

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **BARLBY HIGH SCHOOL**

Barlby, Nr Selby

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique Reference Number: 121708

Headteacher: Rev F Loftus

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe  
1025

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> September 2001

Inspection number: 189480

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:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	York Road Barby Selby North Yorkshire YO8 5JP
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S D Rhodes
Dates of previous inspection:	16 <sup>th</sup> - 19 <sup>th</sup> September 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9034	Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay inspector		Attendance
13452	Mr H Meggitt	Lay inspector		Partnership with parents
5038	Mr H Heller	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language Achievement of boys	Pupils' attitudes and values School's care for pupils Leadership and management
11479	Mr J A Paine	Team inspector	English Drama	
1262	Mr R Heath	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Science	
31981	Mr E Forster	Team inspector	Art	
11190	Dr W M Burke	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
12470	Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	Curriculum
8873	Ms C Evers	Team inspector	History	Efficiency: staffing, accommodation and learning resources
4829	Mr I H C Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
8645	Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Assessment
13217	Mr M D Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education	
10448	Mr M Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This smallish comprehensive school currently educates around 700 pupils aged 11-16. The overall social and economic background of pupils is very slightly above average. The overall level of attainment of pupils on entry to the school at age 11 is close to, but (recently) slightly higher than, the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is around the national average, although the proportion with SEN statements is above average. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The inspection included a focused evaluation of the school's strategies to support the achievement of boys. The school was last inspected in September 1996.

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

This is a good school. It has many sound features, is effective in most of its work – and can be even better. Pupils' overall standard of attainment is about average at the end of Year 9 and slightly above average by the end of Year 11. Most pupils progress well. Teaching is good overall. Governors and the school's senior management work hard to establish a responsible, but enjoyable, attitude to learning amongst pupils and to raise standards. There are still a few things to put right. The school provides a good standard of education for its pupils. On its well above average income and expenditure (and taking into account its budgetary deficit), it provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Mathematics, science, design and technology, and geography are particular subject strengths.
- Pupils make good progress overall, especially in Years 7-9.
- The quality of both teaching and learning are good overall.
- Pupils' attendance is very good; pupils are punctual for school and classes.
- The quality and organisation of pupils' guidance and welfare are significant strengths of the school.
- The school makes a high level of provision for extracurricular activities and links closely with its many partners.
- High attention is successfully paid to pupils' moral, social and cultural education.
- The school's ethos is warm, friendly, encouraging and inclusive. There is a strong community feeling here.

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

- The extent and consistency of assessment of pupils' attainments and progress across the school.
- The overall level of attainment of boys.
- The school does not have a coherent policy or practice for gifted and talented pupils.
- The management and monitoring of the school's policies need tightening up.
- Not enough time is given to information and communication technology (ICT) or to religious education (RE) in Years 10-11, or for collective worship throughout the school. All fail to meet statutory requirements.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development.

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

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

The school has made satisfactory progress overall since its 1996 inspection. On the specific weaknesses identified then, however, it has made inadequate progress. On the positive side, statutory requirements are now met for music; there is generally a reasonable balance in the curriculum offered in Years 10-11; and teaching of the tutorial programme is good. Girls generally do well in their studies. In contrast, boys' overall level of attainment is still not high enough and statutory requirements are still not met for RE in Years 10-11

or for daily collective worship. Although the school has improved its database about pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7, it does not use its data thoroughly enough.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 has risen steadily over the last few years and most pupils make good progress over Years 7-9. Their overall level of attainment in GCSE examinations is a little higher than at the time of the last inspection: pupils' overall progress in Years 10-11 is satisfactory. The school's teaching has been sustained at a good level. The quality of pupils' education remains good. Pastoral care is particularly strong. The school has shown a fair capacity, but with a few inadequacies, to improve its practice.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils 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	C	C	C	E	<i>Well above average</i> A <i>Above average</i> B <i>Average</i> C <i>Below average</i> D <i>Well below average</i> E

The school's results in the Year 9 national tests in 2000 [the most recent year when full national comparisons can be made] were above average overall— as in the previous three years. They were at this level in English and science, but well above average in mathematics. The results were in line, overall, with the average for schools of a similar kind (as measured only by the proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals). Both boys and girls do a little better than they typically do nationally. Standards have risen over the 1996-2000 period, at least in line with the rise nationally. By the end of Year 9 standards in the school are average in most subjects. They are above average, however, in mathematics, science, and design and technology. The majority of pupils achieve good progress in their studies between Years 7 and 9.

Results in GCSE have been broadly average since 1996. Those in 2001, however, were the best in the school's history. In 2000 the proportion of pupils gaining five or more of the higher A\*-C grades was above the national average, whilst average points gained were close to average. The overall standard in 2000 was, however, well below that generally achieved in schools of a similar character: there are, however, good reasons for part of this slippage and the results and progress of the majority of pupils were at least satisfactory. The strongest subjects in GCSE over the last few years have been science, design and technology, and geography. English, art, history and PE have generally been the weakest subjects. The school met its 2001 GCSE target for pupils to achieve at least five A\*-C grades. It has ambitious ones for 2002.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are generally very positive about school and lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The vast majority of pupils behave well. The school is a very orderly community, marked by a calm and welcoming atmosphere.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' capacity to take responsibility and show initiative is a strength of the school. Relationships are warm and friendly.
Attendance	Consistently very good. Pupils are normally very punctual, too.



Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour are a strong feature of the school. There is much litter around, but an absence of graffiti. School life here is pleasant, responsible and generally hard-working. There is little bullying: any detected is effectively stopped. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching quality has been sustained at the high level it was at the last inspection. It is good overall throughout the school in mathematics and science, and in Years 7-9 in English. In nearly all other subjects teaching is good. It is satisfactory in art and, in Years 10-11, in English. It is very good throughout the school in design and technology. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory and numerical skills are well developed. In well-taught lessons pupils make good progress through teachers' careful planning, high expectations and rigorous work. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by too little pace or low, intellectual demand. Overall, most pupils learn well, because they receive good teaching, show interest and work hard.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	In Years 7-9 the curriculum is broad and well balanced. In Years 10-11 it does not provide enough ICT or RE.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school's policies for these pupils are clearly framed and well implemented. Adult support is of good quality and well managed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision is good overall. Pupils' social development is especially well promoted, but provision for their spiritual growth is – as it was in 1996 – unsatisfactory overall. Moral values are thoroughly aired and patiently nurtured.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The strong framework of pastoral care is both a strength and a high priority of the school. The school has a secure and welcoming environment.

Most curricular aspects are sound, although in Years 10-11 ICT and RE do not meet statutory requirements. Careers education, work experience, extracurricular activities, study support and community links are strengths. The teaching of literacy (though without full coordination yet) and numeracy are sound overall. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is strong and effective, but little is coherently planned for gifted and talented pupils. The school works in close partnership with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	These are successfully based on very open, friendly, committed and positive relationships. The headteacher is a dedicated, accessible and caring professional. Senior and middle managers are generally effective. School policies now require sharper structure and monitoring.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed and carefully scrutinise policies presented to them. They do not, however, have a secure overview of the school's performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's new performance management system has been launched effectively. Most aspects work well, but sets of data are insufficiently used.
The strategic use of resources	Financial management and planning are good, despite the large current deficit. Expenditure is carefully monitored.

