

INSPECTION REPORT

TESTBOURNE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Whitchurch

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116502

Headteacher: Ms H Jackson

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Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 3rd to 6th December 2001

Inspection number: 189430
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: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Micheldever Road
Whitchurch
Hampshire

Postcode: RG28 7JF

Telephone number: 01256 892061

Fax number: 01256 896796

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs E Jones

Date of previous inspection: September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17932	John Bald	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9756	Kenneth Parsons	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?
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	History Equal Opportunities Special educational needs	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	
15462	Clifford Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography	
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English	
16548	Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art and design	
27548	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
30128	Shirley Stanley	Team inspector	Music	
18673	Richard Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious education	
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science	

The inspection contractor was:

SERCO QAA
Herrington Barn
Herrington
Dorchester
Dorset DT2 9PU

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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?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	22
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Testbourne Community School is a small comprehensive school serving several villages and the town of Whitchurch. It has 579 pupils, aged 11 to 16, with slightly more boys than girls. The standards reached by pupils joining the school have risen in the last three years and are now above average, but the pupils who have taken GCSE in the past two years had reached average standards at the age of 11. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. Almost all pupils are white, but a very small number have minority ethnic backgrounds. None of these pupils requires extra help with English. The social and economic circumstances of the school are good, and few pupils are entitled to free school meals.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Testbourne Community School is providing good education. Standards are above average, teaching and learning are good, and pupils learn to become mature and responsible. The school is very well led and managed, with a strong sense of teamwork. Although the cost per pupil is above average, value for money is satisfactory.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching and learning across the school are good.
- There is good provision for pupils' welfare and guidance.
- Standards are above average overall, and well above average in some subjects.
- The vast majority of pupils have very good attitudes to school.
- All pupils are effectively included in the school's life and work.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Teaching in a fifth of lessons is satisfactory rather than good.
- Gifted and talented pupils are not challenged enough in a minority of lessons.
- There is too little provision for pupils' spiritual development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected, in September 1996, standards were good and it had a very good climate for learning. However, there were weaknesses as well as strengths in management, teaching in a fifth of lessons was unsatisfactory, and learning and standards were too low in several subjects, including mathematics for younger pupils and information and communication technology. Despite having two changes of headteacher since the last inspection, the school has made good overall improvements in its work. Teaching has shown significant improvement, and standards have risen in almost all subjects where there was weakness. There has been particularly strong improvement in standards in Year 9. On the other hand, there is a narrower choice of options for pupils in Years 10 and 11 than in most schools, and the curriculum for these pupils does not meet legal requirements in religious education. The school has maintained and developed its strengths, for example by developing facilities for drama and sport. Very good recent improvements in management have improved the quality of education, and have given the school a clear focus on raising standards. The school is in a very good position to make further improvements.

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	B	B	B	D

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

GCSE results have been improving at an average rate since 1996. While the 2001 results were below those in most schools with similar results in Year 9 national tests, they represent satisfactory achievement from the standards these pupils had reached when they joined the school. Pupils obtain well above average GCSE results in French and in physical education; results are at or above average in other subjects. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 reflect rising standards among pupils joining the school, and have improved at an above average rate since 1996. They are now well above average in English, mathematics and science, and similar to those in other schools that, like this one, have very few pupils entitled to free school meals.

Standards in pupils' work are well above average in English throughout the school. In mathematics and science, they are above average at the end of Year 11, but well above average at the end of Year 9. Standards are well above average in French throughout the school, and in art and design in Year 11. Standards in most other subjects are above average, though only just so in information and communication technology. Standards in music are recovering from the effects of recent staffing difficulties; they are average at the end of Year 9, but still below average at the end of Year 11. Standards in religious education are average for the end of Year 9, but low at the end of Year 11, as too little of the subject is taught. The trend of rising standards in pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 reflects recent improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching and learning.

Overall, achievement in the school is now good, and represents good long-term progress from the standards pupils reach when they join the school. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good, with some outstanding individual success. Gifted and talented pupils achieve high standards at GCSE, for example in English, and in sport and drama, but some younger gifted and talented pupils could achieve more. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve well. The school has set suitable targets for raising standards at GCSE, and has raised them to match the high standards achieved in the most recent tests in Year 9.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy learning, work hard and take pride in their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Very good behaviour in almost all lessons contributes to learning, and behaviour around the school is generally excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils co-operate very well with each other and with their teachers, and the oldest pupils are very mature and responsible.
Attendance	Well above average, with very little unauthorised absence.

Pupils accept responsibility willingly, particularly as prefects and mentors to younger pupils. They are enthusiastic library users, and complete homework very consistently, particularly in preparing for GCSE.

Pupils behave with exceptional courtesy in the playground and in the very cramped dining hall. However, a small number of boys do not behave as they should in some of their lessons.

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.

The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good throughout the school, and is the foundation of its good pattern of learning and achievement. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught, both in English and mathematics lessons and in other subjects. Teachers promote reading well, extend pupils’ vocabulary and help them organise their writing, but some marking does not pay enough attention to grammatical and spelling errors. Activities across subjects to reinforce number work are well thought-out and relevant to everyday life.

Teaching is very good overall in drama, French and physical education; it is good in all other subjects, with significant numbers of very good or excellent lessons in most subjects. Teachers’ knowledge and understanding of their subjects is very good overall, and they manage classes very well. Resources in most lessons are well chosen to provide interesting activities for pupils. Teachers make excellent use of computers in art and design. However, this is not consistent across the school, and computers are under-used in some subjects. There is a good level of challenge to the highest-attaining pupils in GCSE courses, although younger pupils with talents for academic work are not fully stretched in some lessons. Homework is used consistently; its quality is generally good in GCSE courses, but some tasks for younger pupils do not do enough to engage pupils’ interest. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is well organised and leads to good learning. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, it enables most pupils in the class to make steady progress, but work is not matched as closely to pupils’ needs as in good lessons, and the pace of work is sometimes not so brisk.

Teaching is meeting the needs of all of the pupils well over their five years in the school, and its strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. All teachers take an active part in professional development and in the evaluation of their work with senior colleagues.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in Years 7 to 9, satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Extra-curricular activities are very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is consistently good provision in lessons across the school, supported by effective co-ordination and specialist teaching.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The very small numbers of pupils with English as an additional language achieve well and do not require additional help with English.
Provision for pupils’ personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Very good for moral and social development, and good for cultural development, with good contributions from art, drama and music. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory. There are too few opportunities for it in lessons and in tutorial periods.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school takes good care of pupils’ health, safety and well-being, and has good arrangements to assess and track their learning.

The school has a very good partnership with parents, and provides them with very detailed information. Personal, social and health education, and careers education, are well planned and effective. The school does not meet legal requirements for collective worship, or for religious education in Years 10 and 11. The school works well with other schools and with the community.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and senior management team provide clear vision for the direction of the school. Effective planning and management procedures are improving the quality of education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well qualified and well organised, and contribute effectively to the direction and educational climate of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school uses the results of national and other tests well to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to set targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Careful budgeting and development planning enable the school to deploy its resources well in pursuit of its educational goals.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate, and teachers use resources very well. The library is used very well, but needs more books. Arrangements for the performance management of teachers have contributed to good teaching and learning, and are linked to the professional development of teachers. Very good links between senior management and middle management contribute to consistency in the school's work, and to its strong sense of teamwork.

Governors' financial planning is very effective, and the school understands and uses the principles of providing and obtaining the best value it can within its budget. Governors do not ensure that legal requirements for religious education and collective worship are fully met. The school has excellent priorities for development, with strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and the use of computers.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are expected to work hard and to achieve as much as they can. • The school is approachable. • Leadership and management are good. • Pupils are making good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on children's progress • Co-operation with parents • Activities outside lessons • Homework

The proportion of parents expressing positive views was high, and inspectors agreed with the points they made. They did not agree with most of the negative views, although they considered that some targets for pupils, including those in their annual reports, needed to be more specific. The inspection team did, however, agree with a small number of parents who said that the highest-attaining younger pupils needed more demanding work in some of their lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, standards since the last inspection have shown good improvement at the end of Year 9, and satisfactory improvement at the end of Year 11. However, because of changes in the standards reached by pupils joining the school, the pattern of results and achievement is complex, and cannot be evaluated solely on the basis of changes in results from one year to the next. In some subjects, the standards seen during the inspection were higher than recent examination results. In part, this is because the standards among pupils joining the school have been rising in recent years, and this is now having a positive effect on standards higher up the school. However, the cumulative effects of improvements to teaching are also playing a significant part in the raising of standards amongst older pupils.
2. Standards among pupils taking GCSE in 2000 and 2001, and among those in Year 11 at the time of the inspection, were average overall when they joined the school, and over half of the boys taking GCSE in 2001 had below-average standards in reading in Year 7. While standards among pupils joining the school have risen to above-average levels over the past three years, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs remains in line with the national average, and is higher than in most schools with very low proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. The respective standards reached by boys and girls joining the school vary considerably from year to year. For example, there are significant groups of low-attaining boys in the present Year 9, and of high-attaining boys in Year 7.
3. GCSE results have been consistently above average since the last inspection, and the rate of improvement matches the national trend. However, results in 2001 were significantly below those in most schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, and with similar results in national tests at the end of Year 9. These comparisons need to be treated with caution. Other nationally standardised evidence collected by the school shows weaknesses in aspects of mathematics and English, which were not specifically assessed in the national tests, among these pupils at the start of their GCSE courses. The proportion of pupils gaining results at grades A* to G at GCSE is consistently very high. This represents good achievement for lower-attaining pupils, who persevere with their work to complete their courses, and good provision by the school to include all of its pupils. Boys reached significantly lower standards than girls at GCSE in 2001. However, this was not part of a longer-term trend. There were no significant differences in standards reached by boys and girls during the inspection, except for modern languages, where girls were doing better than boys. Boys' results, however, were also well above national average levels in this subject. GCSE results are consistently good in French and in physical education.
4. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average, and have been improving at an above average rate since the last inspection. This partly reflects rising standards among pupils joining the school, but is also the result of improved teaching. In mathematics, for example, teaching at the time of the last inspection was sometimes unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and it is now good. There was a particularly strong improvement in 2001, where significant numbers of pupils achieved at well above the standard expected for their age, in English, mathematics and science. In English, however, results were more widely spread than in the other subjects; while half of the pupils reached well above average standards for their age, a quarter did not reach the standard expected nationally. The school is making an impact on this problem through its provision for literacy, although there were still significant weaknesses in the writing of a fifth of pupils in Year 9 during the inspection.
5. Pupils' work during the inspection showed above average to well above average standards in almost all subjects, and a good overall level of achievement throughout the school. Standards in English among older pupils are particularly good, and standards in mathematics and science are above average, and better than the most recent GCSE results. Standards in information and communication technology and in the use of computers to promote learning are a little above those

in most schools. As most pupils joining the school have below average skills in using computers - for example, no pupils in one Year 7 class had used spreadsheets in their primary schools - this represents good overall achievement, though from a low starting point. However, some younger pupils with exceptionally good skills in using computers are not fully stretched in lessons.

