

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLYHEAD SCHOOL

Handsworth

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103517

Headteacher: Mr C. R. Giudici

Reporting inspector: Mr C. R. Warn
4293

Dates of inspection: 26 – 30 November 2001

Inspection number: 189439

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Milestone Lane
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Handsworth
Birmingham

Postcode: B21 0HN

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Appropriate authority: The governing body
at the above address

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Rhoma Bowdler

Date of previous inspection: 23 September 1996

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4293	C Warn	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
				The school's results and achievements
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
12277	K Halden	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?
9009	V Bradley	Lay inspector		<i>Supporting above lay inspector's aspect responsibilities</i>
3472	K MacFarlane	Team inspector		How well are pupils taught?
				How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2030	A Allchin	Team inspector	Science	
20119	T Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4146	R Kent	Team inspector	English	
28089	T Brotherhood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
			Design and technology	
15127	W Goodall	Team inspector	Art and design	
8425	V Hallan	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	
19893	W Harrison	Team inspector	Religious education	
2024	B Hart	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs	

30348	B Hooper	Team inspector	Geography	
			History	
4454	J Kerr	Team inspector	Physical education	
27748	S Minhas	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
4388	N Rathmell	Team inspector	Music	
11749	H Whiter	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

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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?	13
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	18
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	25
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	26
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	27
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	31
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	32
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	39

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Holyhead School is an inner city neighbourhood school serving the densely populated area of Handsworth in Birmingham. It is a relatively modern, purpose-built school with good provision for the teaching of many subject areas. It is a dual use facility and outside school hours, under different management, provides a wide range of community education opportunities. The school currently has 998 pupils, aged between 11 and 16, which means that it is close to the average size for secondary schools nationally. It serves an area that is very disadvantaged indeed. This area is characterised by a low percentage of adults with a higher education qualification, a low percentage of children living in high social class households and a very high percentage of children living in overcrowded households. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 62%, which is exceptionally high. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language (83%) is also exceptionally high compared to most schools nationally. 46% of pupils are of Indian heritage, 18% of Pakistani heritage, 16% of African-Caribbean heritage, 12% of Bangladeshi heritage, 5% white UK heritage and 3% of Chinese/Vietnamese heritage. Approximately a third of pupils have special educational needs, a proportion that is above the national average. Standards of attainment have risen despite increased levels of social and economic disadvantage in the locality recorded since the last inspection in 1996. The overall standard of pupils' attainment on entry is well below the national average. The school has established a good reputation. More parents would like to send their children to the school than there are places for.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school which provides its pupils with a very high quality of education. The overall standard of attainment, although below the national average, is very high compared to schools serving localities that are similar to Handsworth. Standards are rising, especially in GCSE and GNVQ examinations and in tests in English held at the end of Year 9. The overall quality of teaching is good, with much that is very good and excellent. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The whole school community works in harmony to ensure that Holyhead School keeps on improving and provides the best opportunities for all pupils.
- Standards of attainment are very high compared to similar schools, and are rising.
- Pupils make good progress, attend and behave well and show positive attitudes to their learning.
- Teaching is of high quality and is a vital factor in the continuing success of the school.
- There is a rich and interesting curriculum that successfully meets the needs of all pupils, for example in the widespread use of new technology and the many opportunities offered to undertake practical activities.
- Pupils are very well cared for and are given appropriate and timely advice.
- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, senior and middle managers and governors.

What could be improved

- The progress that pupils make in Years 7 to 9, although good, is not as rapid as in Years 10 and 11.
- Generally boys do not achieve as highly as girls by a significant margin, and there are differences in the standards reached by pupils of different ethnicity.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not sufficiently aware of what levels of attainment they should be aiming for and what to do to reach them.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Holyhead School has made further significant improvement since it was last inspected in 1996. It had many important strengths at that time, particularly relating to teaching, behaviour, leadership, management and rising standards of attainment. These strengths have been maintained and in some cases improved upon still further. There has been a significant further improvement in the quality of teaching. Since 1996 standards at the end of Year 9 in English have risen considerably, whilst those in mathematics and science have risen in line with the national trend. There have been impressive improvements in GCSE and GNVQ results since 1996. Governors are now far more centrally involved in planning and monitoring activities and in the management of finance. Links with parents have been strengthened, although there is still more to do. All of the previous weaknesses in music have been dealt with. A successful new curriculum for Years 10 and 11 that includes options for vocational subjects has been introduced. The requirement to teach religious education to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 is still not complied with.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. Four out of five pupils enter the school in Year 7 with standards of attainment in literacy and numeracy that are below average. By the end of Year 9, nearly half of all students have reached the nationally expected standards in English, which means they have made exceptional progress since Year 7. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and science from Years 7 to 9 and their results, although below the national average are, as in English, much higher than in similar schools. Results at GCSE and GNVQ are just below the national average, but are well above the average for similar schools. Almost every pupil leaves with a GCSE qualification and eight out of ten pupils continue into full time education beyond the age of 16. This is an outstanding achievement by the school.

Results have generally risen from 1996 to 2001 at a similar rate to those nationally for pupils aged 14 and at a greater rate than nationally for pupils aged 16. Ambitious targets have been set for pupils' attainment in national tests and examinations in 2002 and 2003, which are well on the way to being met. Generally girls achieve more highly than boys, and there are differences in performance between pupils from different ethnic origins. The standards of work seen during the inspection reflected recent examination and test results, and showed signs of continuing improvement. There were especial strengths in English, art and design, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are considerate, keen to learn and are very proud of their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour seen in lessons was almost invariably good and was sometimes very good. Behaviour outside lessons and in the grounds was generally good. Any cases of unacceptable behaviour were well handled by teachers.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils' relationships within the whole school community are exceptionally good. The school has taken steps to help pupils to develop effective study skills and to take personal responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance rates are close to the national average. This is a very significant achievement given the social and economic circumstances of the area that the school serves.

The arrangements for pupils' personal development through the work of form tutors, year heads, mentors, senior managers and support staff are very good. Many pupils are very keen to become involved in activities outside the classroom and some undertake tasks that require considerable personal responsibility. The school has worked exceptionally hard to raise the levels of attendance above 90%. Very few pupils are permanently excluded and most pupils with challenging behaviour are skilfully supported in a special centre within the school. Pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their education, although some of this could be done earlier.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

From a sample of 152 lessons seen the quality of teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better in almost all cases. In three-quarters of lessons it was good or better, and in some cases excellent. These are very high proportions and represent a very big improvement since 1996. The best teaching was seen in Years 10 and 11. The overall quality of teaching in English was very good, whilst in mathematics and science it was good. Some

examples of excellent teaching were seen in eight subjects whilst examples of very good teaching were seen in almost every subject.

In many cases lessons are imaginatively planned and proceed at a stimulating pace using a variety of techniques. Pupil-teacher relationships and classroom control are very good and most instances of challenging behaviour are managed well. The quality of support given to pupils with special educational needs is good, enabling them to make good progress. Pupils whose literacy skills are weak when they enter Year 7 are very well taught and make very rapid progress in improving these skills. In a minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9 higher ability pupils could be set more demanding targets. Marking is usually thorough and written comments are supportive, but they sometimes lack enough guidance about how work could be further improved, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teachers give considerable attention to developing literacy, and ICT skills across the curriculum, but further work needs to be done to promote numeracy skills. Teachers are prepared to invest a great deal of time and energy in supporting out-of-hours learning activities that are highly beneficial to pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum has been imaginatively designed to meet the specific learning needs of pupils in this school. Those pupils not taking religious education in Years 10 and 11 as a GCSE subject do not receive sufficient opportunities to study this subject beyond Year 9. There are many valuable opportunities for learning outside lesson times. The school has an Artsmark Gold award which is reflected in the work seen in art and design and dance especially.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with special educational needs are given helpful and well-focussed support, especially in Years 7 and 8, and make good progress as a consequence.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. There are a large number of pupils with English as an additional language. They are given very appropriate support and make rapid gains in their literacy skills as a result.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There is a very effective personal, social and health education programme in all years and inspiring religious education lessons for all pupils in Years 7 to 9. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is consistently very good throughout the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school cares for its pupils extremely well. Pupils' overall progress is monitored closely and appropriate intervention occurs if problems arise.

The school offers a rich and interesting curriculum which has at its centre the learning needs of the pupils. This has resulted in an additional emphasis on literacy, ICT and vocational education. This emphasis has inevitably led to pressure on the time available for other courses in Years 10 and 11. To make space for these new courses, some pupils do not study a modern foreign language or a design and technology subject in these years. Parents are relatively well informed about the work of the school, but only a minority contribute actively to this work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and offers creative vision and enthusiastic encouragement. There is a very capable team of deputy headteachers, senior teachers and middle managers. The school is very well organised.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Since the last inspection governors have become far more involved in planning developments, and in monitoring and reviewing the school's work. They are very committed to the success of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Overall development priorities and spending patterns are evaluated well. There is more work to be done to link development priorities to the training needs of staff.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. A large and complex budget with many additional specific grants has been expertly managed and administered.

The exceptionally capable leadership and management skills of the headteacher have been specifically mentioned by many parents, governors and teachers as being a key factor in the success of the school. These comments are fully endorsed by inspectors. He has taken a strong lead in creating a culture of achievement and continuing improvement within a school that cares deeply about the well-being of both its pupils and its members of staff. There is a strong sense of teamwork, and many people have commented on the warm 'family atmosphere' that the school portrays. There are vacancies for teachers and support staff that are proving difficult to fill despite imaginative efforts by the school. These vacancies are affecting the quality and range of pupils' learning experiences in several subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good results that the school achieves; • The teachers have high expectations and take a keen personal interest in how well pupils are doing; • The availability of modern computers that all pupils use frequently; • The high standards of behaviour; • The very good leadership and management; • The way that the school keeps on getting better year after year; • The high reputation of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less temporary teachers; • Scope for gifted pupils to be challenged more; • More interesting homework tasks, especially in Years 7 to 9.

12% of parents responded to a questionnaire sent out and 3% of parents attended a meeting with inspectors. The inspection confirmed that the strengths identified by parents were substantial and impressive. Inspectors are convinced that governors are committed to doing all that is possible to attract new teachers and support staff to fill existing vacancies, including training new teachers. Many teachers are now setting extension activities for gifted and talented pupils to follow, particularly at home. Inspectors found that during the week of the inspection, interesting and appropriate homework tasks were set in most subjects. Sometimes pupils completed some or all of these tasks whilst still on the school site.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Overview of standards of attainment

1. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. The overall standard attained by pupils at the age of 14 is below the average for all schools in England but is well above the average for schools that serve similar areas to Handsworth. The overall standard attained by pupils at the age of 16 is just below the average for all schools in England but is well above the average for similar schools to this one. Four out of five pupils enter Year 7 with standards of attainment in literacy and numeracy that are below average. They make good progress from this low baseline in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11.

Attainment of pupils on entry into the school at the age of 11

2. Over half of all pupils enter Year 7 with levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science that are below the national expectation of Level 4. All pupils are assessed during their first term in Year 7 using commercial tests. The results of these tests conducted in the current Year 7 showed that eight out of ten pupils were below average in their combined literacy, numeracy and reasoning skills. One in three pupils were achieving within the lowest 10% nationally in these skills and one in ten pupils lacked sufficient literacy skills to be able to read and write effectively.

Attainment by the age of 14

3. In 2001 the proportion of pupils who had reached the expected standard of Level 5 in English by the age of 14 (which is at the end of Year 9) was close to the national average. This indicates that pupils make very good progress in English from Years 7 to 9. This has been achieved by very high standards of teaching in English and a successful approach to supporting the development of pupils' literacy skills in all other subjects. Further important contributions to this remarkable success story have been made by those members of staff who ably support pupils for whom English is an additional language and pupils who have identified special educational needs. Since the last inspection in 1996 the English test results for pupils aged 14 have been consistently well above the average for similar schools to Holyhead School. The average point score for English tests was just below the national average in both 1996 and 2000.
4. In 2001, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 at the age of 14 in national mathematics tests was in line with the national average. This is a very significant achievement considering the relatively low starting point in Year 7 for many pupils. The average point score for mathematics tests was below the national average in 2000 mainly because fewer pupils reached the higher Level 6 and than in most schools nationally. Average point scores have risen at the same rate as those nationally since 1996. Pupils make good progress in mathematics from Years 7 to 9 and benefit from good teaching in mathematics lessons. However, they receive

considerably less help in developing their numeracy skills in other subjects than is the case with their literacy skills.

5. In 2001, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 at the age of 14 in national science tests was close to the national average. As in the other two core subjects, the proportion of pupils reaching Levels 6 and 7 in 2000 was lower than in most schools and this depressed the average total points score figure, which was well below the national average. However, the average points score is well above the average for similar schools. Since 1996, the gap between the national and the school figures for pupils' average total points score in science has narrowed considerably. These figures combine to present a picture of a school where pupils make good progress in science from Years 7 to 9 from a relatively low starting point and where test results are improving at a faster rate than those nationally.
6. The standards of attainment recorded by the school for pupils aged 14 in the foundation subjects have varied greatly in recent years. They range from being considerably above the national average in French to being far below the national average in physical education. However in some subjects the standards as assessed by teachers are not sufficiently accurate and do not equate with standards seen by inspectors in lessons. Inspectors judged that the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 at the end of Year 9 was close to the national average in art and design, modern foreign languages, design and technology and ICT. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 was below the national average in geography, history and physical education. The school reported the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in music as being in line with the national expectation. It was impossible for inspectors to verify this because the teachers involved in the assessment had left. The standard of attainment in religious education as assessed by teachers in 2001 in relation to the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus criteria was in line with Local Education Authority's (LEA) expectations for the subject.
7. The current lack of overall accuracy in the teachers' assessments of standards in the foundation subjects prevents pupils having a clear understanding of how well they are doing across all subjects. Even so, the current picture is of pupils generally making good progress from Years 7 to 9 in all subjects, with particularly notable progress in art and design, design and technology, French and ICT.
8. The overall progress that pupils make in Years 7 to 9 is good across all subjects. This is particularly the case for approximately half of all pupils who enter Year 7 with attainment at Levels 3 and 4 in the core subjects and who go on to reach or exceed Level 5 at the end of Year 9 in these core subjects. More girls than boys reach Level 5 in the core subjects. The gap between the performance of girls and boys in the core subjects at the end of Year 9 in 2001 was greatest in English. This gap has widened in recent years because of a rapid rise in the attainment of girls. There is a similar gender gap in some of the foundation subjects.
9. There are significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different ethnic origins at the ages of 11 and 14. Statistically pupils of Indian and Bangladeshi ethnicity attain well by the end of Year 9 and make very good progress from Year 7. Overall, pupils of African-Caribbean ethnicity achieve in line with the average for the school, and make good progress. In general, pupils of Pakistani ethnicity enter the school at a lower level of attainment in the core subjects than other groups and

although they make satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 9 they do not catch up with other pupils. There are insufficient numbers of white pupils within the school to provide a trend that is statistically significant. This data has yet to be used by subject leaders to identify the ways that are within their control of helping underachieving pupils to improve. However, the school analyses the specific learning needs of pupils on an individualised basis, regardless of gender or ethnicity.

10. The proportion of pupils who do not reach Level 4 (the national target level for pupils aged 11) by the age of 14 is no greater than the national average in English and mathematics and is only just above average in science. This is another strong indicator of the effectiveness of the school, in this case in providing good support for those pupils who experience problems with literacy skills or who have wider learning difficulties. Inspection evidence pointed to the need to provide more able pupils with more opportunities to extend their reasoning and investigative skills. This would enable them to demonstrate capabilities that are of Level 6 or above.

Attainment by the age of 16

11. In 2000 the proportion of pupils who gained five or more grades A* to C in GCSE and GNVQ examinations was 44%, which placed the school in line with the national average. This figure was the best ever achieved by the school and was considerably higher than at the time of the last inspection. This outstanding performance also placed the school within the top 5% of similar schools in England. The comparable figure for 2001 dipped to 35%, but this is still very high compared to similar schools and is in line with the school's own target. The standard of work seen in lessons by inspectors indicates that the school is well placed to realise its ambition to reach or exceed the governors' target of 45% of pupils for this indicator in 2002. Governors are keen to press on towards 50% of pupils reaching five or more grades A* to C by 2005. These are ambitious and aspirational targets, in keeping with an ethos of aiming high and continuing to improve. There is an exactly comparable pattern compared to other schools for the percentage of pupils who gained five or more grades A* to G in 2000. The proportion of pupils gaining at least one grade G in 2000 was well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. This shows that pupils with learning, behavioural or attendance difficulties are well supported and are enabled to succeed.
12. The average total point score for GCSE and GNVQ examinations combined was close to the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The gap between the school and national figures for this indicator narrowed from -10.3 points to -5.5 points between 1996 and 2000. Comparable national figures for 2001 were not available at the time of the inspection. This shows that the school is helping pupils of all abilities to reach higher grades. This has been done through a combination of factors that have included better teaching, high expectations, a more appropriate curriculum, improved support for study skills and the wider use of new technology.
13. The standards that pupils achieve in all subjects at GCSE and GNVQ are much higher than might be expected given pupils' levels of attainment on entry into Year 7. Standards of work are also high in personal, social and health development lessons. There is no subject with any significant weaknesses in the patterns of attainment in Years 10 and 11.