The school's open, informal and friendly style of management has achieved much. It now requires the addition of tighter evaluation of the impact of policies and greater use of data about pupils' attainments and progress. The provision of teaching staff is good, especially when pupils are taught (as in most lessons) by specialists. There is sufficient accommodation, but some inadequacies for English, science, art, ICT and SEN. The provision of resources, despite low spending, is generally satisfactory. The school pays close attention to obtaining the best value for its money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are expected to work hard and do well.</li> <li>• The good quality of teaching.</li> <li>• The school's approachability and links with home.</li> <li>• The school's friendly, personal and caring ethos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information about children's progress.</li> <li>• A wider range of extracurricular activities.</li> <li>• More publicity about the school's strengths.</li> </ul>

Inspectors' judgements largely support the views that parents express. The school has an atmosphere of hard work, good manners and an emphasis on doing one's best. The quality of teaching is good overall. The school's friendly and relaxed relationships encourage pupils to enjoy their work. The school has typical consultation procedures – and a very wide range of extracurricular activities – but accepts that more detailed information about its achievements and the enhancement of communications about pupils' progress could help parents still more.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. The overall standard of pupils' attainment is broadly in line with that expected nationally of pupils at the end of Year 9 and slightly above average at the end of Year 11. Pupils' level of attainment is above average overall in the national tests in Year 9 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In GCSE examinations attainment is, on most measures, close to average overall. The results in 2001 were above the (provisional) national average.
2. The level of attainment in the Year 9 national tests has risen since the last inspection of 1996, broadly keeping pace with the rise nationally. The trend of the school's results in GCSE has fallen slightly since 1996 and has not quite kept pace with the rising trend nationally up to 2000. The 2001 results, however, were the school's best ever and firmly restored the upward trend in results. Overall achievement is good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10-11.
3. When pupils come to the school in Year 7, their overall attainment is now close to, but just a little above, average. The overall level of attainment of the school's intake has been rising over the last few years: whereas, for example, 1997's intake (the pupils currently in Year 11) was below average overall (and particularly had fewer high-attaining pupils than the norm), the overall attainment of those currently in Years 8 and 9 was at least average on entry. The school does not, however, analyse thoroughly enough its variety of intake data to spot trends, reconcile anomalies and provide a secure baseline for charting pupils' later progress and the school's performance.
4. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2000 [detailed national comparators were not available at the time of the inspection for the 2001 results], the proportion of pupils who achieved the national standard of at least Level 5 or Level 6 was close to average in English, but well above average in mathematics and science. On the average "points" that pupils scored in the tests in 2000, their overall attainment was above average (as it had been in the previous three years) - above average in English and science, but well above average in mathematics. Overall, results have been consistently higher in mathematics and science than in English. The slight underperformance in English is due, at least in part, to some discontinuity in teaching personnel and insufficient precision in monitoring attainment trends.
5. The trend of the school's results in these national tests over the 1996-2000 period has at least matched the rising national trend and, on most measures, has improved slightly more than the national picture. For example, the proportions of the school's pupils gaining at least Levels 5 or 6 has increased from 105 per cent of the national average in 1996 to 123 per cent in 2000. The results in 2001 were, overall, a little lower than those in 2000 – about the same as those of 2000 for Level 5+, but lower (though still average) at Level 6+. In 1999-2001 teachers' assessments of pupils were generally close to the test results pupils achieved.
6. When these 2000 Key Stage 3 results are compared with those in schools that have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed overall in line with the group average – above it in mathematics, in line with it in science, but below it in English. Again, performance in mathematics and science over the 1998-2000 period has been noticeably higher than in English. Pupils' average points score for the three subjects was broadly consistent with that of other schools in the same free meals category in both 1999 and 2000; it was above the group average in 1998.
7. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils as close to average in history, above average in geography and well above average in design and technology, in information and communication technology (ICT) and in modern

foreign languages. Inspectors judge current standards in most of these subjects as broadly average, but that overall attainment is above average in design and technology.

8. As pupils move through the school from Year 7 to the end of Year 9, the very limited statistical evidence available from national tests suggests that they generally make good progress. This was certainly true of the 1997 and 1998 intakes as they moved through to the end of Year 9 in 2000 and 2001 respectively: although one fifth of pupils could have done a little better, about half made at least good progress and one third sound progress. The school has, however, inadequate systems or evidence with which to judge either pupils' progress or its overall performance during Years 7-9.

9. On the evidence of pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, inspectors judge that pupils' progress and achievement in their studies are good overall. They achieve well where (as in the majority of cases) teaching is stimulating and thorough. They are unsatisfactory in a minority of classes with insufficient pace or depth of learning.

10. In GCSE examinations in 2000 pupils' overall attainment was close to average for pupils' average points score, but above average for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more of the higher (A\*-C) grades. The proportion gaining five or more grades A\*-G, in contrast, was below average. Over the period 1998-2000, on all the normal range of measures used, results were broadly average. For instance, the proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining five or more of the higher grades over the 1996-2000 period was 40-53 per cent, compared with a national average of 43-47 per cent. The recent 2001 proportion (56 per cent of the cohort) was the highest ever achieved by the school.

11. The overall trend in the school's GCSE results over the period 1996-2000 was below the rising trend nationally: this is because the average points gained by all pupils (though rising slightly) did not quite keep pace with the national rise. The good 2001 results have ensured that the school's upward trend once again matches the national trend.

12. There are several reasons for the contrast between the improvement in higher grades, but slight fall until 2001 (relative to the national picture) in pupils' overall points scores. The school has double the national proportion (and an increasing proportion) of pupils with special educational needs. A very small number of pupils in Year 11 had poor or intermittent attendance and gained low results. Importantly, pupils' achievement in two non-GCSE courses of study did not count towards the school's score, with the result that the school's GCSE entry rate was well below its local authority average: the school has since reorganised the courses it offers, with more emphasis on GCSE accreditation.

13. In the core subjects pupils' attainment of a grade in the range A\*-C in GCSE in 2000 was above average in mathematics and science, and close to average in English. The results were fairly similar in 1999 and noticeably better than those in 1997 and 1998. Over the last five years GCSE results have improved substantially: in 2001 they were the best ever in all three subjects and were, overall, about double what they were in 1997 – a significant achievement.

14. When pupils' performances in all the subjects they took in GCSE are compared with one another, pupils did significantly better in at least three of the last four years up to 2000 in science, design and technology and geography, but generally worse in English, art, history, PE and drama. No pupil achieved the highest A\* grade in 2001 in English, mathematics, (some of the elements of) design and technology, history, humanities, music or religious education (RE). The proportion of the highest (A\*/A) grades obtained overall, however, has been at least in line with the national average in the last two years.

15. When the school's average point scores at GCSE are compared with those in schools with a similar free meals background, this school's performance was average in 1998, but well below average in both 1999 and 2000. Its performance was significantly stronger in 2001. By the same measure, pupils' overall performance was a good average in science in 2000, but below average in both English and mathematics.

16. Taking into account pupils' level of attainment in the national tests two years earlier, most pupils made at least satisfactory progress overall as they moved through the school from Year 9 in 1996 to Year 11

in 1998. Over the subsequent two-year periods, however, the amount of unsatisfactory progress increased a little. Some of the reasons for this fall-off in performance are noted in paragraph 12. The school's targets for GCSE in 2002 are appropriately ambitious. This is particularly true for points scores: the school's 2001 score of 40, though the highest ever, fell short of the target of 42 and the 2002 target of 44 is clearly much higher than has been achieved to date.

17. In work seen during the inspection individual pupils' standards of attainment varied widely, but their overall standard by the end of Year 9 was close to that expected nationally in most subjects. It was above average in mathematics, science, and design and technology. By the end of Year 11, the overall level of work is a little above average overall – and in most subjects. Pupils' work is of an average standard, however, in English, art, modern foreign languages and PE. It is below average overall in ICT and well below in RE, because the appropriate programmes of study are insufficiently taught.

18. In most classes the needs of higher-attaining pupils are met, because most teaching is thorough, appropriate topics are studied and suitable learning materials are available. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are well catered for in science and (in Years 10-11) in music. In other subjects and across the school generally provision has many satisfactory features, but is insufficiently planned or comprehensive, because the school does not have a coherent policy or practice for these pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall, as a result of supportive teaching and appropriate learning resources.

