

INSPECTION REPORT

DARTON HIGH SCHOOL

Kexborough, Barnsley

LEA area: Barnsley

Unique reference number: 106651

Headteacher: Mr Michael Anderson

Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones
2918

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th December 2001

Inspection number: 189210

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:	Churchfield Lane Darton Barnsley South Yorkshire
Postcode:	S75 5EW
Telephone number:	01226 382568
Fax number:	01226 382350
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Martin Shepherd
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2918	M.L. Glynne-Jones	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?
9176	G. Barker	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?
3534	A. Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
11190	W. Burke	Team inspector	Art and design	
22695	R. Cardinal	Team inspector	History Religious education	
11838	D. Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
19586	W. Easterby	Team inspector	English	
23324	S. Greenland	Team inspector	Geography Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
17269	J. Johnson	Team inspector	Science	
12475	S. Johnson	Team inspector	Music	
17258	C. Phillips	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10817	G. Rayner	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
10941	R. Robinson	Team inspector	Design and technology	

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

Grasshoppers
1 Anglesey Close
Chasetown
Burntwood
Staffordshire
WS7 8XA

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	16
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	23
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	24
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	27
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	29
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	33

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Darton High is a mixed community comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16, situated on the edge of the village of Kexborough on the north-eastern outskirts of Barnsley. Numbers are growing with 1064 pupils on roll, 100 more than at the last inspection. There are broadly equal numbers of boys and girls. Accommodation is tight. The numbers of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds or speaking English as an additional language are very small; none is at an early stage of learning English. There is a below average proportion of pupils identified as having special needs, while the proportion with the highest level of need is average. Pupils' special needs are mainly in three areas: learning difficulties, dyslexia and behaviour. When pupils join Year 7, their attainment is average overall, while including a full range of ability. The number of families registering for free school meals is below average, although the area from which the majority of pupils are drawn has above average levels of disadvantage. The school benefits from Excellence in Cities funding.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Darton is a good school and an increasingly popular one. Standards have improved well to reach the national average; teaching and learning are good so that pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. There is effective leadership and management to which the headteacher's contribution is very strong. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Above average standards at GCSE compared with similar schools
- Pupils' good attitudes, relationships and behaviour
- Good teaching and learning
- Provision excellent in dance and good in science, design and technology and physical education
- A very strong inclusive approach being established to provide the best for each individual pupil
- Good leadership and management
- Very good personal and social education programme.

What could be improved

- Insufficient rigour in monitoring health and safety procedures
- Pupils not achieving as they should in Years 10 and 11 in history and modern languages; gifted and talented pupils not achieving as well as they should in English, geography and modern languages
- Poor provision with underachievement in art and design
- Requirements for the Years 7 to 9 curriculum not fully met in art and design and music; alternative provision to GCSE in Years 10 and 11 too limited
- Learning activities restricted by poor accommodation in English and by unsatisfactory resources and accommodation for music.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in 1996 is satisfactory. This applies to the quality of teaching and to four of the five key issues identified for action in the last report; the four concern resources, information and communication technology (ICT), cultural development and the English curriculum. There has not been enough improvement in meeting the requirement for daily worship. Standards have improved well at GCSE.

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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	D	C	C	B

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

- Good results
 - Steady rise in results from 1998, closing the gap with national results
 - Rise in nearly all subjects, most in science, but slight drop in German
 - Proportion of pupils reaching the higher grades reached the average in 2001 and is above average when compared with results in similar schools
 - The proportion improved to average for gaining at least five grades and is well above the average for similar schools
 - The proportion gaining at least one grade improved to average and is above the average for similar schools
 - Strength in business education
 - Targets exceeded for gaining higher grades and at least one grade; points target not reached
 - Challenging targets for 2002.
-
- Year 9 test results show steady rise up to 1999 and 2000 when they were above average
 - Results fell in 2001 to well below average, compared with all schools and with similar schools
 - The 2001 results reflect the attainment of the Year 9 group when they joined the school which was well below average in English and below average in mathematics.
 - However, results rose more over the last three years than national results.
-
- Standards are average overall in the work seen
 - Strength in science where standards are well above average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 to 11
 - Below average standards in geography, in ICT in Years 7 to 9 and in history in Years 10 to 11
 - Below average standards in art and design, well below in Years 10 and 11
 - Satisfactory achievement overall, good in science and design and technology and unsatisfactory in art and design and in history and modern languages in Years 10 to 11.
 - Gifted and talented pupils not achieving as well as they should in English, geography and modern languages

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils enjoy their work and are keen to get on.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall and very good in lessons, especially in Years 10 and 11.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory overall; relationships are good, pupils' confidence and independence are satisfactory.
Attendance	Satisfactory; steady improvement to reach the national average.

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.

- Good learning reflects the good teaching; both show in improving results but not yet in good achievement in pupils' work
- Pupils set themselves a good pace for working in most subjects and get a lot done
- This does not happen in geography in Years 10 and 11 where pupils do not work hard enough
- Teaching and learning are good overall in English, mathematics and science
- There is some weakness in English in the lack of planning for different levels of attainment
- Teachers' management of pupils is a strength in science
- Expectations are too low in art and design; pupils are not given enough feedback about their work so that they do not have a clear enough idea about how they are getting on
- Pupils' individual needs are met well in mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT, music and physical education; there is some weakness in geography in Years 10 to 11
- Literacy and numeracy skills are soundly taught overall, with strengths in science and ICT.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory range of opportunities; however, because the curriculum does not fully meet requirements for art and design and music in Years 7 to 9, the overall judgement has to be unsatisfactory. Very good personal and social education. Alternatives to GCSE courses limited.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory; pupils' individual plans are up to date and detailed, diagnostic records are kept, but there is not enough liaison between special needs staff and subject teachers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall and for cultural development; good for moral and social development but unsatisfactory for spiritual development. The lack of coordination leads to the variation in quality.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall; strength in the personal support given to pupils; weakness in monitoring health and safety practice.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Satisfactory; information for parents is generally helpful, although pupils' annual reports are not always clear enough about what they do well and where they need help.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: strong leadership by the headteacher with good staff commitment to improvement; weakness in the management of art and design at all levels.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: governors work well as a team, show good commitment and a very positive approach to their responsibilities; insufficient attention to ensuring that requirements for the curriculum are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: very good identification of improvements needed and sound monitoring of teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Good: satisfactory staffing, accommodation and learning resources overall, used well to raise standards; poor staffing arrangements in art and design; music resources and accommodation in English and music are unsatisfactory.
How well the school applies the principles of best value	Good: systematic, thorough and comprehensive attention to achieving best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school.• The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best.• Their children make good progress.• The teaching is good.• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a query or a problem.• The school is well led and managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework and its planning.• The range of activities outside lessons.• The information they receive about how well their children are getting on.• The school working with parents more closely.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They agree that the information parents receive about their children's progress needs strengthening. However, they find the range of activities and the homework arrangements to be satisfactory, with good homework in science, French and music. The team of inspectors judges the partnership with parents to be sound, with scope for development.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Year 9 English, mathematics and science

1. Taking the three subjects together, since the last inspection there was a steady rise in pupils' points scores in National Curriculum tests up to 1999 which levelled off in 2000 at an above average standard. Girls' points rose fairly steadily while boys' points rose to 1999, but fell off in 2000. In 2001, pupils' points scores in the three subjects together showed a fall to below average. This fall reflects the attainment of the particular year group at the beginning of Year 7. Over the last three years, however, the average for the points scores of both boys and girls has been much the same as the national average; in science above average for both, in mathematics, a little below average for both, and in English, average for girls and slightly below for boys.

2. The pattern is not the same in each subject. In English, the points rose to above average in 1999 and 2000, but fell to well below average in 2001. School data on pupils' attainment on entry shows that when the Year 9 group in 2001 joined the school, their attainment, unlike the entry profile of other year groups, was well below average in English. The well below average results in 2001 are therefore as would be expected. In mathematics, points rose steadily until levelling off at an average standard in 1999 and 2000. Like the English results, there was a fall in 2001 to below average, reflecting the Year 9 group's attainment on entry. The science points show some fluctuation year on year. Points were average in 2000 and 2001, while above average in 1999; on entry, pupils' attainment in science is above average. When compared with results in schools whose pupils have a similar background, English points are well below average, mathematics points are average and science points are well above average.

3. The average standards in the work seen in English and mathematics are better than the 2001 results might suggest. They appropriately reflect pupils' attainment on entry to the school. By Year 9, achievement in these two subjects is satisfactory. The well above average standards seen in science work represent good achievement over Years 7 to 9 from pupils' attainment on entry which is above average.

Year 9 art and design, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, French, music, physical education and religious education

4. The average standards seen in pupils' work generally reflect their average attainment overall when they join Year 7. Over Years 7 to 9 pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory in most subjects. In history and French, the 2001 Year 9 teacher assessments are confirmed by the inspection findings. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in these two subjects. In design and technology, teacher assessments in 2001 show standards close to the national average. Pupils achieve well in design and technology, reaching an average standard by Year 9, although their attainment on entry is below average. Their good achievement is the result of good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes to the subject.

5. In geography and ICT, the 2001 teacher assessments show below average standards. These geography assessments are confirmed by the standards in work seen during the inspection. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory from the weak standards they show on entry to the school. The main reason their standards do not improve to average is an imbalance in the curriculum elements taught, with too much emphasis on knowledge at the expense of attention to skills. In ICT, the teacher assessments appropriately reflect the generally below average standards in those elements of ICT which should be taught in each

subject. However, in those elements which are taught in specific ICT lessons, standards are average. Pupils' achievement is overall satisfactory in ICT.

6. The 2001 teacher assessments show standards above average in physical education and well above average in music. These standards are not reflected in the standards of work seen which in both subjects are average. The average standards in the work seen suggest that assessment criteria were applied too generously in 2001 although in music this could not be confirmed through observing all the current Year 10 pupils because only a few are taking music. In music, pupils' achievement by Year 9 is satisfactory while in physical education pupils achieve well over Years 7 to 9 to reach this standard, given their below average attainment when they join Year 7. The main reason in physical education is the good teaching and teachers' commitment to ensuring that pupils do well.

7. Standards in art and design are below average. These standards and pupils' unsatisfactory achievement are a consequence of the school's poor management of the subject: staffing, the curriculum and the assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory. The 2001 Year 9 teacher assessments which show above average standards are not an accurate reflection of the quality of pupils' work. The assessment criteria were applied far too generously.

Year 11 all subjects

8. At GCSE, the picture is one of good improvement across the school as a whole in the 2001 results. Both boys' and girls' results improved to become close to the national average. Over the last three years, boys' average points scores have been close to the national average, but girls' have been below average. Pupils' point scores show a rise in 2001 in most subjects except German. Results at the higher grades are average in English, English literature, mathematics and design and technology, and slightly above average in science. However, in most other subjects the proportion gaining higher grades is well below average. The exception is in German where the proportion is below average. No national figures are available for expressive arts; about half the pupils taking the examination gained a higher grade.

9. Standards in the work seen are average overall. In nearly all subjects, where average standards are reached by Year 9 these standards are sustained by Year 11. This applies to English, mathematics, design and technology, physical education and religious education. It applies to music in the Year 10 GCSE music course and to the Year 11 music component in the expressive arts course. In all these subjects except design and technology, pupils' satisfactory achievement over Years 7 to 9 is maintained by Year 11 and they do as well as they should. Pupils' good achievement in design and technology courses over Years 7 to 9 is sustained by Year 11, but for slightly different reasons. There is good achievement in some materials areas, particularly textiles, and lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

10. Standards in science are above average, although not as high as they are in Year 9. The main reason lies with department resources for GCSE work which do not allow pupils to work at equally high levels to those achieved by Year 9. As a consequence, pupils' achievement is satisfactory at this stage rather than good.

11. In history and modern languages, standards show a fall from Year 9 to below average. The main reason for this in history is the relative weakness of pupils' writing and study skills compared with their oral skills. In modern languages, the reason is three-fold. Over the last five years there have been continuing staffing difficulties resulting from long-term absence. The time allocated for the subject is insufficient. A weakness reported at the last inspection is still an issue: the work set for higher attainers is not sufficiently challenging so that these pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

12. Standards remain below average in geography, for the same reason as in Years 7 to 9 concerned with the imbalance of the curriculum. Pupils' achievement remains satisfactory.

13. There is not enough evidence to judge the standards in ICT over Years 10 and 11.

Pupils with special needs and gifted and talented pupils

14. The progress of pupils with special needs is satisfactory across all year groups. In 2001, all but two of these pupils in Year 11 gained at least one GCSE grade, and several gained up to ten grades. Nine gained a Certificate of Achievement in English. The progress of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory overall and in mathematics, ICT and religious education. This judgement balances good progress in design and technology, physical education, and, in Years 7 to 9, in science and music, with unsatisfactory progress in English, modern languages, art and design, geography and, in Years 10 and 11, in history. A main reason for the unsatisfactory progress is the lack of sufficient appropriately challenging work for these pupils. The school has identified who its gifted and talented pupils are and is establishing procedures for ensuring appropriate provision for them.

Literacy and numeracy

15. Standards of literacy are average. Pupils read with understanding, though not widely. They write reasonably accurately, using paragraphs correctly, but spelling often has errors. Pupils listen positively and respond appropriately, although the girls do this better than the boys. Pupils speak clearly, but limit their answers to short phrases, rather than expanding them with detail. They lack confidence when speaking in formal situations, such as when presenting work to the rest of the class.

16. The standard of pupils' mental arithmetic is average. Pupils have the mathematical skills necessary for their work in other subjects. For example, they use measuring skills in design and technology for their examination work on garments and soft furnishings; they use bar and pie charts in their projects. In science pupils' calculate force in Newtons, use Ohm's law and graphs of radioactive decay; the measurement of volume, temperature and time pervades all practical work. In business education, pupils calculate average incomes and real wage increases from statistics, while in history they study the rise in share prices.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good; this standard confirms parents' positive views of behaviour. When pupils are moving round the difficult school building there are occasional minor lapses at bottlenecks. None the less, pupils arrive for lessons in an orderly and efficient manner, equipped to start work. Their response to any reminders about behaviour, even in frustrating situations such as queuing for late buses, is usually quick and appropriate. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good. There are occasions when poor attitudes hinder learning, for example in a Year 10 French lesson, but these are rare. Pupils generally take care of the school environment and value the newly refurbished areas such as the library and resource centre. Despite the lack of storage facilities, pupils' personal property is respected. Pupils appreciate being able to use the social areas and – with permission - their

classrooms at lunchtimes. They do so sensibly, showing mature attitudes and good relationships. They are prepared to help one another and to think ahead about other people's needs, for example, by waiting until a friend with a health problem is ready to go out to play or getting work for a friend in hospital.

18. Relationships throughout the school are good and show a degree of mutual understanding and respect. All pupils mix easily, with friendly warmth, boys and girls, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special needs. In assembly there was ready applause for the 25 per cent of the year group who were presented with certificates for personal achievement. While pupils think that racist and sexist attitudes are rarely shown, they acknowledge that some bullying does occur but are confident that it will be investigated and, usually, resolved. However, a small number show a stronger sense of how other people's attitudes can affect them than the sense they show of how their own behaviour affects others. No incidents of bullying behaviour were seen during the inspection. There is a small, unruly element among the pupils however, reflected in the above average rate of short-term exclusions. The number of permanent exclusions is broadly average for schools of a similar size. Excellence in Cities funding has enabled a new unit to be set up to tackle the problems of disaffection and there are early signs of success.

19. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory rather than good because their independence and initiative as learners in lessons is only satisfactorily developed. When pupils are asked to take on responsibilities their response is good and good examples were seen. For example, members of the school council demonstrate a thoughtful approach. They understand the need for confidentiality, while appreciating the need to report back to those who elected them, for example, when involved in interviews for the post of deputy head. Following a study skills session, Year 9 pupils 'cascaded' their newly acquired knowledge to the year group. Year 10 pupils share their sporting expertise with pupils in Year 6 by taking on a coaching role. Pupils of all levels of attainment contribute through doing something for the school community. For example, they take registers to the office, raise money for a charity selected by the school council, and plant bulbs in the grounds or in the churchyard. The range of opportunities to take responsibility is limited however, and opportunities are not frequent enough. In some lessons pupils were observed taking a degree of responsibility for their own learning. For example, in mathematics, a group got on with work involving a range of mathematical skills, using book references independently as a help. Pupils use computers in the resource centre sensibly, understanding that the trust invested in them by giving them e-mail access is to be respected: one was communicating with a friend in Singapore.

