the end of Year 9.

Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment data to monitor pupils' progress and the subjects' performance.
- The contribution of other subjects to standards of numeracy.
- Provision for use of computers to support learning.
- The quality of information in reports.

78. When pupils enter the school, their standards are below average. Standards are still below average at the end of Year 9 but are improving. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' previous learning. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average, which represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' standards at the end of Year 9. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented well in teachers' planning. However, pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are not assessed well and their progress is not well monitored.

79. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, results were below average. While results have declined compared to national averages from 1996 to 1999 they have improved each year since 1999. They have continued to improve in 2001. Results were below average when compared with all schools and similar schools. The performance of boys was better than that of girls. Results were similar to those in science though not as good as in English. These results represent satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' attainment when they entered the school.

80. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was below average. These results were below average compared to all schools and similar schools. Results have declined since 1999. However, these represent satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. The performance of boys was better than that of girls. The proportion gaining A*-G was below average. Pupils did not perform as well in mathematics as they did in some other subjects studied.

81. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. Number skills are not well developed for many pupils. Many have difficulty with handling numbers mentally and average attaining pupils have difficulty in simplifying fractions. The higher attaining pupils in Year 8 have a good understanding of how to find factors of numbers. Algebraic skills are weak for most pupils with only the most able pupils able to handle algebraic expressions and equations with confidence. Pupils' understanding of shape and space and data handling are better. Average attaining pupils in Year 9 have a good understanding of mean and range for a set of data. Problem-solving skills are being developed well through investigational tasks. The most gifted pupils have a good understanding of problem solving techniques and are able to use their knowledge of different concepts to arrive at solutions.

82. Standards in the work seen at the end of Year 11 are below average. Number skills and algebraic skills are still weak for many pupils. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty with using negative numbers. However, they can plot coordinates on a grid confidently and reflect shapes using the coordinates. Average attaining pupils in

Year 10 are unable to solve simple equations with any confidence and are not competent in dividing decimal numbers. Pupils' data-handling skills and understanding of shape and space are generally better. Problem-solving skills are satisfactory with pupils able to identify patterns and establish rules. More able pupils can predict and test results and extend investigations. Achievement for the higher attaining pupils in Year 11 is generally good. They have a good understanding of quadratic equations and can use the formula to find solutions confidently. However, many do not have a good enough understanding of factorisation.

83. The contribution made by other subjects to developing pupils' numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. The school does not have a whole school policy for numeracy and most subjects do not make any planned provision for the development of numeracy skills. A few subjects do help to develop numeracy standards. For example, in science, lessons are devoted to ensuring that pupils have the necessary skills needed to be able to calculate effectively, for example, in Year 11 when dealing with velocity and acceleration. In art and design, good provision is made for the development of pupils spatial skills of symmetry and enlargement.

84. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is sometimes good and very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge that ensures that they are able to explain concepts clearly to help pupils understand new topics and skills. They are competent in teaching basic numeracy skills. When teaching is most effective, the planning for lessons is good with clear objectives provided for the lesson. For example, in a number of lessons aims for the lesson were clearly written and discussed so that pupils were aware of what they were going to learn. There is good progression between lessons and what has already been learned previously is reviewed effectively. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Teaching methods provide appropriate activities to help pupils learn and effective feedback is given in lessons to help pupils overcome difficulties and identify how well they are doing. They make effective use at the beginning of lessons of mental activities to develop pupils' number skills. Teachers manage pupils well, which ensures that pupils concentrate well and as a result make good progress with learning. Good use is made of overhead projectors to create a good pace to lessons and maintain interest. Homework is used effectively to support learning. Where teaching is least effective the starter activities are not difficult enough and sometimes do not involve all pupils. The time at the end of lessons is not yet used as effectively as it might be to discuss what pupils have learned. Weak management of pupils means that time is wasted maintaining order and as a result pupils do not concentrate as well as they should. The pace of some lessons is slow with activities not demanding enough from pupils. Questioning of pupils is generally satisfactory, although teachers often need to ensure pupils do not shout out answers and disrupt others. The quality of marking generally lacks consistency across the subject with few comments used about what pupils need to do to improve their work. Computers are not used often enough to develop skills or support learning.

85. Overall, the quality of learning is satisfactory. All pupils, including those with special educational needs who are given effective support in lessons, make satisfactory progress. Gifted pupils make very good progress. Good links with

primary schools, through master classes, have identified gifted pupils early and, as a result, many have been successful in GCSE examinations earlier than Year 11. Most pupils are acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding well. Poor attitudes of a minority of pupils are resulting in unsatisfactory progress being made in some lessons. Pupils usually apply themselves well to their tasks and make an effort, even though sometimes many find the skills and concepts difficult. The productivity and pace of learning could be better in some classes. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

86. Attitudes to learning are generally satisfactory. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good, which ensures that pupils usually behave well. Listening skills are generally satisfactory; the majority of pupils usually listen attentively when teachers are talking, although often many have to be regularly reminded to listen and are not keen to participate in discussions. When given their tasks, most pupils work productively although occasionally they do not apply themselves as well as they should. The presentation of work in books is generally satisfactory. Pupils usually co-operate well with each other.

87. Leadership and management are satisfactory. In the short time in post, the head of department has made good progress in tackling some of the weaknesses in the department. A clear direction is being provided for the subject and there is a clear commitment to improvement. Schemes of work are at present under review to take account of the National Numeracy Strategy. The department handbook, which at present is unsatisfactory, is being updated to include appropriate information for the work of the department. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. They do not provide an effective system for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress as they move through the school. As a result, the quality of information in reports is unsatisfactory. In addition, the monitoring of performance in tests and examinations is not well established. The head of department is aware of these weaknesses and has plans for improvement. Monitoring of teaching within the department is good. The lack of a whole school policy for numeracy is resulting in an unsatisfactory contribution of other subjects to developing pupils' numeracy skills. A weakness in the curriculum provision is the lack of opportunity to use computers to support learning.

88. Satisfactory improvements have been made since the previous inspection. There has been an increase in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. The quality of teaching has improved, with more variety in teaching styles and better use made of the application of mathematics to solving problems. However, standards in Years 10 and 11 have not improved sufficiently and pupils' progress is still not monitored effectively.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Good progress in Years 7-9. Pupils achieve well.
- Good teaching.
- Personal development is good. Pupils work well together. Behaviour and attitudes to work are good.
- Literacy skills are taught well.
- Marking is good. Pupils know how well they are doing and how they can improve.
- Teachers know their subjects well and are committed to raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Subject leadership; no strategies defined for raising standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Uses of assessment information to monitor progress and support planning.
- Accommodation and resources for learning.
- The use of ICT to support learning.

89. Standards are below average. They are below average when pupils join the school and remain below average by the ages of 14 and 16. Results in science in the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of fourteen were below average; results were similar to those in mathematics but not as good as those in English. Results were also below the average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Over the last three years, however, results have been improving with boys performing better than girls. Increasingly more pupils are making better than expected progress in their first three years in school and results are above local averages. This improvement is confirmed in work seen during the inspection and represents satisfactory achievement overall. In GCSE single and double award examinations at age sixteen in 2000, standards were below average, as they were in English and mathematics. Girls obtained significantly below the national average for girls in science. Compared with results in other subjects, those for science were among the worst. Standards in GCSE examinations have been declining over the last three years.

90. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is below average. Most pupils have a secure knowledge of the topics they have studied and their practical skills in setting up experiments and collecting and recording results are good. In work observed in lessons, books and discussions there is no significant difference in the pace of learning of girls and boys. Girls generally take greater care than boys over the presentation of their written work and scientific diagrams. From Year 7, pupils begin to use their prior knowledge to predict results. For example, in one lesson a lower attaining girl used her knowledge of visits to the seaside to predict that sand will not dissolve in water. A higher attaining girl in the same lesson tested out and reported to the class her prediction that salt will dissolve faster the higher the temperature of the water. Results are below average because pupils

generally experience most difficulty drawing on their prior learning and applying their knowledge. In a Year 8 higher attaining class, pupils are learning to distinguish the terms habitat and environment and they can describe the living and physical factors of a named environment. They have not yet progressed to an understanding that the abundance of organisms in an environment can be affected by these factors. In Year 9, lower attaining pupils know how to test whether foods contain starch or sugar but cannot readily remember the scientific names for the chemicals used. They cannot use their knowledge to predict if saliva will break down bread to release sugar.

91. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 16 is below average. However, achievement in the current Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. The highest attainers have some knowledge of radioactivity but do not apply this knowledge sufficiently in their debate about the ethics of nuclear deterrents. They have a good knowledge of atomic structure and achieve high standards in the skills of planning, obtaining evidence, analysing and evaluating the results of their investigations. Although a small number of these investigations are beautifully word-processed, the standard of the small amount of ICT work seen during this inspection is below average because there are too few opportunities for pupils to use computers in the laboratories. Average attaining Year 11 pupils have difficulty understanding the mathematical calculations in their work on velocity and acceleration; and have difficulty explaining surface area to volume ratio in their investigations on the rates of chemical reactions. They need support to suggest how their methods can be improved. A lower attaining group of Year 11 pupils have little recall of the structure of the eye. Higher attaining Year 10 pupils can generally describe the structure and function of a human system but have not yet progressed to comparing life processes in plants and animals. Year 10 average and lower attaining pupils have satisfactory knowledge about the structure of cells and organs but struggle to explain how they function using appropriate scientific terminology.

92. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers in Years 7-9 because teachers consider their needs when planning lessons, and generally deploy the learning support assistants effectively. In a Year 9 class of lower attaining pupils, all with special educational needs, the teacher skilfully helped a small core of pupils disaffected with school, to improve their inter-personal skills in line with the targets on their individual education plans. One pupil in Year 9 who is learning English as an additional language does not, however, receive adequate support. In contrast a gifted boy in Year 9 is making good progress by learning with a Year 10 class of higher attaining pupils. In Years 10 and 11, pupils with special educational needs learn as well as their peers and make satisfactory progress. They need time to develop their understanding of increasingly complex ideas and the pressure of the examination course often leads teachers to use methods that inform without fully involving pupils or monitoring individual progress effectively. A small number of teachers make good use of individual education plans for planning lessons, but generally across the department there is inconsistent use of the targets in pupils' individual education plans for planning.

93. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work are good. They want to learn; they listen well, and respect their teachers. They participate keenly in practical work and use equipment and chemicals safely; often in extremely cramped and inadequate laboratories. They enjoy seeing their work on wall displays which are extensive and interesting, and which also hide the shabby décor of the department. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 have the confidence to make presentations to their peers about the ethics of nuclear deterrents. A very small number of reluctant pupils are successfully encouraged to participate in lessons because of the high level of skill that teachers have developed to manage their behaviour. Pupils are able to learn without interference and disruption because classes are well managed and teachers generally have good knowledge of pupils' learning and behavioural needs.

94. The overall quality of teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils generally make good progress in lessons. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection, most notably for Years 7-9 where in nearly all lessons provision and progress are good, and occasionally very good. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, and in about one-third of lessons it is good. Teaching is better with the younger pupils because teachers consistently use interesting methods that succeed in getting pupils to join in. They make good use of the scarce resources and ask interesting questions to encourage pupils to think. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils enjoyed the role-play of being a coiled spring in work on forces. In their first lesson on the microscope, another Year 7 class tackled the question "What does small really mean?" In a Year 7 lesson on solubility, thorough preparation of resources took full account of the needs of higher and lower attainers. Higher attainers progressed quickly to investigate the effect of temperature on the rate at which substances dissolve. Lower attainers used the time appropriately to complete their investigation of which substances are soluble or insoluble. Teachers in Years 10 and 11 have very good knowledge of their subjects and of examination requirements. They manage their classes well and standards of discipline are high. They are less successful than with classes of younger pupils in involving all pupils during whole class teaching. In a lower attaining Year 11 class, where all pupils had special educational needs, and where reading ages were as low as seven years, no resources were used to stimulate their interest in a lesson on the nervous system. Questioning skills across the department are not well developed. Questions are not directed sufficiently at the differing needs of higher and lower attaining pupils with the result that many pupils, in GCSE classes particularly, remain uninvolved for extended periods.

95. Pupils generally know how well they are doing because the quality of marking is good. In the best examples, a teacher will provide written advice on how to improve, pose questions to extend understanding and set personal targets about spelling and grammar, where appropriate, to improve standards of literacy. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are less aware of their progress in GCSE investigational skills because teachers are not providing them with enough feedback and guidance. Pupils make good progress in the development of their literacy skills because teachers promote independent writing, reading aloud, discussion in groups and making presentations to the rest of the class. There is some good support for pupils

who have literacy targets on their individual education plans. Scientific terminology is promoted well through the use of key words for each topic. The development of numeracy skills in GCSE coursework is satisfactory but standards are below average. Pupils plot and analyse graphs and bar charts; but find calculations and equations for acceleration and velocity, for example, difficult.

96. Management of the department is satisfactory. However, there are weaknesses in leadership; there is insufficient focus on raising standards in Years 10 and 11; assessment data is not used effectively enough to monitor progress or to support planning. Unsatisfactory accommodation and an inadequate quantity of learning resources hold back the range and amount of scientific enquiry and homework, and the regular use of ICT. The number of technician hours is low. Technicians work in inadequate accommodation with poor preparation and storage facilities. Staff manage the inadequacies of the accommodation and resources well, organising room changes to give pupils who are taught science in classrooms the opportunity to develop their practical skills in a laboratory setting.

97. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The department achieved its target for Year 9 in the 2001 National Curriculum tests, but a new, more challenging target has yet to be set. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 16 are improving but remain below average. The quality of teaching has improved, especially of pupils in Years 7-9. A new GCSE double award course is now in place for the great majority of pupils in Year 10 with an appropriate increase in curriculum time to it. Facilities for practical work have improved, and there are more books, but accommodation and resources remain unsatisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is good.

Strengths

- Teaching - teachers set high standards.
- Leadership.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT.
- The use of visits and visiting artists.