19. In English the overall attainment of pupils is broadly average by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils' reading is slightly above average overall: pupils' fluency in reading aloud is average, but their standard of skimming texts to support a point of view is generally well developed. The overall standard of writing is average in both content and technical accuracy. Handwriting is often good. Spelling is broadly average, though not consistently taught, but pupils plan and structure their writing soundly. The overall standard of handwriting is above average. The quality of speaking is average overall. Pupils listen well, particularly in Years 7-9, and many use technical vocabulary appropriately.

20. The national literacy strategy is promoted satisfactorily throughout the school. In subjects other than English, pupils' standard of reading is close to average overall. There is a wide range in pupils' accuracy and expression when reading aloud, but these aspects are generally sound. A minority of pupils require help to project their voice better. Researching texts is a strong feature of work in geography and history. Most pupils find little or no difficulty in skimming the texts provided for them. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in reading and the most able often have access to suitably demanding texts.

21. Pupils' standard of writing is average overall. Pupils are generally good at planning their written work, as a result of good guidance from teachers. Drafting and editing work are fairly infrequently practised, and partly in consequence of a lower, though fair, standard. Notetaking is well done in art, design and technology and geography. The presentation of written work is generally average. It is very good overall (though often inadequately stored) in design and technology; good in mathematics, geography, history (where that of boys is better than often found) and modern foreign languages; but unsatisfactory amongst middle-range pupils in science. Spelling and punctuation are of an average standard overall. Coursework is often good in content and layout in Years 10-11. Higher-attaining pupils often produce extended, analytical writing of good quality in, for example, mathematics, geography and history.

22. The quality of speaking in class varies widely, but is average overall. Pupils enjoy discussions. A minority of them are very confident and articulate speakers, possessing a wide vocabulary, and contribute astutely to wide-ranging discussions. Another minority of pupils make only brief oral contributions in class or are content to be passive. A middle range of pupils work hard to express their point of view with clarity, but are sometimes let down by poor projection of their voice. The quality of interactive discussion is generally average, though with some good work in mathematics and science, where pupils often ask searching questions and challenge one another to explain and defend their views. Pupils generally listen carefully.

23. The school implements the national numeracy strategy very well. Standards in mathematics and in numeracy across the curriculum are above average. Pupils generally handle numbers and data well. The overall standard in science is above average by the end of both Years 9 and 11, as a result of much lively

and thorough teaching, with short sequences of activities, frequent checking of progress and appropriate praise for achievement. Attainment in ICT is average in the specialist-taught lessons in Years 7-9. The overall standard of ICT in Years 10-11 is generally below average, because most subjects do not use computer equipment and programs enough. The standard reached in most other subjects is broadly average, but it is above average in design and technology and in geography.

### **Achievement of boys**

24. Data on pupils' performance show that boys are generally entering the school in Year 7 with national test results and reading ages broadly similar to those of girls, although the school does not routinely collate and critically examine this range of data. In the national tests taken towards the end of Year 9 over the 1996-2000 period, girls were, overall, consistently and substantially ahead of boys in English, especially at the higher levels. In mathematics and science, in contrast, girls and boys did equally well, albeit with slight variations over the years. Both groups perform slightly better than pupils typically do nationally.

25. In GCSE examinations girls have generally achieved a much larger proportion of the higher A\*-C grades in GCSE than boys. With the exception of 1999 (when girls were only three percentage points ahead of boys), girls have been between 13 and 28 points in front of boys during the 1994-2001 period. The gap between boys' and girls' overall performance is much larger in this school than is typical nationally. The evidence indicates that, relative to girls, boys' overall performance declines a little over Years 10-11.

26. This gap is well illustrated by a comparison of the average points obtained by boys and girls. Whereas nationally boys usually achieve 87-88 per cent of what girls attain in GCSE, in this school it is generally only around 82 per cent. Moreover, boys' overall results have been falling slightly during the 1996-2000 period. In 1996 and 1997, for example, boys did fractionally better than boys nationally, slipped a little in 1998 and 1999, but dropped to only 90 per cent of boys' national average points in 2000. In 2001 boys obtained 19 percentage points fewer than girls of the higher A\*-C grades.

27. The school does not analyse its attainment data sufficiently to detect any overall differences between boys' and girls' attainment or their respective rates of progress. For example, although it has data on individual pupils' standards in the Year 6 national tests in English, mathematics and science and uses a parallel commercial scheme to indicate progress, it does not generally identify any overall or cumulative differences in attainment. A reading test, analysed in this way only in 1995 showed that Year 7 boys' overall standard of reading was very similar to, but slightly higher than, that of girls. The information was not, however, used to compare these standards with those in the national tests or to trace pupils' progress in subsequent years.

28. There is no whole-school conclusion about the reasons for boys' lower performance— or for their significant improvement in 1999. Some staff believe that boys tend to be highly influenced by traditional patterns of work, whilst many girls have transcended traditional roles and become more open and flexible. Older boys, in discussion, saw girls as “knowing what they want and going for it”, in contrast to their own indecision and demotivation. Local employment has been limited for boys by, for example, the ending of traditional apprenticeships in shipyards or mining, but there are increasing outlets for boys in new forms of apprenticeship. Overall, girls in the school show a little greater commitment and perseverance with their work than boys.

29. Individual subject departments have tried out a variety of experimental projects. For example, English has organised single-sex classes in Year 9. In mathematics, pupils have sometimes been seated in boy-girl pairs or more confident pupils have been paired with others who are less confident. The modern foreign languages department has conducted a survey of pupils' likes and dislikes. In design and technology, girls have been encouraged to opt for what some have seen as “male” subjects, and girls' performance has improved. There have been some attempts to cultivate a climate in which boys will celebrate their success and aspects of “high” culture. These interesting efforts have not, however, been

thoroughly evaluated or shared across the school. No significant examples of biased or prejudicial stereotyping by sex were noted during the inspection.

30. It is now a major task for the school to track all pupils' progress rigorously and securely – and particularly that of boys – from the time they enter the school in Year 7. Such precise use of all available and relevant data, coupled with teachers' detailed knowledge of their pupils, is required before the school can pursue a realistic overall plan of action to address boys' lower attainment.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

31. Pupils generally have very positive attitudes towards school. They are keen to attend. They show strong interest and involvement in the wide range of activities provided for them. The school is a very orderly community, marked by a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Overall, pupils behave well in class and around the school. In about three-quarters of lessons pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good (and often very good). They are otherwise satisfactory, except in a very small number of lessons which fail to engage pupils' full interest.

32. Pupils respond positively to the school's rules of conduct and show respect for the fabric of the building and for property; there is a notable absence of graffiti. The high level of litter seen across the school's premises, however, detracts from the overall quality of school life. Whilst some instances of teasing and bullying were reported by individual pupils, there is no evidence of any significant incidence of such behaviour. Furthermore, pupils report that staff deal promptly and effectively with any such episodes.

33. Pupils generally show a good capacity to reflect on their actions and consider how they affect others. A good example of this was seen in a Year 10 session on personal, social and religious education (PSRE), in which pupils were successfully encouraged to practise working in teams, to collaborate in completing tasks and to give and receive feedback about their performance. Pupils form constructive relationships with one another, with staff and with other adults. The many pupils with special educational needs are generally very well integrated into the life of the school. Pupils show respect for the beliefs and values of others: this is demonstrated particularly in RE and in personal and social education.

34. Pupils' capacity to take responsibility and exercise initiative is a strength of the school. There are active Year Councils and an overall School Council. An energetic Youth Forum is influential in the work of the youth centre and Year 11 pupils form a well-trained and enthusiastic team of counsellors, available to support younger pupils. The level of pupil exclusions is low. The school has a sound system of sanctions that are applied well to individual circumstances.

35. The overall attendance of pupils is very good, well above the national average and a strong feature of the school. It is also at a slightly higher level than at the time of the last inspection in 1996. The level of attendance in the 1999-2000 academic year (the latest year when a comparison can be made with national figures), for example, was 94.1 per cent. Both the level of authorised (5.8 per cent) and unauthorised (0.1 per cent) absences in the same year were better than the respective national averages. Attendance remained at a similar high level during the 2000-2001 academic year.