20. Attendance is average and has improved steadily up to the current year. However, while authorised absence is below average, unauthorised absence is above average. There is a hard core of irregular attenders and too many family holidays in term-time. The late arrival of buses is a frequent difficulty and was experienced during the inspection. Those pupils affected lose some of the time scheduled with their form-tutor. Despite the sprawling nature of the site, pupils generally arrive punctually to lessons..

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. Teaching and learning are good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when 88 per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better. Now, this figure is 96 per cent, exceeding the school's internal target by one per cent. The proportion of teaching that is good or better, 56%, and very good or better, 16%, is largely the same as reported last time. The good teaching quality is equally well provided in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' learning is good or better in lessons in Years 7 to 9 a little more frequently than it is in the following two years. This is mainly because in Year 10 and 11 pupils are sometimes content to play a passive role in lessons rather than make an active contribution. Such an attitude reflects the fact that work is not always sufficiently challenging, especially for higher attainers. In science, art and design, business education, dance, drama, design and technology, ICT, music, physical education, religious education and personal, social and health education teaching is always at least satisfactory.

22. In most subjects there is some very good teaching on which the school can draw in order to improve the quality further. This is true in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, physical education and special needs, and on occasion in art and design. Some excellent teaching was seen in science and dance. Excellent and very good teaching demonstrated the following qualities:

- High levels of subject competence and use of technical resources; inspiring delivery so that pupils said it was exciting and were eager to explain to the inspector exactly what they were doing; very skilful use of time ensured that the learning targets were reached; excellent help given to pupils with weaker ICT skills.
- Praise being given when it was well earned; tasks and comments always challenging, although clear; very good subject knowledge and demonstration skills which kept a brisk pace going; very clear reference to the criteria for assessing the task and helpful interim feedback to improve the standard; because of these qualities and the very good working relationships, pupils worked hard for the teacher.
- Very good subject knowledge and knowledge of examination requirements inspired confidence in pupils; very good working relationships meant that pupils confidently asked for things to be clarified, with no embarrassment; probing questions, both of detail and over-arching issues, with very clear feedback, resulted in pupils making significant strides in their preparation for the examination.
- The lesson built skilfully on what had been learned in the previous one, involving pupils in the process; very clear explanations of the new material with challenging tasks; brief 'interruptions' when pupils were working to check on their progress and to feed in ways of thinking about the task; this ensured good pace and sustained effort by pupils; consequently pupils learned very well, showing some personal initiative in approaching difficult tasks.

23. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in five lessons, three of which were taught by temporary staff. The following areas of weakness were evident in these lessons.

- The introduction was too slow to hold pupils' attention, with scarcely any reference to previous learning to ensure a firm foundation for new material. The teacher responded where help was needed but did not routinely check that everyone was succeeding with the task. No help was given about how to select appropriate reference sources so pupils' searches were not at all focused and therefore wasted time for learning. No discussion opportunities were provided to encourage thinking and speaking skills.
- Although the teacher's subject knowledge was good in itself, it was used ineffectively. The same work was planned for all the class, a 'setted' group organised by attainment levels, so that the majority of pupils were not challenged sufficiently, particularly the higher attainers who coasted their way through the lesson. No clear instructions were given about what to do when the main task was completed. Ineffective management of the

- lesson time was a disincentive to pupils who consequently put little effort into their work.
- While lesson activities were planned in detail, the link of these with the learning targets was inadequately planned. As a consequence, pupils' learning was not focused effectively enough to be satisfactory. The teacher's contribution while carefully planned was the dominant feature of the lesson, with too much telling pupils what to think and too little opportunity for pupils to participate in exploring the topic. Pupils' thinking and speaking skills were not advanced by the lesson.

24. Where teaching and learning are satisfactory, rather than good, it is one or more of the weaknesses listed above which holds the quality back, in particular a lack of motivating pace, of suitably challenging and well-focused tasks or of opportunities for independent study skills to develop. Across subjects, the absence of a common approach to marking pupils' work, the result of lack of policy, means that marking is not carried out equally well. It does not always provide sufficient help to ensure that pupils are clear about how they can make any improvements needed. A new marking policy is planned to take effect in the next term.

25. Small-group teaching in special needs and 'catch-up' teaching by learning support assistants is good, sometimes very good. Consequently, pupils make satisfactory progress although their individual difficulties mean that they find it hard to sustain their concentration. Lessons are built on a series of short, literacy-based activities. Teachers use their skill and understanding effectively to engage the pupils' interest and build their self-confidence. The Learning Support Centre offers a secure atmosphere for learning to which pupils respond well. Resources are used effectively to ensure that pupils succeed. No specialist learning groups for gifted and talented pupils took place during the inspection. In subject lessons, the lack of sufficiently clear learning targets for those pupils with individual learning plans sometimes hinders the quality of teachers' planning for these pupils. Where the progress of gifted and talented pupils is held back in English, geography and modern languages, it is because tasks are not specifically planned to challenge them at an appropriate level. No pupil for whom English is an additional language was in school during the inspection.

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

26. Opportunities provided for pupils through the curriculum and after school clubs and activities are satisfactory. Reviewing the curriculum is appropriately the first priority in the current three-year school development plan. The governing body keeps itself well-informed about these developments and is strengthening links to subjects through contact with subject leaders.

27. Overall the planned curriculum offers pupils a sufficient range of subjects but there are unsatisfactory elements. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory because the time allocated for art and design and music is too low to teach the National Curriculum in sufficient depth. In Years 7 to 9, pupils follow the required subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, strengthened by the addition of personal, social and health education, dance and drama. The inclusion of dance and drama as separate subjects reflects the school's long-time commitment to the expressive and performing arts. ICT is taught as a separate subject and the planning for using ICT in subjects is well advanced and being implemented. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection.

28. There have been recent changes in the provision for languages. In Years 7 to 9, all pupils now study French, with no opportunity to learn a second language. While there is an option to study a second language in Years 10 and 11, the number choosing a second language in Year 10 was too small to be viable. Those pupils who were not able to have both their language choices were given an opportunity to study a second language at the local college, in their own time. The result of these changes is some limitation on the opportunities for pupils with a strong interest in languages. Pupils' progress in languages is adversely affected by the below average time allocation for the subject in Years 10 and 11.

29. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum meets requirements but lacks sufficient opportunities for pupils with interests and abilities that could be better met through alternative courses to GCSE. Currently the great majority of pupils follow National Curriculum subjects through GCSE courses. A move to making the curriculum more relevant has begun; a popular business education course is offered and in a few subjects there is alternative accreditation through the Certificate of Achievement. Changes to the structure of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 have improved the choices available to pupils. It is now possible to study dance, art and design and music as separate GCSE subjects, which provides good continuity with the range of subjects studied in Years 7 to 9. However, ICT is not taught at GCSE level and no vocational courses are offered. The school has identified the need to review the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 and provide for alternative accreditation. There is, however, a good alternative curriculum for the small number of pupils who require support in achieving regular attendance and in maintaining their motivation to learn. A series of 'TriOut' courses, such as business administration and hairdressing, are provided in conjunction with the local college. These courses are aimed at increasing the confidence and personal development of these pupils and are funded through Objective One of the European Social Fund. A second small group of pupils follows a vocational course in Building Craft Occupation at the local college as an alternative to the design and technology courses run by the school.

30. The key issue at the last inspection to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in English has been fully met.

Literacy and numeracy

31. The school has only recently begun to co-ordinate its efforts to ensure that literacy is taught across all subjects of the curriculum. There is no overall school policy and very few departments have formally documented how they can contribute to the improvement of pupils' literacy. Key words are displayed prominently in most subject areas and technical language introduced carefully. In ICT, for example, pupils were carefully shown the meaning of the new word 'template', and in science pupils are taught how to spell scientific vocabulary. However, in mathematics, errors in simple words in general use are allowed to go uncorrected. One of the factors contributing to this 'overlooking' is the lack of a marking policy. There is no policy for supporting the development of numeracy across the curriculum, but five departments apart from mathematics have a numeracy policy. There is little evidence of work on numeracy on display around the school but there are climate graphs in geography and drawings with measurements on them in design and technology. In science, teachers stress the importance of using the correct units for measurement and in design and technology, pupils are taught to use millimetres instead of centimetres when measuring wood.

Personal, social and health education

32. Personal, social and health education is a strength of the school. A comprehensive programme is provided which incorporates sex education, supported by the school nurse, drugs awareness, supported by the Community Police Team, and careers education. Pupils found the contribution of the police team something of an eye-opener. The programme is very well-organised and monitored. Form tutors teach it, with specialist teaching for careers education. The careers adviser interviews all pupils and provides support in some lessons. Careers education is planned thoroughly, starting with work in Year 9 to help pupils choose appropriate subjects for Years 10 and 11. The school is making good provision for the development of citizenship through the personal, social and health education programme and through the work of the school council. Pupils' personal development is fostered through assemblies and, for some pupils, through mentoring. However, the use of registration time is not planned as effectively as the personal, social and health education programme; the session is often purely an administrative one, with opportunities missed for mentoring.

Pupils with special needs and gifted and talented pupils

33. Provision for pupils with special needs is satisfactory overall in all year groups. Pupils with the highest need receive support from a team of nine classroom support assistants and are sometimes withdrawn from lessons to be taught in small groups in the Individual Needs Base. The base provides a safe haven at lunchtimes. Satisfactory support for pupils with special needs is provided through subject teaching, sometimes with a support assistant present. The 'Catch Up' programme, partially financed by the Standards Fund provides very effective small group tuition for Year 7 pupils to boost their English attainment from Level 3 to Level 4. Pupils with special needs in Year 11 can take a Certificate of Achievement in English; this course is taught well in small groups by the special needs staff.

34. Not all departments provide appropriate learning support for pupils with special needs because of the patchiness of liaison between subject co-ordinators and the special needs co-ordinator. Although all teachers have copies of individual education plans, the targets are rather generalised which makes planning specialised provision difficult. Learning support is patchily provided in English, mathematics and art and design, but is satisfactory in science, design and technology, geography, history, modern languages, music, physical education and religious education.

35. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory overall. A co-ordinator has recently been appointed who, in consultation with other teachers, has identified groups of high attaining pupils. A programme of enrichment activities has been set up, for example a summer school, a study skills seminar, and extra classes in science, mathematics and music. Training for all teachers has raised awareness of the needs of these pupils, but provision for them is not satisfactory in English, art and design, geography, modern languages, and in Years 10-11, in history.

Activities outside lessons and links outside school

36. There is a satisfactory programme of extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' subject experiences. This includes good provision for physical activities at lunchtime and competitive games after school. The opportunities for individual pupils to follow particular interests through clubs are limited, however. There is informal access to ICT facilities and some musical activities but the programme offered by subjects is not extensive. The productions open to the whole school through the expressive arts provision are good; they involve significant numbers of pupils and are valued by them. They play to packed houses.

37. Links with feeder schools are good, with joint summer schools for numeracy and sport and for gifted and talented pupils. There are taster days and some liaison has been established between departments and primary schools. In science, for example, adjustments

have been made to the Year 7 syllabus to take account of literacy skills. Year 7 pupils are happy to show Year 6 pupils round and to explain how things work. Pupils benefit from the school's good links with the local college; all pupils wishing to enter the college are given an interview. Higher attainers are able to attend classes run at the college in a number of subjects. There are improving links with other providers of further education in the area. All pupils have a fortnight's work experience; this effectively raises their awareness of the world of work and is followed up by the English department as a topic for examination coursework.

38. The school is outward looking and has established good links with a number of local organisations. These links broaden pupils' personal and academic development. There are good links with the local community through the United Villages Partnership (UVP) which provides the focal point for many developments and activities both within the school and in the community, for example, through certificated ICT courses and sports development activities. Subject departments make use of the immediate area for studies such as fieldwork in geography, for example, using Barnsley for a major piece of coursework on urban development. The school is working with the Barnsley Business Education Partnership (BBEP) to develop mentoring for pupils and to support the Compact agreement with Year 11 pupils.

Pupils' personal development

39. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. However, there is no school-wide co-ordination, nor a policy to ensure that this provision permeates all areas of school life. Most subject departments do not have their own policies. Consequently, while pupils are given at least satisfactory experiences in all aspects except spiritual development, no clear direction is given to subject departments. As a consequence, what departments provide is not of equal quality.

40. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are unsatisfactory overall and in mathematics, geography, ICT and modern languages; they are poor in science and art and design. Lack of school guidance for subjects is the main reason so that opportunities are missed through which pupils' reflection could be encouraged. The twice-daily ten-minute registration periods do not allow adequate time for reflection once administrative matters have been dealt with. Although there is a 'Thought for the Week', this does not provide a strong reflective theme. When referred to, it is often merely read out, with no discussion or reflection. Better opportunities were seen in assemblies, although none of those observed included an opportunity for collective worship. For example, in Year 8 and Year 9, pupils considered the theme of creation and in Year 11, thoughts were presented about the nature of religious belief. Very good spiritual reflection takes place in dance, through work in class and for productions. In religious education, there are good opportunities in all year groups, for example through studies of belief.

41. There are good opportunities for pupils' moral development. A clear moral code emphasises respect and courtesy for others. It is based on high expectations and self-discipline rather than on extensive rules. For example, in Year 8, a teacher drew attention to the importance of respecting the beliefs of other people when different from one's own beliefs. Year 9, discussed the problems caused by litter. The best opportunities are in expressive arts and personal, social and health education, for example, through exploring such issues as the Holocaust and racism, and the work of a local hospice. In English, there is frequent discussion of the moral ideas depicted in the literature that pupils study. Mathematics teachers present good role models by demonstrating high expectations of pupils, for example by trusting them to check their own work. In business education, pupils consider ethical issues relating to advertising, shareholding, privatisation, and factors affecting the motivation of employees, the rights of the disabled and those of different ethnicity and gender, in the context of changes in legislation. In personal, social and health

education, Year 11 pupils were helped to develop a mature understanding of the value judgements involved in making decisions about abortion. In the majority of subjects, good opportunities for moral development are provided, although in geography opportunities are often overlooked.

42. Good opportunities are provided for social development. The school aims to equip pupils to take their place in a democratic society. The well-established school council enables pupils to work co-operatively both with each other and with staff in contributing to the running of the school. For example, pupils participated in the selection of new senior staff, in the ratifying of the sex and drugs education policies and in improving the environment in the dining hall. The council plays a role in the review of policies and in securing their acceptance by the pupils. It administers a budget of £3,000 and is responsible for running the charitable work of the school, taking the lead in the school's work to support a local hospice. No subject provides a less than satisfactory context for social development. The best opportunities are in expressive arts and personal, social and health education, for example, through strong emphasis on group and class discussions and consideration of issues such as the role of friendship and the family in society. In English, pupils consider power in society when studying 'Animal Farm'. Opportunities are regularly provided for pupils to work collaboratively, take responsibility for their own working practices or take a leadership role in science, design and technology, geography, ICT and music. Extra-curricular activities and productions strengthen relationships and teamwork. Pupils contribute to a buddy system to help new pupils to settle in.