98. Standards in work and lessons seen during the inspection are broadly average overall. Pupils join the school with limited experience of art and design and standards are below average. The good progress made by pupils during the first three years ensures that standards are average by the end of Year 9. Pupils studying for the GCSE examination in Years 10 and 11, find it difficult to cope with the new curriculum requirements. Their progress is slowed by the need to research their studies more widely and to produce extended written notes and careful annotation of their work in progress. Evidence from current work in preparation for GCSE examinations in 2002 suggests standards close to national averages. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 for the current year show attainment broadly average, with a few pupils achieving an exceptional standard. The accuracy of teachers' assessments and estimated grades is confirmed by inspection evidence. The number of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was significantly below national averages and very low in comparison with results in other subjects. There has been a downward trend in results over the past three years. Changes in the option system at the end of Year 9 and the recent changes of staff have had a positive impact on the work and the morale of the department. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection, along with improved standards in work seen, indicate a very good capacity to improve.

99. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 9 is at an average level. Pupils' drawing skills are developed by observational studies and they learn to control line, tone and texture to convey depth in the natural forms they draw. Higher attaining pupils choose unusual perspectives from which to draw their observations, creating new and interesting forms in their work. The observational skills of lower attaining pupils are not well developed and the majority rely on immature conventions, rather than the evidence of their eyes. Their lack of literacy skills holds back their progress in research and annotation. Pupils enjoy working with clay and learn to build thumb pots, coiled and slab forms. Higher attaining pupils join coils evenly and produce strong, well-shaped forms. Lower attaining pupils lack the fine motor skills needed to build structures that can withstand the stresses of kiln firing and need more support as they experience the special qualities of clay. Pupils with special educational needs make the same good progress in lessons as that of other pupils. In work seen during the inspection at age 16, attainment is average. The self-portraits of higher attaining pupils show good

control of line, tone, texture and form. Their work is individually very expressive. Lower attaining pupils understand facial proportions, but they lack observational skills and tend to draw what they think they see, so that they do not bring out the expressive character of faces. Ceramics is an emerging strength of the department and pupils are able to construct large well-built forms, using slab and coil techniques. Higher attaining pupils explore natural forms and show both technical and creative skill in the interpretation of the forms and textures they study. Sketchbooks show some good investigational work, researching artists such as Cézanne, Leonardo, the surrealists and others. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in their written work, although in lessons their progress in note taking is generally slower than their progress in practical art and design. Talented pupils show exceptional skills in drawing. They observe carefully and have the technical skill to reproduce their observations in sensitive and detailed studies. They make very good progress in lessons. Levels of attainment are approaching the levels found at the previous inspection, after the recent decline in standards.

100. Pupils generally have a very positive attitude towards lessons and enjoy the opportunity to express themselves in creative ways. They behave well, responding to the teachers' firm management of the classroom and their high expectations of good behaviour. They are courteous and respectful towards visitors and are pleased to show, and talk about, their work. They listen attentively and watch demonstrations carefully. Most are confident in putting their own views on art and design to the class.

101. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good throughout the school. An excellent lesson was seen in Year 10. Teachers have a very good command of their subject that enables them to teach confidently. This helps pupils to build on their basic subject skills and understanding, and to make good progress in their first three years at the school. All pupils make good and sometimes very good progress in lessons. Through Years 10 and 11, the progress made in art and design skills is good, but overall progress is slowed by the difficulties that the majority of pupils have in developing their research and writing up critical or explanatory notes for their projects. Teachers are aware of the needs of individual pupils and their lesson plans contain notes on those with special educational needs. All pupils are successfully included in the planned lessons and make similar progress to others in the class. Demonstrations of the skills required are given at the start of most lessons and pupils learn from the clear instructions given. Several very good 'gallery sessions' were seen at the end of lessons, enabling pupils to view each other's work and offer a critical evaluation of it. In this way, teachers build pupils' self-confidence and sharpen their critical awareness of their own and others' work. Sometimes not enough time is allowed for these sessions to develop pupils' critical thinking skills sufficiently. The learning environment is purposeful and productive and relationships are very good. Classrooms have very good displays of pupils' work and a bank of specialist terms clearly displayed. This gives pupils a ready reference to the standards expected by teachers.

102. The department has made many good improvements since the previous inspection, notably in teaching and the progress pupils make in lessons. There are five computers, recently installed in a separate area of the department, and a

technician now gives support for an hour each day. The poor showing in GCSE results in 2000 has been a disappointment to the department, but one from which, under strong leadership and a determination to work hard together, they are poised to recover. Overall, progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is satisfactory.

Strengths

- GCSE results in electronics and textiles.
- Literacy strategies used to improve standards.
- Teaching that motivates good learning.
- Improving standards.

Areas for improvement.

- Development of a foundation course from the start of Year 7.
- Procedures for assessment.
- Formal monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Inadequate accommodation and resources affect standards.

103. In 2000, teachers assessed pupils' standards as being well above average. However, observation of pupils' work indicates that the department was generous in estimations of attainment and that standards are below average. Lack of standardisation of grades across the department is a contributory factor to this anomaly.

104. GCSE results in 2000 were broadly average. This result was based on an accumulated figure, including the four elements of design and technology. The strongest areas were electronics and textiles, with disappointing results in resistant materials due to poor motivation of pupils and a lack of continuity, because of four staff changes during the course. Overall, pupils' performance matched their results in their other subjects. Girls' performance was higher than in their other subjects, while that of boys' was below that in most of their other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs gain good results in practical work. They do not do as well in theory work because of their difficulties with literacy and the lack of learning support assistants. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English show good practical skills but again often find the theory work more difficult.

105. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. However, the overall level of achievement is satisfactory because pupils enter the school with below average skills. During Year 7, they experience a full range of skills, tasks and materials. In Years 7-9 pupils respond well to challenging demonstrations that set a standard. For example, when pupils were marking and cutting wood for their fold-up stool, they used tests to identify quality and understood techniques of using their stance and body weight to help with sawing. They are given many opportunities to design independently, to evaluate their work and make changes to improve the final result. Pupils are given a sense of pride in their achievements. All pupils use literacy skills to improve their written work and presentation but still have difficulty producing accurate drawings, annotation of design sketches and the confident use of numeracy to help with scale and dimensions.

106. Standards by the end of Year 11 are broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' earlier learning. In Years 10 and 11 pupils use tools well in their chosen element of technology. In many cases, pupils' portfolios lack attention to detail in drawing techniques to produce accurate working drawings. Limited research and evaluation have a marked effect on examination grades.

107. Attitudes and behaviour are good across the department. Pupils are motivated by new experiences. Year 9 experimented creatively with colour ways, paints and fabric crayons to produce attractive designs and patterns for their drawstring kit bags, in textiles. In electronics pupils had to use their imagination, experience and the help of a computer programme to design a circuit for their fuse tester. During this type of activity, excited discussion, sharing ideas and solving problems together, strengthened pupils' personal development and engaged their creativity so that there was no time for their attention to wander. Teachers are consistent in their demands for good behaviour and high quality work, with a positive impact on pupils' thinking and learning.