36. This strong picture has come about primarily as a result of a concerted and successful effort by staff in the school, coupled with a close working relationship with parents and the local authority's welfare service. The school has a generally thorough system for recording and analysing pupils' attendance and for helping to identify problems. At the beginning of the inspection not all registers were fully completed or returned to the office promptly and the storage of registers, on open display in the school's reception area, was insecure. All these weaknesses were tackled effectively before the end of the inspection week. Overall, the school gives high priority to attendance matters.

37. Punctuality for lessons is generally good. Punctuality in coming to school on time is also good except when delays are caused by public transport.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

38. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school. It is at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons - satisfactory in one third of them and good in just over two-fifths. Additionally, teaching is very good in one in every five lessons. Only five lessons out of the 174 inspected had teaching that was unsatisfactory or (in one instance) poor. The quality of teaching is very similar throughout the school.

39. The overall quality of teaching has been sustained at the high level that it was at the last inspection. In 1996 95 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory or better, with five per cent judged unsatisfactory. Now just three per cent of the teaching falls below a satisfactory level. Nearly a quarter of the teaching was very good at the last inspection and that proportion is now similar at 21 per cent. The variable quality of teaching noted in 1996 in ICT has become good in Years 7-9; it remains variable amongst departments in Years 10-11, but is satisfactory overall. The lower quality of teaching observed in tutorial work than in subject teaching in 1996 has improved and is now as good as the rest – an improvement partly brought about by the school's staff training programme.

40. Teachers generally have extensive, up-to-date knowledge of the subjects they teach. The result of this is noticeable in many classes. Teachers' confidence allows them not only to organise their teaching material clearly but flexibly, but also to encourage pupils to experiment, consider alternatives and discuss issues freely.

41. There are frequent examples of the impact of solid subject knowledge. In mathematics, for instance, a teacher offered pupils a number of alternative explanations of the subtraction of negative numbers, whilst another well anticipated pupils' common errors and provided alternative approaches. In design and technology, teachers often expect pupils to consider thoroughly a variety of materials, designs and solutions to problems. The experience several teachers have of external examining provides them with a wide understanding that motivates pupils and enables them to reach high standards. Only very rarely does subject inexperience result in pupils' poor understanding and time-wasting.

42. The school gives satisfactory attention to the basic skills of literacy and good attention to numeracy. Most teachers display key technical words for their subjects on classroom walls: this is, however, limited in science and not done in history. Few classes have ready access to dictionaries for pupils to check their own spellings. A minority of teachers encourage pupils to read aloud in class, but most give pupils clear guidance on how to shape their writing. The mathematics department frequently puts emphasis on clear numerical understanding, accuracy and facility, and a similar high emphasis is seen in the teaching of science, design and technology and geography. This approach serves pupils well in tackling GCSE examinations. Pupils with special educational needs are carefully helped to make good progress in acquiring literacy and numerical competence.

43. Most lessons are well planned. Teachers give appropriate attention to setting out – and usually sharing with pupils – the purpose and detailed objectives of lessons and the amount of time to be spent on activities. In the best lessons teachers thoroughly but quickly revise the content and significance of what has been previously studied; write up (on the blackboard or handouts, for example) the purpose and sequence of activities in lessons; and ensure that their well-paced lessons are firmly and clearly rounded off with a review of what has been learned. As a result, pupils in these lessons are very clear about what they have to do and display enthusiasm and perseverance.

44. Most teachers match work well to the needs of lower-attaining pupils by, for example, pitching explanations and worksheets at several levels or by ensuring that tasks and questions can be approached in varying depth. The majority of teachers are sensitive to the varying speed of learning amongst pupils, although not enough provide additional materials or tasks that fully stretch the brightest pupils: this weakness is partly the result of the school's lack of a fully coherent approach to the needs of gifted and talented children. On a few occasions, teachers do not assess the depth of pupils' existing knowledge enough and do



not provide clear models, guidance or examples of what they want pupils to do. Teachers plan well together the programmes for combined classes – as, for instance, for the team-building task in a lesson to produce goods that is undertaken by pupils in Year 10 in their PSRE lessons.

45. Most teachers set high standards and expect pupils to do their best. This is particularly evident in those lessons (the majority) where teachers insist on pupils thinking carefully, probing issues thoroughly and explaining their thinking and conclusions. These teachers put high emphasis on correct terminology and clarity of speech and encourage pupils to appreciate the importance of accuracy and intellectual rigour. Many examples of such standards were seen in, for example, mathematics, design and technology, and geography.

46. In a minority of lessons, however, improvements are necessary. In these lessons teachers tend to ask many closed questions, talk too much, do not expect pupils to discuss issues or consider the validity of alternatives, and usually accept the briefest of answers. Sometimes time is wasted on the routine copying of information that could, for instance, have been provided by a handout, thus releasing time for examining issues in depth. In contrast, the provision of handouts is very well handled in science. Very occasionally, too much is expected of pupils, with the result that they flounder and learn little.

47. Most teachers use a sound range of effective teaching methods. The majority are skilled in whole-class activities – for example, succinctly revising past work and outlining the purpose and direction of lessons (though sometimes with too little checking of the depth of understanding amongst pupils) or drawing the class together at various stages in the hour to consolidate what has been done. Both brisk, animated teaching and calm reflection motivated pupils effectively and ensured that they both enjoyed and benefited from their studies. There is usually suitable variation in activities during lessons through, for instance, group or paired work and quick notetaking. Pupils are particularly helped to be systematic by the kind of teacher's questioning seen in one lesson – “Where do I start?”... “What do I do next?”

48. Time is normally used well in the majority of classes that are marked by purposeful work. In these teachers keep up a suitably brisk pace, so that pupils gain both breadth and depth in their studies and remain interested throughout lessons. Resources such as whiteboards, overhead projectors and graphic calculators are generally well used. The lack of dictionaries or displays of key technical words holds pupils' literacy back in a few classes. Learning assistants, often moving with children from their primary schools, help to improve the literacy and general learning of those pupils with special educational needs.

49. The management of pupils' behaviour is well carried out and a strength of the school. In nearly all cases teachers establish a purposeful and respectful work environment and exercise firm but friendly discipline. They expect and receive good behaviour and quickly check occasional rudeness or calling out. Class management was particularly effective in design and technology, history, ICT, PE and RE.

50. Despite variability in the school's overall system of assessing pupils' achievements, most individual teachers monitor pupils' progress satisfactorily in class – moving round the class, carefully checking out understanding, intervening thoughtfully and quickly clarifying common errors. Teachers are generally very aware of pupils' strengths and weaknesses, know the pupils who need particularly regular supervision and provide encouraging support. Assessment practices are very good in mathematics, but not good enough in history and RE in Years 7-9 and in ICT throughout the school. Appropriate homework is regularly set.

51. Teaching is good overall throughout the school. In Years 10-11 it is satisfactory in English, but unsatisfactory in ICT overall (because it is patchy). It is very good in design and technology throughout the school. In all other subjects and years it is good. Nearly all subjects have at least some teaching that is very good. Over a third of the teaching seen in mathematics and two-thirds of that in design and technology was very good: in the latter subject one lesson was outstanding. Teachers generally work hard to help pupils to do their best and to enjoy their school life.

52. Most pupils achieve sound progress in what and how they learn both in lessons and over longer periods of time. Most pupils put in a good effort and persevere with their work, partly because they are well guided by their teachers in study skills.

53. The good overall quality of teaching is the main reason why most pupils make sound progress in their studies. In a small minority of classes learning is held back by a slow pace of teaching or shallow study. The highest-attaining pupils could sometimes be further extended, particularly in Years 10-11, but those who have special educational needs usually make good progress.