14. Pupils benefit in Years 10 and 11 from having a very clear understanding of what they need to do to secure a target grade. They are given plenty of guidance about how well they are achieving during the course from tests and coursework assignments that are graded according to GCSE and GNVQ criteria. As a consequence of this, linked to very good teaching and relevant course content, pupils of all abilities progress well. Many pupils are beginning to benefit from the effects of new initiatives funded by the Excellence in Cities money. These include additional support for gifted and talented pupils, more opportunities for studying outside lesson times using new technology and the use of learning mentors to help pupils who are struggling to reach their targets. Even so, the differences in the relative attainment of boys and girls seen at the age of 14 are also apparent in the GCSE and GNVQ results of pupils aged 16. The statistical variations in the patterns of attainment of pupils from different ethnic origins that were apparent at the age of 14 also remain at the age of 16. It is issues such as these that will need to be tackled in order to reach the ambitious published targets for GCSE and GNVQ results in the next three years.

Summary

15. This is a school where standards of attainment are rising against increasingly adverse local social and economic circumstances. It is performing extremely well in comparison to similar schools and increasingly well against national averages. Ambitious targets for future attainment have been set and are well on the way to being realised. Most pupils leave the school at the age of 16 with results that are considerably higher than would be expected given their performance at the ages of 11 and 14. A remarkably large proportion of pupils continues in full time education after leaving the school at the age of 16. Pupils progress well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11, although with some significant differences between boys and girls and between ethnic groups. This means that the school provides a large 'value-added' component to pupils' results. Parents have spoken and written enthusiastically about the good results achieved by the school. They are right to do so. The success of the school was celebrated in the national press in 2000 and the school received an Improvement Award in recognition of its fine results. Holyhead School was one of the first schools in the country to gain the Princess Diana award for pupils achieving against the odds. There is no subject with any significant weakness in the pattern of attainment.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils' attitudes to school are generally very good. They recognise that the school gives high priority to their education and welfare. Their response exhibits appreciation and a readiness to match what the school offers with a serious commitment to learning. Their positive attitudes reflect the extent to which the policies and provision of the school are successful and effective. Pupils value their place in the school and are aware that membership of the school community is highly desirable in the local area. They work hard in lessons, individually and in groups, and many of them are prepared to give their maximum effort to complete a task. The high expectations which teachers have of pupils throughout the school are matched by pupils' mature participation in school life. Pupils' positive attitudes are one of the key strengths of this school, as they were at the time of the last inspection.

17. The overall standard of behaviour is good. A major contributory factor is the pupils' sense of responsibility and their awareness of the relationship between good behaviour and good education. Another factor is the ongoing vigilance of teachers. Both within lessons and during breaks and lunch times, teachers are always on the alert to encourage pupils to behave well. Teachers never relax their supervision of behaviour and they do so with a combination of kindness and firmness. Occasionally, there are pockets of irresponsible behaviour, but these are very rarely allowed to become disruptive or to assume extreme proportions. There are relatively few cases of bullying or aggressive behaviour and the number of pupils who are permanently excluded is relatively low. Parents said that in the great majority of cases any incidents of bullying were swiftly and effectively dealt with. A very small number of cases revealed the need for staff to act more effectively. Sanctions are appropriately selected from a range that is graded in relation to the severity of an incident. At the same time good behaviour is recognised, encouraged and rewarded well in various ways. Pupils benefit considerably from being encouraged to do their best and to celebrate succeeding in a task.
18. Holyhead School is a place where enlightened and civilized behaviour is the norm. It was noticed, however, that freedom of movement is limited by the narrow corridors through which pupils must pass many times during the day. In the rush to get to lessons on time the resulting congestion could contribute to instances of jostling.
19. There are very good personal relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff. The quality of those relationships, especially between pupils and staff, is exceptionally high, manifesting itself everywhere and contributing to learning and to the rich social climate at Holyhead School. It is a distinctive strength of the school. This is a multi-racial school where all groups cohere to form a truly integrated community. This being the case, the school is a model of good inter-racial fusion with most members of the school contributing to this very positive situation.
20. A revised and well designed teaching programme for personal, social and health development has just been introduced. Each pupil is taught by a specially trained teacher for one hour per week about such topics as anti-bullying, relationships and puberty, drugs education, examination and revision techniques, coping with stress and citizenship. Pupils recognise the importance of these real-life issues which promote maturity, a sense of self-esteem, individuality and social responsibility. Among the other initiatives introduced by the school as provision for stimulating personal development and responsibility is a 'peer mentoring' scheme whereby older pupils are trained to help other pupils. A summer school is provided to help pupils who need to catch up with their scheduled work.
21. The School Council not only promotes democracy among the pupils but also provides a context for developing leadership skills. It is an effective forum in which pupils share in aspects of the management of the school while learning how to be responsible in their communal life. Examples of this include the use of pupil views in revising school meals and arrangements for personal study outside lesson times.
22. Pupils participate in only a small number of assemblies during a term, some of which are not specifically acts of worship. As at the time of the last inspection, this represents a lack of compliance with statutory requirements. The main effect of this

is to deprive pupils of additional opportunities for spiritual and moral enrichment and reflection.

23. Attendance at the school is satisfactory and just 1% short of the national average. The school has worked hard in recent years to move the attendance rate upwards, from below 90% at the last inspection to its present level. Its initiatives and strategies in that direction have been notably successful. There is a 100% attendance in some forms while over 95% in others is quite normal. The rate of authorised absence fell from 12.1% in 1996-1997 to 7.9% in 2000-2001. Similarly, there was a decrease from 2.0% to 1.8% in unauthorised absence during the same period. Family holidays abroad and medical reasons are the main factors affecting attendance adversely. The school must be congratulated on its serious commitment to achieve good attendance thereby showing to parents and pupils that good education and good attendance go together.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

24. The overall quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. This represents an improvement from a strong position at the time of the last inspection. The very considerable strengths in teaching are a vital factor in the high standards of achievement and behaviour that characterise the school.
25. From a sample of 152 lessons seen by inspectors, the quality of teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better in almost all cases. In three quarters of lessons teaching was judged to be good, very good, and in some cases excellent. The best teaching was seen in Years 10 and 11. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in eight subjects and examples of very good teaching were seen in almost every subject. The proportion of satisfactory or better teaching has increased considerably since the previous inspection. Conversely the proportion of teaching that is unsatisfactory or poor has decreased very significantly and is now very small. This high quality of teaching has been achieved in the context of a school that had considerable difficulties in recruiting staff. In the many instances when teaching is good, very good or excellent, it leads directly to highly effective learning. It strengthens pupils' positive attitudes and ensures that they make good progress in all subjects.
26. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is a considerable strength and helps build the confidence and self-esteem of pupils. Teachers are very positive and encouraging. As a result less confident pupils are willing to suggest answers and ideas and are not afraid to make mistakes. Pupils are very supportive of each other. Pupils from all of the local ethnic communities work very well together without prejudice.
27. Good quality teaching in this school is characterised by a number of important features. Teachers have a very secure subject knowledge. A range of effective strategies is used within lessons to stimulate and accelerate learning so enabling pupils to make good progress. Efficient use is made of time and most lessons proceed at a stimulating pace. In these lessons teachers build on pupils' prior learning well, with the consequence that pupils' concentration is good, they are enthusiastic and able to consolidate knowledge and develop their understanding. The majority of teachers demonstrate very effective classroom management and the good

behaviour that results contributes significantly to pupils' learning. In the most successful lessons, teachers manage pupils with understanding and enthusiasm. They deal with challenging situations in ways that causes the minimum disruption to pupils' learning. In a minority of cases, especially in Years 7 to 9, all pupils are given the same task to do in a lesson regardless of their ability or what they already know and can do. The most able pupils in these lessons learn at a rate that is below their capacity.

28. Pupils' work is carefully marked and praise is frequently given for work that has required considerable effort, thought and care. This is particularly true of art and design, English, geography, history and science work. Many teachers are prepared to do additional work beyond their conditions of service to support their pupils and the work of their colleagues. In most cases homework is set methodically and is an integral part of the learning programme.
29. Overall the teaching of English is very good. In the lessons that were observed teaching was almost invariably good or better, and was often excellent. Teachers planned their lessons thoroughly and imaginatively and taught them with flair and insight, especially in Years 10 and 11. Expectations were very high and many pupils were encouraged to attempt tasks that in many schools might be regarded as too demanding for pupils of their age. Teachers in other subjects often give careful attention to ways of strengthening and applying pupils' literacy skills, with positive results. They have interpreted and applied the concepts of the National Literacy Strategy very effectively.
30. The overall quality of teaching in mathematics is good and this has a direct impact on pupils' learning. It is most effective when taught by specialist mathematicians. These specialists have a good subject knowledge and are deployed more intensively in Years 10 and 11. Strengths of mathematics teaching include challenging work, good pace and the lively use of mental and oral activities at the start of lessons. However, teaching is less effective when activities do not match the needs of all the pupils and marking does not tell pupils what they need to do to improve. Teachers have yet to apply the same approach to the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum as has been so successful with literacy. However, work is in hand to do so.
31. The overall quality of teaching in science is good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are generally good and significantly better in the case of subject specialists. Usually teachers explain clearly what pupils are expected to learn and how it fits into a wider sequence of lessons on the topic. Planning caters for the full range of abilities in teaching sets, with easier work for lower attaining pupils and challenging extension work for the higher attaining pupils. Whilst pupils are working, teachers monitor their work, picking up any problems as they arise. Marking is thorough, identifying errors and helping pupils to improve. Discipline is good and any instances of misbehaviour are quickly stopped. These teaching strategies ensure that pupils waste little time in lessons and make good progress.
32. Overall, the quality of teaching in specialist ICT lessons is very good. In all of the lessons sampled teaching was good or better, with much that was very good or excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. They plan lessons very thoroughly and set clear objectives. Teachers support pupils extremely well, so

helping them to make good progress. In a small number of lessons, lengthy practical activities would benefit from being broken into shorter steps to maintain pace. Teachers monitor the work of pupils closely and provide clear guidance on how it could be improved. Many teachers of other subjects are now encouraging pupils to use ICT productively, especially in art and design, English, religious education, design and technology and media studies. ICT was seen being used very effectively in a business and communication lesson where pupils used *Word*, *Publisher* and *Excel* programs to create headed notepaper, message pads and identity cards. Subjects where teachers' use of ICT is underdeveloped include music, science, history, geography and mathematics.

33. The quality of teaching in art and design is very good, with most lessons having a high level of challenge and an expectation that the pupils will achieve to their full potential. The overall quality of teaching in design and technology is good, with particular strengths in the teaching of graphics and food. In both geography and history the quality of teaching is good, with particular strengths in the GCSE lessons. The quality of teaching is also good in modern foreign language lessons where teachers offer abundant encouragement and support to enable purposeful and brisk learning to take place. In music the quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. In physical education teaching is good, resulting in pupils achieving well in relation to their capabilities on entry into Year 7. The overall quality of teaching in religious education is good, with particular strengths in the ways in which questioning is skilfully used to engage pupils and move them on in their learning. Teaching in dance is excellent, where pupils work within a highly disciplined framework based on professional standards.
34. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and as a result they make good progress with their learning. In the best lessons, activities are well matched to pupils' attainment and teachers produce appropriate support materials. When support is available, the class teacher and support staff work well together to make the best use of the opportunity. However, when extra support is not available, as in many Year 9 lessons in the foundation subjects, pupils are sometimes unable to complete tasks on time and some fall behind with their work.
35. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) is good whether through the medium of English or the pupils' first language. The sixty pupils on the EAL register of those needing substantial help are well supported in their learning because of the direct support and monitoring provided by the EAL co-ordinator and the home-school link workers. Additional learning support is only available to pupils in Years 7 and 8 in most cases. Resources in the form of written worksheets are further developed to meet the needs of these pupils and supplements are often in their first language. The effect of this teaching is to accelerate these pupils quickly to a point where they are able to speak and write English fluently and so are able to participate fully in lessons in all subjects by Year 9.
36. Although the overall quality of teaching is good with many more strengths than weaknesses, there are some areas of weakness, seen in approximately one lesson in four during the inspection, that need to be addressed. In some of these lessons teaching methods and tasks are not sufficiently well chosen to ensure that the teaching meets the needs of all pupils. When there is a wide ability span amongst pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, work tends to be pitched at the middle ability

level. This sometimes leaves lower ability pupils unable to complete all aspects of the task without support whilst higher ability pupils may be under-challenged. In some lessons, mainly in Years 7 to 9, the lesson objectives are not sufficiently well defined for pupils to know what they are expected to achieve. Similarly the way that some books are marked gives pupils too little information about how well they are doing and what they need to do to meet their learning targets.

37. There were six student teachers developing their professional teaching skills during the inspection week. These were part of the School Centred Initial Teacher Training scheme (SCITT). They were already able to demonstrate considerable capability in helping pupils to make valuable progress. The scheme is very well organised and is a valuable approach to bringing on the next generation of teachers. The scheme has helped in recruiting new teachers into the school and in refreshing the skills of experienced teachers who support the trainees.
38. Pupils are making good progress in their learning as a result of the effective teaching they receive. Teachers expect their pupils to concentrate and work hard and the majority of pupils readily respond by showing commitment to their learning. They acquire new knowledge and understanding at both key stages. Many learn especially well when using new technology, when engaged in practical work and when there are well-defined criteria for success. In some lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, some pupils are not always encouraged to think and reason for themselves with sufficient rigour. The 'Excellence in Holyhead' course on thinking skills, which takes place in Year 7, is successfully helping pupils to understand how they learn best. Pupils with special educational needs learn well in Years 7 and 8 especially when additional support is available. They also make good progress in Years 10 and 11. The same is true of pupils for whom English is an additional language who make especially rapid progress in Years 7 to 9 because of the high quality literacy support they receive. When learning is less good this is often because pupils, especially in Years 7 to 9, are not encouraged to apply sufficient intellectual effort.

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

39. The curriculum at Holyhead School is relevant and suitably varied for pupils of all ages and abilities. It gives equality of access and opportunity to all pupils. Their learning is enriched by a wide range of activities from within and outside the timetabled day. However, the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 fails to meet statutory requirements with regard to the provision of religious education for the majority of pupils who do not study this subject in a GCSE course.
40. The curriculum in all years is skilfully designed to meet the specific learning needs of the pupils of Holyhead School. The low standard of attainment of pupils on entry to the school, particularly with regard to literacy skills, is recognised and English is rightly given a large portion of curriculum time in all years as a consequence. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of subjects that meet the needs of the pupils and also all statutory requirements. The 'Excellence in Holyhead' course in Year 7 on thinking skills is good and enables pupils to recognise and apply their own learning styles effectively. It also develops higher-order thinking skills well.

41. The curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 is good and is characterised by many important and significant strengths. In addition to the core curriculum there is a well considered range of options. These include courses with a large proportion of practical activities that are assessed using carefully designed criteria. Pupils are guided to make their choices through the personal, social and health development programme and through individual discussions, which include parents. Senior managers and governors have had to make difficult decisions about the content of the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 in order to fit in new vocational courses and additional English teaching within the time available. This has resulted in reduced time for some subjects and a relaxation of the requirement for all pupils to study a modern foreign language or a design and technology subject in Years 10 and 11. These pupils have not been formally disapplied from the National Curriculum to follow these courses. Inspectors consider the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 to have been wisely constructed in view of the high standards of attainment achieved by pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the high level of parental and pupil support for the current curriculum provision. Pupils were seen to be making very good progress in the new vocational courses. They were fully engaged in relevant, demanding and interesting learning activities.
42. Governors seek to ensure that no pupil is unable to follow an appropriate curriculum because of their social or economic circumstances. As an example of this policy in action, the school provides ingredients and materials for food and textiles courses for all pupils.
43. All subjects in Years 7 and 8 and some subjects in Year 9 are taught in mixed ability groups. The reason for doing this is to ensure that all pupils are included equally in all learning opportunities. This decision not to place pupils into teaching sets based on their literacy ability makes sense given the rapidly developing literacy skills of many pupils for whom English is an additional language. However, these groupings demand effective planning to ensure that the activities in lessons meet the needs of all pupils of a very wide range of abilities. This does not happen in all lessons and as a consequence this approach sometimes holds back the more able pupils, and sometimes provides obstacles for the less able. Pupils tend to progress faster in Years 10 and 11 where assessment arrangements are more precise in all subjects. In the core subjects pupils are placed in teaching sets based on their known ability levels.
44. There is a good provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language and who are at the earliest stages of English language acquisition and literacy development. There is evidence that a small minority are developing an over-reliance on the support structures by waiting for a teaching assistant to provide an answer for them. In consequence, there is a risk that their ability to show individual initiative and to use their higher-level thinking skills could be stifled.
45. There is very effective support for pupils who have special educational needs, although for some who have formal statement of their needs their specific requirements are not always met. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are particularly well provided for when extra support is available in lessons and extra literacy help is given for two to three hours a week. There is additional support for disaffected pupils, those disapplied from science in Year 11 and for pupils who require

additional assistance to cope with their GCSE courses. All of this support is well focussed and effective.

46. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is excellent. The working group on this issue, which includes representatives from all subject areas, has established a rigorous programme, which involves parents, to identify pupils and monitor their progress. All subject areas have, as one of their targets, the development of their provision for these pupils. As a result some subjects enrich their classroom experience whilst others plan activities outside the classroom. In addition there is a range of exciting activities that includes visits such as one to the Peugeot factory and a creative arts day, which was enjoyed by a hundred pupils drawn from the local cluster of secondary schools. During the inspection a group of pupils was successfully working with other pupils from the cluster to produce a 'Talking Book'. However staff, in focusing on the needs of this group of identified pupils, do not always recognise fully the learning needs of the other above average pupils.
47. The support for literacy work in subjects is strong. It includes the use of writing frames and key words in many subjects as well as the reinforcement of spelling using key words and an insistence on good handwriting. Currently there are early foundations for cross-curricular numeracy support but as yet it is not making a significant impact on pupils' learning.
48. A thorough review of the curriculum, which takes place each year and involves all subjects, is led by the staff Curriculum Working Group. This group plays an important role in ensuring that the curriculum takes into account what the pupils need and want as well as planning new innovations such as vocational GCSE courses. The theme of 'the most appropriate provision for the pupils' is paramount when the timetable is constructed. The process used involves the consideration of the most appropriate teachers for each group.
49. All pupils in Years 7 to 11 have a weekly personal, social and health development lesson. The provision, which is good, has been imaginatively developed by the Personal Development Working Group within the school. It includes the statutory elements of sex education, the consequences of drug misuse, and careers education as well as a range of topics to assist pupils' social development.
50. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. There is a large variety of lunchtime clubs in addition to a very good programme of study support out of school time that includes Saturday schools. The school was awarded the 'Education Extra' certificate in recognition of the quality of this work. There are productive links with the LEA's 'University of the First Age', which has enabled homework clubs and 'super learners' courses to be established. Breakfast clubs and after school activities have been greatly supported by the national New Opportunities Fund. A range of additional activities is available in art and design, music, mathematics, sport, debating, drama, dance, ICT, design and technology. There are GCSE revision classes and a successful games club for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular provision and a significant number of pupils takes part in one or more activity. Pupils are encouraged to care for others through work in the local community. The work experience programme is good, always involving pupils working with the local

community. This programme is highly valued by employers, parents and pupils. The links with local primary schools and post-16 providers are also good.

51. Parents expressed some concern that homework, especially in Years 7 and 8 is not set systematically and is not sufficiently interesting and challenging. The inspection findings are that homework is methodically set in the majority of lessons. It is usually appropriate and enhances pupils' learning. As a result of the valuable provision in school for homework clubs and access to ICT, a number of pupils do their homework tasks on site but outside lesson times. They therefore rightly tell their parents that they have finished their homework in school.
52. Opportunities for promoting pupils' moral, social and cultural development are very good and support for their spiritual development is good. The school places a high priority on establishing good relations amongst the whole school community. This is evident in the quality of relationships around the school. All members are valued and their contributions regularly recognised and praised. The school provides many good opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual development and has improved on the satisfactory provision in 1996. Subject departments have been successfully encouraged to consider how they contribute to this aspect of pupils' development. Religious education is a very important dimension of the work of the school, as many pupils are devout about their own religion, and so plays a large role in their spiritual development. Valuable and sometimes very moving events in some subject lessons strengthen pupils' spiritual insight. Inspectors saw such events in English, drama, art and design and in personal, social and health development lessons. The acts of worship seen during the inspection contained valuable moral and social messages, but were not designed to encourage spiritual development very effectively. Acts of worship are not held as frequently as is legally required.
53. Opportunities for supporting pupils' moral development are very good. There is an expectation that pupils will recognise right from wrong and will behave accordingly. This is reinforced constantly by teachers in classes and around the school, and makes a noticeable contribution to high standards of behaviour and positive relationships. Pupils are often asked to consider wider moral questions, such as considering conflicts between economic development and environmental conservation in geography.
54. The provision for supporting pupils' social development is also very good as demonstrated by the high quality of the personal relationships within the school. The arrangements for peer mentoring are a valuable way of helping some pupils to exercise responsibility and leadership.
55. Opportunities for cultural development are also very good. Many subjects provide a curriculum that looks at a range of cultures, as seen in religious education, art and design, English and food technology. Pupils have opportunities to take part in a variety of musical, dramatic and sporting activities, which make a positive contribution to their social development.
56. The many opportunities available for personal development make a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to each other, the staff and to their learning. They contribute to the high degree of social and racial harmony within the school community, particularly given the large range of different ethnic groups within the

school. There is a climate of achievement and success that pervades the whole of school life.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. In general, the quality of the care offered by Holyhead School to all pupils is very good. A very high standard of care and support is provided through the teaching staff who consistently subscribe to the school's commitment to put the pupils first. The combined efforts of the headteacher, the teachers and the governing body to operate the policies for pupils' welfare and guidance result in the creation of a healthy social atmosphere for pupils and their education. The large multi-racial population necessitates the use of a considerable amount of resources in the form of funds and teaching skills for the provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language. The result is that a very high standard is reached in English by most pupils. There are full integration and educational inclusion of all pupils. Year 7 pupils are helped to settle into the school and to adjust to secondary education. One strategy to assist this process of adjustment involves moving those pupils from classes in which they are uncomfortable to another class in their year where they are likely to perform in a better way. The functions of learning mentors include academic support for pupils with learning difficulties, while the peer mentors system is a pupil-to-pupil way of helping to improve social interaction, reading ability and coping with the curriculum, for instance. Pupils are well cared for at break and lunch times. The kitchen staff provides over 650 good hot meals with a variety of menus daily.
58. The school can justifiably be proud of the wide range of innovations and imaginative strategies it has introduced for supporting its pupils and to demonstrate to them that their interest and academic progress are the motives underlying all its policies. A very sophisticated project for providing work experience for Year 11 pupils is ably managed and coordinated. This ensures that all school leavers have an opportunity to be introduced to working life in areas of their own choice. There were 167 placements for work experience in the current school year in 136 community organisations, services and industry. The scheme is carefully supervised and monitored by the teaching staff to ensure its benefit to the pupils is maximised.
59. The child protection arrangements are very good. A child protection register is kept by the deputy headteacher who is the designated child protection officer and whose experience from training for that role is passed on to other members of the teaching staff. Fire protection arrangements now conform to standard regulations and first aid facilities are satisfactory.
60. The school operates very good procedures for monitoring pupils' behaviour and attendance. The personal, social and health development programme aims to inculcate in all pupils those values that will help them to enhance their behaviour and their ability to participate in a civilised community. The programme, for instance, includes anti-bullying lessons. The learning support centre is the final stage in the process of correcting bad behaviour. The earlier stages are led by a pupil's form tutor with parents, subject teachers, heads of school and pupils agreeing to work towards corrective action. This strategy is working satisfactorily.

61. A measure of the school's very successful efforts to improve attendance is the fact that it received an award of £8000 from the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) for its anti-truancy initiatives. Since then, the school has attracted the interest of other schools nationally for help in dealing with their truancy problem. A deputy headteacher, the senior management team and the school's educational social worker are responsible for co-ordination of measures to improve attendance.
62. Procedures for monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory and the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is good. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are also good. Improving the assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 has been correctly identified as an area for improvement. Currently, the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 lacks consistency and precision in many subjects. Pupils are not always aware of the level that they are currently working at or how to reach the next level. As a consequence some pupils set themselves rather generalised targets related to their attitude and effort rather than more precise targets relating to specific skills or concepts. In the great majority of cases pupils' work is marked carefully by teachers. This marking often includes encouraging comments which pupils respond to well. Pupils are offered valuable personal guidance by their form tutors and their personal, social and health education teachers. Several Year 10 pupils who were interviewed by inspectors were unclear about what post-16 learning opportunities were present in the locality. Detailed post-16 guidance begins in the spring term of Year 10.
63. The high proportion of school leavers who continued with full time education in further education and sixth form institutions in 2001 is indicative of the school's highly successful efforts to help its pupils to remain committed to their own learning after Year 11.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. Parents have a very high regard for Holyhead School. Their relationships with members of staff and governors are very good. They appreciate the standards which are set and maintained. Some parents help to shape parts of its policies for such things as behaviour and homework, through discussions with parent governors. They support the homework programme well and meet their obligations in the home-school agreement. Parents' views expressed in the pre-inspection meeting and through the questionnaires showed very high levels of satisfaction with the school. The relatively few critical comments received by inspectors were positive and constructive and some offered valuable suggestions for further improvement.
65. Among the initiatives recently introduced by the school to improve and strengthen its partnership with parents is a Parents' Forum. This is intended to offer a valuable meeting point for governors, staff and parents to discuss a variety of issues related to the school. It will serve as the starting point for the process of consultation of school policies and as a channel for new ideas and suggestions for school improvement. A governing body 'surgery' is about to start which is intended to offer parents a useful opportunity to discuss specific areas of concern related to the school in general and to their children in particular. Parent governors are becoming increasingly effective in gathering the views of parents before meetings and informing them of governors' decisions subsequently. Parents are satisfied with their access to staff and with the information given to them about their children's work and progress. Parents'

meetings are held from term-to-term while 'dropping in' to see the teachers when necessary is a normal activity. The headteacher and staff know, for example, that if they consult parents over matters of discipline the response will be sympathetic and helpful. The school offers an extensive induction programme to pupils moving into Year 7 and their parents. This well designed programme successfully helps pupils to cope with any hazards and stresses that may be generated by their new experiences in secondary education.

66. Reports to parents and carers about pupils' academic performance are informative, comprehensive and clearly written. They highlight strengths, weaknesses and targets to be tackled very clearly. Similarly, the annual report to parents by the governing body is attractively presented and satisfactory on all points.
67. The inspection team identified two weaker aspects of the partnership with parents. Firstly, involvement of parents in the school within the school day is only at a basic level and there was not much evidence to show that this is regarded as an important element in the partnership by the parents. Secondly, the ways in which information is communicated to parents who are not fluent English speakers could be improved further.
68. In summary, parents have extremely positive views about the effectiveness of the school. The impact of parental involvement on the work of the school and parents' contribution to learning and homework are both satisfactory, while the quality of information provided for parents on their children's attainment and progress is good. On the whole, the partnership works satisfactorily, but there is a need for parents not only to be better informed but also to be more actively involved in the life and work of school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

69. The leadership and management of the school are both very good. This is a key factor in the continuing improvement of the school since the last inspection. This aspect of the work of the school was strong in 1996 and has improved further since then.
70. Excellent leadership from the headteacher provides very clear educational direction for the school. There is a shared desire amongst everyone in the school to 'aim high' and members of staff are fully committed to achieving the best for all pupils. This spirit of success is enhanced by a shared commitment to making learning relevant and enjoyable and to involving adults as well as pupils in the learning process. As a consequence, children aged under five use part of the school during the day and members from all sections of the community use the leisure facilities outside lesson times. The school operates a School Centred Initial Teacher Training scheme which trains graduates to become teachers. This has had the effect of refreshing experienced teachers who support trainees. There is also a very strong commitment to high standards of behaviour, good interpersonal relationships and equality of opportunity. The buildings are full of stimulating photographs and displays that visibly reinforce the culture of high expectation and achievement. This culture is articulated equally powerfully through both the words and actions of all members of the school community. The aims and values of the school are, therefore, fully reflected in its work.

71. The headteacher, who has led the school for over twenty years, provides exceptionally strong leadership. He shares a crisply defined insight into the success and development needs of the school openly with all members of staff and governors. Many representatives of the school community have rightly praised his specific contribution to the success of the school. He has high aspirations for the future and cares deeply about the well-being of all pupils and members of staff. He has been pivotal in introducing good ideas that have enabled the school to respond well to the many challenges coming from both local circumstances and national developments. He encourages adults working in the school to do a good job. There are low levels of staff absence and few signs of low staff morale despite heavy workloads. The headteacher is ably supported by two very capable deputy headteachers who undertake many high level leadership roles superbly. They are exceptionally strong teachers and have the ability to deal with major strategic or small personal issues with equal ease. Senior teachers, heads of year, heads of department and co-ordinators also show high levels of leadership. There are several influential policy-making and working groups which generate new ideas and help to steer the work of the school well. Responsibility is therefore delegated very well within the school. There is a strongly shared commitment to continuing improvement linked to the capacity to succeed.
72. At the time of the last inspection, there was a need for governors to become more fully involved with many aspects of the work of the school. Since then governors have played an increasingly important part in development planning, the management of the buildings and the budget and the evaluation of performance data. They have set ambitious targets for the future attainment of pupils. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well, but still require more support to enable them to see what needs to be done in order to meet the targets and improvement priorities that they have set out. In particular, some governors find it quite hard to keep abreast of the changing curriculum situation locally and nationally; and would benefit from accurate summaries of current legislation and school practice. The contribution of parent governors has been of especial importance in giving insight into ways of engaging parents more fully in the work of the school and in improving home-school communication. Governors are very eager to support the school and many give large amounts of their time to help the school to improve further. This amounts to the role of the governing body now being a strength of the school when formerly it was a key issue for improvement.
73. There is a well established system for school self-evaluation which links in effectively with the annual cycle for development planning. This system includes incisive reviews of the work of departments and year teams. The school's current development plan contains twenty improvement priorities, each of which is supported by a reasonably detailed action plan in tabular form. Most of these priorities relate to ways of improving the curriculum and the school environment. Some of the issues that emerge from the school's own analysis of performance data, such as overcoming gender and ethnicity differences in attainment, are not explicit in the school's development plan. The link between development planning and financial management (including how the main sources of additional funding are used) works well in practice. There are no explicit links between the school's development plan and the LEA's educational development plan or the school's asset management plan.

74. Each subject team has produced a subject development plan that sets out suitably detailed agendas for every department. Arrangements for performance management for teachers have been set up correctly and are working well. Currently the outcomes of performance management reviews are not closely linked with the programme for the continuing professional development of teachers. Similarly subject plans are not always closely linked to the school development plan. At present the quality of teaching is not systematically monitored by senior managers and heads of department to help spread good practice and to pinpoint aspects for additional action.
75. The school is very efficiently managed and administered. Pupils benefit from success in attracting additional grants and from wisely targeted spending. A large and very complex budget is managed with great skill. The senior managers and governors correctly believe that an annual budget should where possible be spent on enhancing opportunities for those pupils currently in the school. Governors play an important part in establishing principles and values that guide expenditure and in monitoring the extent to which the spending patterns affect standards of attainment. The principles of best value are systematically and rigorously applied to ensure that money is used well, such as when securing contracts for catering, cleaning, computers or security installations. A recent auditor's report identified many strengths and no significant weaknesses in the administration of the school's budget and accounts.
76. The quality and expertise of the teaching and support staff that are in post are both good. There are effective arrangements for the induction of new members of staff and a commitment to training new teachers. The impressive improvements in the standards attained since the last inspection testify to the strength of teaching. However, the school has found it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain teachers, especially in shortage areas. It has responded to these difficulties very imaginatively, for example by becoming a training school for graduates wishing to gain a teaching qualification and adjusting the curriculum and timetable to minimise the effect of gaps in the teaching provision. Even so, at the time of the inspection there was a shortage of a music teacher that resulted in reduced music coverage. This was due to be rectified from January 2002. There are vacancies for teachers in science and English and there are insufficient modern foreign languages teachers to meet the current requirements to teach all pupils in Years 10 and 11. There are also vacancies for technicians, classroom assistants, learning support staff and community workers. Governors are understandably concerned about the need to find ways of recruiting more support staff to relieve the pressure of clerical work and preparation activities that teachers currently do. The school's work with parents is also hindered by a shortage of home-school workers. It is important that governors and senior managers continue to work with other agencies to find ways of overcoming staff shortages.
77. The building is well maintained and many detailed improvements have been made in recent years. Displays and furnishings create an outstandingly stimulating environment for learning. However, the school has no hall, which makes whole school assemblies and acts of worship very hard to organise. The performing arts area is inadequate for supporting the curriculum and there are some science laboratories that need to be upgraded. There are narrow corridors that create bottlenecks at movement times. Some design and technology lessons have to be

taught in an annexe which is nearly a mile away from the school site because of lack of workshop space in the main building.