108. Teaching is good overall with a significant proportion of very good teaching. In all lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge and industrial experience is skilfully transmitted through lively explanations, demonstrations and the use of specialists from the community such as the school meals manager. Year 11 pupils questioned this visitor on the aspects of designing a take-away food product for a school canteen. Effective planning with pupils during the previous lesson prepared questions and set the scene for their project. The discussion encouraged pupils to set up a food group to monitor school meals in collaboration with the speaker. The teacher encouraged a mature, reflective debate across the class. Basic skills are integrated well into learning, helping pupils to focus on producing clear, well presented text and helping to raise standards in folders, especially in Years 10 and 11. Assessment in Years 7- 9 has started to identify levels of attainment for each pupil, but there is a lack of self-assessment to guide personal motivation. Pupils with special educational needs, and those at an early stage of learning English, make similar progress to their classmates because teachers are aware of their needs and provide good support.

109. The department has a new manager and a group of enthusiastic staff, including technicians, who take a positive role in the widest developments of the department. The work and plans of the previous head of department are being used as a basis to develop and strengthen the systems for assessment, schemes of work and the department handbook, to ensure that pupils reach their targets and improve their standards of work. Assessment data is not yet used well enough to identify underachievement or to support planning. There is no formal monitoring of teaching by the head of department but the school's self-evaluation booklet is helping to guide this development.

110. Deficiencies in accommodation affect standards. The school has responded to the previous inspection report and a piecemeal modification has taken place, but the department lacks storage, which leads to cluttered work areas and cramped, inappropriate spaces that restrict independent learning. Inadequate resources further affect standards. The lack of access to appropriate ICT equipment reduces pupils' opportunity to reach the higher levels in their tests and examinations. Generally equipment is out-of-date and fails to meet pupils' needs to produce quality products. For example, there are no drawing boards for graphics. The department has made a satisfactory response to the previous report on issues of accommodation and continuity and progression, which are partly completed. There is still inappropriate provision for higher attaining pupils.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is satisfactory.

Strengths

- The department's commitment to improving attainment for all pupils.
- The relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Some very good teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Further development and use of assessment procedures.
- Greater use of field work and computers to develop geographic understanding.
- Monitoring and evaluating teaching.

111. At age 14, standards are in line with the national average. However, assessment of work by teachers shows that the proportion of pupils reaching the national average is increasing. During the first three years at the school, pupils make sound gains in their knowledge and understanding. At age 16, pupils' standards are as expected when compared with their prior attainment. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the proportion of passes at grades A*-C was just below the national average. During the last three years, this pass rate has increased dramatically. The pass rate at grades A*-G has approached, and sometimes exceeded, the national average during this time.

112. The work seen during the inspection shows that attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 is close to average. This situation has improved since the previous inspection. Many pupils enter the school with very low levels of geographical awareness and many have difficulty in writing and in using numbers. At the age of 14, higher attaining pupils can describe briefly how earthquakes and volcanoes are formed, sometimes presenting their work well with good illustrations. They understand how aspects of the physical world affect climatic patterns. Not all lessons are planned with sufficiently difficult work to ensure that pupils make the progress they should, however, particularly for those who are gifted and talented. As a consequence, they do not extend their understanding to see the links and relationships between places. Lower attaining pupils, when encouraged by very good teaching, show that they can use data from maps and statistics, for example in their studies of coasts and weather patterns. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in lessons, sometimes with work that is adapted for them, so that they can contribute well to discussions and write some ideas down. Most pupils lack confidence in their ability to explain ideas in detail and their written records are brief. Although they can usually understand the special vocabulary associated with the subject, they find it very difficult to record information in logical sequences. Pupils occasionally use ICT successfully. For example, they process data collected for extended homework and then use the results to explain patterns and they extend their understanding of environmental issues through research. Computers are not used enough to develop pupils' understanding of geography in their first three years at school.

113. The work seen during this inspection shows that attainment at the age of 16 is close to the standard expected nationally. Higher attaining pupils have a good grasp of essential numerical and statistical skills and can write extended paragraphs, for example on the impact of climate on rice growing in South East Asia. They produce accurate course work folders, sometimes using ICT, in which they process data to show the impact of moving the football ground in Luton to an out of town location. Lower attaining pupils have great difficulty in writing and in displaying information clearly. Consequently, they do not include enough detailed information or accurate explanation of geographical processes in their answers. Some struggle to complete simple graphs and do not understand the patterns that they show.

114. Pupils usually show enthusiasm for their work and are keen to answer questions. The very good relationships between teachers and their pupils mean that pupils try hard and are anxious to please. They often find that independent activity during practical tasks challenges them to learn and find out, although lower attaining pupils seek constant reassurance from their teachers. They behave well in lessons when a variety of stimulating resources and activities has been planned. However, pupils' concentration wanes rapidly when tasks are not fully understood and their behaviour deteriorates.

115. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is a significant majority of good and very good teaching. This is marred, however, by a large minority of unsatisfactory lessons. When teaching is very good, pupils achieve highly and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 8, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge, enthusiastic approach and very good resources meant that pupils rapidly understood how processes of erosion shaped the landscape. They extended their vocabulary quickly because key words were built into the discussion and recorded for future use. Writing tasks, specifically planned and adapted to the needs of different groups, enabled higher attaining pupils to work independently and lower attaining pupils to gain in confidence as they completed sentences with the new words they had learnt. In lessons where classroom assistants are available, pupils with special educational needs make good, and sometimes very good, progress. For example, in a good Year 9 lesson, pupils built up their understanding of symbols on weather maps very rapidly. The constant efforts of the teacher, working in close partnership with a colleague, meant that a great deal of individual attention was given to those who needed extra help and they made very good progress. The practice of planning for the needs of all pupils in lessons is not consistent across the department, so that some learning opportunities are missed. In an unsatisfactory lesson, the same tasks were set for all pupils but were too difficult for most. They did not understand how to proceed and so their learning was restricted. Too much time was spent in these lessons on low level tasks, such as copying, which did little to move pupils' learning on. Occasionally, some older pupils display unsatisfactory attitudes in lessons. Their learning is then too slow, despite the best efforts of the teacher to encourage and engage them in activities.

116. The department runs smoothly, with good relationships between teachers and a commitment to raising the attainment and achievement of all pupils. However, opportunities are not always taken to share very good classroom practice and expertise between teachers and through this to eliminate the significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. New strategies for marking and assessing pupils' work are now in place, with an emphasis on frequent written comments to show pupils how well they are achieving. However, in Years 7-9, these comments do not yet relate to national standards so pupils know how to improve their performance in relation to them. Although there are now more lessons planned using ICT activities, they are still infrequent. Pupils have limited opportunities to extend their geographical understanding in this way. In Years 10 and 11, the department provides generous support to pupils outside lessons, particularly in the completion of their course work. This is helping to raise standards.

117. The department has made satisfactory progress in tackling the issues raised at the time of the previous inspection. There is now some very good teaching within the department and this is improving the quality of pupils' learning. The school now provides much more information on pupils' prior attainment. The department is using this to generate a greater awareness of the needs of all pupils but still needs to find ways of using this information to help raise pupils' attainment further.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils work well together.

Areas for improvement

- The accuracy of written work.
- Consistent implementation of departmental policies.

118. In all years, pupils' attainment is broadly average. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good in relation to pupils' attainment when they join the school. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is satisfactory. In 2000, teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at age 14 were broadly average. Work seen during the inspection supported this judgement. The proportion of candidates who achieved GCSE grades A* - C in 2000 was above the national average. Boys and girls performed similarly. All candidates achieved an A*-G grade. Results in history were better than in other school subjects. In 2001, results were not as good from a cohort with lower prior attainment.