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

54. The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities that mostly meet the needs of all pupils. Very good careers education, extracurricular activities and study support, organised by staff and supplemented through close links with the Community Education provision based at the school, effectively enhance the opportunities offered. In Years 7-9 the breadth and balance of the curriculum are good. All subjects of the National Curriculum and RE are taught. Pupils study either French or Spanish and those with particular linguistic aptitude study German in addition. All pupils are taught drama and receive personal and social education (which includes education about sex and drugs) from their form tutors.

55. In Years 10-11 a largely satisfactory range of curricular provision is offered. All pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, design and technology, a modern foreign language, PE, a combined course of personal and social education and RE (PSRE), and a tutorial programme with their form tutors. In addition, pupils choose from an appropriate range of 12 subjects that includes drama, business studies, and business studies and communications. There are no courses for the General National Vocational Qualification. Thirteen pupils, for whom the full range of GCSE subjects is not deemed appropriate, attend a suitable vocational course for one day each week that is offered in association with a further education institution, Selby College.

56. The school meets all statutory curricular requirements except in ICT and RE in Years 10-11. The time allocated for RE is insufficient in Years 10-11 for teaching fully what is required by the local Agreed Syllabus for RE. This deficiency was reported at the time of the last inspection and inadequate progress has been made in addressing this issue. No specific slot is provided on the timetable in Years 10-11 to teach ICT, and the programmes of study are not taught sufficiently in other subjects across the curriculum to meet national requirements. The school's teaching time of 25 hours is in line with the minimum recommended by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). There is insufficient timetabled time for GCSE PE.

57. The school has developed a clear policy to raise standards of literacy as part of the national literacy strategy, with appropriate guidelines for staff and departments that all subjects have begun to implement. This initiative is not, however, consistent or sufficiently coordinated across the school. To make it more effective, the school has recently appointed a member of staff as a coordinator of the policy. The national numeracy strategy to raise standards of numeracy is being introduced effectively in mathematics and the school has a clear strategy for its further development across the curriculum.

58. All pupils have the opportunity to study the full range of subjects offered. Pupils are taught in classes grouped by their prior attainment in mathematics and science in Years 7-9; in modern foreign languages in Years 8-9; and in geography, history and RE in Year 9. Elsewhere they are taught in mixed-attainment groups. These arrangements are generally effective. Work is, in the main, appropriately matched to the differing needs of pupils. Alternative accreditation is occasionally available for those pupils in Years 10-11 for whom the GCSE examinations are considered inappropriate.

59. The school's policies for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are clearly framed and well communicated. The provision for these pupils across subjects is generally good and work is usually well matched to their needs. Most pupils respond well. Even those with emotional and behavioural difficulties look upon staff as supportive and usually cooperate satisfactorily. The Code of Practice is in place: its stages are viewed flexibly, with sensible movement between them. There is a strong level of support for SEN work from the school's senior management and from the local authority.

60. Individual pupils and small groups are withdrawn for good, specialist teaching by the local authority's learning support teachers. This work, in which pupils with severe learning difficulties are significantly helped, is well regarded across the school and carefully managed by the school's SEN coordinator. The level of in-class teacher support, though recently reduced, is nevertheless positive, although prior consultation with class teachers is limited. The in-class use of LSAs is good. They are of high quality, well trained and managed, and confidently play a supportive role with teachers. The sole pupil for whom English is an additional language receives sound assistance with linguistic work.

61. The school attempts to provide some support and enrichment for gifted and talented pupils, but this is limited to activities within individual departments. There is no whole-school policy or strategy to support them and no specific criteria for identifying them. The result is a vagueness about the nature of giftedness within the school and its equation with "high ability".

62. The procedures for curricular planning are largely satisfactory. There is, however, no curriculum policy statement to use as a basis for future planning. Arrangements for monitoring the curriculum through classroom observation and discussion are good, but there is no systematic or coordinated link between subject departments and senior managers. Schemes of work are good in mathematics, design and technology, ICT, geography and RE. They are satisfactory elsewhere, except in history where they are out of date.

63. A very good range of extracurricular activities enhances the curriculum. Successful residential visits are arranged to France, Germany and Spain. There is an annual exchange visit to Denmark and outdoor activities and field visits within the UK. Pupils regularly visit museums, art galleries and places of interest for field visits within the local area. Musical events and dramatic performances take place regularly and several subject clubs (including a poetry group) meet weekly. Sports teams take part in a well-organised programme of inter-school fixtures in a good range of sports. Approximately two-fifths of pupils participate in competitive sports and there is a strong commitment to them from seven members of staff.

64. A very good programme of support for pupils' studies has been developed. All subjects participate in organising additional examination revision and help with GCSE coursework, and staff make themselves available regularly to help pupils who have difficulty with their work. In association with the Community Education staff, the school provides good social and personal support for pupils with difficulties, including a very successful homework club.

65. Provision for careers education and guidance is very good. Careers education is well coordinated, has clear policies and is taught successfully as part of the tutorial and PSRE programmes for Years 7-11. Good use is made of outside speakers from colleges and training agencies. All pupils produce a *curriculum vitae* and a letter of application and participate in a very successful system of mock interviews with a local employer. Impartial guidance is given by the careers officer and is focused appropriately on those pupils in greatest need. Good arrangements are made for other pupils: they are interviewed by the careers coordinator, often with the support of the careers officer. The guidance given is well focused and effective.

66. All pupils in Year 10 participate for two weeks in very well organised work experience. The allocation of placements is made through a well-structured application system, in which pupils write letters of application and participate in an interview. Pupils are well prepared, are visited by a member of staff during the placement and complete a diary. Immediately on their return they all take part in a useful follow-up activity. The careers library is satisfactory, but the room in which it is located is used as a classroom and as the Year 11 common room, so seriously and unsatisfactorily limiting access to it. There are limited ICT facilities in the library, but all networked computers in the school include appropriate programs with careers advice.

67. Links with the community are particularly strong. The Community Education provision on the school's site supports pupils in their work: community education workers act as mentors for pupils, many of whom participate in the activities provided, such as the *Youth Achievement Award* scheme. Very

strong links have been forged with local employers through the mock interview programme, work placements for staff, visits to the school and through the work experience programme. Pupils participate in the life of the community through such activities as concerts, visiting old people's homes and the weekly senior citizens' lunch held at the school.

68. Liaison with contributory primary schools is strong: there are regular visits by staff and a successful programme of induction for new pupils. Purposeful and regular links are maintained with training providers and with local universities and colleges, resulting in initiatives such as a vocational programme for one group of pupils. Links with institutions of initial teacher training are strong and the school hosts the training of up to 12 student teachers each year.

69. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall. Its provision for their spiritual development, however, is unsatisfactory. Religious education is inadequately covered in the PSRE course in Years 10-11: in consequence, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their religious opinions and beliefs as they mature. As it did at the last inspection also, the school falls well short of meeting the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. In Years 7-9, in contrast, RE is planned and taught well: pupils have good opportunities for reflection and for thinking about spiritual matters.

70. Some opportunities for reflection arise within lessons on PSRE. In a lesson in Year 11 on drugs awareness, for example, pupils were clearly very moved after seeing a video film about a young person who died after taking "ecstasy". Although opportunities for reflection and spiritual experience are not promoted regularly in assemblies, pupils do celebrate the seasonal religious events such as Christmas and Harvest as well as Hanukkah. The impact of the terrorist atrocities on the USA was handled positively and sensitively. Generally, however, during the inspection there was very little evidence of pupils' experience of the spiritual dimension in subjects other than RE.

71. Pupils' moral education is promoted well. Staff set a good example for pupils and impart positive attitudes in their daily encounters with them. Clear messages are conveyed in assemblies – as, for example, the importance of truthfulness and kindness in relationships. The school has a clearly understood system of rewards and sanctions. Good moral education is implicit in a number of subjects. In history, for instance, pupils consider the ethical implications of nuclear weapons and discuss issues about the justification for their use. In PE, pupils experience the rules of fair play and the value of teamwork. A very good work ethic is promoted in mathematics.