6. Overall standards in literacy are above average. Pupils in Year 11 organise their writing well, and higher-attaining pupils write fluently and accurately to a high standard, both in English and in other subjects, such as history, where teachers give particular priority to literacy. On the other hand, a small number of pupils are still joining the school with very weak standards in writing and spelling, and roughly a fifth of pupils in Year 9 are not reaching the nationally expected standard in their writing. Standards in reading are generally better than in writing, and pupils learn to read broadly and to pay attention to meaning that is not spelled out in the text in English. They use the facilities of the library effectively, for example for private study in geography. However, the quality of research in the library is limited in some subjects by a shortage of suitable books and resources.
7. Standards in numeracy are above average across the school, and pupils confidently handle all numerical operations they are asked to undertake. For example, they make good use of spreadsheets, using and identifying formula correctly, and measure and record pulse rates accurately as part of a health and fitness-testing programme in physical education. The range of such activities is more extensive than in most schools, and they enable pupils to understand the contribution of mathematics to learning and investigation in many subjects and in real life.
8. The proportion of gifted and talented pupils has risen in the last three years, and their overall achievement is satisfactory. Gifted pupils do very well in sports, drama and music, and academically talented pupils reach high standards at GCSE. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting expressed appreciation of the preparation these pupils received for work in the sixth form. However, the highest-attaining pupils are not consistently challenged in all of their lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9. This limits the consistency of learning in some subjects, including mathematics, information and communication technology and history. The very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language, do not need extra help with English, and their achievement is good.
9. Consistently good provision for pupils with special educational needs in all subjects leads to good levels of achievement. Most make significant progress in reading, spelling and number work, and some progress is rapid. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards targets in specific areas of learning, and almost all achieve graded results at GCSE. Annual reviews for pupils with statements of special educational needs show good improvement, and boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils make good progress when withdrawn from lessons for specialist teaching, and learn well in response to support they receive in lessons. There was particularly successful learning during the inspection in a Year 11 English lesson, in which all of the pupils were on track for a graded result at GCSE. There were also examples of outstanding individual achievement. In drama, for example, a pupil with learning difficulties that prevented him from working harmoniously in groups had developed very good skills in lighting, and a pupil with difficulties with physical co-ordination had passed one instrumental music examination and was about to sit another.
10. The school is using a good range of strategies to improve its results at GCSE. It has set appropriate targets for improvement in 2002, and pupils were on track to meet these during the inspection, with pockets of very significant strength in the work of higher-attaining pupils. Targets for 2003 have been raised sharply following the excellent results obtained by Year 9 pupils in the 2001 national tests, and the quality of work in Year 10 was putting the school in a good position to reach these.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils are proud to be members of the Testbourne community, and very willing to talk about their experiences of school life. Many are personable and mature young people, whom it is a real pleasure to meet. These pupils, who include those with special educational needs as well as higher-attaining pupils, have an unforced confidence that enables them to relate well to each other and to adults. Most pupils are happy to come to school, and are prepared and ready to do their work. Pupils complete homework willingly, and a large number take advantage of the range of lunchtime and after school clubs on offer.
12. Pupils generally accept the school's arrangements to promote good behaviour, and their very good behaviour in most lessons meant that teachers did not have to spend much time maintaining order. Pupils' response to the best teaching is excellent. Higher-attaining pupils in history, for example, sustain very high levels of concentration to the end of the school day, and adjust their thinking flexibly to meet the range of questions set by the teacher. In drama, pupils become totally absorbed in their work, and are reluctant to leave at break-time. Even in the less successful lessons, pupils do their best, and most resist any temptation there may be to misbehave. There are few examples of unsatisfactory behaviour, and most are effectively dealt with. However, the behaviour of a group of lower-attaining boys in Year 9 had caused some disruption to learning at the time of the inspection, and was being dealt with by the senior management team. Pupils told the inspectors that this had led to an improvement. In lessons, these pupils' behaviour was generally just satisfactory. Behaviour around the school is very good, particularly in the narrow corridors, and they show great courtesy and consideration to each other in the very cramped dining room. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others, for example by stopping their football games in the playground to allow adults to pass across the "pitch".
13. No pupils have been permanently excluded in the past two years, and fixed-term exclusions were below average for a school of this type. The use of these exclusions, which are usually very short, is reasonable. In discussion with inspectors, pupils did not regard bullying as a serious problem, but said that any incidents were quickly dealt with. The single example that occurred during the inspection was properly dealt with by the end of the school day. Pupils respect each other's and the school's property. Staff are confident when lending resources to pupils that they will be returned. Pupils respect their environment and there is little litter.
14. Form tutors and heads of year build good relationships with their pupils, which contributes to mutual respect and partnership in learning. Pupils' relationships with other teachers also reflect the high degree of stability of the teaching staff in the school. Pupils respect each other as individuals and understand the impact of their actions on others. They share resources well when working in pairs or in groups, and co-operate well, respecting each other's point of view. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are harmoniously integrated into all aspects of the school's life. Low and high attaining pupils often work constructively together, for example in dramatic presentations, and no pupil is excluded from the groups. Boys and girls usually work together unselfconsciously. For example, in a sex education lesson, very good teaching enabled a mixed group of pupils to have a very sensible and mature discussion on what could have been a very embarrassing topic.
15. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to exercise initiative and take responsibility. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning in lessons, for example by evaluating their own and each other's progress, and are set personal targets, which they review regularly. The school council makes responsible suggestions, and is taken seriously. Older pupils who have volunteered to be prefects make a valuable contribution to maintaining order, and the head boy and girl, with their deputies, are good ambassadors for the school. Year 10 pupils act as reading mentors to Year 7 pupils; this scheme is valued by pupils for the bridges it builds across the school. Pupils are keen to take up the well-designed range of opportunities and training in the library. Pupils' appreciate the range of activities provided outside lessons, and take part in large numbers.

16. Attendance is well above average. There is little unauthorised absence, although a very small number of pupils have poor attendance records that affect their learning. Punctuality in the morning is very good. Overall, pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development have improved a little from the good levels achieved at the time of the last inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school, and often very good. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was unsatisfactory in almost one lesson in five, and was good or better in just under two-fifths. Teaching during the present inspection was good or better in four-fifths of lessons, and very good or excellent in over a third. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in normal lessons. The single instance of unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection was with a small group of pupils, in the context of a pilot scheme for literacy. Overall, teaching since the last inspection has shown good improvement, and the school's new procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching have placed it in a good position to improve further.
18. Almost all teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, and manage classes very well. These qualities lead to an effective learning partnership between the school and its pupils, and they are helping all pupils to build good habits of work. Teachers plan lessons well, using a good variety of resources to sustain pupils' interest – in history, for example, they make very effective use of cartoons. Good teaching is particularly consistent in English, mathematics and science, where it is leading to well above average standards in Year 9, which are beginning to be reflected in Year 10. Teachers make good use of the school's system of grouping pupils according to their learning needs to pitch work at the right level for most pupils in the class. They use timed activities effectively to ensure brisk pace and to help pupils to maintain concentration for the whole of the lesson. Teachers set, check and mark homework very regularly, making good use of planners to ensure that it is completed. Some learning tasks for younger pupils lack challenge and interest, but most homework is of good quality, particularly at GCSE. Pupils told inspectors that their workload was reasonable, and that homework helped them to learn.
19. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good overall, and most departments contribute to it. Reading and study skills are well developed in most lessons, and teachers introduce new words related to their subject carefully. There is good emphasis on critical reading, particularly in English, geography, history and science. The teaching of reading to pupils with special educational needs leads to good progress, and the library is used extensively to promote reading. Most subjects develop pupils' writing skills systematically. For example, there is good emphasis on note-making in geography, and on structuring writing in history. The best marking, notably for older pupils in history, gives pupils very good guidance on improving their writing. However, marking in some subjects allows errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar to go uncorrected, and pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in their own words in science. Teachers provide constant and well-planned reinforcement of number skills in mathematics lessons, and planning in other lessons includes number work wherever it can make a relevant contribution to learning. This helps pupils develop speed and accuracy in calculations, and to understand the importance of mathematics in everyday life. Teachers use computers effectively to promote learning in roughly half of the subjects, and there is good work in art and design and design and technology. However, teachers in some subjects are not yet using computers to promote independent learning. Overall, the use of information and communication technology in teaching is satisfactory, and the school has good plans to develop it further.
20. Very good and excellent teaching occurs regularly in physical education, French and drama, and in other subjects where individual teachers have exceptional levels of professional skill and commitment. In history, for example, one teacher has chosen to work part-time in order to spend a whole day in school developing resources for learning, marking work and guiding pupils on improving it. The result is excellent marking and guidance to pupils that complements and sustains a climate of high achievement in her classroom. All of the excellent and very good teaching shows outstanding knowledge and understanding of patterns of learning in the subject, which teachers use to plan the most effective blend of teaching methods for the class. This inspires confidence in

pupils and leads to accelerated learning. There is much more outstanding teaching than at the time of the last inspection, and it has become an important strength of the school.

21. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, planning provides adequate opportunities for learning, but is less sharply focused on the needs of the pupils in the class. Sometimes this affects the learning of highest-attaining pupils, but work in some lessons also needs to be better adapted to the needs of pupils reaching a little below average standards. Pace in these lessons is adequate, but there is sometimes too little time to complete planned activities. A significant proportion of this teaching takes place outside teachers' main subjects; while teachers' knowledge and understanding in these lessons are adequate, they do not have the more advanced professional understanding of the subject needed to promote good learning. The single example of unsatisfactory teaching was caused by inadequate knowledge of the subject. In a very small proportion of lessons, lapses from the generally very good behaviour in the school are not dealt with effectively.
22. Teaching promotes good learning among pupils with special educational needs. Teachers have good information on learning difficulties, and use this well to match work to pupils' needs. Additional support in lessons, from teachers and teaching assistants, is effective, and specialised literacy teaching in small groups leads to consistently good learning for those with difficulties in reading and spelling. Teachers expect much of pupils with learning difficulties, and encourage them to persevere with difficult tasks. The teaching and learning of gifted and talented pupils are satisfactory overall. They receive good to excellent teaching in physical education, music, art and design and drama, and are generally well taught in Years 10 and 11. However, some teachers of younger pupils, including the highest-attaining boys in Year 7, do not use information on what they already know, understand and can do to ensure that they are fully extended. Teaching meets the needs of the very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds well overall, though they are affected to a degree by the gaps in teaching for gifted and talented pupils. Teaching and learning in the new work-related curriculum for older pupils are effective, and appreciated by the pupils.

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

23. The curriculum has good breadth and balance for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and offers satisfactory opportunities to those in Years 10 and 11. Throughout the school, in addition to the National Curriculum, there is very good provision for drama, and effective provision for health education, sex education, and education against the misuse of drugs in the course of personal social and health education (PSHE).
24. There are good features in the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils may study two languages, most take English Literature as well as English, and an effective work-related course is offered in co-operation with a local college of further education. All pupils study a nationally accredited key skills course in information and communication technology. However, pupils cannot study more than nine GCSE subjects in the normal school day. Religious education is available as an optional GCSE course after school and as an element within PHSE. However, only a small proportion of the locally agreed syllabus is covered, and the school is therefore not meeting the legal requirements for religious education in respect of pupils in Years 10 and 11. The breadth of vocational courses has been increased through new GCSE courses in catering and engineering, and the school has plans to address its remaining weaknesses through a complete review of the curriculum.
25. Pupils' learning and their personal development are enriched by the very good range of clubs and other activities outside lessons. There is particularly good provision in music, drama, including school productions, games and sporting activities. There are also many subject-based activities such as fieldwork in geography, revision clubs, and visits to France and Germany, which enhance learning in modern foreign languages. There is an extensive programme of visits to sites including cathedrals, mosques, synagogues, theatres and museums.
26. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is consistently good in each subject, and they enjoy the full range of learning opportunities offered to all pupils. Provision is well co-ordinated and

carefully thought out to meet their needs, with a good balance of support in lessons and specialised teaching in small groups. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 10 and 11 benefit from support with study and revision skills within the school's work-related programme.