43. Satisfactory opportunities are now provided for cultural development, a key issue reported at the last inspection. Pupils now come into contact with a range of cultures. The best multi-cultural development is provided through personal, social and health education, design and technology, business education, dance and music. The personal, social and health education programme raises awareness of different national, ethnic, religious and regional identities in Britain by examining why Britain is a multi-cultural society. Year 9 pupils explore the experiences of women in Afghanistan. Themes in textiles often have a focus such as Japanese and Egyptian styles and those connected with ancient religions. In business education, pupils have to plan an exhibition, taking account of the needs of visitors from different cultures. Pupils study Indian music and African drum rhythms and use the Internet to explore world music. Dance themes are based on ideas from different cultures. Pupils study world religions. The school is well aware that, as a community with a small ethnic mix among its pupils, it has particular challenges in providing multi-cultural experiences and is seeking ways to improve these further. There remain insufficient cultural opportunities in mathematics, science, art and design, geography and ICT where this aspect of pupils' development is not routinely included in subject planning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. There are satisfactory arrangements for checking pupils' progress both as individuals and in their work. Form tutors know their pupils well because the pastoral staff team stays with the same tutor groups from Year 7 to Year 11. It is clear from the friendly relationships that prevail that this helps pupils to develop the self-discipline needed for successful learning. The pastoral structure has been helpfully revised in order to strengthen the links between the personal and educational guidance pupils receive. For example, heads of year will now work with the linked member of senior staff in order to concentrate on the specific needs of particular year groups. The role of form tutors is being appropriately broadened to work with pupils in setting their personal and educational targets. Tutors already discuss progress grades with their pupils twice a year. Records of achievement are produced as a leaving document after Year 11 pupils have completed their work experience, but are not used as a tool for pupils' self-monitoring.

45. The steps taken by the school to ensure the care of individual pupils are unsatisfactory overall because risk assessments are not carried out with sufficient rigour. Since the last inspection, there has been unsatisfactory progress in implementing risk assessment procedures in science. During the inspection two health and safety issues were brought to the school's attention and immediately attended to. Appropriate arrangements for first-aid and for storing and administering medication are suitably in place; some parents expressed their appreciation of the way in which the latter is handled. There are two qualified first-aiders among the office staff whose training is up-to-date. While midday supervisors do not have first-aid training, some have, with pupils, undertaken basic emergency aid training from the St John's Ambulance. Current practice whereby pupils who feel unwell sit in a thoroughfare area near the school office, rather than in the medical room, is however, unsuitable. The difficulty of providing proper supervision for the existing medical room is acknowledged in the school development plan. Arrangements for child protection are in place as required. The designated teacher has received up-to-date training and has passed this on to staff in a training session.

46. The steps taken by the school to ensure good behaviour are effective. Pupils understand the behaviour policy which is formulated well. It makes clear the shared responsibility of all members of the school community and is expressed in the form of a contract between pupils, parents and all staff. This reflects the approach taken in the Home-School Agreement and the school's Internet Contract. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have been consulted about their views on bullying; the school plans to sample opinion routinely when reviewing policies. Pupils are well aware that racist and sexist behaviour is unacceptable; pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds consider that harassment is minimal and that if it does occur it is dealt with speedily and effectively. Staff generally implement the behaviour policy well so that inconsistencies in practice are minimised. The stepped sanctions are understood clearly by the pupils. Fixed-term exclusions are used as an ultimate sanction to allow for a cooling-off period and time to plan ahead with parents for supporting improvement. When exclusions occur, every effort is made to minimise the disruption of pupils' education. Procedures are followed properly.

47. New provision in the Bridge Unit and through the appointment of the learning mentors is tackling effectively the problems which can lead to exclusion. It aims to help those pupils who have been excluded to re-integrate successfully on their return. A measure of success is already being achieved in changing students' attitudes. For example, new arrangements for pupils in Years 10 and 11 involve extended work experience, and/or college attendance and residential experience. Those who lack motivation have been linked with business mentors. Both the provision in the Bridge and the learning mentoring scheme are integrated well into school life, although both only started at the beginning of the current term. There is an efficient flow of information and of adapted teaching materials. Yearly targets are set for reducing the rate of exclusions and improving attendance and pupils keep their own record of attendance.

48. There is satisfactory work to monitor attendance and improve it. A computerised registration system has been in place since 1999. 'First-day' follow-up of absence is in place with additional office time allocated for it. This has been received favourably by parents. The link between attendance and achievement has been recognised, although data to show the link is not prepared. Additional educational welfare time bought in ensures that there is an officer in school every day to examine registers and discern any patterns of absence. The officers attend the reviews of pupils with special needs if attendance is a problem.

Assessment

49. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall. There is satisfactory use of the information gained from the range of pupils' assessments to ensure that appropriate work is planned, both for individuals and in the curriculum. This is done thoroughly in music and physical education. In English the procedures are good; the department is beginning to give National Curriculum levels to pupils' work. In Years 10 and 11, assessment folders are graded and individual targets set for pupils; data from assessment is analysed and used as a guide to adapt the curriculum. In mathematics, teacher assessment is accurate. Good records are kept of test results which are used to organise teaching groups. In science, data is analysed extensively but there is not much evidence of its use. A design and technology database and teachers' records are used for monitoring pupils' progress thoroughly and for discussions with parents. ICT records are beginning to be used for grouping pupils and tracking the progress on their targets. In modern languages, regular testing and good analysis of pupils' skills lead to accurate estimated grades. The interim arrangements in art and design are unsatisfactory and the accuracy of teachers' Year 9 assessments needs attention as it does in physical education.

50. In special needs, detailed records are kept of individual pupils' assessments in order to track their progress, but there is no monitoring of the effectiveness of special needs teaching. Annual reviews are carried out as required. There are no records showing how many pupils each year make enough progress to remove their need for special support.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Overall the partnership with parents is satisfactory. The questionnaires returned by parents indicate that most are happy with the school and in particular they feel able to approach teachers if there is a problem. This is a popular school which is over-subscribed.

52. Information for parents is presented well in the school brochure, with an attractive cover and straight-forward, informative inserts. There is a useful starter pack for new parents covering the day-to-day running of the school. Simple guidance on ways to help with homework and tips on study skills are helpfully included. Although the importance of good attendance is stressed, it is not made clear that the authorisation of absence is up to the school, not the parent. The Home-School Agreement is clear and direct. It reflects the commitment to strengthening the sense of school community.

53. Regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date with activities and concerns. Parents' views are sought, for example, about the arrangements for the Year 7 induction day. The school plans to extend such sampling of views. However, although pupils' planners contain much helpful information, they do not appear to be used effectively for communicating with parents. Scrutiny of a sample suggests that checking both by teachers and parents is not guaranteed. Although during the inspection planners were seen in use and pupils said that they were useful, their use is not fully exploited. Parents' view is similar. Parents' evenings are held regularly, with the sensible addition in the current year of an early check-up meeting for new parents after the first half term. These meetings are well supported with an attendance of around 70 per cent. The attendance at the governors' annual meeting with parents is very low.

54. Pupils' annual reports are provided for parents as required. However, they are not always clear enough to help parents gain a clear understanding, for each subject, of what their child does well and what needs to be worked on. In addition to the annual report, letters are sent out after the twice-yearly reviews of progress. These letters inform parents where there is cause either for praise or for concern.

55. Parents' contribution to the life and work of the school is satisfactory. They help with school visits, the charitable fund-raising organised by the school council and the musical and dramatic productions mounted by the school. A parent who is a rugby coach helps with training. Parents are invited to share in activities such as the drugs awareness workshops. When the structure of A-levels changed there was a presentation to explain this. The school association is active in fund-raising and organising social activities, although it has some difficulty in finding helpers. Good provision is made for developing contact with families whose children have difficulty with school. There is regular visiting by the learning mentors and the educational welfare officers. The school hopes to offer parents support by setting up a course which explores the problems of bringing up teenage children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The school community is experiencing a period of change under the leadership of the new headteacher who took up his post in September 2000. Adjustments in the arrangements for running the school have had to be made as a result of senior staff sick-leave, two of whom were absent during the inspection week.

57. Of good benefit to the school is the equally strong quality of the headteacher's leadership and management skills. These skills are demonstrated particularly well in the current development plan. This plan is a very effective document showing a clear sense of the school's direction, a highly coherent management approach and an unequivocal message about needed and wisely identified change. It helpfully sets the context of where the school is now and where it wishes to be. A knock-on effect is the good quality of development planning in about half the subject departments. The new 'Leadership and Management Group', consisting of all staff with subject and pastoral responsibilities and the senior staff team, provides a valuable forum for reviewing what is effective and what needs strengthening in the way all staff managers carry out their school-wide responsibilities. The process contributes effectively to the continuing professional development of staff; for example, through scrutiny of the analysis of GCSE results for 2001 and through the discussion observed during the inspection which explored the school's ethos and what it might be.

58. Leadership and management are good in geography, music, physical education and religious education; in design and technology they are very good. The quality shows for example, in the clear sense of direction for departmental development and in good staff team work, both particularly strong and well established in design and technology. However, the school's management of art and design is poor. Unsuitable staffing arrangements, inadequate curriculum time, poor lesson monitoring and a succession of temporary staff to cover for absence, have combined to prevent pupils from achieving the standards they could in the subject. A strength in music, as part of expressive arts, is the monitoring of teaching followed up by a written report. In the majority of other subjects monitoring is satisfactory, but unsatisfactory in English and mathematics. Balancing these weaknesses with the good school-wide arrangements in place for monitoring teaching and learning through lesson observation, sampling work and interviewing pupils, leads to the judgement that provision overall is satisfactory. The regular reporting to the governing body on the findings of monitoring is a very good feature. Staff and governors are benefiting from the use of new technology to collate and analyse data on assessment and attendance, as well as record such matters as the incidence of 'call-out' by departments – the arrangement for seeking senior staff help with undisciplined behaviour. During the inspection, equipment arrived for heads of year which will provide direct access to centrally held records. Overall the use of new technology for teaching and learning and as a management tool is satisfactory. The potential is good, supported very well by the new administrative 'IT' appointment to deal with school data and analysis.

59. Arrangements for performance management have been established well. Those for the continuing professional development of staff are very good. The record of staff training activity from September 2000 is impressive. Almost all staff have attended specific training for their own development on at least two occasions, most on many more. The training has related closely both to individual targets for improvement and to the school-wide priorities in the development plan, for example, training on the National Numeracy Strategy for Years 7 to 9, courses on ICT, and behaviour management training for all staff. The beneficial effects of the latter were seen, for example, in the management of a class on report for poor behaviour. Induction arrangements for new staff are good.

60. The school is served well by its governing body. Procedures are in place which ensure that governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses; these procedures are helpful for new governors in building their understanding of how the school operates. For example, in addition to the inclusion of a report from the headteacher on the findings of monitoring in the minutes of governing body meetings, the headteacher's reports to governors include reports from subject departments. Governors discuss the PANDA and the school's analysis of results. The knowledge gained from such reports is now being suitably strengthened by the arrangement agreed during the last academic year for individual governors to be linked with departments. Parent governors make a strong contribution. Sensible and timely changes to the governing body's committee structure are being put into effect, replacing two committees with four, to ensure a manageable work-load and sharply focused discussion. However, statutory requirements for the curriculum and for daily worship are not fully met and the monitoring of health and safety procedures is insufficiently rigorous.

61. An audit in May 2001 found the school's financial controls to be satisfactory. Funding is being used effectively to bring about the range and quality of provision determined by the headteacher and the governing body. School records show below average basic budget allocations in previous years, as reported fully at the last inspection. In 1999-2000 the figure was well below the national average. The healthy position anticipated at the end of the current financial year gives no indication of the difficulties previously experienced as the school endeavoured to clear its deficit (the consequence of local school reorganisation to 11-16 from 11-18 and the closure of one of the school's two sites). When compared with the national figures available, current funding levels show an average basic budget allocation and well above average spending per pupil resulting from monies from the Standards Fund, Excellence in Cities funding, substantial funds from the National Grid for Learning and an additional 'one-off' government grant. Budget management is highly efficient. Grant monies are used wisely and with imagination to secure equally good opportunities for personal development and progress for those pupils whose success is at risk. A particularly good example is the mentoring now provided by two full-time mentors whose professional backgrounds are in educational welfare and social work. There is good application of the principles of best value. For example, parents were consulted by questionnaire about the arrangements for Year 7 induction. Staff are well-informed and consulted, for example, about department funding and budget control; all subject leaders belong to the leadership and management group. There is vigilant analysis and comparison of the school's results and finances with local and, for results, national figures. Bulk purchase, change of suppliers and updating equipment is saving money, for example, £1800 a year on water supply.

62. There is sound management of special needs; provision meets requirements. Detailed diagnostic records are kept and reviews are documented well. Pupils' individual plans are up to date, although these would be improved by more precise targets. The team of classroom support assistants is deployed well and several team members are studying for relevant qualifications. Although regular liaison takes place with external agencies, internal liaison with some subject departments is not strong enough to ensure the most effective

teaching and resources are provided for all pupils with special needs. There is no mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of special needs provision across all subjects.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

63. Staffing is satisfactory overall and good in science, geography, history, modern languages and physical education. There is particular strength in design and technology and weakness in art and design. The staffing arrangements for art and design, involving two part-time appointments, have been inadequately managed by the school with detrimental effect on pupils' standards and achievement. The difficulties have been compounded by staff absence. In the small number of lessons taught by non-specialists, no adverse effects on standards were observed.

64. Overall, the quality of the school's accommodation is satisfactory. Since the last inspection some progress has been made, with site improvements and the grouping together of subject teaching rooms. Accommodation for art and design and ICT has been significantly improved but remains unsatisfactory for music, where the need to store music equipment in the sole classroom restricts the range of learning activities that can be undertaken. The design and technology, physical education and expressive arts departments have very good accommodation which supports pupils' achievement of high standards, although the surface of the all-weather pitch is in a poor state of repair and the electronics teaching room is too small. Provision for English is poor: on some occasions each week, the subject is taught in general teaching rooms which restricts the range of resources that can be readily available. Because some rooms used for English are too small for current class sizes, activities are curtailed, for example, pair and group work on oral tasks; the effect is to limit pupils' progress in speaking skills.

65. Generally, learning resources are adequate for needs in most subjects, while good in science, design and technology and physical education. Satisfactory progress has been made in tackling the key issue regarding resources which was raised at the last inspection. Expenditure on resources has improved and is more efficiently targeted now that subject bids are linked to the school development plan. Books and consumable resources are much improved although in mathematics, geography and expressive arts there are still shortages of textbooks. There is a shortage of audio equipment in music and of audio-visual equipment in art and design where overall provision is unsatisfactory. Kilns for art and design, not in use, are a wasted resource. In all the subjects affected by lack of resources, pupils' learning activities are restricted.