72. Provision for pupils' social development is very good and a strength of the school. The school is an orderly community and has an atmosphere that is very conducive both to work and recreation. A very good range of extracurricular activities and educational visits enables pupils to form new friendships and to learn how to get on in unfamiliar surroundings. In particular, outdoor pursuits and visits to Denmark and Spain offer very good social experiences. Good social opportunities also arise in and around the locality – as, for example, through the school's own Youth Centre, senior citizens' lunches and the *Foottappers* wind band that is based in the village primary school. Pupils have good opportunities to experience and exercise responsibility, especially through their involvement in the School Council and through a peer-counselling project. Pupils also serve as library assistants.

73. In a number of subjects, pupils work successfully in pairs and groups. In music, for example, they devise compositions jointly and rehearse performances, and in both science and design and technology they work well together in research and design activities. Drama lessons enable pupils to explore many different kinds of relationships. Lessons in PSRE, too, are often presented in the form of games or group tasks in which pupils learn to cooperate in the spirit of healthy competition. In mathematics, pupils learn to accept and celebrate the achievements of their peers.

74. Whilst parts of the school buildings have poor aesthetic appeal (especially due to poor maintenance and a preponderance of litter) and the school has no social areas specifically designed for this purpose, pupils take sensible advantage of the various spaces around the school to meet their

friends. A wide range of food is served from several locations at lunchtimes: this system helps to reduce queues and crowding.

75. Pupils' cultural development is well promoted, particularly through a large range and number of visits to museums, galleries and theatres. Of these the visits to London are especially valuable: pupils have recently visited, for example, the National Gallery and National Theatre. Other relevant visits have recently been made to galleries in Leeds and theatre events in Wakefield. In connection with their study of modern foreign languages, pupils learn at first hand about the cultures of France, Germany and Spain.

76. Pupils' musical education extends to Indian classical music, Chinese music and black American music, and in art they examine, for instance, designs for African masks that they develop in ceramic form. Pupils have benefited from the presence of a practising artist. Pupils' main experience of traditions and cultures that are very different from their own is largely second-hand through art, literature and the humanities. The school is aware that pupils' face-to-face encounters with people from ethnic minorities are, at present, very limited.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

77. The very strong framework for the pastoral care of its pupils is a considerable strength of the school. This is led by a very committed and capable group of year heads, who are well supported by individual form tutors and a deputy headteacher. This aspect of the school's work is given high priority by senior managers and provides a secure and welcoming environment in which pupils can work.

78. There is an active Health and Safety Committee which considers whole-school issues and policies. Action arising from its work, however, is not always implemented with sufficient urgency - as, for example, the identified need to ameliorate the hazard presented by the service road at the side of the school, leading to the youth and leisure facilities, where pupils have to circulate alongside frequent, external traffic.

79. The school has effective policies for promoting good attendance and behaviour and for eliminating bullying. For the most part, these policies are successfully implemented. Staff communicate and cooperate well with one another on matters about pupils' welfare and discipline. Formal arrangements for Child Protection are soundly and sensitively managed.

80. There is a good range of provision for personal and social education in Years 10-11, in addition to a weekly session of tutorial work for all pupils. These two programmes have been carefully reviewed to avoid duplication and the work is well coordinated. The quality of teaching is good overall, has improved since the last inspection and is particularly imaginative in the more specialist work in Years 10 -11.

81. The school offers good support and guidance for individual pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils receive individual sessions of academic review, in which they consider with teaching staff how well they are progressing. Staff offer an effective mentoring scheme for pupils who need additional support, particularly during the GCSE courses.

82. There are good opportunities for pupils to receive personal counselling, both from their tutors and from a range of additional services. These more specialist sessions are offered by the school nurse, a Relate counsellor, the staff of the school's youth provision and peer counsellors from amongst Year 11 pupils. The recent, part-time appointment of a behaviour support teacher has provided additional positive opportunities for the guidance and support of individual pupils. For pupils with statements of special educational need the school provides programmes that conform to the requirements of those statements.

83. The school has a clear assessment policy which includes guidance on the purpose of assessment, the roles of staff and a description of required procedures. Within most subject departments the overall quality of day-to-day assessment of individual pupils ranges from very good to satisfactory and is sound overall. In history and RE, however, it is unsatisfactory, mainly because assessments do not relate to agreed standards. The mathematics department, in contrast, has a very good system:

assessments are very clearly recorded and pupils' progress throughout Years 7-11 is very well identified and charted.

84. In Years 7-9, assessments relate satisfactorily to National Curriculum levels of study in all subjects except history. In Years 10-11, assessments relate firmly to the requirements of external examinations and, as a consequence, give reasonable indications of the progress of pupils as well as providing targets for improvement. Although subject departments adopt a variety of procedures and grading systems in assessing pupils' work, pupils generally know how well they have done in their various tasks and tests.

85. Although the overall procedures for assessment are satisfactory, the school does not thoroughly coordinate and interpret data on pupils' attainment. As a result, it does not evaluate accurately and thoroughly pupils' progress throughout Years 7-11, nor does it monitor with sufficient precision the performance of subject departments or the performance of the whole school. The previous inspection reported that the school had an inadequate system for identifying pupils' attainments in Year 7. This is still the case. Although it has improved this aspect since 1996 by the introduction of a nationally based series of tests, it has made insufficient improvement, because all its available Year 7 sets of data are inadequately collated and used.

86. The school has a good system, however, of reviewing the broad progress that pupils make. This includes pupils' own written comments on the subjects that they find hard or easy and clear instructions on how to prepare for meetings with staff to discuss progress in school work. This system is very well coordinated by a deputy headteacher and heads of year.

87. Reports to parents generally include percentage marks and broad indications of standards achieved; some subjects, additionally, give an indication of the average marks of the class, set or year group. These marks are not, however, consistently indicated – nor are they comparable – across all subjects. Written comments in reports are strong on pupils' personal qualities. Overall, however, they do not give enough clear, detailed information to parents about their children's attainment, rate of progress and what needs to be done to secure any necessary improvement. In the preinspection survey a significant minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the information they received, particularly in respect of their children's progress. The reports do, however, include a useful opportunity for the pupils themselves to make a written evaluation of how well they are getting on.

88. Pupils' formal *Record of Achievement* includes a collation of data from Year 7 onwards and is completed in Year 11. The folders are well presented and include awarded certificates relating both to academic and other achievements, together with pupils' personal evaluations of their achievements and capabilities. The assessment procedures and practice for pupils with special educational needs are good.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

89. Parents hold the school in high regard for what it offers and achieves for their children and are pleased with the progress their children make. They feel that staff and the school as a whole are very approachable and friendly. They like the school and the high expectations it promotes, and (rightly) feel that their children are well taught. This positive view of the school is reflected in the significant increase in pupil numbers since the last inspection. The rate of return of the pre-inspection parental questionnaire, too, was substantially higher for this inspection than the last.

90. There is a regular flow of information, letters and notices to parents, advising them of activities, significant dates and facilities offered by the school. This good range of information includes details about such provision as the mentoring scheme for Year 11 pupils, curriculum booklets for each year group and homework timetables. The school's prospectus provides a helpful range of information about the aims and activities of the school. Its GCSE options booklet is well prepared, attractive and informative.

91. There is a high attendance at parents' consultation evenings; those who do not attend are contacted directly by the staff. In addition to the one consultation evening each year, parents receive a full *Annual Report* and a *Progress Review*. This ensures that parents receive at least one formal contact with the school each term relating to their child's progress. The *Student Planner* also offers parents the opportunity to communicate regularly with teachers in an informal way.

92. Although there is a good level of parental communication and activity, information about pupils' progress, the range of activities outside lessons and links with parents were regarded unfavourably by a significant minority of parents in the pre-inspection survey. As indicated above, inspectors judge that the written annual reports often lack sufficient detail on children's attainment and progress. On the other hand, the school does provide a very good range of voluntary, extracurricular activities and generally works hard at its links with parents. This mismatch in perception appears to be at least partly explained by the school's modesty in publicising the many good things it does: as one parent opined, "the school undersells itself".