27. Provision for literacy and numeracy is good across the school. An effective training course in literacy teaching, delivered by the head of English and colleagues in drama and science, has helped ensure consistency across subjects. Provision in history is particularly strong, with numerous opportunities for reading, note-taking and research, but there are weaknesses in marking in some subjects, and reading is under-used in mathematics. The school is responding positively to the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy. However, some aspects of the strategy are not yet matched closely enough to the needs of the pupils, and an overall policy for literacy in the school is still being developed. Numeracy work is effective because teachers identify and use and using number work to promote learning in a good range of subjects, so that pupils consolidated their skills well and gain in speed and accuracy. As with literacy, however, there is no overall policy, and there has as yet been no audit of pupils' skills. The school is preparing to improve the co-ordination of its work as part of the introduction of the national numeracy strategy.
28. Provision for information and communication technology to promote learning across the school is satisfactory. The school has a good range of equipment, which is used for a sound range of purposes in addition to basic word processing. For example, pupils in Year 8 have produced their own newspaper, and pupils in art and design make very good use of the digital camera, scanner and specialist software to capture and manipulate images. Internet facilities in the library are used well for research. However, in some subjects, teachers are just beginning to use information and communication technology to promote learning, and not all teachers are fully aware of its potential.
29. The personal and social education curriculum is well planned to meet pupils' needs, and uses an interesting and relevant range of teaching methods. Careers education has very good long-term planning, and is of good overall quality. It begins in pupils' second year in the school, when pupils are encouraged to consider their own ambitions, strengths and weaknesses, and has good focus on specific careers in Years 10 and 11. The school has built up a very good collection of resources to support this work. The school's newly-developed provision for work-related learning makes very effective use of the resources of the local business and industrial community.
30. The local community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning, and they and parents have recently sponsored improvements to the theatre hall. The school in turn makes an excellent contribution to the community. It is a focal point for organised activities in the Whitchurch area, with many local organisations making use of its facilities. These include a playgroup, an after school club, and a day centre for the elderly, which is supported by pupils in Year 8. An adult drama group is now based in the school to make use of its new drama hall. Various evening classes make use of the school's other specialist facilities, and sports clubs use the gymnasium, the swimming pool and the playing fields. The school receives good support from local businesses in terms of work experience placements for pupils, and pupils in Year 11 benefit from the mock interviews that local organisations provide. The local vicar comes in to conduct acts of worship; other visitors supporting the curriculum include the police and the prison service. The St John's Ambulance Brigade and the Red Cross teach all pupils first aid, and award certificates.
31. The school's relationships with partner schools and colleges are good. It has very close links with primary schools, and provides very good opportunities for their pupils to get to know Testbourne before they join it. The school gathers information on individual pupils, which it uses to set targets, although these are not always used consistently enough in planning pupils' work. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting appreciated the way in which pupils were prepared for sixth form work, and this includes good links with local colleges.
32. The school makes too little provision for pupils' spiritual development. School and year-group assemblies have good Christian, religious and spiritual content, but there is no daily act of collective worship, as required by law. Most tutorial periods have no spiritual element, and often concentrate solely on tasks such as checking that pupils have completed their homework. Some subjects make good provision for pupils' spiritual development in lessons. For example, in religious

education, pupils are encouraged to explore questions of ultimate purpose and meaning. In art, pupils are involved in a project on 'self' and personal reflection currently through a 'Lord of the Rings' project, and there is some good reflective writing in English, for example on the theme of "growing up" in Year 10. There are too few opportunities for reflection in most other subjects.

33. The school's very effective provision for moral development is based on clear values, based on respect and caring for the individual, which are shared by pupils, teachers and parents alike. Teachers provide pupils with very good examples of hard work, care and consideration for others, often taking great pains to help pupils when they need support with some aspect of their work. The school has clear policies and effective strategies for bullying and behavioural support, firmly established in a moral code. Pupils understand right from wrong, and are aware of the consequences of their actions. Assemblies make an important contribution to the development of moral awareness. Pupils are given good opportunities to explore moral issues in a well-planned programme of personal and social education and are challenged in a number of subjects ranging from environmental issues and health related ethical issues to the Holocaust. The school provides a positive focus to caring for others through fund raising for a wide range of charities. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, including the school council, the prefect system, training as librarians, taking responsibility for sport, and acting as mentors to younger pupils. This very effective provision helps pupils to develop a sense of responsibility, which is reflected in their good attitudes to independent work in GCSE coursework. It prepares them well for the next phase of education and for the world of work.
34. The school's very good provision for pupils' social development is reflected in harmonious relationships among pupils, and between them and their teachers. This is an important contribution to the school's co-operative climate for learning, and to its good levels of achievement. Pupils regard the school as a friendly place and feel safe. There are many extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by the pupils, ranging from concerts and clubs to visits and trips abroad. The school has achieved Sports Mark status for its wide range of successful sporting activities. Pupils form good relationships in lessons, with many good opportunities to develop their social skills of collaborative working and listening to the contributions of others in discussion. There is strong emphasis on social development in the programme of personal and social education, and pupils' individual progress files record a broad range of social as well as academic achievement. Tutors monitor these regularly, and provide constant encouragement to pupils in all areas of their work. Pupils' achievements are publicly recognised in assembly and their self-esteem raised through the schools good and efficient merit system.
35. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in music, art, drama and dance, and to experience performing before a critical audience through productions, concerts and workshops. Their awareness of other European cultures is raised through good opportunities to take part in recreational visits abroad and the foreign language exchange programme. In English there is extensive coverage through poems from other cultures, in particular 'Presents from my aunt in Pakistan', studied by Year 11 pupils. This good provision for cultural development contributes to achievement in arts-related subjects. Pupils' understanding of the tenets of major world faiths and of significant religious events is effectively developed through religious education, school and year assemblies. However, the school could do more to promote pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity of contemporary British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school has maintained its provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils since the last inspection, and has made significant improvements in arrangements to assess, track and guide their learning. Overall, arrangements have a positive effect on achievement and standards across the school.
37. The senior management team and teachers at all levels make considerable efforts to care for the welfare of individual pupils. Pupils believe that the staff are approachable, are genuinely concerned to help them when they need it, and do their best to resolve any problems they have. They appreciate their long-term relationships with form tutors and heads of year, and find senior

management visible within the school and approachable. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare comply fully with local guidelines and are of good quality. There is good provision within the programme for personal and social education to help pupils to take responsibility for their own safety. This support allows pupils to concentrate on their learning, and they feel safe and valued. It also helps pupils whose behaviour and attitudes put them at risk of exclusion to continue with their education.

38. The school site generally provides a safe environment and routine health and safety procedures and testing are in place. Governors have been actively involved and the school is using the expertise of outside bodies effectively. No unsafe practice was seen in lessons during the inspection, but more formal recording of risk assessments as they are carried out is needed. The layout of the school site makes access for pupils with disabilities difficult, but the school has been able to make arrangements for them by careful timetabling.
39. There are good and comprehensive arrangements to monitor and promote good behaviour. Form tutors, supported by heads of year, carefully monitor and record problems, taking preventive actions before they become serious, for example, through the "on report" card system. This effectively addresses a key issue identified in the last inspection report. All pupils are totally familiar with the systems, and the rewards and sanctions that apply. These are used well to help pupils think about their own behaviour, whilst the "internal exclusion" system by which pupils have to work outside a manager's office separately from their class, is a good way of motivating pupils to behave properly and to limit the number of actual exclusions. The credit reward system – ten credits to enter a prize draw – is proving to be highly motivational. When pupils are excluded from school, there are good procedures to help them re-integrate on their return.
40. Procedures to promote good attendance are systematic and effective. Potential problems are identified early, and followed up with the Educational Welfare Officer, who visits weekly. The school is beginning to make good use of computers to identify trends, although this was inhibited during the inspection by problems with a new system. Morning registration periods and the calling of registers in the afternoon are efficiently conducted.
41. The school has good arrangements to monitor each pupil's personal development. Each pupil has a personal record of achievement, which includes certificates and awards for a broad range of activities, and the credit system provides effective reinforcement for the school's high expectations of work and effort. Personal organisation is very effectively fostered by a well-designed and robust planner, maintained by pupils and regularly reviewed by tutors. The planner records the setting and completion of all homework, and helps pupils develop the habits of work needed for success at GCSE. These planners contain personal targets, which are kept under review. The best of these targets are very specific and help pupils to make progress, but some are too vague to be helpful.
42. The school has good systems to assess and track standards and progress in English, mathematics and science. It uses these to group pupils according to their learning needs, and to ensure that they are building effectively on what they have already learned. This is contributing to the pattern of rising standards in the school, but assessment, particularly in mathematics, could be improved further if it were more specifically linked to the provisions of the National Curriculum, particularly when pupils transfer from primary school. Pupils are involved in setting targets for future progress based on assessment, but these are not always followed up in the work they are given. Pupils with special educational needs receive sensitive assessment, linked to good guidance, and this is condensed into an effective digest of information for teachers. Arrangements for assessing progress in other subjects are satisfactory overall, but in some subjects, notably music and physical education, have suffered from a high turnover of heads of department. The newly appointed heads of department are taking effective steps to improve matters, for example by using recording to assess progress in music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The school has maintained its good relationship with parents since the last inspection, and has improved the quality of information for them. Three fifths of the parents responded to the pre-

inspection questionnaire or attended the meeting with inspectors, an above average rate of participation. Most were positive about all aspects of the school. In particular, parents believe that their children like school, that the teaching is good and that their children work hard and make good progress. They endorse the standards of behaviour and think the school helps children to become mature. Virtually all would be comfortable approaching the school with a suggestion or a problem, and had a positive view of the influence of the present headteacher. Overall, parents' views of the school are good and the school has the confidence of its local community.

44. A significant minority of parents were critical of the amount of homework set for their children – additional comments suggest that several thought that there was too much homework for younger pupils. About a quarter of parents believe the school does not work closely enough with them and should keep them better informed, and a smaller number would like to see a wider range of activities outside of lessons. Individual parents at the pre-inspection meeting were concerned about the progress made by higher-attaining younger pupils, particularly in mathematics and information and communication technology.
45. The inspection team considered that the overall quality of information for parents was very good, particularly in the annual information guides for each year group, which give exceptionally detailed information on pupils' programmes of learning. The prospectus and annual governors' report to parents are well-written documents that give a good flavour of the school, and the prospectus is very well designed and attractive. There is some room for improvement in annual reports to parents. Comments on reports are often too general to be helpful, and some targets for pupils need to be made more specific. Parents' evenings are generally good, and the school provides regular newsletters of good quality.
46. Overall, inspectors considered that homework was effective, and pupils told inspectors that they thought the workload was reasonable. The range of activities outside lessons is broader than in most schools, though they tend to take place at lunchtime rather than after school, as many pupils have to catch buses home. Inspectors found, however, that parents of gifted and talented pupils had some grounds for concern about the consistency of their learning. While the school has begun to identify these pupils it does not ensure that they are effectively challenged in all lessons, and some pupils told inspectors that they were repeating work they had completed in primary school.
47. The student planner enables parents to keep track of homework and to communicate in an informal way with form tutors. The planners are used and taken seriously by pupils and staff, and are signed by both the form tutor and the parent. The school involves parents well when a pupil is having problems with behaviour or learning, and this approach often helps the school and parents to work together to solve the problem. There is an active parent teacher association, which organises social and fundraising events. There is a home school agreement in place, which has had little practical effect. The parent governors make a good contribution to the school's governing body, although only eight other parents attended the annual meeting with parents. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The headteacher and senior management team provide a strong personal and professional lead. They are very well organised, with clear divisions of tasks, and have systematic and effective arrangements for managing teachers with responsibilities, including heads of department and teachers responsible for pupils' welfare and guidance. A well-designed system of development planning and departmental review that was in place at the time of the inspection has been effectively refined. The plan for each department follows the same pattern as the main school development plan, and the whole is supported by a well-designed timetable, which allows progress to be kept under continuous review. Departments are managed well, with very good management in individual departments, including English and physical education, though some elements of the central management systems, for example in using all available information to set targets, are not yet fully represented in all departments. Heads of Year co-ordinate personal and academic support for pupils very effectively, and provision for special educational needs is managed well, involving all of the school staff.