78. Since the last inspection the provision for ICT has vastly improved. The school is now very well equipped and the benefits of this can be seen in many subjects. In particular, new technology is used by pupils to undertake investigations and to present work impressively. As well as the improved equipment, improvements in the use of ICT have happened as a result of the imaginative leadership of the ICT department, ably assisted by the ICT support manager. A fresh vision of the possibilities that new technology can bring has successfully linked planning with new sources of income. As at the time of the last inspection, the learning resource centre (which is a combined library and computer area) is very intensively used and at lunch times is too small to accommodate all those who wish to use it.
79. A greater proportion of the budget is spent on learning resources than in the majority of secondary schools. This has led to some good quality equipment and books being available to support learning well. An example of this is the helpful use of graphical calculators in mathematics to assist pupils in their conceptual understanding of algebra and statistics. Another example was the use of an electronic whiteboard located in an ICT room was seen to be used to good effect in training a whole class together in keyboard skills and the use of different software programs.
80. At the time of the last inspection the joint use arrangements with Leisure Services for the use of parts of the school during evenings, weekends and holidays was judged to detract rather than enhance the school's provision. It was a key issue for action to resolve this problem. Considerable progress has been made in this direction, particularly since the appointment of a new manager of the Leisure Centre who is also a co-opted governor of the school. The dual use of the sporting facilities helps to involve adults in the life of the school but does not bring in any significant income.
81. The overall income and expenditure per pupil are high compared to the majority of schools in England. This is in part because the school receives considerable amounts of additional funding from specific grants. Inspection evidence confirms that all expenditure is used wisely to drive up standards of attainment and to continue to raise the quality of teaching and learning. This is a very effective school that provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

82. This is a very effective school which is fully committed to continuous improvement. There are three main development points to deal with in order to enable the overall standards of attainment to rise in line with the governors' future targets. These are:

(1) to continue to improve the rate of progress that pupils make between Years 7 and 9, especially for more able pupils, so increasing results in the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests further;

(see paragraphs 3-10, 36, 43, 46, 96, 137, 147)

(2) to continue to seek ways of reducing variations in the rate of progress of different groups of pupils, particularly in

- bringing the standard of attainment of boys closer to that of girls, and
- addressing any factors within the school's control that reduce the progress made by pupils from some ethnic groups;

(see paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 14, 36, 44, 84, 114, 127, 136, 146, 161)

(3) to help pupils set more precise personal learning targets and give them more guidance about what more they should do to reach them, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

(see paragraphs 6, 7, 62, 97, 130, 150, 167, 175, 187)

In addition, governors and staff should also:

(1) continue to seek ways of overcoming current staff shortages;

(see paragraphs 37, 76, 171)

(2) address the lack of religious education provided in Years 10 and 11 for those pupils who do not study this subject in a GCSE course;

(see paragraphs 39, 181)

(3) take steps to comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils.

(see paragraph 52)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

152

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

132

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	22	36	55	34	3	2	0
Percentage	14	24	36	22	2	1	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	998
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	618

Special educational needs

Y7 - Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	394

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	786
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	50

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	108	90	198

<i>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</i>		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	52	49
	Girls	53	47	42
	Total	89	99	91
Percentage of pupils at National Curriculum level 5 or above	School	45 (54)	51 (30)	46 (34)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at National Curriculum level 6 or above	School	12 (14)	22 (10)	19 (6)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	50	54
	Girls	61	48	49
	Total	109	98	103
Percentage of pupils at National Curriculum level 5 or above	School	55 (37)	49 (49)	52 (30)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at National Curriculum level 6 or above	School	22 (11)	20 (18)	12 (5)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year (1999).

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	116	78	194

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	49	107	115
	Girls	36	75	76
	Total	85	182	191
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	44 (34)	94 (93)	98 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

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

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year (1999).

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	155
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	463
Pakistani	176
Bangladeshi	118
Chinese	3
White	42
Any other minority ethnic group	38

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	20	2
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	23	0
Pakistani	25	1
Bangladeshi	2	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	3	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)	64.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	305

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.67
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – YR11

Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	20.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 – 2001
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	£
Total income	3325204
Total expenditure	3286629
Expenditure per pupil	3255
Balance brought forward from previous year	-21087
Balance carried forward to next year	17488

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	998
Number of questionnaires returned	117

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	40	3	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	44	50	2	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	37	9	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	45	7	3	3
The teaching is good.	49	44	3	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	41	11	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	34	3	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	30	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	36	42	12	2	8
The school is well led and managed.	50	36	2	1	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	40	2	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	38	5	2	11

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

These responses show a very high level of parental support for the work of the school. Most of the replies in the 'don't know' column came from parents of pupils who had recently joined the school in Year 7. Inspection evidence confirmed that parents were right to respond in this way. Their confidence in the school was very well founded.

Other issues raised by parents

At the parents' meeting held before the inspection, equally positive views were expressed. There were areas of concern that related to a greater than satisfactory number of temporary teachers being used, more scope for gifted and talented pupils to excel, and more interesting homework tasks being set in Years 7 to 9. Inspectors were convinced that governors were taking bold and imaginative steps to overcome a serious local staff shortage for both qualified teachers and support staff. Inspectors found that most homework tasks set during the week of the inspection had appropriate objectives. There were valuable opportunities for the most gifted and talented pupils to experience demanding extension activities. Other pupils who are of above average ability but who do not come into this category could benefit from more opportunities to develop their thinking and reasoning skills, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

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

ENGLISH

The English provision is **very good and still improving**.

Strengths

- The excellent quality and variety of much of the teaching;
- The excellence and variety of resources used in classrooms;
- The detailed planning that leads to well structured lessons.
- The excellence of teachers' subject knowledge;
- The detailed marking that sets specific learning targets;
- The excellence of relationships between staff and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- A more consistent use of differentiated tasks in all mixed ability groups;
- The role of classroom assistants in English lessons;
- The gap between the GCSE performance of boys and girls is bigger than in most schools.

[Evidence for these judgements was gathered from a detailed scrutiny of pupils' exercise books and folders and the observation of 18 lessons. All full time teachers of English were seen. Documents provided by the department including schemes of work and the subject handbook were read. Discussions with staff and an interview with the head of department were undertaken.]

83. Overall standards of attainment in English are below the national average for all schools in England, but well above the average for similar schools. In the National Curriculum tests for pupils aged 14 held in 2001, 61% of pupils achieved Level 5 or above which was close to the national average. This was a very good result given the low levels of attainment on entry to the school and the numbers of pupils for whom English is an additional language. It was an increase of 16% on the 2000 result and made English the highest attaining core subject in the school. In comparison to schools with similar socio-economic backgrounds, 61% is well above the national average. Girls' performance was better than boys, in line with the national trend, and the highest performing group was girls from Indian heritage.
84. Standards of attainment at GCSE were well below the national average in 2000. However, the figure of 44% of pupils entered for GCSE gaining a grade between A* and C in 2001 was a big improvement on the 2000 result of 33% and placed the school above the national average for similar schools. In English literature examinations, the 2001 result of 52% of pupils gaining a GCSE grade between A* and C matched the previous year's result of 51% which is again well above average for similar schools. An excellent achievement was the 99% of pupils who received grade G or above in both English language and literature. This is in line with the average for all schools nationally and is especially praiseworthy given that 83% of pupils have English as an additional language. Results in media studies are above the national average with 65% getting a Grade C or above in 2000 and 53% in 2001. The performance of boys is well below that of girls, with a greater gap than found nationally. The department has a detailed action plan to raise the achievement of boys and to enhance GCSE results to bring them in line with those for Key Stage 3.

Results both for pupils aged 14 and 16 dipped in 2000 but have risen in 2001 and the upward trend over recent years is broadly in line with the national one.

85. Gifted and talented pupils are well challenged as evidenced by the current Year 10 'express' group that will take GCSE a year early with a view to study the subject at AS-level in Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language all make good progress. The clearest indicator of their very good progress is the fact that, although pupils enter Year 7 with English tests scores that are well below average, the proportion of pupils leaving Year 11 with at least a G grade has been well above average for the past two years.
86. Pupils make good progress overall, and some make very good progress. This is made possible by the very high quality of English teaching. Of especial note is the excellence of the marking, the setting of learning targets for each pupil and the monitoring of pupils' progress towards these. All teachers have, in their mark books, statistics regarding each pupil's previous best performance. Pupils know and understand what they need to do to improve. The transfer of information across year groups and key stages helps to ensure continuity of progress; and the detailed analyses of previous years' examination results by gender, ethnicity and teaching groups, are examples of excellent practice. Teachers have very high expectations and set pupils very challenging tasks. As an example, a Year 11 pupil who entered the school with below average attainment is now able to ask the question of George, when in a role play situation discussing Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, "Do you feel in any way responsible for the death of Curley's wife?", so demonstrating an understanding of the text well beyond the literal.
87. There are many excellent examples of the development of ICT skills in English, especially in pupils' media studies coursework folders. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to develop as independent learners, for example, when a class of Year 11 pupils was divided into two groups, each with a digital camera, to go out onto the campus to do a 'photo shoot' of the pop group culture they were studying. The development was then to download the images and, by using the computer programme *Photodraw*, to enhance their photographs. This was supplemented by imaginatively written captions.
88. The overall quality of teaching in English is very good. In the lessons sampled during the inspection almost all teaching was good, very good or excellent. Teaching observed was excellent in two thirds of cases, which is a very remarkable proportion. Pupils' positive attitudes, response, behaviour and progress are directly related to this. All teaching in Years 10 and 11 seen was excellent. In Years 7 to 9 there is more of a challenge to teachers to provide suitably differentiated tasks because of the very wide ability range in most of the teaching groups. Some of these groups have support from a classroom assistant whilst others do not. Some classroom assistants work closely with the teacher to support the learning of many pupils whilst others are more restricted in what they do. The corporate approach to teaching is a major strength of the department. All lessons start with a clear statement of aims, objectives and purpose often demonstrated in a lively manner with humour to engage pupils' interest. There were many examples of excellent planning, with time limits set for a variety of interesting activities that ensured that the lesson progressed at a brisk pace.

89. The provision of excellent resources complements the excellent teaching. For example, colour prints of Van Gogh's *Starry Night* were used very imaginatively to inspire descriptive writing. Carnival music was played quietly in the background of a lesson to inspire pupils who were writing about festivals. Local newspaper articles were used very effectively to generate group discussions about heroes, heroines and villains. Video clips were skilfully used to enhance the writing of an information leaflet. A teacher ingeniously used nonsense verse to facilitate pupils' understanding of poetry conventions. In many lessons in Years 10 and 11, teachers made direct reference to GCSE grade criteria to be studied for homework in order to encourage pupils to aspire to even higher levels of achievement.
90. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and their enthusiasm and willingness to 'go the extra mile' are an inspiration to the pupils. Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils are significant in maintaining progress and raising standards. The relationships enable a culture of high expectations that impacts directly on to the very good progress that pupils of all abilities make. For example, the Year 11 group of less able pupils discussing *Of Mice and Men* were expected to attain far higher than typically accepted for such a group. They did.
91. Departmental leadership and management are excellent despite the lack of a second in department. Morale is high and has a direct impact in raising standards. The handbook and recently revised schemes of work that take account of the new national Key Stage 3 framework for English place the department in a strong position to raise standards even higher. Performance management reviews are in process. There is also an efficient and effective monitoring system through 'book trawls' and classroom observations. The departmental handbook sets out clear strategies for raising standards among boys.
92. The addressing of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is another major strength of the department and has a significant impact on pupils' attainment in a number of areas. Literature essays and group discussions frequently benefit from the careful consideration of moral issues. Social development is enhanced by the wide variety of small group and paired activities. Close study of art and poetry from other cultures and traditions encourages pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness. There are specific schemes of work, for example, the one on 'Festivals', that contribute to cultural development.
93. The contribution made by other subjects to pupils' competence in literacy is good. Lesson observations across the curriculum provided evidence of the use of word walls, writing frames and the teaching of the spelling of subject-specific vocabulary, except in mathematics. In modern foreign languages, the department is teaching some lessons using the format of the primary literacy hour.
94. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Oral skills for the majority of pupils are now secure, the success of media studies has been maintained and the results at the end of both key stages have improved. There are now many opportunities for the direct teaching of reading skills and language understanding. Pupils are positively encouraged to, and become, independent learners. A very high proportion of teaching has moved from good or very good to excellent in terms of its quality and its impact on learning.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress; and the monitoring of pupils' subject performance;
- The quality of teaching;
- Performance in mathematics well above that of similar schools;
- Attitudes and behaviour of pupils in mathematics lessons;
- Relationships between staff and pupils;
- The use of homework to support teaching and learning in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The development of ICT resources and the use of ICT to support teaching and learning;
- The monitoring of standards of marking in exercise books;
- More opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in using and applying mathematics at Key Stage 3;
- Some elements of provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language;
- Teaching strategies for pupils in mixed ability classes to meet the needs of all pupils.

[Evidence for this report was based on the observation of 17 lessons, interviews with the head of mathematics, subject teachers and pupils and the detailed scrutiny of samples of work drawn from every year group from pupils of all abilities.]

95. Pupils' results in the national tests at the age of 14 have been well below national averages for the last few years. The number of pupils attaining a Level 5 or above is well below national averages. Few pupils achieve Level 6 or above. Over the period 1997 to 2000, improvement in results has been broadly in line with the national trend. There was a significant drop in 1999, due to a weak cohort of pupils. However, when compared to similar schools, the schools' performance is well above their average. At GCSE, pupils' results have been well below national averages. Trends have been slightly above national trends. However, the performance is well above average when compared to similar schools.
96. The overall standard of Year 9 pupils' work seen in books and lessons reflects recent performance in national tests and is well below the national average. However, taking into account pupils' attainment on entry to the school, they make good progress in most areas of mathematics and achieve well. They develop their mental skills through short activities at the beginning of lessons and are able to use number effectively when solving problems. Pupils demonstrated good mental skills when working out the difference between pairs of numbers, and are able to add and subtract quickly in their heads. Higher attaining Year 7 pupils demonstrate good understanding of number, adding and subtracting fractions accurately. Low attaining pupils know the key points to include in graphs when plotting the results of their surveys. Pupils demonstrate good understanding of the size of angles and can estimate them accurately. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise using and applying mathematics skills in problem-solving, working in groups or using computers.

97. The overall standard of Year 11 pupils' work is well below the national average. However, pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11, and develop their confidence and competence in all areas of mathematics. Higher attaining pupils use higher level algebra skills when working with equations and plotting graphs. Low attaining pupils show clear gains in knowledge and understanding of number and are able to use number skills when working out VAT costs. Pupils gather information and draw different types of graphs, commenting on what they show. They show good levels of independent working and problem-solving skills in their coursework tasks. Mental and oral skills are well developed by some teachers through a short activity at the beginning of lessons. Achievement of pupils by the time they reach 16 is good and they make good progress. There is no significant difference between boys and girls in any groups. Most pupils enjoy mathematics, are very well behaved and very enthusiastic and concentrate well. Positive attitudes in lessons have a significant impact on the quality of work.
98. The quality of presentation in the books of some boys, particularly of lower attaining pupils, is unsatisfactory. The attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory although, in weaker lessons, the teachers' planning lacks detail and pupils only make satisfactory progress. Teachers make insufficient use of assessment to find out what pupils understand and to use this as a basis for planning what work each pupils should do. In such lessons, there are no short term targets to give pupils incentives to learn, and insufficient opportunity to develop mathematical language. Progress is better where work is closely matched to need and where explanations are clear and focussed. Higher attaining pupils make good progress but in some lessons work is not sufficiently challenging, particularly with younger pupils in the mixed ability classes. In these lessons the work tends to be too easy for them and they coast along rather than moving forward at an appropriate pace.
99. The overall quality of teaching is good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons seen; and teaching was often good and sometimes very good. Roughly two thirds of lessons seen were good or better. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is good overall and significantly better with teachers who are subject specialists in mathematics teaching. When teaching is good, staff explain the content of the lesson clearly; what pupils are to learn, and how the lesson fits into a sequence of lessons on the topic. Planning caters for the range of abilities in the set, with easier work for lower attaining pupils and challenging extension work for the higher attaining pupils. Lessons move forward at a pace. Pupils are involved in the lesson and develop their speaking and listening skills when explaining to the class how they solve problems. Whilst pupils are working, teachers monitor their work, picking up any problems as they arise and stopping the group to explain where necessary. Marking is thorough, identifying errors and helping pupils to improve. Discipline is good and any instances of misbehaviour are quickly stopped. These teaching strategies ensure that pupils waste little time in lessons and make good progress. In some lessons, specialist teachers use national numeracy strategies effectively, helping pupils to develop their mental mathematical skills. However, this is only recently developed and pupils have not had sufficient time to significantly improve these skills. Plans are in place to develop pupils' numeracy skills in line with the National Numeracy Strategy.