93. The activity of the parents' association has declined since the last inspection and the school has not recently held any workshops for parents on curricular or similar topics. There is a high level of participation by pupils in extracurricular sport, musical concerts, drama and study support groups. The school also works closely with parents and others on *The Duke of Edinburgh's Award* scheme, overseas visits, mock interviews and on aspects of the PSRE programmes. The school's links with parents of children with special educational needs are good. There are regular termly meetings to review pupils' progress and to ensure that pupils are provided with appropriate support.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

94. The school has a good set of broad and relevant objectives for pupils' education and development. These place a high value on meeting individual pupils' needs and establishing a climate of personal growth and strong personal relationships. To a very large extent these aims are successfully achieved in the daily life of the school.

95. The school's management style has developed in the light of this emphasis on open and positive relations. The increase in the school's size, however, and the increasing need to evaluate and account for its performance mean that a spontaneous management style is no longer sufficient by itself. The school does not have in place an adequate schoolwide system to ensure full consistency and quality of practice across subjects or aspects and to establish an adequate base of essential management information. In the absence of such systems, the school does not always respond speedily or effectively enough to current demands.

96. The headteacher is a dedicated and caring professional who is highly accessible to pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. He provides positive encouragement and a sense of optimism for all who work in the school. He is open to fresh ideas and welcomes sound change, even though the school does not always implement new ideas with sufficient speed or effectiveness. He has a clear vision for the school as a humane and civilised community, where all are valued and can demonstrate their individual worth. His very warm, open and friendly style is an important element in the school's success and progress.

97. Overall, the senior management team makes a positive and effective contribution to many areas of the school's life. The coordination of the school's work on pastoral, special educational needs and tutorial matters, for example, is particularly effective. There is, however, insufficiently clear direction and accountability in such whole-school areas as curricular monitoring and development, the evaluation of pupil and school performance and the line-management of subject coordinators. At times the communication to parents and the wider community of the school's current successes and future plans is muted. This tends to confirm the view of some parents that the school "undersells" itself and its quality.

98. The quality and effectiveness of leaders of subjects and pastoral work range from very good to unsatisfactory, but are good overall. These leaders play a significant role in the management and

direction of the school, but their contributions are not regularly communicated and coordinated across all staff, so that the whole school can build on the many good practices that are already successfully in place.

99. The governing body brings a high level of local support and commitment to the work of the school. Governors scrutinise policies and plans with care and make a supportive contribution to the school's development. They are not, however, sufficiently in touch with the details of the school's performance. Nor have they ensured that the school complies with the statutory requirements for the teaching of ICT and RE, provides a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, or has fully implemented the key issues for action arising from the last inspection report.

100. The school's new performance management system has been appropriately built on the earlier system of teacher appraisal. The new arrangements have been launched effectively and in a positive spirit, a view confirmed by the external, threshold assessor's report.

101. The school has a widely based system of planning for future improvement, in which staff and governors play a full part. Periodic reviews of progress are a regular feature of this planning cycle. There are, however, some limitations in the detail of this plan: priorities within the list of targets are not fully indicated, costings of objectives are insufficiently precise and success criteria are not explicit.

102. The school's financial management and planning are generally good and support effectively its educational priorities. The governing body is reasonably informed about the school's spending patterns, and is involved in discussing, though rarely taking the initiative on, financial matters.

103. The school is spending more than its income and its budget is in deficit – albeit with the agreement of its local education authority. Some measures have been taken to reduce this deficit by, for example, reducing the costs of teaching staff. It is anticipated that rising pupil numbers will attract more funding and help to reduce the deficit further. There is every indication, however, that this route alone will be insufficient and that the school must give urgent consideration to additional means, including restructuring staffing at senior level, in order to eliminate the deficit fully by the target date of 2003. The most recent audit raised only very minor issues that were dealt with immediately. The school's financial management and administration are good, and spending within the necessarily tight budget is carefully monitored.

104. The school has made suitable and effective use of funds for staff training. Other specific grants and funds are used appropriately – as, for example, in the school's decision to use some funding to reduce the budgetary deficit. The school makes satisfactory use of such new technologies as email and the Internet. When purchasing services, the school takes best value into account. It has, for example, recently taken over the school's cleaning contract and installed a water-saving system and some movement-activated lighting in parts of the building.

105. The proportion of the school's budget spent on teaching staff is above average. The provision of teachers is good and almost all lessons are taught by specialists. Non-specialists, however, have a detrimental impact on some pupils' learning and progress in English, drama and PE, because of insufficient subject expertise. There are sufficient qualified and/or experienced teachers for pupils with special educational needs.

106. With the exception of art, there is sufficient technical support: the appointment of an ICT technician is an improvement since the last inspection. The number of hours allocated for administrative staff is below average for a school of this size, but there is good administrative support for the coordinator of special educational needs. The ratio of pupils to teachers is close to the national average. The total teaching time of 25 hours per week is in line with that recommended nationally.

107. There is a good system of induction to the work of the school for teachers new to teaching. Opportunities for the professional development of staff are generally used well. The overall good



standard of teaching makes the school an effective provider of initial teacher training. The guidance and support provided for teachers being trained in the school are good.

108. Most subjects have sufficient accommodation. Although much of the English teaching area has been refurbished and is of good quality, there is insufficient accommodation in English as well as in science, art and ICT. The accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is inadequate, although there are plans in hand to improve it. It is planned that new accommodation for drama will allow new science teaching rooms to be created. History is taught in three widely separated rooms: one of these is too small to allow for any variety in teaching styles, whilst the two others are temporary classrooms on the edge of the school's site. This separation results in a lack of any sense of a history department and creates inefficiencies owing to the dispersal of resources.

109. Improvements have been made to parts of the buildings recently and several areas have been re-roofed. The front of the school's site has many attractive features, but some other parts have a run-down appearance that is not conducive to pupils' aesthetic education. There is, for example, peeling paint on many window frames. Despite a large number of litter bins around the site, there is a large amount of litter around. There is wheelchair access to much of the site, including two of the mobile classrooms, and the school has two toilets for people with physical disabilities.

110. Although the school's spending on learning resources is below average, due in part to the very tight budget, the provision of resources is generally satisfactory. There is, however, a shortage of textbooks for pupils in all years in history and in Years 7-9 in modern foreign languages – although a delivery of books during the inspection week may help to improve provision in the latter. The provision of resources for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, but they are sometimes – as, for example, with the community-owned, specialist ICT provision – not used to best effect.

111. At the time of the inspection the number of centrally provided computers was below average, but the imminent installation of 20 new, industry-standard machines promises to improve the school's provision considerably. The provision of ICT within departments is unsatisfactory in English, history, music and PE. In these subjects there are insufficient computers available for pupils to use.

112. The library is too small for a school of this size and type: as a result, the stock of books, both fiction and non-fiction, is very limited in number and range. There are three computers with CD-ROMs in the library, but without Internet access. No newspapers are available and the stock of magazines is very small. As a result, the library does not provide a good resource for independent learning.

113. The library is well managed by a temporary, non-teaching member of staff, who is not a qualified librarian. She is very aware of the shortcomings of the library and works hard, within a very limited budget, to improve provision and encourage its use. The library is used well by pupils on the four lunchtimes during the week when it is open. It is insufficiently used by staff as a research area for small groups of pupils. The school now requires a clear policy to determine the future function of the library.