49. In addition to close analysis of the results of national tests, one deputy headteacher uses a good range of assessment materials to analyse strengths and weaknesses in the school's performance. This information is shared well with colleagues and with the governors. It feeds into action to tackle weaknesses and to set targets for GCSE in line with the improving standards achieved by pupils in Year 9. At the same time, close tracking of pupils' personal development effectively identifies those who are at risk of exclusion from school. This enables the school to take effective steps, for example by systems of reports, to keep these pupils in school and give them a sense of success. The effectiveness of arrangements to include all pupils in the school's work is seen in low exclusion figures, in the very good attitudes of pupils, and in the high proportion who obtain graded results at GCSE. The small number of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds are fully involved in all aspects of school life, and there is very good racial harmony.
50. Arrangements for monitoring teaching, using performance management, contribute to the high proportion of good teaching in the school. This, with the careful selection of new staff, including four recently appointed heads of department, is a major contribution to the pattern of rising standards and achievement in the school. Since her appointment a year before the inspection, the headteacher has helped the school identify the areas it needs to improve, and has begun to take effective action. Overall, leadership and management have shown very good improvement since the last inspection, when the senior management team were not sufficiently involved in setting targets and raising standards.
51. As at the time of the last inspection, governors are well qualified and well organised. They are fully involved in the life and work of the school, contribute fully to its direction, and have very good understanding of the community, which it serves. Governors review the progress of planning each term, and the senior management team is fully involved, both in formulating the main plan and through their management of departments. The governors and senior management team understand the need to evaluate the school's provision to ensure that it provides the best possible value, and to obtain good value in their purchases. For example, their choice of flooring for the sports hall took account of the value added by a material that was not the cheapest, but added significantly to the quality of the environment and promoted high standards in physical education. On the other hand, the governors have not taken action to ensure that the school provides adequately for religious education in Years 10 and 11, and for collective worship.
52. While the cost per pupil is above average, the school manages its funds effectively, with a clear focus both on raising standards and on maintaining the breadth of learning, for example through the extensive provision for drama. Prudent financial planning has enabled the school to retain its core of experienced teachers, to make steady improvements in facilities, and to deal with unexpected problems, such as the need to provide a new floor for the sports hall. Additional funds and grants, chiefly from the Standards Fund, are used very well to support educational priorities, and are contributing to improvements in standards. For example, a recent training course led by the head of English and two other colleagues, based on analysis of the school's needs, contributed to the good provision for literacy seen during the inspection, and there are good plans to use additional funding to improve teachers' skills in using computers. The school makes effective use of computerised management systems, which ensure that information is kept up to date and can be used for planning. For example, computers are used to provide information on pupils with special educational needs to teachers in a clear and compact format that allows them to use it when planning lessons. The burden of paperwork from external sources is heavy, but the school's clear priorities and effective use of new technology ensure that this does not interfere with the process of improving its work. The school receives effective support from the local education authority, with which it has a co-operative relationship.
53. The school has an experienced and well-qualified teaching staff, whose skills are the basis of the good education that it provides. The school's arrangements for professional development are effective, and relate well both to individual needs and to the priorities identified in the school development plan. Less experienced teachers are encouraged to learn from colleagues whose work is excellent, for example in history and in drama. There is good teamwork among teachers in all departments, but some teachers, including more experienced staff, have too few opportunities to

observe colleagues' work. The school received an exceptionally favourable report on its provision for professional development from Investors in People. Teachers are deployed well, but the skills of some who are working outside their main subject are only just adequate, and this leads to teaching that is satisfactory rather than good. There is satisfactory provision for the training and introduction of new teachers, but the skills of some newly-appointed teaching assistants need to be developed further. Administrative staff are courteous and efficient.

54. Accommodation is adequate overall, and teachers use it well. There are good facilities for drama and physical education, but some classrooms are cramped, and this limits the scope of teaching in some mathematics lessons. The dining room is very cramped for the number of pupils who use it, and is too small for teachers to eat with pupils. However, pupils minimise any potential problems by exemplary behaviour. Access for pupils with disabilities is difficult, though the school has been able to ensure wheelchair access where necessary. Resources for learning are adequate and their good use by teachers promotes interest and variety for the pupils. The school has sufficient computers. These include some new machines, and some older networks, which are still adequate for their purposes. Resources in the library are adequate overall, with good book stocks for roughly half of the subjects, and computers linked to the Internet. There are too few books, however, to support learning in mathematics, music and religious education. As at the time of the last inspection, the library is exceptionally well used, by boys as well as girls, and does much to foster an interest in reading and a love of books among the pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. The school has good plans to raise standards at GCSE, to extend its use of information and communication technology, to develop the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, and to make further improvements to the library. The school has taken some action to improve the issues in the first two of the points for action below, but needs to extend its work further.

1. Make further improvements to the quality of teaching, by:

- Ensuring that planning meets the full range of pupils' needs in each class;
- Improving the quality of marking, and its use to guide pupils in their work;
- Developing effective professional development for teachers working outside their main subject, and for new teaching assistants.

See paragraphs 5, 8, 21, 27, 53, 75, 115, 116, 124 and 141.

2. Raise standards among gifted and talented pupils, by:

- Ensuring that they are fully challenged and extended in all lessons;
- Monitoring their progress more closely;
- Providing additional extension courses for them.

See paragraphs 5, 8, 21, 22, 69, 75, 78, 109, 116, 119 and 124.

3. Extend opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, by:

- Providing more opportunities for reflection in lessons and tutorial periods;
- Making adequate provision for religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11;
- Meeting the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

See paragraphs 24, 32 and 138-144.

Minor issues

Ensure that all targets for pupils are specific, and followed up in the work they are given (see paragraphs 31, 42, 62, 75, 132, 132).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	122
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	8	34	55	24	1	0	0
Percentage	7	28	45	20	1	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	579
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	8

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	98

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Year 9

Number of registered pupils in Year 9 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	51	50	101

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	38	43	49
	Girls	38	39	38
	Total	76	82	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (85)	81 (83)	86 (81)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	51 (39)	55 (61)	62 (50)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	43	46
	Girls	40	41	41
	Total	79	84	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (77)	83 (86)	86 (79)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (29)	55 (52)	62 (42)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Year 11

Number of registered pupils in Year 11 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	53	51	105

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	24	53	53
	Girls	34	50	51
	Total	58	103	104
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (55)	99 (98)	100 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.5 (41.4)
	National	39 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	576
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	19	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	35
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6:1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	236

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

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

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	19.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	1,588,730
Total expenditure	1,604,444
Expenditure per pupil	2830
Balance brought forward from previous year	46,182
Balance carried forward to next year	30,468

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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	579
Number of questionnaires returned	304

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	57	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	59	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	62	6	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	63	15	3	1
The teaching is good.	25	64	5	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	50	22	5	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	45	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	49	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	21	50	19	3	7
The school is well led and managed.	36	53	4	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	62	6	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	12	52	18	4	13

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the provision for English is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average.
- Teaching is good, and has many very good features.
- The subject is very well led and managed, and teachers are very committed.
- Teachers have very high expectations, and all pupils are challenged.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Data from assessment could be used more to plan for high standards.

56. Results in GCSE English are above average, but have been lower than those in most similar schools over the last two years. However, pupils taking GCSE in these two years had reached only average standards when they joined the school, and their results represent good long-term achievement. In 2001, over half of the pupils taking English Literature as well as English at GCSE achieved a pass at grade C or above. More pupils take both subjects than in most schools, and this represents good achievement.

57. The results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average, and have risen significantly over the past three years. Standards in pupils' work during the inspection reflected recent improvements in the work of the department, and were well above average throughout the school. Girls did better than boys in the most recent national tests and at GCSE, but this is not part of a consistent pattern, and girls and boys reached similar standards during the inspection. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school, and obtain good examination results in relation to their learning difficulties. The overall quality of achievement in English is good throughout the school, and gifted and talented pupils reach the standards they should. The department has maintained the good quality of provision seen during the last inspection, and the strong teamwork among the teachers puts it in a very good position to improve its work further.

58. About half of the pupils in Year 9 achieve above average standards in all aspects of English. Around four fifths write with the basic accuracy expected for their age. These pupils' writing is well organised in paragraphs, uses a broad range of vocabulary and sentence structure, and effectively engages and sustains the reader's interest. They read accurately, and their writing covers a broad range of styles and purposes. Pupils in Year 8, for example, wrote very good suspense stories following study of the character Shelter in the story 'Stone Cold', and there is much good analytic writing. About one-third of pupils write at the expected standard, but have some weaknesses in accuracy and expression, particularly in explanatory and analytical writing. These pupils' skills in reading and in speaking and listening, however, are above average. The reading and writing of a fifth of pupils are below average. Their writing has frequent errors, and lacks control and organisation. These pupils understand the basic meaning of texts they read, but depend on the teacher to help them deduce meaning that is not stated explicitly.

59. Most pupils in Year 11 write with at least the control and accuracy expected of grade C candidates at GCSE. Roughly half reach higher standards in all aspects of English, and the best reach the very highest standards. Their written work is practically flawless: their response to reading detailed, evaluative and highly analytical. Most middle attaining pupils write accurately and some have the crispness of expression associated with higher grades. A small number of these pupils are not secure enough in expression and accuracy to achieve a C grade. The work of lower-attaining pupils

is below average, but their understanding of important aspects of the subject is better than that seen in many schools. Their work on 'Presents from my Aunt In Pakistan' showed that they can make well-supported, independent deductions about the implied themes of a poem. However, while their writing is often well organised, it contains too many errors.

60. Work in other subjects makes a good contribution to the development of reading and writing skills. In most lessons across the school, written tasks for pupils are clearly thought-out, and there are examples of good work in many history lessons, especially for older, higher-attaining pupils. Authentic materials are used effectively to promote reading in modern foreign languages, and pupils are encouraged to read widely in history. On the other hand, some marking does not identify errors consistently, and some subjects, including mathematics, could do more to use and promote reading. Across the school, teachers effectively broaden pupils' use and understanding of technical vocabulary. Work in English makes satisfactory use of information and communication technology (ICT), but there is little number work.
61. Teaching is good, with some outstanding features. There is a small but significant amount of excellent teaching, that leads both higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to reach significantly higher standards than would be expected in lessons where it takes place. All English teachers have very good specialised knowledge of the subject, manage pupils very well, and expect all to do their best. This results in good, and at times excellent learning, for pupils of all abilities. Pupils make good gains in the skills of organising essay work, analysing texts of different types in detail and in acquiring the methods and techniques that help them to succeed in both course work and examination assessment. For example, in Year 11, a tightly scheduled lesson ensured that the highest-attaining pupils made great progress in developing the speed with they analysed the effects of presentational features in a pamphlet on animal rights. High expectations permeated every lesson during the inspection – for example, pupils in Year 9 studied texts such as 'Lord of the Flies', more often read by older pupils taking GCSE. Teachers introduce pupils to writing of high quality, often using extracts to prepare pupils for writing. This led to suspense writing of high quality from pupils in Year 8. These pupils' absorbed concentration when writing was very good, and typical of the pupils' overall positive attitudes. All pupils in Year 7 receive a challenging introduction to Shakespearean theatre. This includes tragedy as well as comedy, and is reinforced by practical activities in drama. Teachers use information from the co-ordinators for special educational needs well to group pupils and to adapt work to match their needs. Expectations of these pupils are high, and grouping of pupils is subtly organised, so that some pupils with special educational needs are placed in higher sets where the work matches their potential.
62. There are very few shortcomings in teaching. Marking is good, but some comments, especially about the strengths of pupils' work, are not precise enough. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not always know the National Curriculum levels they have reached, their short and long-term targets, and the aspects of their work that they need to improve. Very occasionally the pace in some lessons flags, and pupils do not do as much as they could. The potential value of reviewing work at the end of a lesson is lost by the lack of reference to clear learning objectives, both at the start and during the lessons. Teaching and learning are well monitored through work sampling and analysis of results, but there are too few opportunities for teachers to observe each other's work, and information on the standards pupils have reached could be used more effectively to raise standards.
63. Leadership is very good and the department is managed well. The department evaluates how well it is doing and responds to what it learns. New initiatives are evaluated critically, and the department is playing a key role in improving provision for literacy within the school. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good, and the department is very well placed to make further improvements in its work.