100. In those lessons where teaching is not so good, teachers often have limited subject and sometimes teaching knowledge. Explanations are unclear or too rushed and work is not planned to meet the needs of all pupils. High standards of behaviour are not always expected. Some marking is superficial, with some work not marked and few comments on ways to improve or on careless and untidy work. In most lessons, computers are not used to enhance pupils' learning. However, a new suite of ten computers has recently been installed in one room and the department has plans to train teachers and support assistants in their use; and to integrate computer work into mathematics lessons.
101. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and low attaining pupils is satisfactory overall. However, in some lessons, all pupils do the same work. Assessment is not used to diagnose both group and individual weaknesses and devise learning programmes well tailored to pupils' particular needs. As a result, some topics are inappropriate and pupils have little understanding of underlying mathematical ideas. For example, one group of pupils could add fractions accurately but did not fully understand what fractions were. Teachers do not always set short term, meaningful targets to improve pupils' mathematical skills and presentation of work; and little use is made of computers. Mathematical language is insufficiently developed, for example, by focussing on mathematical words for the topic that pupils should know and use.
102. The attendance of a small number of pupils is poor. They miss a lot of work and do not make appropriate progress as a consequence.
103. Improvements since the last inspection have been hampered by staffing problems. However, this has been resolved and there is now a new mathematics department with keen and enthusiastic specialist teachers. The department is well led and managed. Departmental documentation and curriculum plans gives clear guidelines to staff including non-specialist teachers. However, long-term plans to systematically address issues such as raising standards, developing the numeracy provision and the use of computers lack detail. Resources in mathematics are satisfactory overall. However, computer systems are recently installed; and software is limited. As a result, pupils cannot get the necessary access to computers on a day-to-day basis to enhance their learning. Other resources are adequate overall. Accommodation is good in mathematics, which has a suite of rooms. Some good display in classrooms positively enhances the working environment.
104. Despite aspects that are still in need of further development, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have continued to rise. Several new specialist staff have been appointed. Teaching is good, with over two-thirds of teaching seen good or better. There are improved systems for assessment and recording of pupils' progress. Plans are in place to implement the National Numeracy Strategy. Departmental plans address the main issues raised in the inspection. The relatively new department is working well together to develop a team spirit. Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good and have a significant impact on their progress in lessons.

SCIENCE

The quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- Good overall progress made by pupils of all abilities as they move from Years 7 to 11;
- The high quality of the relationships between teachers and pupils;
- Overall, the quality of teaching is high;
- The very positive way in which the department has responded to the findings of the last inspection and has made significant improvements to help pupils in their learning.
- The high quality leadership of the head of science who has a vision for what is possible and supports staff in its realisation.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of ICT to support learning;
- The need for more appropriate teaching approaches to support those pupils who make the least progress;
- Insufficient emphasis on developing investigative skills in Years 7 to 9;
- Good practice within the department is not systematically shared;
- Some laboratories need refurbishment.

[During the inspection 18 lessons were observed, pupils' work in both key stages was scrutinised and discussions were held with the head of department.]

105. Standards reached by pupils in national tests at the age of 14 have risen steadily since the last inspection from 26% to 46% of pupils achieving Level 5 or above. This is below the national figure of 66% but is an achievement in line with that of the top quarter of all similar schools in the country. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 6 is also in line with the top quarter of similar schools. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys. The standards of work seen during the inspection reflected this recent test performance. The school has recently undertaken an analysis of achievement by gender and ethnicity. This indicates that whilst most groups are making good progress in science, Pakistani boys make least progress.
106. Standards reached by pupils aged 16 have risen in line with the national trend from 35% of pupils gaining a GCSE grade between A* and C at the time of the last inspection to 40% in 2000. Pupils examined in 2001 studied either double science or single science. The percentage of pupils gaining GCSE A* to C grades in double science rose to 46%, which is close to the national average figure of 52%. In the single science examination 8% of pupils achieved an A* to C grade compared to the national figure of 18%. In both examinations, the performance of boys was significantly below that of girls, reversing the position of the previous four years. These results show that, although standards for pupils aged 14 remain below the national average, the progress made by pupils during Years 10 and 11 is better than that achieved nationally. Work seen during the inspection reflected this picture.
107. During Years 7 to 9 pupils are developing their use of scientific vocabulary and can, for example, use this and their increasing understanding of electricity, to explain how simple circuits work and to suggest what is wrong if a circuit fails to work as expected. They can prepare slides and use microscopes to see onion cells in detail.

By the end of Year 9 they can undertake numerical work on pressure and turning moments. They are developing their practical skills. They can measure and record data, and plot graphs carefully and accurately. They have some opportunities to develop their investigative skills; by the end of the key stage they can look for patterns in, for example, a series of graphs showing the growth of a baby. However, although pupils understand the concept of a 'fair test', in the lessons observed they found it difficult to plan a practical investigation, to make predictions and to control variables.

108. The notes made by Year 10 and 11 pupils are often very detailed indeed. By the end of Year 11 they have, for example, a detailed knowledge of cell division, electrical circuits and the reactivity of metals. They can undertake numerical work on electrical resistance, calculate formula mass and balance chemical equations. Pupils' investigative skills are developed more effectively in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, in consequence of well-taught preparation for public examinations. The majority of pupils can undertake research into the science underlying a scientific investigation and plan the investigation itself, controlling the variables and choosing the range over which the variables will be measured. Most pupils can record data and plot graphs showing, for example, how a derived variable such as the resistance of a bulb varies with the current flowing through it. Most can also identify and comment on anomalous results. The great majority of pupils' work is very well presented and almost all of it shows that pupils take a pride in what they are doing. Almost all work is marked in detail and teachers often write comments that will help pupils clear up a misunderstanding or correct an error. All marking is positive and encouraging although occasionally, in Years 7 to 9, marking focuses too much on the presentation of the work. Sometimes teachers do not follow up the work that they have asked pupils to complete.
109. The standard of teaching in science is at least satisfactory, and often better. Most lessons are good or very good and sometimes excellent. Lessons have a sense of urgency, there are very good relationships between the teachers and pupils and humour is often evident. Teachers show a genuine concern for pupils' well-being as well as their progress in science. Teachers are patient and skilled at managing behaviour and defusing potential difficulties. They have high expectations of behaviour and of the standards of work pupils should reach. Tasks are set which usually match the learning needs of pupils and where appropriate, different support materials are provided to help all pupils succeed. Support for pupils who have English as an additional language is limited but effective. Teachers often direct questions at named pupils and skilfully help them to articulate their thinking. Sometimes analogies are used to help pupils understand difficult concepts such as electricity or displacement reactions in chemistry. Care is taken to ensure that pupils know and understand the relevant scientific vocabulary. In some lessons pupils have the opportunity to develop their literacy skills by reading to each other from scientific texts. Most lessons have a clear structure where what is to be learnt is shared with pupils at the beginning and summarised at the end by engaging the pupils in a question and answer session. Teachers are willing to try new approaches to lessons; for example the use of a model landscape to simulate biological sampling techniques, data logging to monitor changes in temperature and concept mapping to identify prior learning and possible misconceptions.

110. Occasionally teachers do too much of the work and as a result, pupils miss opportunities to think for themselves. Sometimes teachers direct questions predominantly at those pupils who are eager to contribute; this allows others to remain uninvolved. Lessons are often full of activity and sometimes, as a result, teachers run out of time, and opportunities to consolidate learning are missed. From time to time teachers forget to help pupils' learning by capturing and representing ideas on the blackboard. None of these omissions are significant enough to inhibit learning or to make lessons unsatisfactory; nevertheless a higher degree of consistency in these aspects of teaching would help to raise standards further.
111. Many improvements have been made in response to the last inspection to help pupils learn more effectively. Some of these are evident in the high quality of teaching observed but, in addition, there are now planned opportunities for pupils to undertake independent learning and structured notes of guidance to help them in this aspect of their work. Lower attaining pupils now receive accreditation through the 'Unit Award Scheme'. Teachers have begun to use 'Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education' materials to develop pupils' thinking skills. Although pupils' investigative skills are still not well developed at Key Stage 3, opportunities for pupils to develop these skills have been built into the curriculum and helpful materials produced to support their progress. All the health and safety issues raised in the previous inspection report have been dealt with.
112. The use of ICT has improved slightly since the last inspection. Teachers are computer literate and begin further training on the use of computers in science lessons shortly. There are plans to increase the number of computers available in science. Pupils can use data loggers, access web sites, use spreadsheets to display data and watch computer simulations of scientific phenomena; but the use of ICT is not yet widespread and teachers are aware that this area of work needs to be developed further.
113. The science department is well led. Despite a difficult staffing situation and the low attainment of pupils on entry, there is a shared vision of what can be achieved and a strong determination by all staff to succeed in reaching aspirational targets for pupils at both key stages. The department has responded well to recent initiatives such as 'Excellence in Cities'. This has provided contexts for scientific investigations that have particularly helped to extend links with the wider community.
114. Further work is needed to develop pupils' investigative skills in Years 7 to 9. Additional work is required to extend the use of ICT in science and to share innovative approaches and best practice amongst the science team. Teachers are not yet exploring strategies which would support groups of pupils known to be making the least progress. Some science laboratories do not meet the needs of a 21st century curriculum and give rise to crowding when some aspects of practical work are undertaken.

ART AND DESIGN

The quality of provision for art and design is **very good**.

Strengths

- Pupils' progress in art and design is very good throughout their time in school;
- The quality of teaching is very good; there is a high level of challenge and an expectation that the pupils will achieve their full potential;
- Leadership and management of the department are very effective;
- Relationships are very positive; pupils have the ambition to do well;
- Assessment is very thorough, giving both teachers and pupils detailed information about how well they are doing so that they can plan together effectively to improve further.

Areas for improvement.

- The use of pupils' very good art and design skills to enhance their learning in ICT and design and technology;
- The accuracy of identifying the newly introduced National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9.

[Nine one hour lessons were seen, five in Years 7 to 9 and four in Years 10 and 11. There were interviews with the head of department and the technician, discussions with staff and pupils, a review of documentation and work in folders as well as an analysis of work in progress.]

115. Standards are very good in art and design. The teachers' assessments of the attainment of 14-year-olds last year (2000) suggested that the number reaching the expected Level 5 was below the national average. However, a good look at the displays of those pupils, as well as the work in progress by the present Year 9, indicates that most pupils are achieving levels around the national average, and several above it. The levels are newly introduced and as yet there are no visual standards published to help teachers to identify them accurately. The staff used the level descriptions that were provided diligently and professionally, and they are aware that they appear to give harsh judgements on their pupils' achievements. Girls were judged to have achieved much better than the boys, but again in lessons this difference is not currently apparent.
116. Pupils are progressing very well from entry to the school through to the end of Year 9. Many enter with a limited experience of art and design, but by the time the inspection took place, just before Christmas, the youngest pupils have made remarkable gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. They are confident and assured in their art work. They have developed a liking for the subject and are producing work of a high standard in a range of techniques. These include drawing, where they make detailed observational studies of fruit, and ceramics, where they are experimenting with making masks from different cultures and for different purposes. Those in Year 9 have progressed to making exciting and thoughtful landscapes using texture and different media which are then developed into pictures and wall hangings. In printmaking and sculpture, they develop their ideas about art and design from the excellent research in their sketchbooks, which are used very well. Pupils extend their studies through homework and sometimes extra work outside class hours. Pupils needing additional consideration such as gifted and talented pupils, those with special educational needs and those needing extra help with English, are

identified in teachers' planning and have special attention when needed so that they all progress appropriately. Standards are similar to those mentioned in the previous inspection report, but now the pupils use a much wider range of art and design experiences. They talk more lucidly about their own work and that of other artists, recording their experiences, ideas and analysis of artists' and designers' work in their sketchbooks.

117. The standards achieved in GCSE examinations are high. In 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in art and design was above the national average, and in the general art and design paper it was well above. Pupils usually achieved better than they did in their other subjects. The trend in improvement has been steadily upward over the past five years, and in fact the 2001 results were slightly lower than before, but in line with predictions. A review of some of the folders of pupils who took last year's examinations suggests that it was the final test piece that let them down, and most of their work was of a higher standard. The art and design staff are aware of this and are making strenuous efforts to prepare their pupils for the final test so that they can achieve their full potential. In the new GNVQ course, the teachers have also identified where problems might arise as much of the testing is written work. They are helping the pupils to understand the questions and prepare them for the tests very thoroughly. The GCSE pupils have progressed very quickly in Years 10 and 11, many Year 10 pupils are already producing work which would achieve a good grade in their GCSEs, both in the general paper and in three-dimensional studies. Large scale pots and sculptures based on cubism are particularly good, as are the vigorous paintings and prints they produce and the glass and ceramic models based on natural forms. The quality of their drawing is sometimes weaker; but the excellent work they put into their sketchbooks, by using collage, mixed media and research from books and the internet, overcomes this so that they can express their ideas freely and with confidence and maturity.
118. All pupils in Years 10 and 11, whatever their needs, are helped to reach their potential throughout their GCSE and GNVQ courses. Both boys and girls achieved equally well last year, which meant that the boys achieved much higher grades than is usually expected, as nationally boys do not do as well as girls do in art and design. Progress in standards since the last inspection has been good. Then they were in line with national averages, but now they are above, and the progress has also been in the variety of work and the awareness that pupils have of the world of art and design. The use of artists in residence to work alongside the pupils preparing for examinations is very effective, and is an innovative use of their placements. They attempt the same questions from the examination paper as the pupils; and their ideas are displayed around the school, motivating other pupils to do well in art and design.
119. Pupils' literacy skills are encouraged and developed thoroughly. Key words in art and design are displayed around the studios and specific words relating to each activity are pinned up and discussed before and after each lesson. Examination questions are explained and discussed in preparation for work. Teachers are supportive and sympathetic, but still demand high standards in written work and presentation. Numeracy skills are less evident.
120. Year 9 pupils have regular lessons in the ICT rooms with a specialist teacher to develop their skills in using computers and other equipment to support their work in art and design. The lessons are focussed on gaining technical skills, which is the

right priority, but as yet these exercises do not include a development of the pupils' excellent art and design work in their sketchbooks. This would encourage the crossover between art and technology that the department has identified as its aim. There are also stand alone computers in art studios; the department uses *Apple Mac* machines which are the industry standard for graphics. These resources are very good, but their use is limited. There is some evidence of good computer work in folders and on display, and there is a lot of research using the internet available in the sketchbooks, but this work is usually done at home or outside of lesson time. When it is used as an integral part of art and design projects, such as in the Fauves project, then the results are excellent. Teachers are developing their own ICT skills through study and professional development within the department and outside.

121. The quality of teaching is very good; in some cases seen it was excellent. There is a high level of challenge and expectation, and very good control of the different classes. One impressive feature is the innovative use of music to establish the mood of a particular project. Pupils listen attentively and respond positively without embarrassment to a range of different music such as aboriginal, African or modern western composers and produce images from their feelings and reactions to the sounds. The planning is thorough, detailed and linked to the exemplary assessment systems that have been developed. These identify attainment, progress, and areas for development for each of the pupils, involve them in discussions about their work and set clear targets. Marking is supportive and comments are used well to point to ways to improve further, but some of the objectives shared with pupils during their classes are more about the content of the activities than learning outcomes. The teachers extend their skills by sharing expertise and helping each other. They attend professional development courses which are linked to priorities established in the regular departmental reviews that are monitored by senior management. The technician is used very well to help teachers prepare their lessons and complete tasks such as firing the kilns, building up resources and printing worksheets and assessment forms. This enables teachers to concentrate on their teaching and focus on raising standards. The technician also provides valuable work in supporting pupils in their research at lunchtimes.
122. A particularly impressive feature of the school is the excellent ethos for learning that the staff have established over a number of years. Relationships are very good, both between teachers and pupils and between different pupils. The pupils want to learn, try hard to improve, and co-operate very well in class. The lessons are productive, and pupils finish the work well when given clear timings for each task, and often do extra work outside school hours to extend and develop their ideas, particularly in their sketchbooks.
123. There has been significant progress since the last inspection four years ago. This is now a very good department, and is a strength of the school. Standards by the time pupils leave are now above national averages, progressing rapidly from the low level they were at when they arrived. Pupils now study in a wide range of materials and techniques and produce very good work in all of them, and they are involved in many exciting cross curricular links with other subjects. Partnerships with galleries, businesses and other institutions are highly developed. The school is often contacted by them because of the good work they have done in the past. This work has been recognised nationally by an *Artsmark* gold award from the Arts Council of England. The head of department led the writing of this bid across several areas of the school

curriculum. The process was very useful in identifying and establishing links between subjects and arts activities. Pupils benefit from these links. The Year 11 pupils interviewed were very aware of the role of art and design in society and all were achieving beyond the initial expectations they had on arrival at the school.