66. The school has made good use of special funding to improve ICT resources. Provision of hardware and software for the specific 'specialist' course is good. However, subject departments have limited access to computers both in subject rooms (limited numbers of computers) and in the computer suites (demand greater than availability). The library's pleasant working area is too small for the number of pupils on roll. There is a good range of fiction books, but non-fiction stock is limited and there is a lack of periodicals and newspapers. Computers are available in the library for pupils' research, with Internet access, although there is no Internet access yet for administrative use. There are well-considered plans to develop the library as a resource centre and to extend provision and opening hours.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. To raise standards further and meet requirements fully the headteacher and governors should:

- (1) Ensure the rigorous checking of health and safety procedures in all areas of the school's work through:
- Clarifying the responsibilities of all postholders for health and safety
 - Strengthening school procedures for risk assessment
 - Ensuring that scheduled health and safety checks take place as expected and are fully reported to the governing body
 - Providing suitable arrangements for pupils who are unwell.
- (Paragraphs: 45, 60, 98)
- (2) Ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they should in Years 10 and 11 in history and modern languages and that gifted and talented pupils achieve as well as they should in English and geography through:
- Providing work that is equally challenging for pupils of all levels of attainment
 - Clarifying exactly what is expected of subject departments and individual teachers in planning pupils' work
 - Ensuring that all staff benefit from existing good practice
 - Providing further training for all staff and for subject departments to establish equally effective planning across subjects and courses
 - Following up the year-group monitoring by implementing regular checks on the quality of this aspect of planning
 - Evaluating planning in relation to pupils' progress by year group and by subject
 - Ensuring that effective challenge is a feature of all teaching activities such as questioning, discussion-leading, verbal feedback and marking.
- (Paragraphs: 11, 14, 15, 21, 25, 35, 73, 75, 119, 145, 156)

- (3) Implement adequate provision for art and design and raise standards through:
- Providing for departmental management by senior staff, with clearly defined responsibilities
 - Implementing arrangements for the day-to-day management of the art and design department by a full-time member of staff
 - Ensuring that art and design department meetings involve all members of the department
 - Providing staff training to ensure that the management issues for the subject are appropriately tackled
 - Ensuring that sufficient specialist guidance on the management of art and design is available for the department.
- (Paragraphs: 7, 14, 27, 58, 63, 101, 103, 105-107)
- (4) Meet curriculum requirements for art and design and music in Years 7 to 9 and extend the range of alternative curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 through:
- Ensuring that the school's teaching week and the time allocations for these two subjects in Years 7 to 9 allow pupils to benefit fully from the National Curriculum
 - Ensuring that sufficient specialist guidance on the curriculum for art and design is available for the department
 - Strengthening the opportunities for work-related and vocational studies in Years 10 and 11
 - Providing further alternative routes to certification in Years 10 and 11.
- (Paragraphs: 27, 29, 98, 105, 154, 158)
- (5) Improve the accommodation for English and music and music resources through:
- Providing equally well-resourced teaching rooms for all classes in English
 - Providing adequate storage facilities for the English and music departments to avoid taking up classroom space for storage that should be available for learning activities
 - Ensuring that an appropriate range of resources is provided for lesson activities in music.
- (Paragraphs: 64, 65, 74, 157)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	138
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	20	55	55	5	0	0
Percentage	2	14	40	40	4	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	1064
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	154

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	199

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	37

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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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
	2001	87	113	200

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	55	62
	Girls	64	72	82
	Total	99	127	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	50 (69)	64 (70)	72 (70)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (36)	38 (39)	36 (36)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	55	46
	Girls	91	75	74
	Total	153	130	120
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (73)	65 (72)	60 (56)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (27)	31 (37)	24 (27)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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
	2001	94	102	196

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	39	88	91
	Girls	48	95	98
	Total	87	83	89
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	44.4 (39)	93.9 (90)	96.9 (96)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	88.8 (90.6)	94.5 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.2 (36)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	1057
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	73	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	17.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	486

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	29
Key Stage 4	23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2 648 589
Total expenditure	2 501 826
Expenditure per pupil	2 394
Balance brought forward from previous year	(36 717)
Balance carried forward to next year	110 045

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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	1064
Number of questionnaires returned	176

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	54	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	52	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	52	20	4	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	52	20	4	3
The teaching is good.	20	69	5	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	48	27	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	51	5	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	48	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	15	48	23	3	10
The school is well led and managed.	21	62	3	1	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	57	6	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	40	13	5	19

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 **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good teaching from experienced staff interests pupils
- Pupils' good knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses – result of good assessment
- Good contribution to pupils' moral and social development
- Good provision for drama
- Good improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Work not sufficiently adapted to meets the needs of all pupils
- ICT not used enough
- Insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning
- Poor accommodation restricts learning activities.

68. Standards in the work seen in Year 9 are average. Higher attainers read well, although not always widely. They write accurately and at length. They have a good awareness of how to adapt their writing for a particular purpose, for example, when writing a formal letter. They speak clearly, but not at great length. Average attainers understand what they read. They use quotations to support their ideas, for example from the poem 'Memories of my Grandfather,' and make inferences from their reading which lead, for example, to an appreciation of the character. They use paragraphs and punctuate accurately. Lower attainers show understanding of their reading at a basic level. They can adapt their language to show the difference between the characters in the novel 'Daz for Zoe'. Their vocabulary is limited and their spelling is poor. They join sentences together with 'and' and 'so', rather than using a range of sentence structures. They answer questions briefly. From their average attainment on entry, both boys and girls achieve satisfactorily during Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress. However, work is not specially adapted to take account of their needs unless they are withdrawn for teaching in small groups, where their progress is good.

69. In the Year 9 national tests in 2000, results were above the national average and well above average compared to schools with a similar intake. They had risen steadily over the previous five years. Results dropped in 2001 to well below average. In 2000, English results were better than those in mathematics and similar to those in science, but in 2001 they were below both. This fall in results is explained by the attainment of the 2001 Year 9 group when they joined the school; school figures show that their attainment was well below average. Although the relative performance of boys and girls varies strikingly from year to year, there is insufficient analysis of the reasons for this or of the reasons for the drop in standards.

70. Standards in Year 11 are average and reflect the GCSE results in 2001. Higher attainers read with perception. Their comparisons of 'The Red Room' and 'Farthing House' show good use of quotation and good analytical skills. However, their reading material does not always give them extensive enough experience to ensure that they make the progress they are capable of. They explain their ideas orally at length and with confidence. The written work of average attainers is substantial and interesting. These pupils use a reasonably wide vocabulary but make errors in writing, for example in the punctuation of direct speech and in the spelling of complex words. They read well, for example, understanding and using

technical terms such as 'personification'. Folders of work by lower attainers are too often incomplete. These pupils understand plot and character in their reading. They ask relevant questions and give relevant answers, but speak reluctantly and hesitantly. Achievement is satisfactory for both boys and girls; pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress. Those taking the Certificate of Achievement course make good progress because their work is broken down into manageable chunks and they receive much individual help. However, during Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11 the achievement of higher attainers and the gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory. Good assessment procedures ensure that pupils know their own strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement are individually targeted. However, the texts used and the pace of lessons are not always suitable for these pupils. Similarly, lower attainers receive insufficient help to enable them to tackle the work at their own level.

71. In the GCSE examinations in 2000 results were average in English and below average in English literature. In 2001 they are better. In both examinations, results are average compared to national standards and well above average compared to results in similar schools. Pupils do better in English than in most of their other subjects, but only a small number of pupils gain the highest A or A* grades. As in Year 9, the difference between boys' and girls' attainment varies. In 2000, the difference was less than is usual nationally, but in 2001, it was greater. The school has not monitored the results sufficiently to be able to explain these differences, or to remedy them. Almost all pupils enter both examinations and gain a grade. Six or seven pupils each year, including some with special needs, complete the Certificate of Achievement successfully.

72. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They respond with enthusiasm, especially when the teaching is very good. Year 7 hugely enjoyed a dramatic reading of a Norwegian folk tale and wrote their own endings with great concentration and effort. Pupils work co-operatively in pairs and groups. Successful pair-work in Year 11 ensured that pupils identified many ambiguous words in Simon Armitage's poem 'About His Person'. The keen interest in the forthcoming Readathon shows how pupils are concerned for the welfare of others, as did the sensible and thoughtful discussion by Year 10 pupils on the events of September 11. Relationships are positive and staff and pupils work together with good humour.

73. Teaching and learning are good. On occasion they are very good and on occasion they are unsatisfactory. However, the lack of monitoring means that variations in quality have not been identified or sorted out. Teaching and learning are slightly better in Years 10 to 11 because teachers are more confident about following the schemes of work for these year groups. The management of pupils is a particular strength of the teaching. Because pleasant relationships are established with humour and concern, pupils are interested and work keenly. Teachers know their subject well, have clear learning targets for lessons and present work convincingly. As a consequence, pupils develop good understanding. In a Year 11 lesson on 'Of Mice and Men' for example, pupils appreciated the themes of the novel because of the clarity of the teacher's explanation and the skilful way questioning developed understanding. Pupils are prepared well for examinations because teachers have a very good knowledge of external assessment requirements, both in Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils have a good knowledge of how well they are doing, especially in Years 10 and 11, and are helped by the individual targets set on most of their completed work. Teachers constantly check whether pupils have understood, both during class discussions and when they are working independently. This checking is done particularly well in Years 10 and 11. Work in English is effective in developing pupils' social and moral awareness. For example, discussion of 'Animal Farm' drew out parallels with modern-day Britain and the way power can corrupt. Teachers pay good attention to the improvement of basic skills such as spelling, but far too little work is done on ICT. This is largely because of the lack of resources. There is no evidence of attention to developing numeracy skills. The main area needing further attention

in teaching and learning is the planning which does not take enough account of the range of attainment within each class. Often, good open-ended tasks are set which give pupils the chance to develop work at their own level. However, the methods used do not always allow for higher and lower attainers to progress at an appropriate pace or with suitable resources. Since the last inspection, much improvement has been made in the extent of pupils' opportunities to talk about their work and develop their understanding through discussion. But on occasion, there is still too much talking by teachers and too few speaking opportunities for pupils.

74. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Some effective systems have been put into place such as the assessment procedures, but these are not applied equally well by all teachers. The poor accommodation for the subject creates many difficulties. There is no English room within the department where new developments can be discussed and where ideas can be shared. The English classrooms are shabby and uninspiring for pupils, despite valiant attempts to brighten them with pupils' work. A small proportion of English lessons are taught away from the department in non-specialist rooms. Inadequate storage space leads to cluttered rooms. The rooms are small for the numbers of pupils in some classes, making effective oral work difficult. All these have some adverse effects on standards and on the development of a cohesive department, despite the good level of staff commitment. Despite the strengths of teaching and learning in individual lessons, the unevenness of provision, the lack of attention to the top and bottom ends of the ability range, the poor accommodation and the lack of analysis to identify and improve specific problems, results in achievement that is satisfactory overall.

75. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection. More opportunities for structured oral work are given and there are now schemes of work in place to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum, including pre-twentieth century literature. Standards of attainment have improved, as has the teaching in Years 7 to 9.

Literacy

76. Opportunities to explore ideas through speaking and discussion are limited. Some good class discussion and group- and pair-work take place in English, expressive arts, ICT, physical education and religious education, but these opportunities are rarely provided in mathematics and geography, for example. As a result, pupils generally lack confidence in speaking formally in front of an audience. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write in a variety of forms or for a variety of purposes, although in science they are taught to write practical reports and in design and technology they write evaluations and letters to relevant companies. Far too few opportunities are provided for pupils to practise and develop their reading skills. Some use is made of the Internet to provide good opportunities for practising reading skills such as skimming and scanning, but teachers often read to pupils rather than ensuring that pupils have as many opportunities as possible to improve their own reading.

77. Pupils in Year 7 are making good progress in 'Catch-up' classes, but are missing parts of other lessons to do so; this has a limiting effect on their progress in those lessons.

Drama

78. Overall, the quality of provision in drama is good. Drama is part of the expressive arts department. It is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and, from September 2001, as an option in Year 10.

79. Attainment has improved since the last inspection and is now average in Year 9 and in Year 10. Pupils are achieving well. In Year 9, higher attainers use precise movements to convey meaning and have the determination to practise and refine their mimes. Lower and average attainers co-operate well in pairs to convey meaning but do not show persistence in

improving their performances. In Year 10, higher attainers take on role and sustain it convincingly, for example in their preparation of scripted drama. Average attainers take part in group discussion well and motivate each other by their comments. Lower attainers join in well. Pupils with special needs make good progress, playing an active part in the lessons.

80. Pupils enjoy their drama and show interest and motivation. Their behaviour is good. They co-operate very well, for example, in a Year 8 lesson focusing on social issues such as the misuse of alcohol and drugs.

81. Teaching is good. Lesson targets and instructions are very clearly explained so that pupils are clear about what they are doing and develop understanding of drama techniques such as mime. Quick warm-up exercises energise pupils so that they work hard during the sessions. Pupils learn at a good pace because the teaching incorporates good strategies for managing the class, for example restricting pupils' movement to a specific area of the studio for each group. Good assessment, which fully involves pupils in reviewing their own strengths and weaknesses, means that pupils know how to improve in the next session. Pupils are encouraged to speak clearly and listen carefully, although opportunities to teach useful spellings are not always taken up. On occasion, silly behaviour is not dealt with soon enough.

82. Leadership and management are good. New teachers appreciate the good help and guidance given. Very good accommodation contributes to the good atmosphere for drama which helps to focus pupils' attention closely. Provision has greatly improved since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' good subject knowledge, planning, methods, use of resources and management of pupils
- Improvement in results at Year 9 and GCSE
- Pupils' good behaviour and good attitudes to the subject
- Good tracking of pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of monitoring of teaching
- ICT not incorporated into schemes of work for all pupils
- Further development needed for the National Numeracy Strategy.

83. By Year 9 standards are average overall. They are above average in the highest ability groups as they should be. Average pupils in Year 7 use their knowledge of place value to solve problems involving decimals; they confidently express probability as a fraction. Average pupils in Year 9 can calculate the circumference and area of a circle and predict the result of multiplying and dividing by numbers between 0 and 1. Higher attainers in Year 8 combine their knowledge of area with their knowledge of enlargement to solve problems such as finding the scale factor that transforms one area into another. By the end of Year 9, higher attainers solve quadratic equations using trial and improvement methods; they apply Pythagoras' theorem to solve problems. Lower attainers solve problems involving number and money and draw regular polygons inside a circle by calculating the angle at the centre. Pupils with special needs reach the same standards as the other pupils in their groups. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress.

84. Although the results in the Year 9 national tests were disappointing in 2001, standards are better than these results might suggest. Since 1996, test results have moved closer to the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving at least the expected level increased each year until 2000 when it was close to the national average. In 2001 the proportion fell below the national average and below that of schools with a similar intake. However, for this Year 9 group, achievement judged on their results when they were in Year 6 is satisfactory. The trend in average points over the last four years is rising faster than the national trend so that the school is closing the gap between its results and the national results; the performance of the girls is rising faster than that of the boys.

85. Standards in Years 11 are average. Average pupils use percentages to solve problems and find the rule of a quadratic sequence, expressing it algebraically. They can devise and carry out a survey, using their knowledge of handling data to display and interpret their results. Higher attainers solve quadratic equations by substitution and by the application of the formula. They understand inverse proportion and can apply the sine and cosine rules to calculate missing dimensions. Their examination coursework is good. Lower attainers in Year 11, including those with special needs, can calculate average speed and can convert between metric units, for example, litres to millilitres. They make satisfactory progress as do those pupils who are gifted and talented.

86. GCSE results have improved each year since 1998. In 2001, just over half the pupils gained the higher grades and their achievement between Year 9 and Year 11 is satisfactory. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades is above the national average, both for boys and for girls. Fewer girls than boys gain the higher grades however, but in 2001 girls' results moved closer to boys' results. Although there has been a good rise in the number of higher grades, no pupil gained the highest grade. The proportion of pupils not entered for GCSE in 2001 was very small. Some who in previous years might have been entered for the Certificate of Achievement took GCSE instead. Those that did enter for the Certificate of Achievement did well: they gained three passes with distinction, three with merit and one pass certificate. No pupil failed to pass.

87. Teaching and learning are good. Overall pupils are making satisfactory progress in their learning, while in Years 7 to 9 they do so well. This is mainly due to the quality of teaching and is supported by pupils' good attitudes and behaviour. Teachers use a variety of approaches to help pupils understand and learn mathematics. Lesson time is never wasted, good selective use is made of resources and the management of pupils is effective. Teachers work from well-prepared lesson plans; assessment of the work done in the previous lesson is reflected in the next lesson's plan, and in some lessons, plans are modified appropriately during the course of the lesson. All pupils get a fair share of the teacher's time. Pupils learn best when plans include a clear statement of the targets for the lesson which are shared with the pupils at the beginning of the session and reviewed at the

end. The plans include work to extend the quicker pupils and higher attainers and additional resources are provided for pupils with special needs as appropriate. In the most effective lessons pupils are provided with challenging and interesting work which makes them think. These lessons move at a brisk pace and encourage pupils to work hard, for example by setting time limits for the tasks. A feature of these very good lessons is the skilled questioning by the teacher; probing questions that encourage accurately expressed responses help pupils to explain their methods and reasons for others to follow.