Drama

64. Results in GCSE examinations are significantly above average, and have been rising over the past three years. Standards during the inspection were above average throughout the school, with some well above average work from higher-attaining pupils. Pupils often begin with little previous experience of drama, and their overall achievement is very good. Girls and boys work very well together, and pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. The higher-attaining younger pupils joining the school also do particularly well. The school has maintained the high quality of its work since the last inspection.
65. Pupils throughout the school concentrate well and work hard to succeed, even when they find activities difficult. Pupils in Year 9, for example, worked very hard to create a threatening mood through choreographed movement and gesture. They achieved success because of excellent teaching that was simultaneously challenging and encouraging. The teacher's excellent planning, use of demonstration and example and carefully stepped series of tasks resulted in excellent learning. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are effectively introduced to the disciplines of drama, including timing, learning lines, and lighting. The progress of those with special educational needs, and of those who are not confident in speaking, is given particular attention, with an exceptionally clear focus on achievement. For example, a pupil with a serious behavioural difficulty that made it hard for him to work in groups developed skills in lighting that were recognised by the whole class, and a girl in Year 8 who was worried about learning lines received additional support that enabled her to succeed. Most pupils in Year 11 can move comfortably into their dramatic role, even in a short burst improvised context. In scripted work most are confident, the best reaching the highest standards of convincing characterisation through intonation, staging and gesture. Their work revealed evidence of highly effective teaching.
66. The quality of teaching ranges from good to excellent, and is very good overall. All teachers have good understanding of drama, plan lessons well, and engage pupils in their work. The excellent teaching provides an inspiring educational experience, focusing pupils' attention closely on what is important in life and in art, and leading them all to develop confidence and to enjoy performing. There is a strong spiritual element in the work, and pupils are sorry to see the end of the lesson.
67. Good facilities for drama add prestige to the subject and lift performance. The subject is a popular option and about half the pupils in Year 11 plan to continue drama in their post-16 courses. The department provides good cultural enrichment opportunities through theatre trips and school productions. In addition to the chance to perform in lessons, many pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to develop technical knowledge of production through devising and carrying out lighting and sound scripts for example. Drama makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' personal development, especially through group and pair work and its strong focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good or better.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is very good.
- Analysis of assessment data is good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Pupils show interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment for mathematics.

Areas for improvement

- Gifted and talented pupils are not fully extended in some lessons.
- Marking and planning do not refer closely enough to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades.

68. GCSE results have been above average over the past three years, and a very nearly all pupils achieve a graded result in mathematics. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 have improved at an above-average rate over the past three years. They are well above average, and in line with those of similar schools. Girls did significantly better than boys at GCSE in 2000 and 2001, but there was no significant difference in the quality of girls and boys work during the inspection. Standards among pupils joining the school have been improving in recent years, but pupils taking GCSE in 2001, and those in Year 11 during the inspection, had reached average standards when they started in Year 7.
69. Standards of work during the inspection were well above average in Year 9, and above average in Year 11. Standards in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were better than in the most recent GCSE results. This inspection evidence represents good overall achievement in Year 9 and Year 11 in relation to the standards these pupils had reached when they joined the school. Pupils with special educational needs learn well and achieve good standards. Their learning is very good when they are supported by a teaching assistant, although some classes with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs do not have one. The learning of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory overall, and a significant number are now reaching very high standards by the end of Year 9. However, these pupils' abilities are not fully extended in all of their lessons in Years 7 to 9. Since the last inspection, the department has maintained standards in Year 11, and standards in Year 9 have risen. There has been a very significant improvement in the quality of teaching, some of which was unsatisfactory during the last inspection. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.
70. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 develop speed, accuracy and confidence in number work, partly through snappy practice sessions at the beginning of lessons, and develop their mathematical vocabulary well. They make good progress in work on fractions, converting decimal fractions to percentages quickly and accurately. Pupils reinforce their learning well through good written work, and learn to convey information in a variety of ways, such as graphs, diagrams, charts and statistics.
71. The standard of GCSE coursework is good, and well above average among the highest attaining pupils, who take great care over accuracy, layout and neatness. Pupils develop a good knowledge of the rules of algebra, which they can apply to other areas of the mathematics curriculum. They develop a good understanding of shape, space and measurement, and make good progress in handling data and probability. For example, high attaining pupils were fully engaged in deriving the formula for standard deviation from first principles, and could apply their knowledge in a range of contexts. Work by average and lower attaining pupils is legible, and shows clear advances in learning from their earlier work. A group of the lowest-attaining pupils in Year 10 worked very well to identify the cross sections of everyday solids, such as a triangular chocolate bar, perfume bottle, etc. They drew the cross-sections and completed a table on the whiteboard. All, including those with special educational needs, were fully involved, and made very good advances in their perception and understanding of detailed patterns in shape. Most lower-attaining pupils produce good written work, but some unsatisfactory work goes unchallenged in marking. High-attaining pupils' numerical skills are very good by the time they reach Year 11, although they are less skilled in estimation and in establishing hypotheses when using and applying mathematics.
72. Across the school, work in most subjects makes a good contribution to the development of numeracy skills, and teachers encourage pupils to apply them wherever they can make a relevant contribution to learning. In science, for example, pupils in Years 7 to 9 complete graphical work based on Hooke's Law and can calculate moments about a point. Older pupils make good use of algebra to calculate acceleration when constructing speed-time graphs. There are many examples from other subjects, including physical education and information and communication technology. On the other hand, some pupils in science use calculators too often for simple calculations, and numeracy work often serves to consolidate and use what pupils can do, rather than to move their skills forward.

73. Teaching is good, and results in consistently good learning among all pupils throughout the school. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is very good, and they plan lessons well. All are skilled in using questions to establish what pupils do not understand as well as what they do, and explain topics patiently and well. Lessons start promptly and a brisk pace is maintained throughout, keeping pupils actively involved to the end of each lesson. In a typical lesson, average-attaining pupils in Year 8 were quickly reminded of the formula for the areas of rectangles and triangles. They used these newly-taught skills to calculate the area of the net for a hexahedron and another mathematical shape, which, if they wished, they could cut out and assemble. Pupils were asked to estimate the areas and compare their results with the findings. The work effectively introduced questions of accuracy, measurement, multiplying decimals together and the use of units. The lesson was an enjoyable experience for the pupils, that left them satisfied with their work, and interested in learning more.
74. Relationships among pupils, and between teachers and pupils, are very good, and this promotes a strong sense of shared endeavour in the department. There is a strong work ethic, and teachers ensure that pupils persevere and complete their work, even if they find it difficult. Teaching methods are well thought through for the lowest attaining pupils, taking good account of their capacity to concentrate and drawing on previously-taught skills. Teachers' provide good opportunities for small group work, independent learning and work at the whiteboard for these pupils, and this contributes to confidence. Where lessons are very good, teachers' use time and "bite-size" activities very effectively to promote learning and good behaviour. Resources are well designed to develop pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts and ideas, and teachers use them well. Homework of an appropriate standard is set and marked regularly. Teachers make regular use of ICT, and pupils learn to apply new technology effectively in their learning.
75. On the other hand, significant aspects of teaching could be improved. Teachers do not make enough specific provision for pupils with particular talents for mathematics, for example through extension activities, and they are not fully challenged in Years 7 to 9. This confirmed the concerns of a small number of parents who felt that the most capable pupils were not making enough progress from their work in primary school. While marking is thorough, notes on pupils' work do not clearly identify strengths and weaknesses, and do not provide enough guidance to help pupils move through the National Curriculum attainment levels, or to meet individual GCSE targets. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not know the National Curriculum level at which they are working or what to do to improve. The learning aims for lessons are not shared with pupils sufficiently, and sessions with the whole class at the ends of lessons are not fully effective in consolidating learning.
76. Leadership and management are good. Subject specialists work well together, and are committed to raising standards and sharing good practice. However, written policies have become outdated, and there are no clear strategies to follow them through and evaluate their effect on learning. Accommodation is satisfactory, although the size and shape of classrooms limits the range of strategies teachers can use. Resources that are used very well in lessons, but there are too few displays of pupils' work in classrooms and adjacent corridors, and there are too few mathematical books in the library. Teachers analyse data on learning very well, and use good assessment procedures. For example, the department identified weaknesses in the standards among pupils taking GCSE in 2001 at an early stage, and took action, which limited the problem. It has also responded well to rising standards in national tests in Year 9, setting suitably demanding targets for GCSE over the next two years. The department is well placed to improve its work further.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- There is effective management and organisation of the department.
- There is good teamwork; teachers constantly strive to improve standards.
- Teaching has improved and is good; the planning of lessons is thorough.

Areas for improvement

- ▲ Higher-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 could be challenged more in lessons.
- Information and communication technology is under-used.

77. Standards in science have been rising in recent years, and are now above average overall. GCSE results in 2001 were affected by staffing problems, and were broadly average. However, overall achievement was satisfactory in view of the standards pupils had reached when they joined the school. All pupils obtained a graded result in science in 2001, and only one pupil has not achieved this in the past three years. This represents good provision for including lower-attaining pupils, who persist in their work and complete their courses. Results in national tests in Year 9 were well above average in 2001. They have improved over the past two years, with a significant increase in the proportion of pupils reaching higher than expected standards.
78. Standards in pupils' work during the inspection were well above average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. These standards reflect good teamwork among teachers now in the department, and represent good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress; their teachers know their specific areas of difficulty in learning, and make suitable provision for them. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory long-term progress, but in Years 7 to 9 they need more guidance on independent work in some lessons. There is no consistent difference in the standards reached by boys and girls. Since the last inspection, the science department has maintained its strengths, for example in practical work, and has improved the quality of pupils' investigations. Standards have been maintained at GCSE, and have improved significantly in Year 9. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been good.
79. Pupils in Year 9 reach well above average standards across full range of the National Curriculum, and are well prepared for national tests. By Year 9, all pupils plan practical work confidently. For example, a class of lower attaining pupils during the inspection used masses and balanced boards effectively to study the turning effect of forces. They recognised that a mass of 100g produces a force of about 1 Newton, and discover that the turning effect also depends on the distance of the force from the pivot. They began to notice patterns, and to predict where each force needs to be placed to restore the balance. Very good support was provided by the class teacher and also by the classroom assistant. Pupils are grouped according to attainment from Year 7 onwards, but there is often a wide range of attainment in each class. This is not always taken into account in planning lessons, so that the highest attaining pupils are not always fully stretched. For example, pupils in Year 7 began to investigate properties of acids and alkalis using the BBC website, but had too little guidance on the specific aspects of the topic they were looking for.
80. The good standards reached during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 benefited from the grouping of pupils according to their learning needs, which helped teachers to match the level of work to suit the needs of all pupils. This resulted in generally improved challenge for higher-attaining pupils, though occasionally the pace of their work was too slow. By Year 11, pupils in higher attaining sets understand that a moving object will continue to move at a constant speed when the forces acting upon it are balanced, for instance in a parachute. They understand the meaning of acceleration, and most pupils in the class can calculate its value from the given data. Lower-attaining pupils also work well; they label the different cells in a leaf, and learn about the functions of each type of cell. Pupils across the school show pride in their work, and most exercise books are kept in good order. Workbooks prepared for Year 11 pupils are clearly thought out to promote progression in learning.

81. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. They are never less than satisfactory, and are occasionally very good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subject, and relate it to everyday life wherever possible. They manage pupils particularly well. These qualities engage pupils' interest in their work, and create a climate of mutual respect between teacher and pupils. Planning is thorough, and lesson objectives are usually made clear to pupils. There is a good range of practical work, that helps pupils develop scientific thinking. Homework is set regularly, but often lacks challenge and, therefore, interest. Pupils generally concentrate well to the end of each lesson, and learn most effectively when they are given the chance to use their initiative, and to learn independently.
82. Teachers are increasing their contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to write in their own words, and appropriate stress is placed on the use of accurate spelling, and the key words for each topic. However, there is some inconsistency in the depth of marking and the quality of constructive comments to help pupils to improve their standards. There is good use of number skills, including the presentation and analysis of data, for example by using graphs. Pupils turn rather too readily to a calculator, but, by Year 11, they are gaining confidence in rearranging formulae. The use of information and communication technology is less evident, but is beginning to improve following the recent purchase of new laptop computers. However, opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to reflect on the wonders of science.
83. Leadership and management are good. There is a very good working relationship between teachers, who are clearly interested in continuing to improve provision and standards. As a result, the objectives for each lesson are clear, and teachers are beginning to place greater stress on planning the activities through which pupils will learn, as well as the subject matter of each lesson. However, there is too little observation of lessons within the department, so that some errors, such as the teacher talking for too long, or giving too little praise for pupils who provide good answers, continue in a minority of lessons. The department's development plan identifies immediate priorities, but its scope is limited, and it is not always linked closely to improving pupils' learning. There is effective liaison with the laboratory technician. The head of department monitors the results of national tests, and reviews the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' examination papers in order to make any necessary amendments to the scheme of work.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the provision in art and design is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Year 9 and are well above average in Year 11
- Good quality of teaching leads to high standards and achievement.
- The department is well run, and leads pupils and staff to feel supported and valued.
- The curriculum is stimulating and varied, with regular visits to places of artistic interest.