124. The art and design department contributes extensively to the personal development of pupils. It is enhanced by the way pupils are encouraged to reflect on their work, on feelings, creativity and spirituality. There is a clear moral code; pupils respond to the well established classroom routines and high expectations of behaviour from teachers. Their social development is very good; no tensions or conflict are evident in class, and pupils co-operate well in mixed groups. A considerable range of different cultural aspects are included in the art and design lessons, and pupils gain experience of working with galleries and artists in residence on a regular basis.
125. The accommodation and resources are very good and used very well. Computers could be used more creatively, but the staff are developing this and also the links with design and technology to benefit both areas. Displays in studios, corridors and offices are exciting, colourful and informative, and confirm the status of art and design in the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- High standards of attainment by all pupils in all years;
- Strong subject leadership that enthuses both pupils and subject teachers;
- Good teaching that ensures that pupils make good progress;
- Some outstanding work in food, graphics and textiles;
- Very constructive relationships between pupils and teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Co-ordination of the teaching of design across courses in different specialist materials;
- Further development of CAD/CAM in work with resistant materials and textiles.

[Evidence was gathered from national and school-based assessments, observations of 11 lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and by discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.]

126. Design and technology is a strength of the school with well-qualified, experienced teachers enthusing pupils and enabling them to make good progress and achieve high standards of work. Such is the quality of the support offered that many pupils do better in design and technology than in any other of the subjects that they study. Overall standards of attainment are slightly above the national average. This is a significant achievement in relation to pupils' low standards of attainment on entry into Year 7.
127. The overall standards of attainment reached by pupils at the age of 14 are in line with all schools nationally (66% compared with 67% nationally). The difference between boys and girls attainment measured by teachers' formal assessments at age 14 is above the national figure (23% compared with 15% nationally). However, evidence

in lessons would suggest girls make similar progress to boys. The reason for this difference is not clear and should be explored.

128. The standards achieved by pupils at the age of 16 have improved since the previous inspection. They are now above the average for all schools nationally, a significant achievement particularly when compared with that of pupils from similar schools. Many pupils achieved higher grades in their graphics and textiles courses last year than they achieved in any other subject. Vocational courses in manufacturing have been recently introduced. Interim assessments together with work seen during the inspection suggest results will be on a par with existing GCSE courses. In previous years the school has offered very popular catering courses; and these are due to be reintroduced now that staffing issues have been resolved. Unlike many schools, not all pupils in Years 10 and 11 study a design and technology subject. The reason for this is the need to create space in the timetable for some pupils to study vocational courses. Pupils of all abilities who are following a design and technology course in Years 10 and 11 make good progress. The close support teachers give to pupils with special educational needs enable them to make similar gains in learning and access the same projects as other pupils.
129. Pupils' skills in making things are well developed with pupils using a range of materials and techniques to produce products of high quality. The projects in Years 7 to 9 cover an appropriate range of materials and techniques, including food, resistant materials, graphics and control. However, the lack of opportunities for pupils to work with textiles should be addressed. Such opportunities would help pupils to make better-informed choices about which subjects to study in Years 10 and 11. Design skills are taught well by individual teachers but this is not coordinated effectively across the different specialist areas of design and technology.
130. The overall quality of teaching is good, an improvement on the previous inspection. Teaching seen varied from poor to excellent, but was satisfactory or better in eight out of ten lessons. The teaching in graphics and food is a strength of the subject. Some excellent teaching was observed in food lessons. Enthusiastic teachers with very good subject knowledge plan well, prepare thoroughly and inspire the pupils. In graphics, pupils were actively engaged in evolving corporate logos for a hamburger chain. Here, the teacher used examples of commercial graphics as stimulus and all pupils produced valid suggestions. In the same group one girl had used computer graphics to develop variations on a corporate logo equal in quality to those of a professional graphic designer. In food lessons the teachers' approach is very similar to that in a commercial kitchen. Visitors to the food technology area may be forgiven for thinking they had stumbled across the kitchen of a TV chef. Thorough preparation well before school starts enables practical food lessons to proceed at a very brisk pace. Teachers maintain a constant dialogue with pupils, keeping them on task, and explaining both the processes and principles behind the work. In Years 7 to 9 pupils work towards the national *Taste of Success* awards up to gold level and most Year 9 pupils achieve their *Basic Food Hygiene* accreditation. Individual teachers in all specialist material areas teach designing effectively, but there are few links made between their approaches. A common approach to the planning and teaching of design should be developed to help pupils recognise common aspects and highlight differences of approach in specialist materials. This should lead to improved understanding and capability in designing. Assessment procedures are

well planned and implemented, giving pupils a clear idea of the standard they are working at and clear indications how they can improve.

131. Teachers and classroom assistants support pupils extremely well, enabling pupils of all abilities to engage fully in activities. This is also the case for pupils for whom English is an additional language. In a small number of lessons, pupils were insufficiently clear about the purpose of the lesson. Apart from one lesson where a pupil acted in a dangerous manner, pupils responded very well, working for lengthy periods to produce high quality outcomes. They co-operated well on group tasks and were willing to share resources. Pupils took an active part in discussions and respected the views of others. Pupils were seen to be making good progress in the majority of lessons, an improvement on the situation reported in the previous inspection. Teachers use displays of work effectively to support lessons and celebrate pupils' work very well. Appropriate homework is set, building on the work planned for lessons. Links with parents are good, and especially effective in ensuring that examination coursework is completed. However, a small number of pupils are taken out of school by their parents for prolonged periods. This sometimes happens at crucial times in GCSE courses and adversely affects their examination results.
132. Courses are well structured, allowing pupils of all abilities to develop and apply their knowledge of materials and techniques. Opportunities exist for the development of designing skills and the making of quality products. The range of materials offered in Key Stage 3 is good apart from the lack of any work with textiles. This will disadvantage pupils when opting for courses to follow at Key Stage 4. Opportunities for pupils to use electronic and other control systems are in place although some of the techniques are outdated. Activities should be revised to incorporate new technologies such as programmable interface controllers and circuit design software. The excellent work seen using Computer Aided Design (CAD) for graphics has yet to be extended into work in resistant materials and textiles. Recent software and equipment purchases enable the department to have the capacity for further development of CAD/CAM in resistant materials. Design and technology teachers have very good access to computers and utilise them very well. Use of ICT in design and technology benefits from teachers who also teach ICT lessons.
133. Pupils following food courses operate a very successful 'Holyhead Restaurant' on commercial lines. There are rich opportunities here for pupils to consider the cultural aspects of design and technology within the food areas; but the cultural aspects of textiles are underdeveloped. Opportunities to consider the social impact of technologies are also underdeveloped. There are good links with businesses, including the graphics work previously mentioned and visits for vocational pupils to see injection moulding. Specialist rooms are open before school and at lunch times for pupils to continue the work started in lessons; and teachers have organised Easter and summer classes for various groups. Theme park visits are used to support work and teams have entered and won local raft races.
134. Leadership of design and technology is very good with well-planned schemes of work and efficient use of resources. An exception to this is the textiles room. It is too small, falling well short of the DfES guidelines for the range of activities and number of pupils. During a Year 10 lesson with 21 pupils it was difficult to move around the room due to the proximity of furniture and resources. Technician support is shared with art and design, severely limiting the time available for design and

technology. The extra pressure this places on teachers, preparing materials and maintaining rooms, distracts them from their main task of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Professional development for teachers is well organised and targeted on the needs of the school. Development planning for design and technology is effective, focussing appropriately on issues for teaching and learning that emerge from thorough analysis of assessment information. Professional development has also been effective in addressing problems with staffing, minimising their detrimental impact on learning.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The attainment of pupils at GCSE level;
- The quality of teaching which enables pupils to progress well;
- The popularity of the subject in the school;
- The contribution the subject makes to the personal development of pupils;
- The strong leadership of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities for able pupils to develop enquiry skills so they can reach higher levels of attainment by the age of 14;
- Greater use of assessment information that is shared with pupils so that they know how to improve their geography work further;
- More opportunities for fieldwork, particularly related to physical geography in Years 10 and 11;
- Greater use of ICT in teaching geography.

[This report is based upon the observation of 9 lessons, discussions with the head of geography and other teachers and the scrutiny of representative samples of work from pupils of all abilities from each year group. Representative pupils were also asked about the progress that they were making.]

135. Pupils' overall standard of attainment in geography at the age of 14 is slightly below the national average. Teachers' assessments show a similar pattern of performance between girls and boys and that few pupils reach the higher levels. The work of pupils seen in this inspection show that the majority of pupils are working at a slightly higher level than the grades awarded in teachers' assessment last year indicate. The progress made by the great majority of pupils during the key stage is good however, as attainment on entry is low.

136. The attainment of pupils at GCSE is in line with national standards. In 1999 and 2000 GCSE higher-grade results were above the national average while in 2001 results were slightly disappointing for the department as they dipped below the school target and national average. Girls have outperformed boys consistently at the higher levels in the last three years. While this gender difference is a national trend, the percentage difference of girls' achievement in geography compared to boys is markedly wider in this school than in others. Evidence seen in this inspection indicates that standards remain at, or slightly above, the national average. While a good proportion of pupils is reaching the higher GCSE grades, it is also true that very few pupils are awarded the lowest grades. Pupils of all abilities do well in geography

at public examination level. Given that attainment on entry to the school is well below national expectations, the success of pupils at GCSE level is a fine achievement and indicative of the very good progress made by pupils of all abilities in Year 10 and 11 geography lessons.

137. By the age of 14 most pupils have a sound grasp of basic geographical knowledge of places. They can identify the major oceans, continents and British cities. They can compare countries at different stages of economic development and understand how this affects the lives of people. A particular strength of the department is the way teaching builds up pupils' knowledge of geographical patterns and processes such as weather patterns in Year 7, earthquake patterns in Year 8 and migration patterns in Year 9. For example, pupils in Year 8 were able to discuss at length the way the Earth's crust moves along plate boundaries to create earthquakes and volcanoes and they could describe examples of these such as the eruption of Mount Etna. They are beginning to use statistics, maps and graphs to answer geographical questions. Skills of geographical enquiry are under-developed, especially for more able pupils and this limits their access to the higher National Curriculum levels. Pupils need further opportunities to use geographical information to reach their own conclusions. By the age of 16, pupils have made very good progress; and some outstanding examples of geographical investigations were seen. Pupils could investigate transport problems in the local area, gather first hand evidence through questionnaires and surveys, present information in a variety of forms including graphs, maps, and extended writing and then analyse this data to reach their own conclusions. Some examples were seen of outstanding individual GCSE coursework assignments which had been highly commended by the examination awarding body.
138. Pupils enjoy geography lessons. They attend classes expecting to work hard but also in the knowledge that they will be well supported by their teachers. Pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject and their behaviour in lessons is generally very good. Over half the year group in Year 10 have chosen to take the subject as a GCSE option. This includes a significantly higher proportion of girls than in previous years, bringing a more even balance of boys and girls than seen in previous years.
139. The quality of teaching seen was good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and teaching in a quarter of lessons was very good. Teaching is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than Years 7 to 9. The basis of this good practice is the relationships built between the teachers and their pupils. Teachers give very good support to pupils. Certificates are awarded for good work and marking is very thorough. However, some younger pupils are not sufficiently sure about the steps they need to take to improve further in geography. Teachers provide personal attention to as many pupils as they can and give freely of their time outside lessons. Geography teachers care personally about the progress of all of the pupils that they teach, and these pupils duly respond positively to this encouragement. In a number of classes, teachers and pupils were clearly enjoying the lesson and the learning experience. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and know how to use this well to motivate and engage the pupils. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives that are shared with the pupils. All classes are taught in a brisk, purposeful manner.
140. Teachers are aware of literacy issues and they explain new subject-specific vocabulary carefully, often writing key words on the board. Examples were seen of pupils writing poetry in geography, for example, a Year 7 lesson on weather; and in

another class pupils were asked to write imaginatively about what they would see, hear and feel if they were in the rainforest. Homework is used effectively to support learning. Resources for teaching are good and teachers use an abundance of their own worksheets to support learning. Many of these are effective and correctly pitched at the appropriate level for the pupils. In some classes where the ability range is very wide, it is sometimes difficult for teachers to set sufficiently challenging tasks for all abilities. In other classes, the lack of teaching assistants meant teachers had difficulty managing all the pupils with special educational needs. In a minority of lessons, there was insufficient opportunity for pupil involvement. While pupils use new technology in their learning to research information and present data, for example, a Year 10 class had carried out research on Mexico using the internet, it is not regularly used for teaching geography.

141. The curriculum is well organised to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE syllabus. There is a good quality scheme of work for both key stages and a good range of resources for the topics studied. Additional time in Year 8 now brings the time devoted to geography in Years 7 to 9 into line with that typically found in other schools. Teachers and pupils said that two-hour afternoon lessons were sometimes not helpful as classes find it difficult to concentrate for that length of time. There are insufficient fieldwork opportunities in Years 10 and 11, especially in relation to physical geography.
142. A particular strength of this department is the way in which geography contributes towards the personal development of pupils. When introducing a topic on the rain forest, for example, the teacher used a magnificent video clip of sunlight over the forest to inspire the pupils. The effect of the natural world on the lives of pupils is often stressed, for example in work on the weather and flooding or on earthquakes and natural hazards. Classrooms have excellent displays of current events relating to geography and in so doing bring alive the importance of the subject to pupils. In one very good lesson the teacher discussed the difference between the economic terms, *standards of living* and *quality of life*, and then went on to discuss how this could relate to life in Handsworth. Combined with studies pupils carry out on a variety of countries in the world and on the problems of environmental issues, this department is making a considerable positive impact on the social, moral and spiritual development of the pupils.
143. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department leads by example and sets high standards for himself, his colleagues and pupils. There is recognition of the many achievements of the department in recent years but there is also a desire to improve still further. A good, accurate system of self-evaluation is in place and this informs the detailed improvement plan. The work of the department is supported by the clear policy statements set out in the good quality department handbook. The head of department monitors the progress of pupils and intervenes as necessary if pupils are identified as underachieving, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Challenging targets are set at both an individual pupil level and for all GCSE groups. While data on pupils' performance is used to review the effectiveness of the department, value-added data is relatively under-used. While the head of department expresses a strong desire to use the many strengths of all geography teachers to develop more consistent teaching styles and practice, there are few opportunities for teachers to observe other lessons or to review the work of pupils in other classes.

144. The geography department has made good progress since the last inspection. Pupils' performance in Years 10 and 11 continues to be high and pupils' progress is now swifter than described in the previous report. Teaching continues to be good and with the present mix of established teachers and new enthusiastic ones the department is well placed to make even further progress.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The attainment of pupils, particularly those entered for GCSE history;
- The quality of teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11;
- The support and guidance given to pupils in history;
- The positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils;
- The quality of the leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- A higher percentage of pupils achieving Levels 5 and 6 by the end of Year 9;
- A greater consistency in teaching methods across all members of the department;
- A greater emphasis on local history where appropriate;
- More use of value-added data in monitoring pupils' progress.

[This report is based upon the observation of 7 lessons, discussions with the head of history and other teachers and the scrutiny of representative samples of work from pupils of all abilities from each year group. Representative pupils were also asked about the progress that they were making.]

145. The achievement of pupils in history is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The standard of attainment of pupils aged 14 is considerably below standards achieved nationally, but pupils' progress is good, as standards on entry into Year 7 are very low. Progress is particularly swift in Year 7 where many pupils were observed making progress from Level 3 to Level 4. There has been a consistent rise in pupils' performance by the end of Year 9 in the last three years and the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 or above has increased by approximately 10% per year. Only a small minority of pupils reach Levels 6 or 7.

146. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is in line with national averages. The performance of girls has been consistently higher than that of boys and the gap between the performance of girls and boys has steadily increased in the last three years. However, the number of pupils choosing to take history in Years 10 and 11 has remained relatively low in recent years. Pupils who choose to take GCSE history achieve as well, and sometimes much better, in history than in the other subjects that they study. Pupils of all ability make very good progress in Years 10 and 11. These are significant improvements on standards reported in the last inspection. Difficulties with literacy limit the progress of lower ability pupils.

147. From the evidence of work seen during this inspection, pupils at the age of 14 know about historical events such as the Roman and Islamic civilizations, the religious and political changes in Tudor England and the industrial and economic changes that took place during the industrial revolution. They have knowledge of important

figures in history such as Henry VIII and Elizabeth I and they are beginning to make comparisons between events. For example, a Year 7 class was observed making comparisons between the Roman invasion of Britain under Claudius and Julius Caesar. They are able to understand historical terminology such as the medieval, Middle Ages, civil war, empire and revolution and pupils can sequence historical events and are building their understanding of chronology. Pupils use a variety of information to investigate historical questions including the use of artefacts and ICT. This skill was well shown by Year 9 pupils when carrying out their structured investigation into the slave trade. Pupils with English as an additional language were observed making very good progress. While pupils know about historical events and people they have difficulty using this information when considering questions of cause and consequence. Pupils also need to develop their skills when evaluating historical sources, as most tend to accept information presented as true rather than look for bias or reliability issues. More able pupils need to develop skills of selecting and using information to reach their own conclusions.

148. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils make very good progress. They understand difficult concepts such as how conflict is caused by differing attitudes and values. For example, a Year 11 group was observed discussing the cause of conflict between American settlers and Native American Indians in the 19th century. They clearly understood that historical events were caused through fundamental cultural differences between these groups of people. Pupils also have strengths in their individual coursework studies where a number of very good pieces of extended writing were seen investigating issues such as the conflict in Kashmir. They have a sound appreciation of historical change in the history of medicine although they have some difficulty when comparing the relative importance of historical figures and also in evaluating historical sources of information.
149. Pupils generally enjoy history lessons and they often show positive attitudes towards the subject. Some pupils mentioned it as their favourite subject. There was no obvious difference between the attitudes of boys and girls. Behaviour in lessons seen was always satisfactory and often very good. Pupils generally work hard in history lessons although concentration slipped if they were asked to listen for extended periods of time or if the tasks set were not appropriately time-referenced. Pupils worked well in pairs or larger groups. They co-operated with each other and this was often helpful in their learning as they were able to share ideas and develop a common understanding of the issue. A good example of this was a Year 10 class seen working together in small groups on a chronology exercise revising the key events in the history of medicine.
150. The quality of teaching in history is good. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory and two out of three lessons observed were good or very good. The quality of teaching in the department has markedly improved since the last inspection. In all lessons seen, teachers showed a passion for the subject and they used their knowledge to engage and enthuse the pupils. For example, in one lesson about the Spanish Armada the teacher re-enacted Sir Francis Drake playing bowls as he heard the news of the invasion ships approaching England. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and this is built on the mutual trust and respect shown for all. Pupils receive excellent help and support. Marking of work is very good and individual curriculum targets are identified for each pupil, especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers show good awareness of literacy issues and use glossaries to

develop subject-specific vocabulary, writing frames to support extended writing and identify key words to be learnt in each lesson. Resources for learning are very good including some very good quality school-produced worksheets, often differentiated for the variety of ability levels in mixed ability classes. Lessons are always well planned and are based on a high quality, detailed scheme of work. The classroom management skill of history teachers is very good and this allows lessons to be both challenging for pupils but conducted in a relaxed and supportive environment. History classrooms have very high quality displays of pupils' work, and they are exciting and stimulating places to learn. The less successful lessons gave few opportunities for pupils to participate or think for themselves. In a minority of lessons learning objectives were too general and were excessively focussed on factual information rather than skills and understanding. There are some difficulties in certain mixed-ability classes in differentiating the work for the wide range of ability; and some instances were observed where slower learners were unable to complete tasks. There is also little in-class support for pupils with high levels of special educational needs. The department has made strides to develop materials for gifted and talented pupils; and extension work is often effectively used with these pupils.

151. Pupils' learning in history is well supported by a good curriculum that is enriched by helpful extra-curricular activities. A history club has been successful, running Saturday visits to places such as Cadbury World. Pupils have opportunities to visit the Imperial War Museum, the history of medicine museum in Leeds and Warwick Castle. The department has recently been given additional teaching time in Year 8 which brings the proportion of curriculum time across Key Stage 3 devoted to history into line with that normally found in other schools. This extra time is being well used by the department. The department is also making greater use of new technology to aid learning; and some very good examples were observed of pupils using computers to research and present historical information. The amount of curriculum time devoted to local history needs to be strengthened. The curriculum is sensitively organised to reflect the background of pupils. For example, Year 9 pupils have the opportunity to study famous Africans as part of the events of Black History month.
152. The leadership and management of the department are both good. There is a very comprehensive department handbook that gives clear policy statements and the aims and vision for the department. A very good review and self-evaluation report gives direction for the department and this is accurate, clear and closely linked to whole-school priorities. However, some of the objectives set out in the improvement plan are not easily measurable and in reviewing pupil progress more could be made of value-added data. The head of department supports the work of colleagues and has developed good practice to improve the quality of teaching in the department. However, more formal processes to monitor teaching and review pupils' work are under-developed.
153. The history department has made good progress since the last inspection. Strengths identified then, such as pupils' performance in Years 10 and 11, have been maintained and standards have risen steadily in Years 7 to 9. The department now has high aspirations for all pupils and is moving forward purposefully with initiatives such as developments to support further gifted and talented pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall the provision for ICT is **very good**.

Strengths

- High standards and good progress for pupils in all years;
- Strong leadership with clear vision and direction;
- Very good teaching in all years;
- Positive relationships and excellent support for pupils;
- ICT use by many subjects.

Areas for improvement

- Use of e-mail and the school website;
- Opportunities to consider the social implications of technology.

[Evidence was gathered from national and school assessments, observing 7 lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and by discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.]

154. Overall standards of attainment in ICT are in line with the national average by the age of 14, even though pupils come into the school at the age of 11 with relatively few ICT skills. Compared with similar schools, pupils achieve much higher standards both at the age of 14 and 16. Pupils make equally good progress in every year from Year 7 to 11. At age 16, many pupils gain examination results in ICT that are higher than in all of their other subjects. Girls achieve higher grades than boys and the difference is approximately half a grade more than that found nationally. Although standards are still above the average for all schools nationally, the number of pupils gaining A* to C grades has been falling over the last three years, 71% in 1999, 68.5% in 2000 and now 55% in 2001. Despite recent falls, since the previous inspection pupils' standard of attainment has risen.
155. Overall, the quality of teaching in the ICT lessons seen was very good. In all of these lessons teaching was good or better. In two thirds of cases, teaching was very good or excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, they plan thoroughly and set clear objectives. Teachers support pupils extremely well helping them to make good progress. In a small number of lessons, lengthy practical activities would benefit from being broken into shorter steps to maintain pace. Teachers monitor the work of pupils closely and provide clear guidance on how their work can be improved. They make good use of pupils presenting their work to others. A Year 10 pupil demonstrated adding a hotspot link to a web page very confidently.
156. The subject leader for ICT works closely with other curriculum areas helping them to plan ICT-related activities. Many teachers are now using ICT to create high quality work in art, English, religious education, design and technology and media studies. Pupils were seen using data logging equipment to plot the heating curve for ice in science; and modern foreign language pupils have created an interactive on-screen guide for visitors to the school. Pupils make very good use of text, diagrams, scanned images and digital photographs. Pupils in media studies showed considerable maturity and skill in setting up and capturing 'pop-idol' scenes using digital cameras. The images were then manipulated using image-processing software. ICT was seen being used very effectively in a business and communication

lesson where pupils used *Word*, *Publisher* and *Excel* programs to create headed notepaper, message pads and identity cards.

157. Subjects where the use of ICT is underdeveloped include music, science, history, geography and mathematics although spreadsheet work to explore number bonds was seen in Year 8 where timetabled ICT lessons use mathematical contexts. Government funded ICT training for all teachers has been planned for the next 18 months and should further improve the quality of ICT in subject teaching. Despite these inconsistencies, there is evidence across the curriculum of pupils doing work in all National Curriculum strands for ICT, much work being of high quality. Pupils are adept at developing and refining their ideas including using text and graphic layout. Good examples were seen in ICT lessons, art and graphics. In design and technology pupils use interfaces to control robotics models. Pupils make significant use of the internet for research, evident when the internet became unavailable during the inspection. Real contexts, such as Formula One motor racing results and performance figures and imaginary local companies, were used as a basis for some advanced data processing work.
158. Three aspects of ICT are currently underdeveloped although well thought out plans are already in place to address deficiencies. The use of e-mail has been targeted for development by modern foreign languages to give pupils greater access to native speakers of the target language. The school intends to use the school website to improve communications with parents and the community; and plans to include remote access to the school network for pupils from home. Pupils were seen making informed choices of the most suitable software for tasks but there are insufficient opportunities for them to consider the social implications for the introduction of ICT systems.
159. Leadership of ICT is very good. Strong leadership and very good teaching together have contributed to ICT having some of the highest standards in the school. There is clear evidence that the subject can maintain this position and continue the improvement in the future. There is clear vision and direction for the subject both in resource management and in development of the curriculum. Policies and detailed schemes of work are in place. A major factor in the good progress made by pupils is the positive ethos the subject leader and teachers encourage in pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored closely and the results used to suggest improvements in provision for ICT. A good example of this is the recent introduction of GNVQ courses. They provide alternative learning approaches including an innovative Saturday session with supported self-study. There have been significant improvements in all areas identified for attention in the previous inspection report. Most significant is the improvement in the quality of teaching mentioned previously and the way teachers monitor learning and provide clear feedback on how pupils can improve their work. This is particularly evident in examination courses in Years 10 and 11. Great effort is put into supporting pupils and conveying an enthusiasm for the subject. There is a very effective technician in post who maintains the hardware and software systems efficiently. A vacant technician post was due to be filled shortly after the inspection. This level of support is essential to keep the current numbers of computers functioning effectively.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The good progress made by pupils;
- The very good leadership and management of the department;
- The good teaching which leads directly to effective learning;
- The good range of motivating activities provided for pupils;
- The good provision for gifted and talented pupils both within lessons and in extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Work that is more closely matched to the very wide range of individual needs of pupils within a class;
- More consistent use of the foreign language by teachers and greater use of the foreign language by pupils for classroom communication;
- The provision of more opportunities for pupils to practise their new language skills;
- Ensuring consistent accuracy in teachers' assessments for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

[Evidence for this report was gained from observing 13 lessons, from a detailed scrutiny of the work of representative pupils from each year group and from discussions with teachers and pupils. A detailed discussion was conducted with the head of modern foreign languages.]

160. All pupils study French in Years 7 to 9. Modern foreign languages are offered as an option to pupils in Years 10 and 11, with about 15% of pupils in Year 10 currently studying either French or Urdu and about 25% of pupils in Year 11 studying French, Spanish, Urdu or Panjabi. The pupils studying Spanish had started in Year 7.
161. The teachers' formal assessments for French for pupils aged 14 in 2001 show that 60% of pupils achieved Level 5 or above, which is well above the national average and well above other results within the school. Girls performed better than boys did, but the gap was less than the national difference. The department acknowledges that, as a result of staffing difficulties, these assessments may not be secure. The evidence from this inspection indicates that this is likely to be the case and that attainment was probably actually lower.
162. From the evidence of work seen during the inspection, boys and girls across the ability range in Years 7 to 9 are achieving in line with their capabilities, and the majority of pupils are achieving well. A greater match of work to the needs of pupils would enable more to achieve well. In Year 9, nearly half of pupils are on line to reach national expectations. This represents good progress given the low level of general attainment when pupils start to learn a language. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls, between pupils from different ethnic minority groups or pupils with English as an additional language. Most pupils have a sound and often good understanding of spoken and written French at an appropriate level. Most pupils can answer basic personal questions and reproduce language orally, although usually with support. The most able pupils in Year 9 have a secure grasp of spoken French from memory, but in general, few pupils can produce exchanges of two or three phrases without support. Most pupils are able to copy accurately and write answers to questions. More able pupils in Year 9 are able

to write without support, but most pupils require the support of the textbook or a writing frame for extended writing. Given sufficient practice and opportunities, more pupils could be producing language from memory. Most pupils have a good understanding of the basic grammatical rules.

163. There are significantly few pupils studying a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11 than at the time of the last inspection. The small number of GCSE entries for each of the different languages in Years 10 and 11 is not large enough to enable a valid year-by-year comparison with national results or a judgement about trends over time. However, over the last three years pupils in French have consistently gained grades A-C and in other languages pupils have always gained at least pass grades. A sound departmental analysis of results shows that in all four languages pupils are performing well compared with their performance in other subjects.
164. In Years 10 and 11, pupils in French and Spanish make good progress over the course and are mostly on line to achieve higher grades, in line with their capabilities. They have a good understanding of written and spoken language. There is clear evidence of pupils' written work improving over the course as it becomes more accurate and includes more complex language. For example, a Year 10 French group had produced very good written work as part of a *PowerPoint* design of a website for the school. In French and Spanish, standards and progress have improved since the last inspection. It was not possible to make a judgement about standards and progress in Urdu and Panjabi. Pupils' attitudes to learning a language are generally very positive. The department has put a number of strategies in place to encourage more positive attitudes from boys and this has clearly been successful. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually very good.
165. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have built very good relationships with pupils, offering encouragement, support and positive feedback. Classroom management is very effective, there is a purposeful and brisk pace and teachers promote and expect good behaviour. Teachers use good quality resources and plan a range of motivating activities, providing many opportunities for active participation by pupils. As a result, pupils work at a good pace, are attentive and generally keen to learn, participate well and often with enthusiasm. This was most notable with a group of Year 11 boys who entered into a role-play telephone conversation with great enthusiasm. Teachers give clear explanations of grammatical points. Pupils use dictionaries with confidence. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and pupils who are gifted and talented, both through interaction with the teacher and the use of additional materials. For example, in a Year 7 French class the teacher had set up a Treasure Hunt around the classroom for a group of gifted and talented pupils to practise writing sentences with prepositions. However, there is not enough differentiation in the work set to meet the very wide range of needs within each class to ensure good progress for all pupils. The range of needs is sufficiently wide to require different learning objectives for different group of pupils.
166. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to practise all the language skills; but there is often insufficient practice of new language to ensure its confident use by pupils without support. A notable exception was in a Year 8 French lesson where the teacher provided varied and extended oral repetition and practice of vocabulary about transport without pupils having written support. This enabled pupils to have secure

recall of the new language. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use new language in conjunction with language previously learnt. Such opportunities would enable pupils to reach higher standards. In about half of lessons seen, teachers made very good use of the foreign language for classroom communication; but this is not consistent and often too much English is used. Where pupils are used to the teacher speaking mostly in the foreign language, their understanding of the spoken language is good. Pupils occasionally use the foreign language spontaneously to communicate in the classroom, but this is generally an area of weakness.

167. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and give careful, positive and personal comments, which are often in the foreign language. There are often clear explanations of grammatical points that have been misunderstood. Teachers give short-term targets, but these are not always specific enough to help pupils improve. The department has introduced 'Progress Books' for pupils. Each pupil has a Progress Book where they make termly self-assessments and teachers write comments. This is helpful to pupils in enabling them to have clear idea of how they are progressing.
168. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has successfully promoted the profile of modern foreign languages in the school. Departmental documentation is good and provides detailed support for teachers. The head of department has made a good start on monitoring the work of the department. The department has effective and systematic processes for formative and summative assessment and for recording pupils' attainment and progress. The department makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively in lessons and they demonstrate good social skills and support each other well. Teachers take opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of the cultures of the countries whose languages are being studied. Where appropriate, the moral dimension is explored, for example, in a Year 11 Urdu lesson the teacher raised the issue of advertising consumer products in a developing country. As one of its activities to challenge the gifted and talented, the department makes effective use of a series of published materials that focus on a range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The department offers a good range of extra-curricular activities, including a creative writing competition each term for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have worked hard to provide a very attractive learning environment that celebrates pupils' achievements and supports their learning. They have made a positive effort to appeal to boys through the choice of display. The department has a good range and quantity of resources.
169. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in most areas. The progress made by pupils and the standards they attain have improved at both key stages. Most pupils now make satisfactory or good progress. Teaching is now consistently at least satisfactory and mostly good. Teachers plan for a good balance of activities to practise the different language skills. In about half of lessons seen, there was very good and rich use of the foreign language by the teacher, but there is still overuse of English in some lessons. Pupils' listening skills are now sound and the department provides opportunities for a range of writing in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' speaking skills have improved, but they still do not readily take the initiative to speak and are reluctant to do so in unrehearsed situations and without written prompts. Pupils are now generally keen and motivated and have positive attitudes to learning a language.

Many pupils of all ages work with enthusiasm. The school still does not meet the statutory requirements for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to learn a foreign language (unless they are disapplied) and there are significantly fewer pupils studying a language than at the last inspection.

MUSIC

There have been significant improvements in music since the last inspection and the quality of provision is **now satisfactory**.

Strengths

- A rising trend in standards achieved at GCSE;
- Schemes of work which provide a secure basis for lesson planning;
- Pupils' positive attitudes to music, leading to a good take-up in Years 10 and 11;
- Opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities;
- Opportunities for pupils to learn a musical instrument.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of music practice rooms for instrumental teaching and small group work;
- Strategies for teaching pupils how to compose their own music and develop their ideas.