88. Teachers use a variety of methods to maintain pupils' interest and to help them concentrate on their work. For a group of lower attainers in Years 10, the teacher's measured and careful explanations gave the pupils sufficient time to absorb the new skill of expressing probability as a fraction. There followed short periods of activity interspersed by checking answers so that pupils knew how well they were doing. By this method the teacher helped the pupils to make small but significant steps in their learning. A group of Year 10 pupils worked independently in preparation for their next module test. They used a revision list with book references for the topics to be examined; they checked their own answers and decided when they needed help from the teacher. They knew their marks from the previous test and were able to target their own areas of weakness. This is an example of good independent learning. Pupils with special needs are making satisfactory progress in their learning, supported by classroom assistants or by the class teacher. Class teachers are well informed about their pupils' needs and work well with the classroom assistants to the benefit of all pupils in the group. Textbooks and worksheets are used well, the teachers selecting appropriate work for their classes. Numeracy skills are taught well, but the teaching of basic literacy skills is not equally well achieved across the department. Not all teachers use and emphasise key words for the topic they are teaching, correct mis-spelling of mathematical vocabulary or encourage pupils to reason aloud. Although teaching and learning are good overall, pupils' achievement is only satisfactory. This is because there are inconsistencies in provision within the department that are not identified due to the lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching. For example, although pupils' books are marked regularly, not all contain advice to help pupils improve the standard of their work and few show evidence that pupils have acted on that advice.

89. Pupils show a willing attitude to their work and the behaviour of almost all pupils is good. Pupils are polite and responsive to their teachers and work together in harmony. Relationships in lessons are good, both between teachers and pupils and also between pupils themselves. There are few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour. These are managed very well by most teachers who ensure that such behaviour does not continue and that the learning of other pupils in the class is not disrupted.

90. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with some good features. Satisfactory progress is being made with the priorities in the development plan. There is a good team spirit and the team has many strengths. Procedures for tracking pupils' academic progress are good. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, records are based on year tests and for those in Years 10 and 11, on module tests written by the department for internal use, together with module tests set by the examination board. There has been some helpful development of teaching through the department's involvement with Initial Teacher Training and team-teaching. However there is no regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching carried out by the head of department. There is a good new scheme of work for Years 10 and 11 and the scheme for Years 7 to 9 is being developed to incorporate the new national scheme. Accommodation in the main block is attractive, with good displays of both commercial posters and pupils' work, although the entrance to the building is very crowded between lessons. The department has a set of graphical calculators which are very useful tools. However there are no references in the schemes of work to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to use ICT to enhance their

understanding of mathematics or that mathematics teachers contribute to the development of the basic skills of ICT. There are very few mathematics books in the library.

91. Progress since the last inspection is good. There has been a steady rise in pupils' performance. A new syllabus has been chosen for GCSE and the scheme of work re-written. In addition to entering pupils for external module tests, the department has written additional tests to use within the school. Two units have been planned for the Numeracy Strategy and the department has worked with primary schools on one of the Bridging Units published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. However, there has been insufficient progress in incorporating ICT into the teaching of mathematics and this needs to be remedied as soon as possible.

Numeracy

92. The standard of pupils' mental arithmetic is average. Pupils have the mathematical skills necessary for their work in other subjects. For example, they use measuring skills in design and technology for their examination work on garments and soft furnishings; they use bar and pie charts in their projects. In science they calculate force in Newtons, use Ohm's law and graphs of radioactive decay; the measurement of volume, temperature and time pervades all practical work. In business education, pupils calculate average incomes and real wage increases from statistics, while in history they study the rise in share prices.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- Improved Year 9 test scores and GCSE results
- The integration of basic skills in science work
- Good range of teaching strategies used well
- Experienced teachers who work well as a team
- Good, often very good behaviour
- Good textbook, equipment and computer resources.

Areas for improvement

- Safety procedures not fully implemented
- Limited integration of ICT into teaching
- Inconsistent target setting in marked work
- Poor library provision.

93. Standards in the work seen in Year 9 are well above average. This is an improvement from pupils' standards on entry, which are above average. Year 9 test results have improved steadily; over the last four years they have been above average when compared with the national benchmark and well above average when compared with similar schools. A high proportion of pupils achieves the higher levels. Teacher assessments have been lower but the department has identified a flaw in its method used to analyse the data. The records and work seen indicate that correlation with test results is likely to be closer in the current year. Pupils' achievement is good. Both those pupils with special needs and those who are gifted and talented make good progress. No pupils of any age from ethnic minority groups were seen. The difference in achievement between the standards of girls and boys is small. Pupils in Year 7 know some of the differences between animal and plant cells and can describe the function of parts of the cell. They explain that animals obtain food by eating and so have no need of chloroplasts. As well as making measurements using the correct units, pupils can calculate weight in Newtons, given the mass of an object. By the end of Year 9, pupils are

able to calculate pressure in N/m^2 and to explain changes of state from solid to liquid to gas in terms of what is happening to the particles. They can give detailed answers to questions on the misuse of various drugs, and describe what might happen to her baby if a pregnant woman smokes. All pupils are able to describe the relative reactivities of metals and higher attainers can predict possible reactions of a metal, for example of calcium with water, given its reactivity.

94. In the work seen in Year 11, standards are above average. They correspond with the GCSE results, which have been above the national average points score for several years, and in 2001 were also just above average for passes at grades A*-C. Numbers achieving the top A* grade have also been consistently above average. The 2001 results show no significant gender differences. In Years 10 and 11, pupils do not maintain their well above average standard by Year 9. This is because the course texts used in the department do not provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to succeed at the higher levels. Pupils' achievement is therefore satisfactory over Years 10 and 11, including the progress of pupils with special needs and those who are gifted and talented. Pupils make good gains in knowledge, and teaching within ability groups ensures that work is planned to suit their needs. Lower attainers in Year 10 know that the tubes that take water up the stem of a plant are called xylem and that the root hairs on plants take in water. They can explain that these create a large surface area so that plants can take up enough water. All Year 11 pupils are able to talk about heat transfer in terms of conduction, convection or insulation. All know that ammonia for the production of fertilisers is manufactured from nitrogen and hydrogen in the Haber Process. Those who are gifted and talented are able to explore the reaction conditions in greater depth, relating them to the percentage yield of ammonia.

95. Pupils' attitudes are good. Pupils behave well in science and in half of the lessons observed, behaviour was very good. They respect textbooks and laboratory equipment such as microscopes and glassware, and when they have to use equipment such as scalpels they are sensible and trustworthy. Usually pupils observe safety instructions, although in one class they had to be told repeatedly to wear goggles. They work well together in pairs. Although they have only few opportunities to use initiative or take responsibility for organising their work, they respond well when these are given, for example arranging themselves into different, larger practical groups or sharing equipment between groups.

96. Teaching and learning are good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons; in fact, almost all lessons were good or better, with a third of lessons seen being very good or excellent. Pupils have good opportunities to consolidate and develop their scientific knowledge and understanding as well as their manipulative and practical skills. Where lessons include a variety of activities, they concentrate well, displaying enthusiasm when given tasks such as building molecular models in Year 8. Oral, practical and written tasks give pupils many opportunities to think. Participation in the Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE) project extends the range of thinking tasks in Years 7 to 9; for example, Year 7 pupils investigate the variables which affect how roller balls roll. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are able to learn well by answering homework questions in depth, or by answering advanced questions in class, for example, why radioisotopes with a short half-life can be used as medical tracers. Younger pupils are clear about the level of their own work and set themselves targets for improvement. However, in Years 10 and 11, pupils describe their achievement in general terms such as average, rather than in relation to GCSE grades, and when questioned did not all know what they needed to do to improve. In Years 7 to 9, pupils with special needs learn well, as sometimes do those in Years 10 and 11, when the topic is relevant to them, for example home insulation. Notebooks show that they do not learn as well when topics lack a clear vocational or practical application.

97. Teachers have good levels of competence in their specialist subjects and have made good use of professional development opportunities to develop their skills in teaching across all the sciences. Lessons are planned well and expectations of pupils are high. Teachers pace lessons well, making good use of classroom support assistants when they are present. Teaching includes a range of practical work and uses resources such as models and videos. All notebooks are marked regularly, with the detail of comments increasing as pupils move up the school. Sometimes teachers do not set improvement targets for pupils, or fail to check that instructions or questions have been acted on. Homework is used well to consolidate teaching. Good development of numeracy skills runs as a strand through Years 7 to 11. It incorporates increasing complexity of numerical tasks, use of a range of graphical presentations and good stress on units. Teachers are aware of the need to develop literacy skills; the links with primary schools, with regular visits of Year 6 pupils, have helped to promote this. Many teachers correct any mis-spelling of scientific terms; there are word lists displayed in laboratories and for some topics. Occasional examples of good practice include oral presentation of research results. While the use of ICT within teaching is generally satisfactory, greater use could be made of the single computers in each laboratory, for example for research related to a lesson or for the use of CD-ROMs, as well of the science computer room. Development is now underway; there are examples of the Internet being used, for example in connection with the study of the electromagnetic spectrum. ICT is being used for measurement and display of experimental results.

98. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The department is well led and teachers work closely together as an experienced team who share ideas regularly on an informal basis. Staffing is well suited to the needs of the curriculum. Textbook and computer resources are good, as are most practical resources. Library provision for science is poor: apart from a range of biology books, many of which are quite old, there are few other books covering chemistry, earth science and physics. Some books have not been borrowed for many years. The library has no science periodicals and few CD-ROMS for science. Accommodation is satisfactory but the need to use laboratories as a corridor to reach preparation rooms or other laboratories is disruptive; the use of external doors for this purpose in winter is not energy efficient. Arrangements for access to the science areas, and for storage, are unsatisfactory and in urgent need of review. The departmental handbook is a good guide for new teachers and for students doing the initial teacher training course within the department. It includes ICT policies and guidance. These give a good basis for developing the use of the recently installed computers. The guidance in the handbook is not currently being fully implemented, for example on safety issues such as risk assessments. A health and safety issue was identified during the inspection; appropriate action was taken by the school. The newly appointed technicians, who are well qualified in science, have not yet received training on their roles and responsibilities. However, although pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress over Years 10 and 11, the GCSE course does not provide them with the best opportunity to succeed.

99. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards, which were below national averages, both at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE, have improved significantly. The CASE project has provided some opportunities to develop the thinking of lower and higher attainers in Years 7 and 8. Shortages of resources, for example of books, have been remedied. As well as a range of modern textbooks, there are now books for pupils to take home to assist them with homework. Exterior footpaths, the only route between some science rooms, have been improved. While safety procedures are documented, these are not yet fully implemented with regard to risk assessments.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning in Year 7
- Good enrichment opportunities such as the recent trip to Paris.

Areas for improvement

- Poor leadership and management of the subject
- Below average standards by the end of Year 9
- Well below average standards by the end of Year 11
- Teachers' low expectations resulting in unsatisfactory learning for Years 8 to 11
- Unsatisfactory marking and assessment procedures for Years 8 to 11 limiting the progress of all pupils
- Inadequate time provision for Years 8 and 9
- Statutory requirements not met for Years 7 to 9 in terms of breadth, balance and depth of coverage
- Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.

100. Art and design is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and in Year 10. Pupils in Year 9 are taught in six-weekly blocks of time. In Year 11 the subject is taught within the expressive arts course.

101. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average by Year 9. Pupils enter the school with very different art and design experiences. The standards reached in Year 7 are average in skill development. Boys and girls attain equally well as they observe and draw still-life groups of bottles or natural objects and then abstract details. For the majority of pupils in this year group this represents good progress in using drawing and painting techniques. Pupils' achievement in Year 7, in relation to their standards on entry at the start of the school year, is good. They design letter shapes and relate imagery to lettering when creating book covers or covers for CDs. They do not have sketchbooks for planning or developing ideas and make no connections between the graphics work carried out in design and technology and that produced in art and design. Although pupils concentrate well and many produce creditable copies of popular imagery including cars, this is done as a one-off exercise with little meaning for them beyond completing the task. Pupils rarely use ICT to enhance the presentation of their work. Overall, achievement over Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. The pattern of six-weekly blocks of time in different subjects is not handled well enough to enable pupils to sustain a commitment to creating extended pieces of work, an essential feature of subsequent work for GCSE.

102. The 2001 teacher assessments were average in relation to those reported nationally. Inspection findings indicate that these assessments were not accurate.

103. In Year 11 standards are well below average. Over Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. The emphasis of the expressive arts course is on research and production with a main and subsidiary discipline being chosen. Although no three-dimensional skills are taught in art and design in Years 7 to 9, the majority of Year 11 pupils create three-dimensional models to support their dance or drama themes. These models are of a below average standard. While the folders pupils produce for expressive arts are generally of above average standards, with higher attainers using ICT well for presentation, analysis and graphic imagery, the contribution of art and design is slight. The provision for expressive arts encourages dance and drama by giving pupils' good opportunities for self-reflection and practice but does not provide equivalent opportunities for art and design.

104. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes towards the subject and generally behave appropriately, although their personal development is unsatisfactory. Frequent staff absence together with the six-week time slots through which the subject is taught prevent pupils from developing a mature and independent response to their work in art and design.

105. Teaching during the inspection was not typical of the school's normal provision, with many lessons taught by supply staff. The teaching and learning seen during the inspection week were at least satisfactory and often good or better. The scrutiny of work shows unsatisfactory teaching and learning, and that over time, low expectations and unsatisfactory curriculum provision have adversely affected standards. There are confusing inconsistencies in marking, assessment and written comments to pupils about their work so that they are not clear about how well they are doing. As a result their progress slows from Year 8 onwards. There are evident differences between the approaches of the permanent staff and the supply staff because insufficient guidance is available through a scheme of work. In Year 8 for example, a task on one-point perspective can be treated merely as an exercise or can be related to the pupils' own experience of their bedroom or to the work of artists such as Utrillo. Standards are lower where tasks are treated as an exercise because pupils do not fully understand the concepts involved and do not have any point of reference from their own experiences to help them.

106. In Years 8 and 9, the six-week block of time, followed by successive six-week blocks with no art and design experience, limits learning and progress for all pupils. Key words are displayed, recorded by pupils and checked in some lessons but incorrect spellings are marked as correct in others. Pupils with special needs and low literacy skills are particularly disadvantaged by such inconsistencies; their progress is unsatisfactory because the provision made for them is unsatisfactory. Talented pupils do not progress as well as they should because teachers' expectations are not high enough. None the less, these pupils respond well by researching a chosen artist for homework and acting as an expert with their peers. Generally, homework is appropriate and the majority of pupils do the work set.

107. Poor subject leadership and management have limited the learning and progress of all pupils. The low time provision for Years 8 to 9 is partially responsible for the slow acquisition of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Subject neglect however, over a number of years, has led to inconsistencies in the way pupils are taught and restricted the implementation of the art and design curriculum. Absorption within the expressive arts department, without subject vision or energy to ensure equally good provision for pupils' experience in art and design as in the other disciplines has led to the subject adopting a servicing role within the current GCSE course. For example, artefacts are produced to support dance, music and drama rather than being developed as art forms in their own right. Arrangements for assessment and for tracking pupils' progress are inadequate. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution overall to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. In recent years older pupils have benefited from taking part in trips to London and Paris while the younger ones have had access to the skills of a resident kite-maker. However, opportunities for spiritual and multi-cultural development are generally overlooked.

108. Since the last inspection the improvement made is poor. While accommodation and resources are better than previously reported, all of the other issues raised then are still causing problems. Statutory requirements are not met: there is insufficient provision for ICT, no three-dimensional skill development for Years 7 to 9 and the school does not provide sketchbooks for all pupils in these year groups. The subject lacks permanent access to a television and video player for art historical studies and a 'light box' for enlarging images. The kilns are wasted resources. The current staffing arrangements involving two permanent staff on part-time appointments are unsatisfactory.

109. The new headteacher has understood the weaknesses in the present system and introduced a GCSE art and design course for Year 10 pupils. These pupils are struggling to cope with the coursework requirements of the examination because they lack the necessary skills and range of experience. Their concentration levels are limited and their personal expectations are lower than might normally be expected by this stage. Pupils are too reliant on their teachers for direction and ideas. The teachers themselves are struggling because they lack training in the assessment and teaching of courses at this level.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching throughout the department.
- Standards above average in textiles and systems and control
- Very good attitudes and highly motivated pupils
- Very good leadership and management, and team spirit
- Experienced and committed specialist staff.

Areas for improvement

- Standards by Year 11 in food studies
- Attention to numeracy
- The management of pupils in food studies.