Weaknesses

- Accommodation is drab, with limited facilities and storage space.

84. GCSE results in 2000 and 2001 were well above average, and results in art and design are generally higher than in other subjects. Standards in pupils' work during the inspection were above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11. Boys and girls achieve equally well, and overall achievement throughout the school is good, with good progress from the broadly average standards reached by most pupils joining the school. Pupils have good attitudes to their work, and enjoy the practical aspects of the subject, taking pride in what they do. This good climate of learning and achievement is the result of consistently good teaching and management of the department. The school has made good improvements in its provision since the last inspection, when standards in Year 11 were not high enough.

85. Pupils in Year 9 successfully complete work in two and three-dimensions and on a variety of scales. In one Year 9 class, pupils were drawing two of their classmates in striking poses. One pupil was about to strike another who was on the floor. Pupils successfully captured the tension in this situation by focusing on the way that the expressive angularity of the limbs was reflected in creases and folds in their clothes. This helped pupils to look beyond the immediate posture, and to consider both the technical and expressive potential of the situation. This engaging balance of expressive and technical elements is a consistent strength. For instance, some Year 9 pupils had designed dramatic large-scale two-dimensional semi-abstract totem poles, using personal symbolic motifs. They did this following a visit to a local museum that provided excellent inspirational source material.
86. Pupils in Year 11 produce some strikingly mature work. In one Year 11 class, for instance, one girl's very original work consisted of carefully placed painted pictures of three babies, each from different racial groups. They were positioned on the page to show their separateness, although the whole design had a pleasing unity and symmetry. The juxtaposition of the innocent subject matter with the implied statement about racial segregation made a poignant social statement. This was very good work because it was technically well crafted, and made a simple but subtle visual statement. Teachers encourage pupils consistently to use a variety of media with confidence and to produce work with fresh, expressive qualities that do not resort to visual cliché or predictability. The quality of pupils' individual research is good.
87. Pupils throughout the school complete good quality homework that successfully reinforces their work in class. Pupils express themselves thoughtfully when writing, and so core literacy skills are successfully developed. They make excellent use of ICT. For instance in Year 7, they use an advanced art application to manipulate digital images expressively.
88. The good quality of teaching leads to equally good learning. All teachers are confident in their own specialist skills and communicate key principles in a convincing way, helping pupils to have a very clear idea of what is required. Despite occasional banter, almost all pupils settle quietly to practical work. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson, the jocular attitudes that were evident during the teachers opening remarks were replaced by quiet thoughtful engagement once individual work was underway, and some very good work was produced. Teachers are relaxed but have ambitious expectations. As a result, they earn the trust and respect of pupils, who enjoy lessons and learn well. The systematic planning of lessons enables pupils to build their skills in a well-thought-out sequence of learning. The variety of stimuli provided by teachers ensures that pupils' curiosity is challenged and nurtured. In one very good Year 7 lesson in mask making, for instance, the teacher's animated manner brought the learning alive. Although there are no significant areas of weakness in teaching, teachers recognise that they do not always provide sufficient critical written commentary on pupils' work.
89. The management of the subject is very good. There is good planning for improvement that has a positive impact on standards. However, the accommodation is uninviting. It not been redecorated for many years, and the lack of storage space throughout the department restricts what can be done. The lack of facilities for projection limits opportunities for teachers to explain and illustrate the context of pupils' practical work. The good level of challenge for pupils ensures that standards stay high, and their interest in the subject is sustained and extended by a well-planned programme of visits to local places of artistic interest.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the provision for design and technology is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- There is particularly good work in food and textiles.
- Teaching is good.
- There are good relationships between pupils and teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching skills of teachers working outside their main subject.
- The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped.

90. GCSE results were above average in 2001, and showed good improvement on those in 2000, Results were strongest in food technology. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2001, but were slightly high in the light of these pupils' work in Year 10. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well, and often gain better examination results than would be expected from their standards when they join the school. This represents good improvement since the last inspection, when there was some under-achievement.
91. The standard of work in Year 9 was above average during the inspection. Pupils in Year 7 to 9 reach above average standards across a range of activities, including making and designing products in food, resistant materials, textiles, graphics, and electronics. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 follow the guidance provided by the teachers well, and generally respond well to the worksheets and information provided in lessons. They develop a good range of drawing skills, and are beginning to apply these well. Achievement is good for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 make less progress in design than in making, but this recovers in Year 9, where pupils have more practice in this aspect of the subject. There are limited opportunities also for pupils to analyse existing products to evaluate the range of materials, features and processes that are used in them, before they design products of their own.
92. Pupils in Year 11 were reaching above average standards during the inspection. Pupils following the GCSE courses have a good range of research and investigation skills. They produce coursework of good quality and present the stages development in their projects well. For example, in a resistant materials lesson, pupils were designing and making a range of storage units. They analysed both the task and their research well, used specialist computer software to support their design work, and presented their work well. Pupils then used a good range of construction skills to make their products to a good standard, with good use of traditional and modern methods of working with metal and wood. Pupils tested the various designs they produced and noted the good and weaker features of their work, in order to increase the quality of their final products. Achievement was good among all pupils, with accurate and well-developed plans from higher-attaining pupils, and sound work from middle and lower-attaining pupils which met the requirements of the courses well.
93. The overall quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers structure the lessons well and provide clear objectives to guide and support pupils in their work. Specialist teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and pupils accept their guidance with confidence. Some non- specialist teachers are less secure in their knowledge of the subject, and this leads to learning that is satisfactory rather than good. Lower- attaining pupils receive good personal support from teachers, and as a result, they are able to achieve levels in line with other pupils in the group. Teachers try to include all pupils in the learning activities, but some teachers lack a wide enough range of strategies to engage the minority of pupils whose behaviour is poor.
94. Teachers use a good range of strategies to enable pupils to develop skills in literacy, including the development of technical vocabulary associated with the subject. They prepare a good level of resources, which enable pupils including those with special educational needs to structure their

writing effectively. Pupils develop good skills in numeracy as they measure and mark out materials, and process information when calculating values in food and resistant materials. There is good use of spreadsheets.

95. Computers, particularly in control technology, computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture, are not used fully and consistently to promote learning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught to use information and communication technology to support their work when processing and presenting data. They use this mainly when conducting surveys about the products they design. However, this is not a strong feature of the work of middle and lower attaining pupils. Pupils studying food technology use computers well to calculate the nutritional value of food, to evaluate the products they make, and to present the result in the form of charts and graphs. The use of information and communication technology with pupils in Years 7 to 9 is increasing, but remains underdeveloped, particularly in control technology and in work with lower attaining pupils.
96. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department maintains good working relationships within the department, and staff work hard to maintain high levels of efficiency.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average throughout the school.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Teachers give pupils very good support.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology.

97. Results at GCSE were above average in 2001, and were generally higher than these pupils achieved in other subjects; they showed significant improvement on those for 2000. Standards in work during the inspection were above average in Year 9 and in Year 11. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs and of gifted and talented pupils are good, and there are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls. All pupils are fully included in the department's work. Pupils joining the school have reached broadly average standards in geography, and current standards in Year 9 and Year 11 represent good achievement.
98. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in standards, both in Year 9 and in Year 11, in the quality of teaching and learning, and in the assessment of pupils' work. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been very good.
99. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 gain a good foundation of knowledge of the local area, of more distant regions such as Bangladesh, and of global patterns such as the world distribution of earthquakes and volcanoes. Most have an appropriate range of map and graphical skills. They apply numerical skills correctly when using the scale of maps to measure distance, and draw graphs of climate patterns. Most pupils' written work is good, and they use appropriate technical words in a range of situations. Year 8 pupils, for example, know terms such as 'flood plain' and 'alluvium' in studies of the Ganges delta, whilst many pupils in Year 9 write detailed answers on changes in farming in the Lake District. For a minority of pupils, boys more than girls, a lack of care in presentation and completeness reduces the standards they achieve in maps and diagrams.
100. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 consolidate their mapwork skills, and produce good GCSE coursework. For example, pupils in Year 11 conducted a detailed study of Whitchurch, showing good research skills and varied techniques of illustrating information. Higher-attaining pupils understand concepts

about the development of towns, but the standards reached by others are lower because they use a narrow range of research methods and do not include enough detail in their work. Most pupils understand global warming and use books well to write notes and to answer questions. Many pupils understand about how the sea erodes the coast; they know about 'arches' and 'stacks' and how they are produced in areas like Swanage in Dorset. The overall standard of most pupils' written work is good. They use numbers confidently in graphs or charts and when analysing data.

101. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers plan work to build on earlier study, and use a variety of techniques and resources to meet the different needs of pupils. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, made good progress in a Year 7 lesson because their writing was well supported and their progress was closely monitored. Higher-attaining pupils made very good progress in Year 8 because the teacher set challenging tasks comparing flooding in northern Italy to that in Bangladesh. Pupils discussed ideas and wrote detailed answers. Teachers mark work regularly, and give helpful summary comments about achievement. However, not enough attention is given to the correction of grammatical and spelling errors, and this slows progress in these areas. Teachers have very good knowledge and expertise, and this has a very good effect on learning. In Year 11 for example, clear explanations and guidance about coastlines resulted in pupils' understanding of how the authorities can best protect the coast from erosion. Pupils are fully informed about how well they are doing through regular assessment and practice with GCSE questions. This raises their confidence and improves skills in answering questions.
102. Occasionally, teachers do not expect enough of pupils, particularly the more able, in discussion, and they are not always sufficiently challenged to explain their answers. The range of writing and discussion undertaken in geography makes a good contribution to literacy, although younger pupils often have weak spelling. The subject makes a good overall contribution to numeracy skills. There is some use of computers for personal research, mostly in the library, but this aspect of the work needs further development.
103. Leadership and management are good, though long-term planning is somewhat restricted by the need for the head of department to give priority to his work as deputy headteacher. Arrangements for assessment are good overall, and are leading to rising standards at GCSE, although the quality of assessment for pupils in Years 7 to 9 would benefit from moderation across classes. There are good resources for geography in the library, but fieldwork for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is restricted to the local area. Pupils are successfully encouraged to take an interest in their work outside lessons, and a group of pupils in Year 11 won first prize in the regional heat of the Geographical Association's World-Wise Quiz during the week of the inspection.

HISTORY

Overall, the provision for history is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average and are improving.
- Teaching is good, with a significant proportion of very good to excellent teaching.
- Pupils have positive attitudes, and relationships are very good.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good.
- Teachers use resources well to engage pupils' interest and promote learning.

Areas for Improvement

- Younger pupils need more challenge, and more opportunities to take the initiative.
- Information from assessment is not used well enough in Years 7 to 9.
- The department's work could be monitored and evaluated more closely.

104. Results in GCSE examinations have been above average in most recent years. While they fell to average levels in 2001, a high proportion of pupils choosing to study history to GCSE in this year had special educational needs. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average

throughout the school, and was particularly good among higher-attaining pupils taking GCSE. This reflects a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching in Year 10 and 11. There are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls over time. Standards among older pupils with particular talents for history are well above average, but the youngest pupils with particular ability in history are not fully extended in all lessons. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Teachers understand their learning needs, and meet them through individual support and guidance, and by adapting the work they are given in lessons.