119. In work seen during the inspection, attainment of pupils at age 14 is broadly average. Some pupils in Years 7 to 9 reach very high standards, but many pupils' knowledge and understanding of history are at a higher standard than their ability to write. Pupils recall previous knowledge well orally. They show their knowledge through the use of diagrams and charts as well as in writing. A Year 7 class, in

assessing which groups in the Roman Empire had most power, argued confidently and well. A Year 9 class, having studied the horrors of slave victims on the Middle Passage, expressed their response in writing their own poetry.

120. In work seen during the inspection, the overall attainment of pupils at age 16 is average. Some Year 10 pupils show good historical potential in mature study of the autocratic Tsar in the 1905 Russian Revolution at this early stage of their GCSE syllabus. Middle and higher attainers are able to put historical concepts, such as socialism, into context. A Year 11 class, finding work on the Cold War complicated, made good progress in two lessons. They applied themselves to extra questions set and researched their textbook closely.

121. Pupils respond well to interesting work and to orderly classrooms. In Years 7 to 9, the majority of pupils have positive attitudes. They come to lessons prepared to work and some are engaged by the topics studied. Year 8 pupils showed a good spirit of enquiry into contemporary sources about Mary, Queen of Scots. Pupils settle quickly to written tasks. In only one lesson observed was behaviour unsatisfactory. In GCSE classes the atmosphere is serious. A Year 11 class worked hard on a CD-ROM and on web sites to discover how different interpretations of the same facts lead to opposing judgements.

122. Teaching is a strength. All but one of the lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory; the majority were good. All staff take much trouble to prepare for the needs of pupils with differing levels of attainment. Teachers believe in the value of the subject for the young and in many lessons their enthusiasm is infectious. Pupils in all years begin to think historically because training in the evaluation of written and picture sources is given from Year 7. In a Year 11 class, a good opportunity was taken to link the past with present day national and international affairs. Pupils learn well through being encouraged to present their work in a variety of ways, as this reinforces their understanding. Very good emphasis is given to both historical and general vocabulary. Pupils now need to use more of the new words they learn in their own work to raise their standard. In only one lesson observed was sufficient attention paid to the importance of accurate writing. More time in class should be given to basic writing skills such as spelling and the use of capital letters. The quality of learning in Years 7-9 is good and it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In one Year 10 class, learning was very good because the teacher set a cracking pace and made the subject matter absorbing. Pupils in all year groups showed the ability to acquire and consolidate historical knowledge. In many classes the recall of previous work is good. Lower attaining pupils often do very well orally and teachers give them good opportunities to talk and to answer questions. The progress of pupils with special educational needs in relation to their prior attainment is at least satisfactory and, in Years 7 to 9, is generally good.

123. The school has experienced difficulties in staffing the department. Of the six present teachers of history, only two are trained historians. Three of the department's staff have major responsibilities in other areas of the school. Departmental meetings cannot be held at the time allotted for such meetings because five of the six teachers are otherwise engaged. This has an impact on the

effective implementation of departmental policies. The recently appointed head of department, copes with the diverse department cheerfully and energetically, making efforts to share good practice on an informal basis with individual teachers. Meetings would save time and increase efficiency. The head of department is producing good schemes of work and good progress has been made with the department's handbook. The development of ICT skills is now progressing well.

124. The two history rooms are attractive in their displays of pupils' work and in their general historical ambience. Many lessons are taught in other rooms. The department organises good expeditions, sometimes in conjunction with other departments, for example to St Albans and to the Imperial War Museum.

125. Since the previous inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved and oral confidence has increased. Local history is now used to support learning; for example, Year 9 pupils study the effects of the industrial revolution on Luton. The department reviews the attainment of GCSE pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT as a subject is satisfactory. Provision in cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Relevant and interesting schemes of work promote learning.
- Opportunities for additional computer work through after school and lunch time clubs.
- The consistent improving trend in results.

Areas for improvement

- The management structure and opportunities to monitor ICT across the curriculum.
- Opportunities across the curriculum for all pupils to use ICT in their work.
- Provision of an ICT course for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.

126. Standards have improved steadily since the previous inspection. There is no assessment of the skills pupils bring from their home or their primary school and this affects planning for Year 7. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average, but work seen during the inspection indicates that teachers underestimate pupils' attainment and that standards are higher than teachers' assessments.

127. Standards at the end of Year 11 are broadly average. In Years 10 and 11 the majority of pupils follow a half course GCSE. Results have increased steadily over the past three years. Remaining pupils have taken a core ICT course and have been entered appropriately for the Certificate of Achievement. As a response to need, in 2001 the school changed to a full GCSE course in the Year 10 and 11 options, but this has removed the opportunity for all pupils to complete an ICT course. Consequently, the breadth and balance of the curriculum are reduced. Boys' results are consistently better than girls'. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers and match the requirements of their individual education plans. When there is no learning support assistant, literacy problems prevent pupils from progressing at an appropriate rate. Pupils at an early stage of learning English generally match the performance of their classmates when they have appropriate support. There are examples of above average standards with some boys in this group in Year 9.

128. Pupils' progress is good overall across the school. All pupils have a work file on the network and can store work and assessments in this space. In Years 7-9 pupils do not yet have a personal skills checklist to monitor their weekly gains in skills. Progress is good because the well-planned schemes of work put ICT skills into an everyday context. This brings the modules to life through pupils' daily experience. For example, pupils study the concept of supermarket loyalty cards and the technology behind the idea. The on-screen tutor helps teachers to tutor their class individually and to clarify explanations and understanding.

129. There is a less secure picture in the use of ICT across the curriculum and several departments, such as science and mathematics, are failing to meet the requirement to teach ICT skills relevant to the subjects. Few departments have ICT in their schemes of work, missing opportunities to integrate and embed computer work and other technologies such as recording and photography into their curriculum. Similarly, most departments fail to report on ICT in their end of year reports.

130. Attitudes are good. Many pupils make productive use of the computer rooms at lunchtime and after school. Behaviour is good and equipment, though old in many cases, is not misused. Pupils use the typing tutor to improve speed and the accuracy of their copy, as well as the literacy and numeracy programmes used in the special educational needs department. Personal development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to work effectively and to help their friends, strengthening relationships and knowledge.

131. Teaching is good overall. In all lessons, excellent relationships and behaviour, fostered by enthusiastic and stimulating teaching, contribute strongly to positive attitudes to learning. Planning is lively and engaging because modules

focus on topics close to pupils' everyday experience. Activities are designed so that pupils find out rather than being told. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher's effective use of the on-screen tutor developed pupils' skills in using a creative programme to embellish a flyer they were designing for a hotel. During the lesson, pupils modified and enriched their copy and images to produce a highly professional result; they considered their audience, the use of good marketing graphics and the introduction of columns to improve the presentation of the work. Teachers' careful planning accelerates progress in most lessons. The full time appointment of a technician and the active work of a learning support assistant enables the teachers to meet the needs of all pupils. Basic skills are well integrated and add to the drive for high standards. Assessment is best in Years 10 and 11 where most pupils can monitor their own progress and identify where they need to improve.