110. Standards in the work seen are average at the age of 14. This reflects the results in the Year 9 teacher assessments in 2001 which were close to the average. Considering that the pupils have a range of experiences in design and technology when they join the school in Year 7, these average standards represent good achievement. Pupils show an appropriate range of study skills in their investigations and evaluations. As part of their design work they use graphic skills satisfactorily. They design and make items using a wide range of materials, including food, textiles, acrylic and wood. Higher attainers' work shows some good technical graphics as seen in their files. In Year 9, pupils worked effectively when following instructions to build and test electrical circuits. With some basic knowledge of electronics, they demonstrated clearly that they understood the requirements of the task set by the teacher. They used tools well and considered health and safety carefully. Using computer-aided manufacturing; pupils make good quality small hand-mazes and acrylic note-holders. Teachers' guidance and detailed, focused teaching help lower attainers in particular to create ideas and record them on paper for further development. This process was well evident in a Year 7 lesson where pupils demonstrated good quality graphic skills for a desktop personal organiser. Pupils with special needs progress well in lessons because of the guidance that they receive from teachers. Files show that pupils of all attainment levels are achieving well over Years 7 to 9.

111. Standards of work seen by the age of 16 are average overall in the four materials areas taught within design and technology. There are strengths in textiles and systems and

control and some weakness in food studies. Higher attainers and gifted and talented pupils work at an above average level as they should. The results reflect the 2001 results. These results show a good improvement from those reported at the last inspection. Pupils attained particularly well in textiles and in systems and control courses. All pupils, including those with special needs and gifted and talented pupils make good progress between the ages of 14 to 16. They successfully research, develop and use a range of techniques, skills and processes to produce coursework which is often of high quality. Higher attainers' graphic skills are good with some imaginative ideas evident both in completed and proposed coursework. Research work is thorough and pupils use information selectively in designing and making products. ICT skills are used well to present coursework. Good quality word-processing is used throughout the work, for questionnaires and with pie and bar charts to illustrate results. Textiles coursework is particularly noteworthy. Overall, in the four materials areas, pupils' achievement over Years 10 and 11 is good.

112. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils respond very well in lessons. They show interest in their work and their concentration is very good throughout the lesson. They behave very well. Relationships are very good and mutually supportive. Collaborative work is very successful when groups of pupils work on chosen topics. A Year 10 textiles lesson saw pupils working in groups, successfully revising and learning new techniques, among them machine embroidery, appliqué, weaving and layering. Individual work is carried out well in both theory and practical sessions. When given opportunities to take responsibility, pupils respond willingly. Pupils with special needs show very good attitudes to learning because of teachers' support. The ethos of the department ensures that all pupils participate fully in lessons.

113. Teaching is good, as opposed to satisfactory at the last inspection. In a small number of lessons in Years 10 and 11 the teaching seen was very good. Pupils' learning is good. Teachers are all subject specialists who know their pupils very well and plan well to meet their broad range of needs, including those of pupils with special needs. Teaching methods generally motivate pupils successfully so that they want to learn and concentrate well on their work. A Year 11 revision lesson on electronic, mechanisms and materials showed particularly good subject knowledge from the teacher. Learning targets for lessons are clear and explained well and, as a result, pupils are clear about what is expected of them. In lessons on textiles and resistant materials, no time is wasted and the range of activities ensures that pupils stay focused on their work. The very good teaching in a Year 10 resistant materials lesson enabled pupils to achieve good standards in their understanding of ergonomics, anthropometrics and aesthetics. Learning was very strongly promoted by skilful questioning that required pupils to think carefully for themselves and recall previous knowledge. Technical knowledge was encouraged in answers. Pupils have good listening skills. They show high levels of independence in Years 10 and 11 when making their own decisions about what to make in the different material areas. For example, in textiles, many pupils have chosen multi-cultural themes for their work. There is good technical support in the department that plays a valuable part in ensuring that resources are available as required. Learning is usually good in lessons, although pupils in Year 10 food studies do not always use time as wisely as they could and their learning is limited. Pupils of all ages appreciate the teachers' hard work and mostly respond by working hard themselves to achieve work of good quality. Teachers have a clear understanding of individual pupils' achievement in lessons and over time. Pupils with special needs learn well throughout their time in the department because teachers know them well and plan accordingly. Literacy skills are taught satisfactorily, although attention to numeracy development is too limited. Pupils' work is well displayed throughout the department to stimulate thought on the topics being undertaken.

114. Good teaching and learning result from the very good leadership and management of the department. The experienced and dedicated head of department provides an enthusiastic and clear vision for the direction of the subject's work. A strong sense of teamwork and commitment among all staff, including the technicians, ensures that this department functions well on a daily basis and reflects the school's aims and values in its work. The use of ICT is satisfactory and being further developed. There are adequate design and technology books in the library to meet pupils' needs requests. The work of the department is kept under close review.

115. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is an upward trend in standards and teaching is significantly better than at the last inspection. The department is well placed to make further improvements. While the mostly good accommodation is in a specialist suite of rooms, electronics is taught in cramped conditions in a rundown and inappropriate teaching space.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good leadership and management
- Good assessment procedures.

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory range of teaching methods
- Unsatisfactory teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

116. Standards are below average by Year 9. At the start of Year 7 most pupils enter the school with below average geographical skills and knowledge. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11 their standards remain below average. Their achievement is only satisfactory, rather than the good achievement needed to raise their standards to an average level because the teaching concentrates too much on knowledge and not sufficiently on the development of pupils' skills and independent thinking. Higher attainers have an understanding of place and location and show adequate mapwork skills, but their work is of an average standard at best, lower than would be expected by their previous attainment. Middle attainers have some knowledge of the effect of human activity on the environment. Lower attainers are limited by poor literacy and weak map and diagram skills; their work is often unfinished which shows lack of confidence and interest. There was some satisfactory achievement in a Year 7 lesson about National Parks and a Year 8 lesson about Antarctica where teachers linked the topics of the lessons to pupils' own background knowledge.

117. The Year 9 teacher assessments were well below average in 1999, above average in 2000 and below average again in 2001. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels has been consistently below average. The proportion of girls reaching each level has been higher than the proportion of boys.

118. As in Years 7 to 9, the standard of work seen is below average by Year 11, with the higher attainers reaching an average standard. This standard is better than suggested by the 2001 GCSE results which were well below average. One of the reasons for this is the range of strategies being developed in the department to raise levels of attainment which are beginning to have an effect. Year 11 pupils can analyse and organise information when instructed by a teacher but show none of the curiosity that would lead to a greater depth of understanding. Lower attainers have better literacy skills than the lower attainers in Years 7 to 9 but they show limited understanding of their learning materials. In a Year 11 lesson, many

pupils were unable to tell the difference between two graphs illustrating the volume of traffic using the Rhine waterway and the size of barges on each stretch of the river; the teacher was unaware they were using the wrong graph to answer questions. Achievement over Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. While the standard of pupils' work is below average rather than well below as shown by the 2001 GCSE results, pupils are not achieving well enough to raise their standards to an average level because they are not being sufficiently challenged. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher gave out a printed sheet interpreting graphical information instead of showing pupils how to arrive at their own interpretation. In another, a worksheet gave the pupils pre-drawn diagrams to label and a textual explanation with word gaps to fill in, so that their work was devoid of opportunities to think a sequence of events through for themselves.

119. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades in GCSE has been well below the national average for the past three years, and the proportion gaining a grade has been below average. Geography results were significantly below those of other school subjects and, unlike the national trend, have shown no improvement over the last three years. Girls' results have been above those of boys except in 2001 when the trend was reversed. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress since standards of literacy improve overall. In most lessons special work is set that helps them to overcome their difficulties and in the one lesson where a classroom support assistant was seen the standard of help was good. Where gifted and talented pupils are identified in some teaching groups, extension work is available. However, this was only used on one occasion and in general the progress of this group is unsatisfactory as for other pupils in the class. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are well integrated in class activities and work as well as their classmates.

120. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour vary in direct proportion to the challenge and interest in their lessons. In some of the weaker lessons, where the work was too easy and time was not well-filled, a small minority of pupils was demanding and noisy, calling out instead of waiting a turn to speak, with no consideration of the effect on the learning of their classmates. However, the majority of pupils were polite and passive in these unchallenging lessons, although this did not always mean they were paying attention. In the more stimulating lessons pupils showed good listening skills and behaved with consideration, learning from the contributions of others.

121. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all year groups. There were some good lessons in Years 7 to 9 where pupils learned well because they were being asked to contribute to the activities. In one unsatisfactory lesson there was limited learning because the teacher relied too heavily on talking to the pupils so that their interest was not engaged; there was no opportunity for them to link the information about the development of National Parks to their own background knowledge. In several lessons, there was often too much talk by the teacher and too few opportunities for pupils to think independently. By contrast, in others, such as a lesson introducing the natural features of Antarctica, pupils had to contribute their own ideas based on a research homework and this led to lively learning. Pupils are managed well, including the few whose concentration easily wavers. The learning resources are rather limited in range, lessons usually relying on a text book and worksheets and these are not always challenging enough for all pupils in the class. The attention given to basic skills is not always sufficient, especially in the use of key vocabulary. Teachers sometimes read the text to pupils rather than providing opportunities for pupils themselves to read to the class. Graphs are used, for example showing types of traffic using the River Rhine, although they tend to be copied rather than constructed by the pupils. Because of difficulty in accessing facilities, the use of ICT is not a feature of the teaching or learning, although pupils are advised to use the Internet for research as part of their homework. Homework is set regularly as an integral part of the study programme. All marking is up-to-date with lengthy and detailed comments suggesting ways of making improvements.

However, the policy of not grading work other than assessment pieces leads to pupils not being sufficiently aware of their own level of achievement for much of the term.

122. Leadership and management in the subject are good, with many features showing improvement since the last inspection. Assessment is built into every unit of work and pupils' individual progress can be tracked. The subject co-ordinator (leader) monitors teaching but this activity has not yet had the necessary effect of broadening teaching methods. A satisfactory start has been made on planning for the use of ICT. A very good three-year development plan is now in place, linked to a projected budget. The co-ordinator is committed to improvement and with attention to styles of teaching and the development of independent learning skills, the department has a good capacity to succeed.

123. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Much effort has gone into improving schemes of work and changing the GCSE syllabus in the endeavour to raise attainment. Fieldwork provision has improved. Impressive study guides have been produced for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils to help them to pace themselves through the course and organise their coursework. However, these innovations are recent and have not yet had any effect on attainment.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teachers' good range of subject expertise
- Staff commitment to improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Assessments not used to check that planning tackles under-achievement
- The department does not build on individual staff strengths.

124. Standards are average by the end of Year 9 and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils select information from sources about factory conditions and classify it under different headings. They identify sources that give contrasting views of conditions in factories. In discussion, pupils show a good understanding of their previous work on features of the 'open field' system. Their written work in a follow-up study on the enclosure movement shows some weaknesses, with not enough use of sources to give a comprehensive picture of the motives for and the process of enclosure. In their work on the Spanish Armada pupils are confident when identifying Spain's motives, but find it difficult to assess their relative importance. In a study of the Luddites, pupils explain why there was a 'golden age' for handloom weavers. They identify the significance of the Napoleonic Wars in increasing the demand for uniforms. Pupils with special needs explain the impact of new machinery on workers' wages and gifted and talented pupils give a detailed account of the image created in a nineteenth century cartoon. All pupils, including higher and lower attainers, organise their ideas well into a coherent structure in an extended piece of writing on cholera and incorporate the use of ICT. Pupils make appropriate use of numeracy skills, for example producing bar graphs to show death rates as part of a local study.

125. Standards are below average by the end of Year 11 and achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils assess the impact of different visual images on public opinion in a study of Chartism and explain the difference between moral and physical force. Pupils with special needs interpret one source to describe the 'defenceless' image of people being fired on. Gifted and talented pupils show very good literacy skills when scanning sources to identify the key points that provide evidence of good working conditions in factories in the

nineteenth century and contrasting them with sources showing poor conditions. Pupils know when 'canal mania' occurred through using different sources such as statistics showing share prices, but they do not collate information from different sources in order to assess how reliable those sources are. In work on conditions in new towns in the early nineteenth century, pupils can identify public health problems from a variety of sources, although they find difficulty in summarising the key points. In follow-up work they do not make full use of information sources, for example to fully explain and give examples of 'jerry built' housing. In work on turnpike trusts, pupils know from the sources studied that one reason for opposing trusts was 'stopping at toll gates'; their written work on this topic does not always explain fully the consequences for the traveller. On the same topic, pupils know that workers were unwilling to carry out road improvements, but their written response often lacks a full explanation. Pupils make appropriate use of numeracy skills, for example in describing population changes.

126. The 2001 GCSE results are below average. There has been a rising trend in results from 1998 up to and including the results in 2001. An increase in the highest grades is a feature of this rising trend. The school's increase in pupils' average points score between 2000 and 2001 is due to an improvement in boys' results.

127. A key feature of achievement in all year groups is the difference between the standards achieved in oral and written work. This difference is apparent in Years 7 to 9, but becomes increasingly significant in Years 10 and 11 with the greater literacy demands of the curriculum. The understanding pupils show in their oral work is not readily transferred into their written work. Pupils do not always make the best use of historical sources in their writing due to weaknesses in independent study and literacy skills.

128. Attitudes and behaviour are good, with some very good attitudes shown in all year groups. Behaviour in lessons is consistently good. Pupils' interest in the subject is good and they are keen to engage in activities. In discussion they are very willing to contribute ideas when asked. Their attitudes contribute significantly to the positive atmosphere for learning that is typical in lessons.

129. Teaching is good. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9, but is only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 because pupils' independent study skills are not developed enough. This limits the pace of their learning in lessons and through homework. Teachers' very good subject expertise makes them a valuable learning resource for pupils. Their knowledge of examination requirements is used effectively so that pupils learn what is required to earn maximum marks. In work on Turnpike Trusts pupils are constantly reminded of the difference between a basic answer and a full answer through questions and written tasks. However, when teaching the skill of constructing answers to examination questions, teachers' effectiveness is often limited by pupils' lack of independent study and literacy skills. In the most effective lessons, class discussions are stimulating and challenging. For example, pupils' learning about the Luddites was strengthened by teachers' very close questioning about sources of evidence so that pupils learned to detect bias in sources and deepened their understanding of the tactics used in the movement. In the most effective teaching, subject knowledge is used well to summarise previous work and to introduce new work. Teachers manage pupils well. However, on occasion, too much lesson time is taken up by lengthy introductions during which pupils are inactive and there are missed opportunities for pupils to criticise and analyse 'wrong' model answers presented by the teacher. Teaching is particularly effective when methods consolidate the learning of particular points. For example a writing activity about the aims of Chartists' meetings was given early on in the lesson to consolidate the opening discussion. After a discussion on 'canal mania' pupils drew a graph to show the rise in share prices during a given period.

130. Pupils receive good support for structuring their ideas through grids and writing outlines (frames). For example, they collected evidence about conditions in factories and entered it on to a grid under different headings; they then used a writing frame to help organise the information in a written report. Pupils with special needs are supported well by resources that give them full access to lesson activities through clearly presented information sheets, for example, a list of historical sources tracing the sequence of events leading to Boudicca's rebellion. Teachers assess pupils' understanding better during oral work, for example probing how well previous work is recalled, than they do in writing activities. Although pupils work with silent concentration during writing tasks, the progress of individuals is not always monitored sufficiently so that, for example, the fact that only half the question had been tackled by some higher attainers was not picked up.

131. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department has implemented some strategies to tackle under-achievement although these are not yet having a positive effect in Years 10 and 11. The priority is to improve individual literacy and study skills. Although the department has started to analyse examination results to identify weaknesses in attainment, assessments across the age range are not used well to ensure that planning takes account of the causes of under-achievement. Planning for ICT is good with a detailed policy in place and a review of available software. The curriculum provides a variety of opportunities to develop numeracy skills. There is a satisfactory range of resources extended by a wide range of books in the school library. However, there is a lack of specific provision for gifted and talented pupils.