[Evidence for this report was gained observations of 4 music observations, lunchtime and after-school activities, instrumental teaching and discussions with teachers. Due to a delay in the appointment of a new head of music, there were no music lessons for pupils in Year 9 at the time of the inspection and music teaching had been severely disrupted for the whole of the previous term.]

170. Standards of attainment in music are below the national average for pupils aged 14 and in line with the national average for pupils aged 16. Pupils in Years 7 and 9 learn to sing and play musical instruments competently, drawing on a variety of cultural traditions. They understand the elements of music and learn about the music of different times and countries. By the age of 14 they are able to compose their own music to a basic level but their ability to develop and extend their compositions is more limited. Standards achieved by the relatively few pupils aged 16 who study music have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now close to the national average. Just over half of the 23 pupils entered for GCSE music in 1999 achieved grades between A* to C. In 2000 the results improved still further with 11 out of 16 pupils achieving those grades. In 2001 there was a slight drop to just under half achieving grade C or above. At least one pupil in each of the last three years has achieved a grade A. Standards achieved in lessons by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are again in line with the national average. Most pupils have good instrumental or vocal skills but their skills in composing and in performing as a group are more limited.
171. The progress made by pupils in all years has been affected by staff shortages during the summer and autumn terms in 2001, in particular by the difficulty in appointing a new head of music. The progress made by pupils in Years 7 to 9 during the autumn term of 2001 was generally satisfactory, especially for younger pupils who were least affected by the disruption to lessons in the previous term. The progress of pupils in the second year of the GCSE music course has been most affected and the school intends to compensate for this by providing increased support for these pupils during the next two terms.

172. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Lessons are well planned. Pupils are told at the beginning of each lesson what they will be doing during the lesson and what they should be aiming to achieve. The content of lessons is appropriate and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils' skills in composing could be improved by taking a more structured approach, breaking down the composing process into stages, so that pupils understand what they need to do at each stage. For example, in a lesson in which pupils were working in pairs to compose a fanfare, there were too few opportunities for the class as a whole to share ideas. The teacher needed to demonstrate more clearly how a simple idea could be developed by using the elements of music in different ways. In the majority of instances, classroom management was satisfactory and teacher-pupil relationships were friendly and constructive.
173. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their interest in music outside lessons. There are junior and senior choirs which meet once a week at lunchtimes. Pupils are encouraged to use the music room after school for musical activities of all kinds. There are groups of pupils who take advantage of this opportunity every day for various types of music and musical instruments, including, for example, the dhol and DJ-ing. Free tuition is provided for pupils who wish to learn a musical instrument and who can demonstrate a genuine commitment. Tuition is provided in several instruments, including cello, violin, guitar and dhol, and in singing.
174. The school has responded positively to all the issues raised in the last inspection report and weaknesses in music are no longer an issue for action. The head of performing arts has overall management responsibility for music, along with dance and drama. She has provided very good support for music during a period when the subject has lacked a head of department. She has a clear vision for the future development of performing arts as a coherent area of learning and for the place of music within it, with shared policies and a common approach to assessment. Resources are generally satisfactory but there are deficiencies in listening materials, and limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT for composing and performing. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The music room is of a good size and has good facilities for controlling the use of electronic keyboards but there are no music practice rooms for instrumental tuition or small group work. The music room itself could be further improved by installing window blinds and permanent work stations for keyboards and computers.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 9 and by the end of Year 9 have reached the standard of attainment expected of them at that age;
- Some pupils who are studying physical education to GCSE level are achieving standards that are above the national average;
- Teaching is consistently good in all years;
- The extra-curricular provision in sport is very good;
- The subject team is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The current arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in Years 7 to 9 are inaccurate;
- Pupils do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of their learning targets in Years 7 to 9, and what to do to reach them;
- Pupils are weak at analysing and evaluating their own performance;
- A lack of indoor space hinders the teaching of gymnastics.

[The evidence for this report was gained from observing 11 lessons and some extra-curricular activities, a detailed discussion with the head of physical education and from other discussions with teachers and representative pupils.]

175. The overall standard of attainment reached by pupils aged 14 is in line with the national average. This is also the case for pupils aged 16. Pupils' attainment in physical education on entry into Year 7 is below the expected standard in most areas of activity. Pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 9 thanks above all to effective teaching and a good ethos for learning. In most cases pupils use their knowledge and understanding well in order to plan their own work. Most can select the appropriate tactics, skills and ideas to be used in group and team activities. Some pupils can show precision, control and fluency in their movement. Pupils are often unsure about the exact targets that they are aiming for, and so find it hard to evaluate their own performance in order to achieve higher standards. Pupils achieve highly in swimming in Year 7, but are unable to achieve so well in gymnastics because of a lack of indoor facilities. Inspection evidence revealed that the percentage of pupils who were working at Level 5 in Year 9 was higher than in most schools. This includes pupils for whom English is an additional language and pupils who have identified special educational needs. Inspection evidence contradicts the very low results from the teachers' assessments of the attainment of pupils aged 14 undertaken in summer 2001. These assessments were based on an over-severe interpretation of the level descriptions of the National Curriculum.

176. A GCSE course in physical education has recently been introduced. Pupils following this course are progressing well and a significant number are achieving high standards, especially in practical and games activities. Some are achieving less well in written activities, mainly because of difficulties in writing fluently and analytically. The remaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a physical education course that is not examined. As in Years 7 to 9, pupils in Years 10 and 11 progress well, especially in games activities, but have insufficient opportunity to develop their

gymnastic skills. Their skills of planning and performing are at least satisfactory and are sometimes good. They remain relatively weak at analysing their own strengths and weaknesses and those of others within a team.

177. In all years pupils work hard, concentrate well and take an obvious pride in their performance. Many enjoy their physical education lessons and participate in additional out-of-hours sporting activities. Pupils relate well to their teachers and work well in groups. They show great respect for each other and for their teachers. They listen carefully and follow instructions accurately. In the lessons seen during the inspection week there were very few pupils who did not participate in practical activities.
178. In all years the overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and have high expectations of their pupils. In particular they expect high standards of behaviour and performance. Where teaching was at its best, teachers provided pupils with clear objectives for the lesson. This enabled pupils to apply their skills and knowledge purposefully and to support each other well. In the cases where teaching was satisfactory, these elements were under-emphasised. All teachers are dedicated to seeing their pupils succeed. They work very hard to provide a challenging but supportive environment for learning. This enables pupils to develop their skills securely. Weaker aspects of teaching relate particularly to the approaches currently used to help pupils identify their own personal learning targets and to evaluate how well they are reaching them. The current assessment criteria for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are pitched at the wrong standard and provide pupils with a pessimistic picture of their own capabilities.
179. The physical education department is well led and managed. The head of department is an enthusiastic professional who leads by example and provides a clear sense of direction for the team. As a consequence physical education teachers work well together and support each other very effectively. The school is working towards the achievement of a Sportsmark award. Although many aspects of the accommodation for the subject are satisfactory, the current lack of indoor space limits the work that can be done in gymnastics. Additional difficulties arise during periods of bad weather when outdoor areas are unable to be used. Health and Safety procedures are carried out appropriately.
180. There have been many improvements since the last inspection, including the introduction of a successful GCSE course. Standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9 have risen and the curriculum time provided for the subject in Years 10 and 11 has been suitably adjusted. Opportunities for more able pupils to achieve highly have increased. There is a wider range of teaching styles in use now than in 1996. There is clear evidence that the team has the capacity to continue to improve, and is committed to doing so.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good** in Years 7 to 9 and is **very good** for those pupils who take religious education to GCSE level.

Strengths

- Pupils make very good progress from Years 7 to 9, many reaching expected standards for their age by the end of Year 9;
- Pupils develop a strong understanding of the key features of all major world faiths;
- GCSE results are above the national average;
- The overall quality of teaching is good. It is often very good and sometimes excellent.
- There is very good leadership and management by the subject leader;

Areas for improvement

- The subject is not provided, as is legally required, for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not study it at GCSE;
- Boys do not achieve as highly as girls in the subject;
- More opportunities are needed for pupils to take part in discussions and to do independent enquiry work.

[This report is based on evidence from observation of 13 lessons, discussions with teachers and pupils and the scrutiny of pupils' work in books and on wall displays.]

181. The overall standard of attainment of pupils aged 14 is in line with the expectations of the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Teachers' formal assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate very good value added from a low baseline at the beginning of Year 7. As they move from Year 7 to 9, pupils increase their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faiths. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to build a secure base of factual knowledge about religion but also encourage them to reflect upon its significance and meaning within faith communities.

182. The standard of attainment of pupils who study GCSE religious education in Years 10 and 11 is above the national average. GCSE results for 2000 were above national average in terms of the percentage of passes at grades A* to C, but were slightly below for grades A* to G. Average point scores and points per pupil were higher than the national average. Girls out-performed boys and the gap was greater than that found nationally. Performance indicators for 2000 showed that pupils achieved better in religious education than in most other subjects. Results were below national averages in 2001 although targets set by the department have been exceeded. Targets have been set up to 2003. The target for 2002 is particularly ambitious but some pupils have already achieved it.

183. Overall, standards have been maintained since the last inspection but there is now more detailed tracking and monitoring of pupils' attainment. No data analysis has been carried out in terms of pupils' ethnicity. There is still no opportunity for the great majority of pupils who do not study a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 to experience all of the required elements of the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus. With this exception all pupils make good progress, including the gifted and talented, more able and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language.

184. The overall quality of teaching in religious education lessons is good. It is often good and sometimes excellent. In all years teaching seen was never less than satisfactory and was good or very good in the majority of lessons. Teachers' planning shows explicit aims and objectives. These are communicated to pupils who are always clear about what is expected of them. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and both teachers and pupils make appropriate use of specialist vocabulary. Teachers use skilful questioning to engage pupils and move them on in their learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly, with comments related to improvement. Teaching is well paced, with activities appropriately matched to learning objectives. Teachers have high expectations and in the majority of lessons design different tasks for pupils of differing abilities to perform. This ensures that all groups of pupils make good progress. However, insufficient opportunity is sometimes allowed for pupils to take an active part in discussions or to carry out independent learning. Appropriate homework is set, linked to the learning objectives of lessons. Literacy skills are developed through a variety of means including poetry, writing frames, key vocabulary and the use of different texts. The majority of lessons end with a plenary session that provides an opportunity for pupils to review what they have learned. Reflection and meditation exercises are an important feature of many lessons, enhancing learning and making a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual development. There are very high quality displays in all teaching rooms and nearby corridors. This creates a very positive learning environment. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are very positive. They are well motivated and listen respectfully to teachers and each other. There are excellent relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils.
185. Religious education makes a strong contribution to pupils' moral and cultural development and also to the high levels of racial harmony that exist within the school. Great value is placed upon the pupils' diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. This is very well demonstrated in some outstanding displays of pupils' work in the specialist rooms. There are trips out to a variety of places of worship, reflecting the different religions covered. The subject's contribution to spiritual development has increased significantly since last inspection.
186. Since the last inspection, provision has been maintained or improved in most aspects of the subject. The positive contribution made by religious education to moral and cultural development has been maintained, and improved in terms of spiritual development. Accommodation is now better than at the time of the last inspection with improvements to two classrooms, one with a computer suite. ICT is now used well as a means of enriching and extending learning in the subject. Areas for improvement still remain in the continuing non-compliance with national requirements in Years 10 and 11 in relation to non-examination pupils. In addition, opportunities for pupils' to engage in class discussion is still not always fully developed.
187. The leadership and management of the department remain outstanding. The department is moving forward under the head of department's strong leadership. He is supported by a team of subject specialists who all share his same clear sense of direction along with a commitment to raising standards involving the provision of challenging experiences for all pupils. Clear, detailed documentation covers all aspects of the department's work including procedures for the monitoring of standards. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully, there is informal and formal

monitoring of teaching and learning and regular moderation of pupils' work. Priorities for development, with targets, are clearly set out in the context of whole school development priorities and regularly reviewed. The department has worked hard to put systems in place for assessment, which include the setting of targets and 'levelling' of work. Detailed reports, including targets for improvement, are provided for parents. Work now needs to be done on ensuring consistency in the way levels are used and the way links are made between levels and targets. Alongside this, pupils' understanding of the system must be developed so that they know what they have to do to improve. The department should also consider carrying out analysis of data on pupils' performance in terms of ethnicity. There are ongoing opportunities for the professional development of staff, in addition to which the team has established itself nationally as a training provider for religious education.

188. The curriculum for religious education is based upon the locally agreed syllabus. It meets statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9, but not for Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is well planned to match the different religious and cultural background of pupils. Strong cross curricular links can be seen through planning, in pupils' work and displays; and include links with art and design, ICT, personal, social and health development, drama and music. The development of ICT within religious education is a strength, and includes opportunities for communicating and handling information, word processing, using CD-ROMs for analysing and presenting information, formatting, printing and using the internet for research. Extra-curricular activities include the Gold Asdan Breakfast Club for the gifted and talented and contribution to the school's summer literacy school. Resources are good in terms of quality and quantity, including textbooks, in-house worksheets, CD ROMs, slides, videos, tapes and artefacts. These are used effectively by teachers. Overall, this is a dynamic department with great capacity for further improvement.

PERFORMING ARTS

The current provision for dance is **very good**, and for drama is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards of achievement in dance;
- The quality of teaching in dance;
- The ethos of discipline in performance, respect for other pupils and professional standards;
- Excellent leadership and management;
- Curriculum enrichment through links with professional artists;
- Collaboration with other departments.

Areas for improvement

- Aspects of accommodation for dance and drama, especially noise made by heaters in the studios.

[This report is based on evidence from observation of two dance lessons and two drama lessons, lunchtime and after-school activities and discussions with teachers. This is a new department bringing together music, dance and drama. A very positive start has already been made by the newly appointed head of performing arts. Dance and drama have been successfully introduced as new subjects, with particular strengths in dance, but developments in music and drama have been affected by the delay in appointing heads of department for those subjects. Music within this department is separately reported *see paragraphs 168 – 172*].

189. Standards in dance are very high. Pupils aged 14 dance with confidence, energy and discipline. They are able to create their own dances, making effective use of the techniques they have been taught to develop their initial ideas. Boys and girls dance together in mixed groups, achieving equally high standards. In a lesson on the theme of gangs, pupils were able to develop a basic dance motif in different ways, perform their work for each other with a high degree of control and comment sensitively on aspects of each other's work.
190. Pupils aged 16 taking the GCSE expressive arts course, in which dance is for most of them one of two areas of specialism, achieve standards ranging from below average to very high. Pupils at all levels of attainment understand some of the ways in which dances are created and performed. They can use particular techniques to create their own dances and develop their ideas. In a lesson introducing the 'box' technique, all pupils were able to use this technique to develop a dance motif and a significant number of pupils achieved a high standard.
191. Standards in drama are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils aged 11 to 14 are enthusiastic and co-operate well in group work but sometimes lack the skills to be able to develop their ideas in sufficient depth or detail. For example, in a lesson in which pupils were given the task of creating a short scene about an everyday event which goes disastrously wrong, many of them had good ideas but were not able to turn their ideas into effective drama by using appropriate techniques.
192. The quality of teaching in dance is excellent. Expectations are very high. Pupils work within a highly disciplined framework based on professional standards. Lessons are very well planned, making effective use of a wide range of teaching strategies to help pupils plan, develop and extend their work. Pupils are involved in assessing each others' work, which helps to make them aware of the standards they should be aiming at. Tasks are set which provide an appropriate challenge for pupils at all levels of attainment, including pupils with special educational needs and pupils who are gifted and talented.
193. The quality of teaching in drama is satisfactory. Relationships are good and pupils behave well. Schemes of work are well planned but in some lessons too little time is allowed for pupils to learn the skills and techniques they need to be able to create effective drama. For example, in lessons focusing on enacting a story in mime, pupils achieved a higher standard when the task was more clearly defined and they were given more guidance on the techniques to be used.
194. Performing arts lessons make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils explore a wide range of social and moral issues in dance and drama lessons. They learn to co-operate with each other and to respect each other's views. In dance lessons especially, they achieve a high level of mutual support, group awareness and self-control.
195. The quality of leadership and management is excellent. The head of performing arts has a clear vision of how she wants the department to develop but her ability to realise this vision has been impeded by the difficulty that the school has experienced in appointing teachers to lead music and drama. After a very short time in post, she has begun to establish an ethos for performing arts which emphasises high standards, respect for other pupils and the importance of discipline in performance. Effective

links have been established with other departments, for example English and religious education. Some pupils have been given the opportunity to work with professional artists and there are plans to develop this aspect of the department's work.

196. Specialist accommodation for dance and drama consists of two studios, both of a good size, but there are serious deficiencies in some areas. There are noisy heaters in both studios which make it impossible to work in silence. Some lessons are taught in a small classroom and others in the dining hall. There is no school hall or other space equipped for performance. This limits the ability of pupils to develop their performance skills.