132. Cross-curricular teaching is variable and not mapped or monitored. The most active departments, as indicated by the room booking form, are religious studies and history. Several other departments, such as English are beginning to use the three main ICT rooms. Satellite stations are actively used in departments such as design and technology. These stations contain ageing, slow computers that do not have the memory to run programmes that the staff require to raise pupils' standards of work.

133. Management of core ICT has a clear vision. There are challenging targets and strategies to meet them. In response to the previous report, hardware and room availability has improved. However, a growing interest in computers is making access to computer rooms more difficult. Across the curriculum there is a lack of mapping and monitoring of computer work and cross-curricular ICT remains an issue. In some cases there is a reluctance of departments to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and embed ICT into schemes of work and reporting to parents. This misses the opportunity to use ICT to raise standards of presentation, research, communication and control of movement, light and sound. The school has an acceptable use policy and a filter to the Internet that ensures pupils do not download offensive materials.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Pupils' positive attitudes.
- Teachers' commitment to improve standards.
- Good behaviour management.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocated for teaching in Years 7-9 and for short courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Provision of resources to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum in sufficient
- depth.

- Provision for ICT.

134. Standards are below average in both French and German throughout the school. Although pupils' achievement in lessons is satisfactory, they do not make enough progress as they should over time because they do not have enough lessons in Years 7-9 and this means that they have an insecure foundation for work in Years 10 and 11.

135. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments show that no pupils reached the expected level in either language in 2001. This was confirmed in work seen during the inspection. GCSE results have been consistently better in German than in French although only very few pupils have followed full courses in the last two years. Results in German were in line with national averages but results in French were below average. It is not possible to discern a trend because of the low numbers involved. Girls perform better than boys, in line with the national picture. No pupils gained A or A* grades in either language in 2001.

136. In work seen during the inspection at the age of 14, standards in listening, speaking, reading and writing are all below average in both languages. Standards are adversely affected by the low amount of lesson time. In French, the lack of appropriate resources also hampers learning. In neither language are there enough books for pupils to take home and, as a result, homework tasks are limited. This means that pupils do not have enough opportunity to consolidate their learning and, when combined with the low amount of teaching time, to make enough progress over time. By Year 9, most pupils can use and understand basic language to describe themselves and where they live. They can use the present tense in descriptions but have not covered past and future tenses that are required to reach average standards. Progress in lessons is satisfactory, but pupils cannot reach higher standards over the course of time because the time allocated is insufficient to cover the curriculum in depth. There are no significant differences in the standards of boys and girls, or of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Standards in literacy and numeracy are good. Teachers insist on well-presented work and accuracy in spelling. Role-play is a regular feature in lessons and is used to develop speaking skills. However, regular use of ICT does not take place because of time constraints.

137. In work seen during the inspection at the age of 16, standards are below average. This is the result of inadequate provision in Years 7-9. Pupils following full GCSE courses in French and German make satisfactory progress in lessons and higher attaining pupils start to close the gap. However, their basic knowledge of vocabulary, tenses, idioms and constructions is too limited for them to gain the highest grades. Pupils following short GCSE courses not only start from a low base but also have too little time allocated in Years 10 and 11 to make satisfactory progress over time, although in lessons they do make gains in their knowledge.

138. Pupils show interest and enjoyment in their work in most lessons. There is some disaffection in a few short course lessons because pupils find the work too difficult. Overall, behaviour is good and pupils and teachers work well together.

Pupils are usually well motivated. They take a pride in their written work and this is well presented.

139. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in German. It is better in German because there is more consistent use of the foreign language in class. All language lessons seen were at least satisfactory and this is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers manage pupils well through the good relationships that they share. They have a good understanding of their pupils' needs and abilities and meet them through careful lesson planning. In some lessons there is not enough use of foreign language by the teacher for this to be the main means of communication in class. As a result, pupils in these classes do not have enough opportunity to listen to the language or to develop confidence in speaking. On the other hand, a Year 10 French class undertook role-play work seriously and made good progress. Pupils co-operated well with each other and all took turns in presenting their work to the class. The best lessons have a range of activities that cover the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. A very good Year 8 German lesson enabled pupils to make very good progress in their learning because it was carefully planned, with a good variety of activities in the four skills. It was conducted at a brisk pace and gave pupils the chance to consolidate work they had done before. Pupils took their work seriously and enjoyed the lesson. The teacher made very good use of gesture to convey meaning and her sense of humour was appreciated by the class. There were opportunities for pupils of different abilities to work at different levels. Teachers assess pupils' work well in lessons and pupils know the levels at which they are working. The use of homework to extend learning is hampered because there are insufficient textbooks for pupils to take home.

140. The quality of learning is satisfactory overall. It is better in German than in French. This is partly because the resources used in German are more up-to-date and appropriate than those used in French. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons because they are interested in the work and enjoy good relationships with their teachers. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are given additional tasks to extend them in some lessons. The lack of lesson time in Years 7-9 and for short course pupils in Years 10 and 11 means that learning is not consolidated well over time.

141. Since the previous inspection there have been many changes to the curriculum, mainly in response to staffing difficulties. Although most pupils now follow a language course to age 16, provision is inadequate and standards are too low as a result. The head of modern foreign languages has worked very hard to improve the quality of teaching and shows a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Provision for extra-curricular activities, particularly productions.
- Good attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils and staff show enjoyment of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures.
- The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged.
- Accommodation.

142. Pupils enter the school with below average standards in music. By the age of fourteen standards are average, representing good achievement in Years 7-9. Standards by the age of sixteen are below average but achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' prior attainment.

143. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed that the majority of pupils attained below average standards. Nine pupils were entered for GCSE in 2000 of whom five obtained passes in the A* - C range and all gained grades A* - G. Such small numbers make comparisons with national averages unreliable but these were at least satisfactory outcomes. There were no GCSE candidates in 2001.

144. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of fourteen is average. Pupils are able to play from graphic scores (pictorial representations of sounds) accurately, and with satisfactory attention to details of timing and volume. They also compose their own graphic scores, often showing good inventive and imaginative powers. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of conventional notation, dynamics and other elements of music, and the ability to locate notes on keyboards are broadly average. Knowledge and understanding of composers and styles are weak. No use is made of computers but pupils have a growing familiarity with electronic keyboards.

145. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of sixteen is below average. Performance and composing skills, and knowledge and understanding of composers and styles and musical general knowledge is below that which is expected for GCSE examinations. Computers are used for research into music history.

146. A fairly small group (30) of pupils enhance their musical attainment with instrumental music lessons and many more do so through participating in the numerous choirs and instrumental groups. A recent production of 'Guys and Dolls' involved a cast of 120 pupils. Such productions, achieving high standards, are a regular feature of the school, showing tremendous commitment on the part of pupils and staff, much appreciated by parents and the community.

147. Pupils are well behaved in music lessons and show generally positive attitudes towards the subject. They show good independent learning skills, for example in Year 8, working out how to perform a graphic score without being told, or in Year 10 using computers and books to research the Renaissance period in music.