132. Improvement from the last inspection is satisfactory. The achievement of higher attainers has improved and resources are now satisfactory. There is now a more centralised subject base. Examination achievement has not improved in comparison with national results, although a rising trend in results is now evident.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good achievement in the well-managed specialist course in Years 7 to 9
- Good teaching and good subject expertise
- Good response from pupils
- Positive effects on learning from the good accommodation and resources
- Good awareness of improvements needed and commitment to achieving them.

Areas for improvement

- Overall standards below average by Year 9
- Opportunities to use computers in all subjects not equally well provided
- No opportunity to take a specialist course in Years 10 and 11.

133. In Year 9 standards are below average. However, the work seen in the specialist course in Year 9 shows average standards, although this course does not cover all aspects of ICT. Pupils' achievement in the specialist course, from their below average standards when they join Year 7, is good. Most pupils can find and select information for a specific purpose and organise it for presentation. They use a range of software to do this, including databases, spreadsheets, the Internet, word processors, art packages, desktop publishers and multi-media packages. Most are appropriately coming to understand the importance of presenting work for a specified audience (readership) and show some capability in choosing software and techniques for the purpose. For example, in a Year 9 lesson there was considerable variety in the science topics chosen for a multi-media presentation. In most lessons pupils give thought to selecting fonts and styles convey messages to the intended audience effectively. The main differences in the work of higher and lower attainers are shown in the quality of their written work. Some work by higher attainers, for example, has detailed explanation of work using spreadsheets, with evaluation of the relative usefulness of the software a calculator. By contrast, some work by lower attainers lacks detailed explanation.

134. In 2001, teachers assessed their pupils' standards as below average at the end of Year 9. When other aspects are taken into account that are taught within other subjects, such as using computers to take measurements or to control other equipment, overall standards are below average. This matches the teacher assessments which properly cover all aspects as required. The below average standards are mainly due to pupils not yet being provided with equally well-organised opportunities to improve their ICT skills in all subjects. However, the school is now making improvements, such as better equipment to take measurements in science, which are beginning to increase pupils' opportunities of reaching higher overall standards. No significant variation was seen between the standards of boys and girls.

135. Because there is no specialist course in Years 10 and 11 and because opportunities to make progress in using ICT in other subjects are not yet systematically provided, there is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on standards by Year 11. However, the small amount of evidence available from subjects such as design and technology, science and business education, indicates that when pupils do have an opportunity to use computers they are able satisfactorily to put into practice what they have learned in earlier years. The school is well aware that it needs to provide better opportunities for pupils' ICT development in different subjects during Years 10 and 11 and has put into place an action plan for securing this by identifying subjects which can provide appropriate activities.

136. Pupils enter the school with standards in ICT that are below average. Opportunities to improve their standard are provided in specialist lessons and in each subject of the curriculum. In the well-organised specialist course in Years 7 to 9, achievement is good, including the achievement of both pupils with special needs and gifted and talented pupils. This course does not cover, and is not expected to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum requirements. The others are part of each subject's programme where achievement is mostly satisfactory. Overall therefore, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

137. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in the specialist ICT lessons are good. Pupils clearly enjoy working with computers. The great majority listens carefully to explanations and instructions and carries out individual work with interest and concentration. When working in pairs and small groups, pupils co-operate well, for example when sharing ideas and opinions on font styles that work best for a particular audience. Occasionally, particularly in Year 7, substantial numbers of pupils have lapses in concentration so that noise levels rise and at times the pace of work slows. However, most quickly respond when teachers ask for improvement.

138. The quality of teaching and learning in the specialist course is good. This is particularly so in those lessons taught by the principal ICT teachers who, although not initially trained as specialists, have worked with considerable commitment to establish good subject expertise. Teachers thoughtfully adapt material from a commercially produced course so that it meets the needs of all their pupils. They plan lessons with learning targets that are well matched to the requirements of the National Curriculum. Because of this, pupils learn not only the required computer skills, but also an understanding of how to use them to make choices to meet the requirements of particular tasks. In a number of lessons for example, teachers ensured that pupils considered carefully the purposes of work and the audience for whom it was intended. Explanations are clear and often enhanced by demonstrations using a screen projector, so that pupils are certain about what they need to do. Teachers make good use of the spacious accommodation. For example, they ensure that work is often carried out in small groups away from the computers which strongly supports pupils in learning how to plan work systematically in collaboration with others. These skills are often further encouraged by homework that is motivating and has an investigative focus; for example, Year 9 pupils responded well to the task of finding examples of texts produced for different adult and child audiences. While skills of questioning are generally good, teachers sometimes do not use them fully to develop discussions. For example, they do not always prompt pupils to improve their responses themselves or identify problems encountered during a task, but do this for them. In a small number of lessons, learning targets are limited to completing the given tasks with insufficient attention to wider learning possibilities, such as understanding the purposes of tasks or alternative ways to carry them out.

139. Pupils with special needs participate well in class activities. Teachers make use of their individual education plans so that they have a good knowledge of pupils' needs. They often provide work that has been adapted for individual needs and provide good individual support, so that the general work of the class is fully accessible to these pupils. This is often further supported when teachers organise pupils into pairs or groups in which they help each other. Registers of pupils who are gifted and talented in ICT have been created for Years 8 and 9, with plans to create one for Year 7. Additional, challenging work is often planned, although not always given out. Generally, boys and girls have equal access to computers, often working well together, in pairs and groups.

140. Appropriate advantage is taken of opportunities for improving literacy and numeracy skills in ICT lessons. The stimulus of working together at a computer screen often encourages pupils' exercise of speaking skills when they discuss their ideas. Pupils

frequently present their ideas on word processors and other software. The good focus on writing for a specified audience is effective in improving both their ICT and their literacy skills. Pupils use spreadsheets for compiling numerical information, creating calculations and preparing graphs. In a Year 7 lesson, a single exercise provided an effective context for both literacy and numeracy. Pupils counted, tallied and compared how often different font styles appeared in various publications aimed at adults and children.

141. Overall leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory, with some strong features. Those involved, at all levels of management, have a high commitment to improving the provision of ICT. The ICT course in Years 7 to 9 is run well. While leadership and management of ICT on a school-wide basis has been deficient, this has recently improved significantly. Although there is no ICT co-ordinator, a small working group in which senior staff are represented has a good awareness of what needs to be done and good plans to secure the necessary improvements. The group is focusing well on Years 10 to 11, but also needs to ensure that ICT in all subjects in Years 7 to 9 is not neglected. Because the fulfilment of plans is still at an early stage of implementation, the full effects of the improved leadership and management have not yet been established.

142. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards remain below average by Year 9; achievement is satisfactory overall and good in the specialist course. Numbers of computers have significantly improved to a level where they are now average for secondary schools. There has been good improvement in accommodation. Two large rooms, with good space for work on and off the computer, provide an effective setting for the ICT and business education courses. Design and technology and science departments have their own computer suites and a small suite has been established in the library. Network wiring has been provided to all areas in the school and most classrooms have a computer. Other resources, such as scanners, digital camera, screen projector and control and measuring devices are now starting to have a positive effect on pupils' learning. However, because of the heavy demands upon the computer room by the ICT and business courses, many subject departments still find it difficult to book lesson time in the specialist suites. Further improvement is necessary. The planning of the specialist course has improved well. All aspects of the National Curriculum are taught, either in the specialist course or in other subjects. All subjects provide at least some opportunities for pupils to use computers, with most providing at least satisfactory opportunities for using word processors to present work and the Internet to carry out research. However, overall opportunities are weak in some subjects, particularly in mathematics and art and design. The school complies with the requirements of the National Curriculum because it ensures that all aspects are taught, either in the specialist course or in other subjects and because all subjects provide some opportunities for pupils to use computers. There is planning to strengthen the contribution of those subjects which make a relatively weak contribution, such as mathematics and art and design. The lack of an opportunity for pupils to take a specialist ICT course in Years 10 and 11 is a weakness.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Improved GCSE results in 2001, significantly improved since the last inspection, though still below average
- Good analysis of results helping to improve aspects of provision
- Good understanding by pupils in Years 10 to 11 about how well they are progressing and what they should do to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory achievement by Year 11
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject often unsatisfactory, especially in Year 10
- Insufficient opportunities for speaking and writing, especially for the most able
- Insufficient time for languages in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

143. By the end of Year 9, the average standards overall reported in the 2001 teacher assessments are confirmed by the work seen during the inspection. Girls do better than boys, but less so than happens nationally. All pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 and 8. In Year 9, most higher attainers continue to make satisfactory progress, but the gap between the standards of these pupils and all others begins to widen disproportionately because average and lower attainers are given less demanding tasks. The most gifted pupils should be achieving higher levels. Pupils acquire knowledge of vocabulary at a steady rate and the strong focus on language rules helps to improve their literacy skills. As a result, listening and reading skills are satisfactory and pupils identify main points in what they hear and read. Standards in writing vary. By the end of Year 9, higher attainers write accounts using past tenses. Average and lower attainers write brief descriptions about familiar topics such as their family or the local area. There is considerable range in accuracy which reflects the range of attainment. Pupils enjoy speaking in Years 7 and 8, especially in games and choral repetitions for practising new words and phrases. However, by the end of Year 9 there is inadequate progress towards exchanging information from memory and a loss of enthusiasm in oral work. Higher attainers participate reasonably well in role-play, often using notes as a help, but other pupils contribute only brief responses and find it difficult to formulate questions. For all pupils pronunciation and intonation are weak. Boys contribute as well as girls in lessons. Pupils with special needs and those from minority ethnic groups are equally involved, making progress which appropriately reflects their previous attainment.

144. Standards in the work seen by Year 11 are below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory over Years 10 and 11, especially in French, where there have been greater staffing difficulties. Achievement is good for higher attainers in German, while satisfactory overall. Pupils continue to extend their knowledge of vocabulary as they study new topics. Listening and reading skills develop satisfactorily, though average and lower attainers require increasing support through repetition and rephrasing to help them understand what they hear. All pupils benefit in their written work from the structured approach to coursework. This approach enables them to produce acceptable content on topics such as school uniform, personal fitness and their local area. The writing by higher attainers shows imaginative content and good accuracy, for example in an account of a catastrophic weekend, and uses a range of tenses. The written work of average and lower attainers suffers from poor spelling and weak knowledge of language rules, so that their meaning is not always clear. Speaking skills vary considerably: they are satisfactory in German, but unsatisfactory in French, where even the most capable pupils, especially in Year 10, are reluctant to participate in oral work and make very little progress towards the learning goal of conversational French. Oral

contributions remain brief and are often badly pronounced, especially when words are similar in both languages. Pupils' generally negative attitudes and the low time allocation for weekly lessons, combined with the legacy from continuing staffing difficulties in the department, prevent the satisfactory teaching from having sufficient effect in raising oral standards.

145. In 2001, GCSE results at grades A*-C improved in both French and German. Although French results remain below average, there has been steady improvement since the last inspection. The number of entries has increased; more pupils are entered for modern languages than for any other subject. Girls did better than boys in 2001 in both languages, less so than nationally in French and more so in German. Most pupils gain a grade, including those with special needs. However, the very low numbers of pupils gaining the highest grades, A* and A, reflect the unsatisfactory progress by the most gifted pupils.

146. Attitudes to learning a modern language are unsatisfactory overall, and limit pupils' learning. In discussions with inspectors, older pupils often expressed a dislike of learning French, seeing no relevance to their present or future circumstances. By contrast, attitudes are satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, which is encouraging, and among those pupils taking German in Year 11. The disruption resulting from teachers' absences and the stream of temporary teachers has had an adverse effect on pupils' attitudes. It has resulted in some older pupils seeing no point in learning the subject and this makes it an uphill task for teachers to motivate them. For example, in two Year 10 lessons for higher attainers, pupils were loath to participate in oral work. On occasion, some lower attainers behaved immaturely, simply refusing to do any work. However, in most lessons behaviour is generally satisfactory and enables progress to be made.

147. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is some good teaching, mostly in Years 7 and 8, and in Year 11 in German. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in one of the 14 lessons observed, although none was seen in lessons delivered by permanent staff. Teachers have good command of the languages they teach. In Years 10 and 11, their knowledge and advice about examination requirements provide pupils with substantial guidance in preparation for GCSE. However, pupils' learning is not accelerated by teachers' linguistic expertise because teachers speak too much English in lessons. They tend to translate the French they use with the result that pupils wait for the English rather than trying to follow the French. This results in expectations that are not high enough, in pupils not hearing enough of the foreign language, and in unsatisfactory development of pupils' speaking skills. Pupils receive good guidance on how to listen and read for information. They are beginning to understand how language works as teachers focus increasingly on language rules. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory, although there is no planned attention to improving numeracy skills. Pupils use ICT for a variety of purposes, especially in Year 7, for example for word-processing and for games accompanying the new course.

148. Planning for individual lessons is satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers manage pupils well because they keep them busy and engage their attention for the full 60 minutes. For example, in a Year 11 German lesson on work experience, pupils revised relevant vocabulary through oral routines, constructed a story about work experience in Germany and completed reading tasks. They enjoyed the lesson and made good progress in different skills. However, there is some weakness in the longer-term planning of sequences of lessons because in most there is a similar routine and pattern of activities, with methods that do not vary. As a consequence, pupils' motivation reduces. Planning does not sufficiently provide for regular independent oral work or for the systematic development of writing skills, so that progress in speaking and writing is restricted. However, in Years 7 and 8, a new approach with new materials is successfully improving planning and is beginning to bring about an improvement in both standards and attitudes.

149. A positive feature of teaching is that questions are clearly focused, with pair and group activities that are organised well, so that all pupils have equally good learning opportunities, irrespective of gender, ethnicity or previous attainment. However, activities are not always planned to match pupils' different levels of attainment. Teachers manage classes firmly and fairly and the good relationships in most lessons encourage pupils to make an effort. The department has a satisfactory range of resources such as reading schemes, video and computers, although not enough use is made of overhead projectors. Pupils benefit from having access to a foreign language assistante, but more thought is needed on how best to use this valuable resource. In a Year 10 lesson for lower attainers on healthy habits, the teacher made good use of the assistante and the classroom support assistant to divide the class into smaller groups for oral work and this helped pupils to learn more quickly. However, on occasion, the contribution of the assistante was negligible as her time was not managed well by the teacher. Marking is an unsatisfactory aspect of the teaching. There is no uniform system and a lack of helpful comment about how improvements can be made. Consequently, pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have a clear picture of how well they are progressing. However, in Years 10 and 11, pupils are kept well-informed about how to improve towards the targets set for them, mostly through test and examination results and verbal advice. Homework is generally set in accordance with the school timetable and always assists learning well by extending or consolidating the work done in class.

150. There is satisfactory leadership and management for the work of the department. Satisfactory monitoring is undertaken through the collection of lesson plans, observation of lessons and sampling of pupils' work, although the disruption caused by staff absence has limited the time available for such monitoring tasks. New technology is used well to analyse pupils' test and examination results. Assessment procedures are sound and have led to appropriate decisions about the priorities for development. There is evidence of improvement in areas judged to be weak, for example, teachers' expectations, pupils' writing skills and the use of ICT. Schemes of work are being revised to take account of the new course book for French. There is good display of pupils' work in classrooms. Pupils in Year 7 benefit linguistically and culturally from an annual visit to northern France.

151. Since the previous inspection GCSE results have improved in both languages. A much higher proportion of pupils is now entered for the examination and has experienced some success. Assessment procedures are now satisfactory and underpin sound entry patterns for GCSE. There has been some progress in dealing with the weaknesses identified in the previous report, for example in the provision of textbooks and access to native speakers. However, the lack of challenge for the higher attainers remains a weakness. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching
- Good management and organisation of lessons, with good use of resources
- Pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and working relationships
- Good progress by pupils with special needs.

Areas for improvement

- Tasks not sufficiently matched to the needs of higher attainers
- Limited range of extra-curricular activities
- Unsatisfactory quality of resources, particularly music technology and audio equipment
- Unsatisfactory accommodation restricting learning activities.

152. In recent years there have been no entries for GCSE music, although some pupils were able to take music as a component of the expressive arts course. The school is now offering GCSE music as an option. A group of Year 10 pupils is preparing for the 2003 examination.