105. Overall, achievement in history is now good. Since the last inspection, the school has raised standards and has improved the quality of teaching. Pupils have more opportunities to investigate historical issues, and teachers use a wider and more interesting range of resources. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.
106. Pupils develop good knowledge and understanding of history, and master a good range of historical skills. These underpin their learning, and they learn to scrutinise and interpret history evidence from the time they join the school. For instance, in a lesson on the Battle of Hastings, Year 7 pupils enthusiastically discussed the reasons for the Norman victory, making confident reference to historical sources to support their arguments. This approach is applied in a good variety of historical contexts, so that pupils in one Year 9 lesson could give good explanations of the reasons for canal building in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the quality of learning is not consistent between lessons, and in some lessons the highest-attaining pupils are not challenged to analyse evidence closely enough.
107. By the time they reach Year 11, pupils exercise mature and skilled judgement when comparing and interpreting evidence. Their analysis of cartoons from the 1930s, for example, showed very good knowledge and understanding of their purpose, context and characteristics, and of their value as evidence. Other coursework showed good knowledge and understanding of bias, propaganda, the purpose of authors of sources, and the characteristics of Nazi Germany. In two excellent lessons in Year 11, higher-attaining pupils showed very good flexibility in their thinking as they constructed effective answers to mock examination questions on differing topics. The writing of the highest-attaining pupils in this class was imaginative, well organised and closely argued.
108. Work in history makes a good contribution to literacy, through writing that helps pupils develop these skills of argument, explanation and analysis, leading to well-supported conclusions. Most work is well presented, but that of some lower attaining pupils is significantly weaker, especially in terms of presentation, detail and explanation. Pupils use numeracy skills effectively to calculate, analyse and present data. However, they do not make enough use of information and communication technology for research and investigation.
109. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. It is at its best in Years 10 and 11, where there is a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of history, and use this to interest and enthuse pupils, helping them to develop very positive attitudes that make a very significant contribution to learning. Teachers select resources, including videos, carefully, and design effective worksheets, adapted to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. In the most successful lessons, they set challenging work that covers a broad range of historical thinking, and produces a particularly enthusiastic response from pupils. For example, pupils in Year 10 worked at full stretch to identify and judge the effectiveness of posters as propaganda in recruitment in World War 1.
110. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9, the pace of work is slower, and there is not enough challenge to the highest-attaining pupils, who have too little opportunity to take the initiative. Homework is set regularly but some has too little challenge and interest. Teachers mark work regularly, usually with constructive comments to help pupils to improve it. The best marking and target-setting makes a very effective contribution to learning – for example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 know whether they are aiming for A* or A. However, work is marked less thoroughly in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11, and some comments on good work lack the guidance needed to enable pupils to improve it further.

111. There is good leadership and management in the department. The head of department provides clear direction, and fosters good teamwork. Teaching is well supported by detailed schemes of work, and development planning is clearly focused and shared. Standards are kept under review, especially in Years 10 and 11, and reasons for any unsatisfactory achievement explored. There are good assessment procedures, closely linked to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9, and to GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. However, evidence from this assessment is not used consistently in Years 7 to 9 to set targets, track progress and ensure that pupils are fully extended in their work. The work of the department is monitored and reviewed, mostly through the school's performance management procedures, but these are not yet rigorous enough to promote consistency in teaching and achievement in all lessons. Nevertheless, the strengths in the school's provision for history far outweigh its weaknesses, and the department is in a good position to improve its work further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the provision for information and communication technology is **good**

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Year 9 and 11.
- Good planning covers a broad range of skills in ICT lessons.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils create a good climate for learning.
- Teachers provide good individual support for all pupils.
- Teachers manage pupils well and include all pupils well in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for gifted and talented pupils, and for some with special educational needs, needs to be refined and expanded.
- Assessment and targets need to be more closely linked to National Curriculum levels.
- Information in annual reports to parents needs to be made more specific.
- Pupils in Year 11 who do not take GCSE need more opportunities to develop their skills.

112. Pupils cover a good range of basic skills in specialist ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE course. As a result, standards are just above national average levels in Years 9 and 11. The GCSE course is, however, a recent development, and no pupils have yet taken the examination. As many pupils joining the school have below-average skills in the subject, this represents a good overall level of achievement across the school. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is good overall, although provision needs further adaptation if it is to meet the needs of all of these pupils. A small number of gifted and talented pupils join the school with skills far in advance of those expected for their age, and the school has not yet adapted its provision to enable these pupils to extend their skills effectively.

113. At the time of the last inspection, there were significant weaknesses in provision, and in the quality of equipment. Standards were generally below average. The improvement in standards, teaching and the range of equipment has been good overall from this rather low level, and the school has effective plans to extend and improve its work further.

114. By the end of Year 9, all pupils, including those with special needs, achieve competence in the basic ICT skills of desktop publishing, use the Internet, spreadsheets, databases and a range of electronic resources such as scanners and digital cameras. Lower-attaining pupils learn a good range of basic techniques with good individual support from teachers. In Year 7, pupils are introduced to a broad range of ICT skills including word processing, editing text, combining graphics and text for desktop publishing and use simple spreadsheets. In Years 8 and 9, pupils increase their knowledge of using databases and spreadsheets. They research information using the Internet and are able to modify and present the detail for a chosen audience. Pupils' work shows good understanding of the software they use. They learn to apply their skills to a

satisfactory standard in activities such as surveys, and to a very good standard in art and design. There are, however, fewer opportunities for them to use control technology; by Year 9 standards in this aspect of the subject are only just average. Higher-attaining pupils work independently and complete tasks faster than others, though pupils whose skills are well above those of the rest of the class do not receive sufficiently challenging work to move them forward. A small minority of boys do not focus their attention closely enough on their work, and need to be more challenged by the tasks.

115. Pupils following the GCSE Information Technology course research and present their work well. Coursework folders contain good evidence of pupils using a range of ICT skills to a good standard. These include databases, desktop publishing, spreadsheets to process and present data, and control technology. All pupils learn to apply and use electronic resources such as scanners, digital cameras and the Internet to gather information and present this as part of their coursework. In Year 11, for example, pupils had designed computer systems to support the management of a small theatre company. They identified how ICT could improve the efficient management of the company and used a range of software to design effective systems to use. These systems were then tested and evaluated. In class, pupils explain their work well using a good range of technical vocabulary, which they apply accurately.
116. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. Teachers generally provide a good structure to lessons in the form of guidance booklets, which enable pupils to know the level they have reached. Where the teaching is good or better, teachers plan and prepare work well, set clear learning goals and provide a good structure to lessons, with good management of time. This gives the pupils an opportunity to assess what they have to do, and which enables them to work independently. Teachers use worksheets well to guide pupils through the tasks, and this helps them to develop independence. For example, worksheets in a Year 9 lesson guided pupils through each stage of setting up a spreadsheet, and helped them develop their skills in changing the data. They were guided to recognise the results of the changes they made. At the same time, teachers supported pupils well when they needed help. Pupils use correct technical vocabulary when talking about their work, and teachers use a range of methods to ensure that they develop a good command of specialist terms and words. This helps pupils with below-average reading skills to secure a wide and relevant vocabulary. They also read effectively from a range of texts, using books, CD ROMs and the Internet for research.
117. Schemes of work however, provide limited guidance for teachers to use a wide enough range of strategies to plan work which is suited to the individual needs of pupils. This limits the progress of gifted and talented pupils, and of some of the pupils who have special educational needs. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and include them effectively in learning activities. However, some teachers' skills are only just adequate for the work. These teachers use the department's planning structures to ensure satisfactory learning, but are not able to give guidance that is closely matched to pupils' individual needs.
118. The contribution of other subjects to pupils' ICT skills is satisfactory overall, and is growing. There is excellent work in art and design, and good work in some English, mathematics and modern foreign languages lessons. The application of number and literacy skills to ICT makes a satisfactory contribution to these areas of learning. However, work in science is in the early stages of development, and there is little use of computers in some other subjects. Pupils make good use of computers in the library, and are increasingly using the Internet rather than CD ROMS for research. However, older pupils who are not taking the GCSE course have too few opportunities to develop their skills.
119. Leadership and management are good. They ensure consistency in teachers' approach, and this is helping to raise standards. However, while there is some monitoring of teaching and learning, teachers have too few opportunities to observe each other's work, and to share the most effective techniques. Assessment arrangements are not linked closely enough to the National Curriculum, and, partly as a result of this, information in annual reports to parents does not give sufficiently precise information on what pupils can and cannot do. The school now has an above-average number of computers per pupil, and its older machines are adequate for the aspects of the subject

for which they are used. Good support from technicians has a very positive impact on learning, and they are beginning to contribute to teaching.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the provision for modern foreign languages is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching in French and good teaching in German lead to rising standards.
- Management and leadership are very good.
- Achievement is very good in French and good in German.
- Almost all pupils behave very well and have very good attitudes to work.
- There are good procedures for assessment.

Areas for improvement

- Boys are achieving less well than girls.
- The level of challenge in work provided for the highest attaining pupils.

120. Results in GCSE examinations are well above average in French and above average in German. Girls obtained better results than boys, although boys' results were still well above average. Standards in work seen during the inspection were well above average in French and above average in German by the end of Years 9 and 11. This represents very good achievement in French and good achievement in German. Girls achieve better than boys, but the gap is narrower than in recent GCSE results. Much of this is due to improved teaching. There are no significant differences in attainment between the different ethnic groups in the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, and the number of graded results achieved by lower-attaining pupils at GCSE is consistently high. Pupils of very high ability do not always achieve their maximum potential because there is a lack of work tailored to their particular needs. At the time of the last inspection, standards were broadly average. There has been a strong rise in standards since that time. Results have risen steadily, and in 2001 exceeded the targets set for them by the school in both languages. The subject has made very good progress since the last inspection.

121. By the end of Year 9, all pupils answer questions in a basic way about such topics as their daily routines, different types of transport, the parts of the human body and common illnesses. Pupils learn to listen carefully to the teacher, to cassette tapes and to other pupils. They understand the teacher's instructions in the language being taught. The vast majority of pupils are confident speakers, and try hard with pronunciation. By the end of Year 9, most pupils carry out conversations with a number of exchanges, and can express their likes and dislikes and their opinions. Pupils develop good reading skills through reading textbooks and worksheets to find the answers to questions. This is supplemented by lessons in the library and by the use of magazines and other authentic materials in lessons. Most pupils can write short accurate paragraphs by the end of Year 9. High-attaining pupils write good descriptive pieces about themselves and their families, and about their leisure time, using a range of tenses, descriptive language and accurate grammar. However, the development of writing is not as strong in German as it is in French and this accounts for some of the difference in standards between the two languages.

122. By the end of Year 11, pupils extend these topics as preparation for GCSE, and add others such as going on holiday, descriptions of the local area and comparisons of schools in France or Germany and in England. Pupils continue to achieve well in German and very well in French. The weaknesses in writing in German are more evident in Years 10 and 11, and there are relatively few examples of good extended writing using imaginative vocabulary and a range of tenses.

123. Pupils' work is regularly marked and corrected, and there is a concentration on grammar, spelling and punctuation. As a result the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy development. Pupils also use graphs and tables to present the results of surveys they have carried out. This is a

satisfactory contribution to numeracy development. The subject has good access to computers, and pupils make satisfactory use of information and communication technology (ICT) to refine and edit their work and to produce pictorial information.

124. The quality of teaching, and of the learning it promotes, is very good in French and good in German. In French, nearly half of the teaching is very good. In German the proportion is one-fifth. Teaching was reported as “generally sound” at the last inspection, and pupils’ progress was unsatisfactory in a substantial number of lessons. This strong improvement in the quality of teaching is the key factor in the development of the school’s provision for languages. In almost all lessons, teachers control their pupils very well. This is achieved without fuss and without a demeaning attitude to pupils. As a result, relationships among pupils and between pupils and their teachers are very good. The working atmosphere is relaxed and businesslike. The vast majority of lessons are conducted in the language being taught so that pupils are “immersed” in the language and no time is wasted speaking English. Regular homework is set. When pupils’ work is marked, a marking scheme is used that pupils understand well, so they know what they need to do to improve. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. This is particularly evident in Year 11 classes where teachers give very good advice on the techniques necessary to maximise marks in GCSE.