148. The school has experienced difficulties in staffing the music department in the recent past and has been obliged to resort to pragmatic arrangements including the use of non-specialist teachers to cover the subject. At the time of the inspection, these arrangements were working reasonably well although at times lacking the depth of knowledge and understanding which could be expected from specialists.

149. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory at Years 10 and 11. Teachers manage pupils well so that good conditions for learning are established, often despite the poor accommodation. Expectations are sometimes too low, and work is not hard enough to get the best out of higher attaining pupils. For example, in a Year 7 lesson about playing a simple graphic score, opportunities to refine and develop the dynamics of the music or to consider how performances could be improved were not taken.

150. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are not given the opportunity to acquire score reading skills or sufficient practice to develop essential listening skills and knowledge of basic musical repertoire. Pupils are encouraged to acquire independent learning skills but their knowledge of how well they are doing is inadequate. Assessment procedures need to be reviewed so that pupils know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. More supervision and guidance would be beneficial to the non-specialist teachers.

151. The quality of learning is good at in Years 7-9. Middle and lower attaining pupils make good progress in acquiring their musical knowledge, skills and understanding but there is evidence to suggest that higher attaining and talented pupils are insufficiently stretched, although they make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of learning is satisfactory but insufficient to meet the requirements of the GCSE course. Chances of success would improve considerably with concentrated practice in score reading, and committing to memory basic information about composers and their works, styles and positions in musical history.

152. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory and affects teaching and learning, in particular because sound from drum or brass lessons in the practice room can interfere with listening lessons in the adjacent classroom. The rooms need further adaptation and soundproofing to become suitable, and alternative storage for staging needs to be found.

153. Since the previous inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement, mainly in the fact that GCSE courses are running in Years 10 and 11 with a reasonable take-up.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is good.

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Pupils achieve well, particularly in Years 7-9.
- Attitudes, behaviour and relationships have a positive effect on learning.
- Extra-curricular sport is good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to support learning.
- The quality of reports.

154. In work seen during the inspection, pupils attain average standards by the end of Year 9. This confirms the results of teachers' assessments. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7-9. Most pupils are able to perform a variety of strokes in swimming and are confident in the water. In badminton, boys show above average ability in a variety of strokes and place their shots accurately. Basic passing and dribbling skills are beginning to be mastered in hockey but progression onto small group activities is not as successful. Some Year 9 groups have only just been introduced to the game. Throughout Years 7-9 there is an emphasis on pupils planning and evaluating their performance. In many classes pupils plan their own warm up and at the end of lessons, teachers summarise what the class has learnt to consolidate progress. There is no significant difference in standards between boys and girls or between pupils from different backgrounds.

155. In 2000, GCSE examination results were below average in terms of A* - C grades but above in A* - G grades. The present Year 11 groups are attaining below average standards in theory work because many pupils have difficulties in writing skills. ICT is hardly used in the course but is a priority in the subject development plan. In practical work, pupils perform up to the required standard. For example, in badminton, strategies and tactics are beginning to develop when concentration is high. By the end of Year 11, in the core curriculum, pupils attain average standards. Pupils have an element of choice and aerobics are enthusiastically performed. The active workouts promote an above average standard. Badminton is not at the same

standard because some of the basic skills have not been learned and a continuous rally is not possible. A girls' basketball session was energetic and produced some accurate shooting but there were too many non-participants who were not involved in the lesson. There is a keen response to trampolining by the girls and many show skills of continuity in their routines. Pupils with lower practical competencies can choose their activity and they achieve at a satisfactory level. Overall, achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The discrepancy in standards between the core curriculum groups and the GCSE groups is because of the below average theory performance in the examination course.

156. Attitudes to the subject are generally positive and are good overall. Behaviour is good in lessons and there is no sign of graffiti around the department. Pupils tend to look after the changing rooms and respect the hygiene arrangements in the swimming pool. Relationships between pupils are good. They cooperate with each other during lessons and work collaboratively in mixed ability groups. The positive attitudes, for example, helping each other, have a significant effect on learning.

157. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory and on occasion it is very good. When teaching is closely matched to pupils' levels of ability, as in rugby in Year 7, they achieve very well. The ability to perform set drills such as rucking in progressively challenging situations enables rapid progress. Learning by pupils of all abilities is evident. The teaching of swimming is knowledgeable and progressive practices assist all pupils to succeed. When activities are matched to individual needs, pupils learn at an appropriate level and achieve well. Setting prescribed activities in gymnastics causes some pupils to make slower progress than others. Pupils are not making as much progress in hockey skills as in other activities because the basic dribbling and passing skills are below average. An activity more suited to the practice surface should be considered. Aerobics and trampolining in Years 10 and 11 are taught effectively and involve the whole group in purposeful activity. When exercises are performed safely and in a non-threatening manner, pupils make good progress. A Year 11 basketball group showed accurate shooting skills because the organisation of small-sided games provided plenty of opportunity. However, there were too many non-participants in this lesson and the lack of involvement affected their learning of skills. Teaching in the GCSE theory sessions is satisfactory because of the good relationships between teachers and pupils, but the lack of ICT limits the variety of presentations. Teaching methods in practical sessions provides opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and small groups. The collaborative working involves pupils from different backgrounds in planning and evaluating their work together. These teaching methods have a positive effect on learning.

158. The curriculum has good overall breadth and balance. Dance is being considered as a unit for Years 7-9 and would add extra creative opportunities. In Years 10 and 11, a half course GCSE is being offered to pupils not entered for the full course. Provision for extra-curricular sport is good and about 15 per cent of pupils take up the offer. All staff in the department and three staff from other departments contribute to the sessions. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and being developed to meet the requirements of National Curriculum 2000 together with modified schemes of work. However, reports to parents are bland and not

focused on specific activities. Leadership and management are satisfactory with many changes planned for next year. The staff in the department relate well to each other and create a caring environment. The resources and accommodation for physical education are very good and promote pupils' participation and progress.

159. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching is good overall and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has been reduced. Pupils achieve well overall. Attitudes to the subject are good. The offer of dance and girls' soccer in Years 7-9 added to the development of ICT, particularly in the GCSE course, are areas for future improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is very good.

Strengths

- Breadth of curriculum provision.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise.
- Good leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Performance in examinations particularly by boys.
- The use of assessment procedures to monitor progress.
- Resources for learning.

160. Standards in religious studies are average overall. Teachers' assessments in 2000 show over half the pupils reaching the recommended standard at age 14, which represents good progress from below average standards in Year 7, where many pupils confuse basic features of eastern religions. Not all schools enter their pupils for GCSE examinations at two levels in the subject, which makes it difficult to make comparisons purely on the basis of examination results. By GCSE standards, pupils' performance on the full course in 2000 was in line with the national average, after being a little above it in 1999. The results for the short course, entered by the majority of pupils, were below average, boys doing worse than girls. Results on both courses this year have dropped, boys' especially, reflecting the general picture for that particular year group, which had a lower level of prior attainment.

161. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 14 are average. Pupils have a good basic knowledge of six major world religions and record information reasonably neatly and thoroughly in their books. In their written work, Year 9 pupils are able to illustrate the seven deadly sins in their personality profiles of fictional television characters, and higher attaining pupils use ICT to produce colourful posters for class display. Many pupils are not developing their writing in sufficient length, whether to describe an issue of conscience or to justify the punishments they think fit certain crimes. Pupils think seriously about their own values, helped by stimulating teaching. In an enjoyable Year 9 lesson, pupils took part in a mock auction of values, which helped them to understand what is important to them and to others. In another lesson, an episode of "Bart Simpson" helped all pupils to understand something of the nature of the human soul, but lower attaining pupils needed follow-up tasks more suited to their needs to consolidate their learning of such abstract concepts.

162. At age 16, standards in work seen during the inspection are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory overall. Many pupils are making good progress in lessons. Pupils on the GCSE full course are achieving well, having maintained their efforts from the start of the course, whilst achievement on the short course is just satisfactory, as pupils have done little extended writing on topics covered in Year 10. On both courses, pupils are competent at researching information from

computers and reference books. Pupils on the full course are learning well, working at a fast pace and successfully presenting their findings on leading pacifists after just one lesson and homework preparation. Productivity is also higher on the GCSE short course this term, where pupils have produced more detailed written work than previously, giving their views on marriage and cohabitation, and on capital punishment. They need to give more attention to explaining religious teaching on moral issues and show that they have taken them into account in forming their own conclusions. Pupils state their views effectively in group discussion, showing good understanding. For example, in a very good Year 11 discussion based on case studies of crimes, pupils argued convincingly as to whether retribution or reform should be the guiding principle determining punishment. Much will depend on how far pupils are able to sustain the good progress they are making in lessons at the start of the second year of the course.

163. Pupils have a good attitude towards the subject in Years 7-9, showing an interest in the lessons and concentrating on their work. Behaviour is generally good, but some boys in Year 9 found it difficult to play by the rules of a mock auction. Year 7 pupils showed reasonable respect for religious artefacts they were examining and Year 8 pupils showed sensitivity to worship in their written prayers for their class. The fact that a record number of pupils are studying for the GCSE full course in Year 10 indicates the positive attitudes of pupils in that year. Commitment to their studies is high in the full GCSE group in Year 11. Most pupils appreciate the opportunity to think through moral issues on the compulsory course, but some pupils, mainly boys, lack the commitment needed for examination success.

164. The quality of teaching is good across the school, reflecting the teachers' command of the subject and their detailed lesson planning. Faulty organisation of an activity was responsible for one lesson being unsatisfactory during the inspection. Teachers are using a variety of effective methods, which allow pupils to learn in different ways. They make good use of investigative approaches, such as examining religious artefacts in Year 7 and searching reference works and the Internet for information on topics in Year 11. These methods promote pupils' ability to learn for themselves. More is being expected of pupils on the short course in terms of written homework. Teachers manage their classes well, directing discussion effectively and finishing lessons with a thorough review of what has been learned. Learning materials need to be matched closer to the needs of pupils at different levels in mixed ability classes. Marking is thorough and comments assist pupils to make further progress, but assessment on the GCSE short course can be inconsistent, awarding similar grades for work that differs in quality, and the individual tracking of progress used in Years 7-9 needs extending to Years 10 and 11. In most lessons, time and resources are used to best advantage but, on occasions, materials are not exploited fully or the lesson loses its focus because of a sudden change in direction.

165. The department is well organised and efficiently managed. In the last two years, there has been a complete changeover of staff in religious studies. Much effort has gone into revising the curriculum in Years 7-9 and introducing new GCSE courses. The new schemes of work include regular use of ICT to support pupils' learning in the subject. Visiting speakers from the Luton Council of Churches enrich the curriculum and pupils gain valuable insights into worship from visits to the

neighbouring Roman Catholic church and the Anglican cathedral at St. Albans. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall but there is a need for further development, particularly in the use of data to plan teaching and to let pupils know how well they are doing. It has been decided to adopt an assessment model linked to levels of attainment, similar to that used by National Curriculum subjects. Once it is operating fully, it should give pupils more precise information on how they can improve their performance in the subject. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, much of it relatively recent, through a range of initiatives that have yet to feed through into improved examination results.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

GNVQ MANUFACTURING

Overall, the quality of provision in vocational courses is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Planning reflects pupils' individual needs.
- There are good opportunities for group work and personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Staffing.
- Time allocation.

166. In 2001, three pupils passed the GNVQ intermediate level in manufacturing out of a total of seven. This year there are eight pupils in Year 11 of whom three may go on to enter the intermediate level examination.

167. Overall, the standard is well below the nationally expected level but half the cohort has special educational needs and attendance is a weakness. There are difficulties in staffing the course and a newly qualified teacher is responsible for teaching the programme. An added obstacle is that the same teacher is timetabled for a product design GCSE course at the same time as the GNVQ course. Planning and preparation take account of the difficulties and teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. There are effective investigative procedures and group work opportunities. In the lessons observed, pupils found difficulty in developing their own ideas through discussion and presentations to each other. Nevertheless, the pupils who were present had a positive attitude to the course and satisfactory progress was being made.

168. The course is being discontinued in Year 10 and because of staffing difficulties the GNVQ programme will cease to be offered in the foreseeable future.

PERFORMING ARTS

Overall, the quality of provision in performing arts is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Achievement is very good.

Areas for improvement

- None.

169. There are two groups of Year 11 pupils taking this very popular course for GCSE examination. Work seen during the inspection was of a very high standard. The attainment of boys is particularly striking – singing, dancing, acting quite brilliantly and matched by equally good performances by girls. The energy and drive of some of the work seen was excellent.

170. Teaching in this area is very good indeed and pupils make very good gains in knowledge and understanding of a wide range of performance skills, for example dancing, choreography, acting, singing, movement, stage management, costume and make-up. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development, especially gains in confidence and self esteem, are excellent. Recent performances of ‘Guys and Dolls’, which were incorporated in the course, reached high standards of attainment and achievement of which the school is justifiably proud.

DRAMA

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is very good.

Strengths

- High quality teaching.
- Standards attained by pupils at end of Year 11.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is unsatisfactory; lessons are disturbed because people have to pass through the hall.

171. From limited observation in this inspection, pupils’ standard of attainment is above average at the age of 16. Pupils have specialist drama teaching from Year 7 and follow a drama and theatre studies course in Years 10 and 11. They achieve very well in this subject. Results in 2000 were significantly above the national average at grades A*-C and all pupils gained a grade in the range A*-G. Pupils’ performance was better than their performance in most other subjects.

172. Much of the strength of drama provision arises from the very good teaching. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher’s energy and clever choice of activities involved all the pupils as they learned to trust a partner. She challenged them by the expectation that they would have to perform a role-play as a character in the poem ‘Matilda’ and they concentrated furiously. Her own performance and her humorous conduct of the lesson did much to create a good working atmosphere and very good behaviour. In a Year 10 lesson, when pupils were preparing the ‘Audition’ unit of their course, the teacher used the pupils themselves and her own high quality performance skills to establish the key features of performance. As a result, they learned to work together and gained confidence from the fact that everyone had to take part. A feature of the lesson was the high standard of individual attainment by pupils performing solo drama, dance and music routines. The teacher also brought out clearly the effort and commitment which goes into such performances and the pupils were able to see this for themselves in, for example, the beautiful line-dancing costume made by one of the pupils.