153. Standards in the work seen are average in Year 9. Pupils listen and respond well to music, sharing their understanding of the elements of music. For example, there is effective use of tuned and untuned instruments to create sound textures which are enhanced through the variation and contrast in volume. Pupils' compositions have a good feeling for mood and atmosphere and they explore compositional devices to achieve a desired effect. For example, pupils in Year 9 used chromatic notes in the melodies they were composing as part of their music for a horror film. There is good use of graphic notation in Year 7 but the use of staff notation is very limited in all year groups. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

154. By Year 11, standards are average in the music component within expressive arts. There are some good individual players, but when pupils play together in groups their performances lack fluency and cohesion. Pupils with special needs in Years 7 to 9 make good progress as a result of the high level of individual attention given during the practical work. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. Overall, taking account of pupils' standards on entry and the standards attained, the level of achievement is satisfactory. Effective teaching and well-structured lessons help to overcome the problems raised by the limited amount of time allocated in Years 7 to 9. In Year 10, the small group size and support from the instrumental teachers enable the pupils to attain standards close to national averages.

155. Attitudes to music are good; the take-up for the new GCSE course in Year 10 is above average and the extra-curricular activities are well supported. Pupils behave well. Their relationships with each other are good and they collaborate well in groups and pairs, sharing instruments and helping each other thoughtfully. The progress of pupils with special needs and lower attainers is helped by these working relationships. In class, particularly when listening to each other's performances and compositions, the pupils are courteous and sensitive, showing respect for each other's feelings.

156. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned with good use of time so that activities are paced well. The good pace leads to productive working and pupils complete the tasks set. During the lessons the teachers assess the work effectively and involve pupils in evaluating what they are doing. Consequently pupils know how well they are getting on and where they can improve. Good tasks are planned that enable pupils to work at different levels so that those with special needs are integrated well into the activities. This also results in good independent learning during which the teacher moves around giving individual help. Literacy and numeracy skills are suitably taught. The good management and control of pupils and the good organisation ensure that pupils concentrate well. Higher attainers and gifted and talented pupils are given good opportunities to work at a higher level in Years 7 to 9 and they make good progress as a result. In Years 10 and 11, these pupils make only satisfactory progress because they need to be more appropriately challenged by tasks which are better matched to their prior attainment. Despite the good teaching and learning, pupils' achievement is limited by the inadequate time allocation for the subject Years 7 to 9 and Year 11.

157. The management and leadership of the department are good. Well-drafted schemes of work give coverage of the National Curriculum and incorporate music of different cultural traditions. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in Year 11 performing arts projects, the pupils work on such themes as racism in society. There is effective use of the Internet for homework and keyboards are well used in Years 7 to 9 and computers in Years 10 to 11. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 use computer programmes such as Cubase to sequence their compositions. However, because of the lack of computer equipment there is insufficient use of ICT in Years 7 to 9. Audio equipment is unsatisfactory; portable CD players are shared with another department. The library stock for music is insufficient although the books are well-chosen to appeal to the general musical interest of the pupils. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The complete absence of storage space means that the main teaching room is cluttered. The instrumental rooms are too small for group work and one is unsuitably located in the neighbouring religious education department.

158. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Assessment procedures are improved. Some work has been done on the wiring for keyboards but the resources for music technology are still limited. Opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities throughout the school year have not been increased so that regular opportunities for performing are limited. Most importantly the level of achievement is still adversely affected by the limited time allowed for music in Years 8 and 9. Good teaching means that satisfactory progress is made and the components of the National Curriculum are covered. But insufficient time and lack of continuity in provision over the year prevent consolidation and practice of performing and composing skills.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching enabling pupils to make at least satisfactory and often good progress
- Pupils' good attitudes and enjoyment of physical activity
- The hard-working team of teachers wanting all pupils to do well
- The wide range of extra activities at lunchtime and after school.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils not sufficiently encouraged to take independent responsibility for their own skills practice
- Below average GCSE results.

159. Standards of work seen during the inspection were average in Year 9. By Year 9, pupils have satisfactory levels of performance in games such as rugby and basketball and understand the rules and tactics used in these games. In preparing for activity they demonstrate a sound understanding of basic anatomy and the effects of exercise on the body. Pupils have satisfactory skills of observation so they can watch one another work and make helpful comments to help others improve. They do not always make the next step to thinking about their own work and what they should do next in order to improve. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with a wide range of experience and varying skills. Attainment in some activities such as football is average but some is below average, for example for net and racquet games such as tennis. By the end of Year 9 most pupils are attaining average levels in a wider range of activities and this represents good achievement. This good achievement is the result of good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils.

160. In 2001, Year 9 teacher assessments show pupils' attainment to be above comparable national figures. However assessments do not give sufficient weight to all the required elements of the National Curriculum assessment criteria and require greater checking for consistency between different teachers.

161. In general physical education lessons in Year 11 attainment is average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory as the skills established earlier are built on carefully and new activities introduced. By the age of 16 pupils can play games to a satisfactory standard and are confident when scoring or acting as officials in these games. Pupils can plan team tactics and strategies for their games and play with a good competitive spirit. They can select appropriate activities to warm up at the start of lessons and in some classes take responsibility for their own preparation. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to extend their ability to judge and evaluate performances and to use these skills through coaching others. This has a limiting effect on pupils' achievement at this stage, despite the generally good teaching they receive. Pupils taking GCSE courses have satisfactory practical skills with some pupils showing good standards in football. Written examination work is satisfactory overall but some pupils do not always complete homework and class-work when they return from absence. Boys in particular find theory work more difficult or less attractive than practical work. The school has tackled this well through a scheme of work that carefully combines practical and theoretical aspects.

162. At GCSE, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades in 2001 was below the national average. The proportion was slightly above the national average for those gaining a grade. The number of girls entered was too small to make valid comparisons with boys' results. In recent years results in physical education have declined and pupils have not done as well as they have in other subjects. Until the current year all pupils had to make a choice

of physical education or performing arts GCSE; not all pupils entered would have chosen physical education at examination level as a particular interest. Although these pupils receive good teaching, this is a factor in the satisfactory achievement at this stage. In the new option system physical education is one of a number of choices available. The current Year 10 pupils have made a positive choice for the subject. Inspection evidence suggests standards will improve.

163. Throughout the school pupils with identified learning needs make good progress, because of the encouragement and individual help they are given. All pupils, particularly those with behavioural difficulties, benefit from the good class management demonstrated by all teachers. The great majority of these pupils achieve the required standard at age 14 and 16. More talented pupils make good progress through the extra-curricular activities and special classes organised for them. Good standards are achieved in competitive games with other schools.

164. Pupils throughout the school have good attitudes to physical education and their behaviour in lessons and changing rooms is good. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and learn the required techniques through careful observation of demonstrations. They enjoy physical education lessons. Occasionally they are less keen to practise and repeat activities, in order to improve their skills, before starting the full game. In these lessons pupils' physical efforts were passive rather than lively and teachers could expect more of them. Pupils of all racial groups co-operate and work in harmony as they share ideas and encourage one another. The positive attitudes to the subject are shown in the good levels of participation in clubs and teams.

165. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some satisfactory teaching and some that was very good were seen but in the majority of lessons the quality is good. A strength is the good subject knowledge of teachers. This shows in lesson planning when practices are incorporated that develop skill in manageable steps so that pupils of all abilities can make progress. This showed clearly in a Year 9 rugby lesson introducing techniques for tackling an opponent. The build up from safe and simple practice introducing basic techniques, to working with specialist equipment for practising tackles, and finally progressing into a small game-like activity, ensured that new skills were learnt and applied safely. Teachers give clear demonstrations of the skill being learnt and support these with helpful explanations so that all pupils are clear about how to improve. Pupils in Year 8 found these two methods helpful when working on how and when to play a drop shot in badminton. While pupils are practising, teachers use their good skills of observation to give helpful comments to the class so everybody knows how well they are doing. This assessment and feedback is an important element of pupils' learning. Occasionally however, the comments are too general and do not focus sufficiently on individuals and how they might improve. Teachers use technical terms accurately and appropriately and this makes a sound contribution to pupils' literacy, as do the good displays of key words in the changing rooms. In lessons, satisfactory use is made of ICT when pupils video their performances and use computers to record scores, for example in squash and table tennis competitions. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage them well; as a result behaviour in lessons is good. On the very few occasions when behaviour for a few was unsatisfactory, teachers managed this calmly and lessons proceeded well. Generally teachers use a good range of methods to develop skills and sustain interest. In Year 7 short tennis, pupils worked in pairs making good use of work sheets to focus their observation and coaching of the forehand stroke. As a result their performance improved because they had a better understanding of the essential points of playing the stroke well. In a few lessons, a greater range of activities is required to energise pupils and help them repeat and practise skills before starting a full game.

166. Leadership and management are good. The work of the department is well organised and supported by a hard-working and committed team of teachers. This has a good effect on attitudes and standards. The priorities for improvement in the subject are appropriate and fit well with school-wide priorities. The ethos and standards of the department are clear and put into practice through the work of all the teachers. Physical education makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral education through the setting of good standards of co-operation and competition in games. The curriculum and the assessment of pupils' progress are well planned although information from assessments in Years 7 to 9 is not yet used when reviewing the work of the department. Better use is made of the analysis of GCSE results, for example when revising schemes of work. The very good accommodation contributes to the wide range of activities in the curriculum, both strengths of the provision. However the surface of the all-weather area is unsatisfactory and needs maintenance to repair and improve the uneven surface.

167. Since the last inspection the average standards in general physical education lessons have been maintained, as have the good teaching, attitudes and behaviour. The changes in the option choices for examination courses are an improvement for physical education. Improvement is satisfactory.

Dance

Overall, the quality of provision in dance is **excellent**.

Strengths

- The exceptional quality of teaching
- Above average standards
- Very good leadership and management
- Highly committed pupils.

Areas for improvement

None

168. Standards in dance are above average. Pupils show very good control in their work and quickly learn new techniques and dance studies. For example, in Year 8 they made very good progress when starting a new unit of work by learning a dance devised and taught by the teacher that led to their own creative work based on German history and culture. In Year 10 the GCSE pupils working on a topic based around a café scene showed skilful use of balance and transfer of weight. In recent years a small number of pupils selected dance as the major part of their performing arts GCSE. Results were good with many attaining higher grade passes.

169. Pupils show high levels of enjoyment in lessons. They concentrate sharply and work at a good pace. When working in groups they demonstrate high levels of collaboration as they discuss ideas and make decisions during the process of creating dances. These opportunities for working and performing together make a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual and social development.

170. The teaching of dance is exceptional: the three lessons observed were excellent. Teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge so that the technical skills pupils require are taught in a way that enables all to achieve success. These skills are then used to help pupils create and refine their own dances. There are high expectations of pupils for commitment and effort throughout the lessons and pupils respond well to this challenge. As a consequence, progress in lessons is very good and pupils' physical commitment high. Pupils are closely involved in their own learning and constantly asked to comment and evaluate their work as a means of achieving good standards.

171. Leadership of the subject is very good and dance has a high profile in school through the major annual production put on by the expressive arts subjects. The school is committed to providing pupils with a good experience of the performing arts. In the current Year 10, pupils can choose to study dance as a separate subject; in Year 11 dance is still part of the more general performing arts GCSE. As a result of these changes the numbers studying dance have risen.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good leadership and management, especially in evaluating provision
- Detailed work schemes for Years 7 to 9; thorough planning for the new GCSE short course.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment not sufficiently linked with syllabus requirements
- Range of teaching methods not broad enough.

172. By the end of Year 9, standards are average in relation to the expectations of the syllabus and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are stronger than their skills in reflection and response. Pupils can identify features of Hinduism that are different from Christianity, but are not clear about the distinction between a different belief and a different way of life. They use appropriate terminology, both the general vocabulary of the subject, and specific terms used by particular religions. They classify Bible references to draw conclusions about Jesus' humanity and divinity; they describe the symbols of the Khalsa in Sikhism. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress; for example, they can give reasoned opinions why Jesus is considered to be both man and God by Christians. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress; for example, they can give reasoned opinions why Jesus is considered to be either man or God. Pupils search and retrieve information about different religious denominations from the Internet; they find information on places of worship successfully, but find searching for examples of different styles of worship more difficult. They describe different views of God from the point of view of different religions and can explain the difference between belief and certainty. In a study of 'holy men' Year 8 pupils describe important people in their own lives. In a study of the major historical divisions in the Christian Church, they write with feeling about 'who I fell out with'.

173. Standards are average by the end of Year 11 and achievement is satisfactory. The work seen shows greater breadth than in Years 7 to 9. Pupils confidently use abstract concepts such as 'good' and 'evil' and understand them from the viewpoint of different faiths, shown for example, in their writing about the Islamic view of resisting evil. They distinguish between natural events like disasters and evil caused by humans. They explain the differences between Christian and scientific views of creation. They identify what can be done by individuals and governments to 'save the Earth' and present their ideas clearly in the

form of posters. They describe examples of suffering in their own lives. In a study of worship, all pupils, including those with special needs, can write about the influence of worship on those taking part and give their own ideas on ritual. Higher attainers including gifted and talented pupils, make satisfactory progress and can give a well-reasoned analysis of the evidence for a belief in God. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress and give well-reasoned opinions, for example on their choice of images of wealth and poverty from newspapers. Pupils discuss moral issues in modern society confidently. Pupils write imaginative modern parables portraying the idea of how God can be viewed in different ways.

174. GCSE results for 2000 from a small entry were below average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades was below average while the proportion gaining a grade was above average. There were no GCSE entries in 2001.

175. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Behaviour in lessons is consistently good. Pupils' interest is good when there is a range of stimulating activities. They work very well in groups to exchange opinions, for example on the images portrayed in advertisements. They volunteer to read their own modern parables, listening well to each other's versions, or to share their ideas on a 'personal' rosary.

176. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory overall. In the most effective teaching pupils are given a clear framework for their learning. For example, Year 8 pupils acquired a good understanding of ideas about humanity and divinity; Years 11 pupils acquired an understanding of wealth, poverty and materialism. In both these groups, pupils' previous learning helped them to work productively on the planned activities which were successful in extending their understanding. In a stimulating introduction to a lesson about the power of the consumer, the clear framework for conducting a study of advertising images, using mobile phones as an example, engaged pupils in a lively discussion that stimulated their interest and held their concentration so that they were keen to undertake group activities. Teaching is less effective, although satisfactory, when lesson activities are not sufficiently explained in terms of the learning targets. For example, pupils' efforts in the task to find the differences between faiths did not work well because they did not have a sound knowledge of one faith as a basis. The use of resources is a strength in some of the teaching. For example, teachers prepare task sheets for pupils' research using textbooks and Internet web sites. The learning support assistant worked closely with two pupils with special needs searching the Internet helping them effectively to make their own records of the information they had collected. On occasion, an absence of resources restricts pupils' learning; for example in a discussion of the differences between 'traditional' and 'modern' families. Assessment is used well to keep pupils motivated and on task, with teachers managing pupils well by constantly checking progress. Homework is appropriate and is sometimes used particularly well as the starting-point for a lesson. For example, when pupils read their contributions to the class the teacher can follow points up using pupils' own work as a starting-point.

177. Leadership and management are good. There are sound and detailed schemes of work in place for Years 7 to 9. The department is critical of its own efforts and has a clear view of key areas for development. It has responded very well to changes in the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 and these changes have been planned well. The curriculum gives good opportunities for all pupils to participate, although there are not always tasks specifically planned for gifted and talented pupils. Provision for the development of literacy skills is satisfactory, including a helpful range of reference and topic books in the school library. In the work seen, opportunities for different forms of writing were provided more frequently in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Assessment procedures are not clearly linked to areas of attainment in the syllabus to provide a basis for lesson planning. Satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use ICT are being introduced into the curriculum but the spread of subject accommodation round the school makes access to ICT rooms difficult.

178. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Resources are improved; assessment tasks are now in place, although closer links are needed with the syllabus.