125. Where teaching is satisfactory, there are some weaknesses in planning, and occasionally in the management of the minority of pupils who do not have good attitudes to work. The highest-attaining pupils do not always reach their maximum potential because, particularly in German, there is a lack of work tailored to their specific needs. Where teaching is at its best, the teacher uses a range of teaching methods to provide interesting and challenging tasks, which move on at brisk pace so pupils have no time to become bored. These include imaginative use of the overhead projector, revision “games” and music as well as written and listening tasks.

126. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils’ moral, social and cultural development. There is a strong moral element in lessons, and pupils are taught right from wrong. There is good provision for social development through taking turns and working together. Pupils show respect for one another by not laughing or being rude when others make mistakes over pronunciation. The languages clubs enhance social provision. School trips each year provide a strong social and cultural dimension. The study of people in other countries adds to the cultural development of pupils. There are very good procedures for assessing pupils’ attainment and progress. These provide consistent data to check the curriculum provision and to set targets for improvement. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored and discussions take place so that best practice can be shared and teaching improved. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and have led to the rise in standards that is taking place.

MUSIC

Overall, the provision for music is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in music lessons is good.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Instrumental teaching is generally very good, and many pupils take part in it.

Areas for development

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 need better understanding of the standards they have reached and of their targets for improvement.

127. Standards during the inspection were broadly average in Year 9, and below average in Year 11. Most pupils joining the school have below average knowledge and skills in music, and standards have suffered in recent years from unstable staffing. Pupils taking GCSE in music in 2001 achieved passes at grades B and C, but the number entered was very small. Teachers’ assessments of

pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed below average standards. However, recent changes in staffing have established a pattern of improvement. Teaching and learning are now good, the number of pupils choosing to study music at GCSE has risen, and the music and practice rooms are full of pupils wanting to make music outside lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are learning well, with some excellent individual achievement. A pupil with a significant learning difficulty, for example, had passed one graded examination in trombone, and was about to take a second. Gifted and talented pupils have very good learning opportunities and are achieving well. Because of gaps in their previous learning, most pupils are still achieving less than they could across the whole range of the National Curriculum, but the present pattern of improvement is strong. There are no long-term differences in the achievements of girls and boys.

128. Pupils in Year 9 are reaching similar standards to those during the last inspection, but there has been a fall in Year 11. However, an element of unsatisfactory teaching present at the time of the last inspection has been eliminated, and opportunities have been extended for the highest-attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs. Provision is, overall, significantly better than when the school was last inspected.
129. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 reach broadly average standards in lessons. Significant minorities, who are supported in their learning by instrumental lessons, do better. These pupils also benefit from opportunities to play and perform in extra-curricular activities in school and in the community. Pupils in Year 7 can compose and play a simple melody and ostinato using percussion, flute and keyboard. Pupils in Year 9 are making good gains in listening, composing and arranging music. More able pupils can identify instrumental breaks and a walking bass. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, can compare two pieces of music and say, in musical terms, which one they preferred and why.
130. While standards during the inspection were below average overall in Years 10 and 11, standards in Year 10 were close to average. A small minority of higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 are working towards high levels in practical and performing skills, and are making very good progress. Pupils in Year 11 during the inspection were working well in preparing for their mock examination. They are improving their listening skills, and were writing down a rhythm and tune with reasonable accuracy. Most pupils responded well to the encouragement that the teacher gave to each individual. However, while learning is now good, these pupils still have much ground to make up.
131. Teaching is good, with some very good features, and this results in good learning throughout the school. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, and they plan and manage lessons well so that all pupils can work effectively. Lessons have clear targets for both behaviour and effort. These qualities ensure that learning is consistent, and build pupils' confidence. Teaching at all ages is making a positive contribution to the personal development of pupils and they are encouraged to appreciate the wonder of music. For many pupils, these experiences are enhanced through instrumental lessons from visiting teachers and extra curricular opportunities provided by the department. Most instrumental teaching is very good, though in one lesson there was not enough demonstration using the teacher's own instrument.
132. All pupils have good access to information and communication technology in music and use it well in learning. In one Year 7 lesson, where the teaching was very good, pupils were enthusiastic and made very good progress in building up their compositions using instruments and computers. The subject is making a good contribution to the development of numeracy through work on counting and intervals, and to literacy through opportunities for pupils to evaluate work and develop their vocabulary. There are, however, too few books on music in the library.
133. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed head of department has revised schemes of work to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, and has developed good assessment systems, including systematic recordings of pupils' work. However, many pupils are not yet aware of the standards they have reached in the National Curriculum, or of their individual targets for improvement. The department's contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is planned for in every class music lesson, and is very good. All pupils study

music from other cultures, including Africa, America and Asia, using instruments with a broad cultural base.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- GCSE examination results are well above average.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Pupils work very well together and share ideas freely.
- There is a very extensive range of learning opportunities outside lessons.
- The subject contributes very well to pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- There is too little use of computers to enhance learning in Years 7 to 9.
- The curriculum needs to build more effectively on pupils' achievements in primary school.
- Facilities for the athletics jumps events are poor.
- Assessment at the end of Year 9 is not accurate.

134. GCSE examination results over the last three years have been consistently well above average. Pupils tend to achieve better results in physical education than in most other subjects, and pupils with special educational needs make good overall progress. Talented individuals and teams achieve well at county, regional and, for some, national levels, in a wide-range of sports. Progress since the last inspection has been good, although some of the improvement has taken place recently, and is not yet fully reflected in standards, particularly in Year 9. The overall quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to very good; the Sportsmark Award has been gained, and independent learning opportunities are now a feature of most lessons.

135. Pupils in Year 9 reached average standards during the inspection. This represents satisfactory achievement in view of the average standards reached by most pupils in their primary schools. Opportunities provided through the good extra-curricular programme allow talented boys and girls to reach beyond the levels expected for their age. Teaching is well adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. Most pupils in Year 9 understand fitness principles, judge performance well and show satisfactory individual skills. Higher-attaining pupils use refined skills consistently to outmanoeuvre opponents. Lower-attaining pupils often achieve satisfactory individual skills in isolation, but lack spatial awareness in game situations.

136. By Year 11, standards in lessons and in work seen are above average, and achievement is good in relation to standards at the beginning of Year 10. Some boys and girls are achieving well in representative sport. They demonstrate high levels of skill, tactical awareness and fitness. Most pupils use their understanding of defensive and attacking principles to plan effective tactics in games. They show good anticipation, footwork and technique in racket sports. Lower-attaining pupils understand rules and basic tactics, but their performances are often affected by below average levels of hand-eye co-ordination and personal fitness. Most GCSE pupils in Year 11 are on target to achieve well above the national average. They understand health related fitness issues and perform well in the practical aspects. Most pupils, across all years, express themselves well due to teachers' high emphasis on providing opportunities for them to think for themselves. Pupils develop good technical vocabulary, because teachers emphasise key words. Year 10 and 11 pupils' literacy skills are good, but some lack extended writing skills. Most pupils' numeracy skills are good, particularly in measuring, recording and analysing fitness data. In Year 9, pupils' ICT skills are underdeveloped because they have too few opportunities to use computers. Access is improved by Year 11, when most pupils can use computers effectively for research.

137. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, and sometimes outstanding. Pupils work hard and want to do well; as a result, learning is very good. The depth of teachers' knowledge has a very positive impact on learning. Continuity and progress are good, because teaching is adapted to challenge all pupils. In a Year 9 badminton lesson, for example, lower attaining pupils progressed well because the teacher simplified instructions; used demonstrations and modified equipment by providing short handle rackets. The learning of higher higher-attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular activities. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn independently in a high percentage of lessons. In a Year 7 lesson pupils planned, performed and judged 'jive' dance routines. The teacher's stimulating use of audio and visual support equipment enhanced their learning. When the opportunities for active learning are more limited, progress by some pupils, particularly lower attainers, is not as good. A small number of pupils underachieve, because of poor concentration.

138. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department – the third this year – has a clear educational vision of what is needed to take the department forward. He is identifying priorities and planning appropriate changes. These include a department development plan; health and safety policy; updated schemes of work and improved assessment procedures. However, monitoring of teaching and target-setting for pupils are in the very early stages of development, and the latest assessments of pupils in Year 9 tended to over-estimate their skills. There are very good facilities for physical education in the sports hall, and these contribute to learning and to a sense of pride and confidence. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall the provision for religious education is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good across the school.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The newly-appointed head of department provides good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- Provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11 does not meet legal requirements.
- Because of this, standards and achievement are poor in Year 11.

139. Standards in Year 11 are well below those expected in the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus, and achievement is poor. This is not a reflection of the quality of teaching, or of pupils' attitudes towards their work, both of which are good. It is because the time allocated to teaching the subject over these two school years is wholly inadequate. Most of the syllabus is not covered, and therefore pupils cannot achieve the standards they should. However, pupils in Year 9 during the inspection were reaching the standards expected for their age in the Agreed Syllabus. Most have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country, and of their origins and distinctive features. They have a sound grasp of religious language, concepts and ideas. They understand why the beliefs of practising members of faith communities are important to them, and how they shape their lives. Their skills in making a personal response to religious questions are well developed.

140. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 learn well in individual lessons on ethical issues, but their longer term progress is poor because of they receive too little teaching. In Year 9, however, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils learn well in lessons and make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Progress is satisfactory rather than good over time, because the recent improvement to the quality of teaching has yet to be fully reflected in long-term standards. Boys and girls achieve similar standards in religious education, and the learning of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The learning of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but the

learning of older gifted and talented pupils suffers from the overall lack of provision for religious education.

141. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a good grasp of their subject, and high expectations of pupils. They know clearly what they wish them to learn, plan their lessons well to achieve their aims, and engage and hold their interest through a variety of imaginative and challenging activities and tasks. For example, Year 7 pupils made very good gains in understanding the defining characteristics of spiritual and mystical experiences. This was because the teacher planned carefully over two lessons to introduce them to key texts from a range of religions. The teaching brought the stories alive through extracts from modern animated films such as *The Prince of Egypt*, and involved challenging individual written work, demanding a personal response to the experiences. Pupils in Year 8 were led step-by-step to a good understanding of the concept of the sanctity of animal life in Hinduism, and of its impact on Hindu dietary customs. The lesson contained skilled description and explanation, challenging tasks based on an interesting video exploring the issues through the eyes of young Hindus, and skilled questioning that extended understanding. A brisk pace ensured that pupils made a sustained intellectual effort. The school has established a voluntary additional GCSE class for 10 pupils in Year 10. Teaching and learning in this class are good.
142. Where teaching is satisfactory, learning resources and tasks are not always matched well enough to the differing needs of pupils. For example, opportunities are missed to set extension tasks for higher attaining pupils, and the pace of work in some lessons is too slow.
143. Teachers regularly make good use of writing frames to support pupils whose literacy skills are less well developed, and give lower attaining pupils very good individual support in lessons. They set worthwhile homework that extends learning in class, for example for Year 9 pupils on the Jewish coming of age ceremonies of Bar and Bath Mitzvah. Most teachers mark work conscientiously and supportively, but some marking does not give pupils enough information on ways of improving their work. Work in religious education makes a good contribution to literacy, but there is little number work, and computers are rarely used.
144. There has been a lack of overall direction to the subject in recent years. However, since her appointment in September the new head of department has exercised effective leadership and management within the limits of her responsibilities. She has a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take if standards are to be raised, and in a short space of time has initiated developmental work that has already resulted in good improvement in Years 7 to 9.
145. Since the last inspection, standards have been raised in Years 7 to 9. This is because the quality of teaching has been significantly improved, and schemes of work and procedures for assessing standards and progress have been much improved. Learning is now supported by sufficient resources, of good quality, and by much improved accommodation. However, the school and its governing body are not meeting their legal responsibility to ensure the Agreed Syllabus is taught to pupils in Years 10 and 11, and the school does not offer pupils the opportunity to pursue a GCSE course within the normal school day.