114. Overall – taking into account the school's deficit budget and its well above average expenditure, set alongside the good quality of its teaching and general education, pupils' progress and their pastoral care – the school gives satisfactory value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

115. To improve and build upon the good quality of education that pupils already receive, the governing body and senior management of the school should:

- (a) improve still further the overall attainment and progress of pupils (particularly boys) by ensuring that they
- establish a clear, whole-school policy for assessing pupils' attainment, in a consistent way, across all subjects and year-groups;
  - thoroughly coordinate and carefully interpret all sets of data about pupils' attainment, in order to evaluate accurately (i) pupils' progress throughout Years 7-11, (ii) the performance of subject departments, and (iii) the performance of the whole school – and taking appropriate action where weaknesses are detected;
  - ensure that all aspects of literacy are very effectively and consistently promoted across the school;
  - carefully evaluate the range of interesting school projects that are designed to enhance the achievement of boys and then spread successful practice across the school; and
  - formulate a policy to meet consistently the needs of gifted and talented pupils (## 14 18 24-30 38 50 53 61 83 85 87).
- (b) ensure that the management and monitoring of school policies are tightened up, in order to
- complement the successful informal systems of management currently in place;
  - secure consistency of good practice across the school; and
  - convert ideas and planning more quickly into effective action (## 62 78 83 85 95-99 101).
- (c) ensure that statutory requirements are met by providing
- enough teaching time for all pupils in Years 10-11 to cover the national programme of study for information and communication technology (ICT) and the Agreed Syllabus for religious education (RE); and
  - a daily act of collective worship for all pupils (## 23 56 76 99).
- (d) enhance the spiritual development of pupils to match the good overall provision for their moral, social and cultural development (## 69-70). [This aspect was identified as a weakness at the last inspection and has been inadequately tackled.]

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 19-22 42 44 46-48 57 62 74 76 92 106 108-113 and in relevant subject sections.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

174

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

88

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	36	74	58	4	1	0
Percentage	1	21	43	33	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. The percentage figures do not add up to 100 because of rounding.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll	704
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	47

#### Special educational needs

Y7– Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	142

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
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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	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 1999-2000.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	60	63	123

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	33	47	48
	Girls	50	53	49
	Total	83	100	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (62)	81 (74)	79 (74)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (27)	59 (48)	37 (33)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	43	39
	Girls	50	49	46
	Total	84	92	85
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (66)	75 (70)	69 (74)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (33)	48 (41)	33 (26)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

*Percentages in brackets refer to 1999.*

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in the final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2000	59	62	121

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Number of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	25	54	56
	Girls	38	54	61
	Total	63	108	117
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	52 (47)	89 (88)	97 (98)
	National	47 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

*Percentages in brackets refer to 1999.*

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.4 (37.1)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

*Figures in brackets refer to 1999.*

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	702
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

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

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	355

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.0
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.5
Key Stage 4	20.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	1,738,550
Total expenditure	1,743,854
Expenditure per pupil	2,742
Balance brought forward from previous year	-111,897
Balance carried forward to next year	-117,201

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	516
Number of questionnaires returned	104

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	25	62	8	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	24	72	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	54	13	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	55	13	3	1
The teaching is good.	26	65	3	2	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	41	21	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	36	7	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	39	4	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	25	53	15	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	44	44	3	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	56	9	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	40	11	9	12

### Other issues raised by parents

There were additional comments from parents on six of the 104 questionnaires returned. These mainly amplified and reinforced the points reflected in the analysis above, but particular attention was drawn to the hard work and caring attitude of both teaching and administrative staff and to the headteacher's personal example of good standards.

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths:

- results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have improved annually.
- teaching is good in Years 7-9; lessons follow the national strategy for literacy.
- pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good.
- the lower attainment of boys is well targeted for support and improvement.

#### Areas for improvement:

- the collation and use of relevant data to track pupils' progress from Year 7.
- pupils' overall attainment of the higher standards they achieve in mathematics and science.
- closer links with drama.

116. On entry to the school in Year 7, the proportion of pupils who have already reached the benchmark of Level 4 in the national tests in their primary schools has improved since 1998 from being at the national average to being above it in 1999 and 2000. The rise in the proportion of pupils entering the school at Level 5 tripled over the same period.

117. Results of the national tests in English at the end of Year 9 have shown a steady annual improvement over the 1996-2000 period from a low base, with attainment being close to the national benchmark of Level 5 in 1998 and 1999 and slightly above it in 2000. The overall attainment of boys, however, was lower than that of girls over the 1997-2000 period: whereas boys' average performance was close to (though slightly below) the national average for boys, girls' standard was a little higher than the national average for girls. When compared with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances, pupils' performance in this school was average in 1998, well below average in 1999 and below average in 2000. These ratings are consistently below those achieved in mathematics and science.

118. In GCSE English language in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A-C was close to the national average. The overall proportion of A-C grades almost doubled over the 1997-1999 period from a low base: results were well below the national average in 1997-1998, above average in 1999 and close to average in 2000. In English literature there has been a steady rise since 1997 in the proportion of pupils gaining grades A-C: the attainment of this level of result in 2000 was higher than it was nationally. In 1999 pupils achieved better in English language than they did in most of their other subjects, but performed worse than most others in 1997, 1998 and 2000. Over the 1997-2000 period pupils' performance in English was usually below that in mathematics and (especially) science.

119. The overall performance of girls in GCSE is usually much higher than that of boys. Over the 1997-2000 period (except for only a slight advantage in 1998) the performance of girls was well above that of boys and in 2000 greater than the difference nationally. Boys' attainment improved significantly, however, in 1998 from the previous year and has been sustained around that level since. The performance of girls was above the national average for girls in 1999 and 2000. In English literature in 1999 and 2000, both boys' and girls' performances were above the national average.

120. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall standard in English work is close to average. The majority of pupils are fluent and confident readers. Most use a range of suitable strategies when reading and refer to appropriate textual evidence to support a point of view. Pupils in a Year 7 class, for instance, used their knowledge of phonics to identify and spell words ending in *-tion* such as "attention" and "fiction". As part of the means of improving the organisation and development of autobiographical writing, other Year 7



pupils considered carefully how the questions “who?”, “what?”, “when?” and “why?” could help to structure their writing.

121. Pupils in Year 8, when reading aloud the poetry of John Agard, developed their understanding of how the poet creates effects, noting examples of such features as assonance, rhythm and line structure, and concluding that “most lines are eight syllables”. Other pupils in a Year 8, discussing the purpose of travel brochures, observed that they “tell you all the good things” and “use a lot of adjectives”. A Year 9 class read a letter to a newspaper to consider the writer’s choice of language and the extent to which alternative words, such as “disgraceful” to replace “unfair”, could be used.

122. Pupils listen attentively and work effectively in small groups or pairs. They write for a suitable range of genres and audiences. In Years 7 and 8 they develop satisfactorily the key literacy skills identified in the national framework for teaching English. In a Year 8 class working on homophones, for instance, pupils clarified the spelling, meaning and usage of such words as “to”, “too” and “two”. A Year 9 class of boys worked in pairs to explore how the language of the formal rules of football may be modified when used in a less formal way.

123. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning in Years 7-9. The use of the national framework for teaching English is being soundly implemented to improve pupils’ progress. Pupils identify and describe aspects of language with increasing confidence and apply that knowledge when working on literary texts.

124. By the end of Year 11, pupils’ overall level of attainment is average. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 select appropriate textual references to reinforce their points of view when writing. Pupils’ GCSE assignments are generally well constructed, confident and mature. A pupil’s work on a comparison of story openings, based on *Foxgloves* by Susan Price and *The Red Room* by H G Wells, for example, was convincingly argued and closely referenced to the texts. Pupils in Year 11 noted the significance of oral devices in a speech of Martin Luther King, when considering the use of persuasive language in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. Year 10 pupils, reading Willy Russell’s play, *Blood Brothers*, explored themes of comedy, tragedy and social issues well through the use of a writing frame. Whilst planning a news report around the theme of homelessness, based on interviews with some of the characters in the novel, *Stone Cold*, by Robert Swindells, pupils considered carefully the level of linguistic formality and informality.

125. Throughout Years 10-11 most pupils effectively use a range of reading approaches, interpret texts satisfactorily and use appropriate terminology when discussing the effects of language use. The writing of most pupils is of a satisfactory, average standard, although a minority of pupils use only a limited range of sentence structures. The extended writing of high-attaining pupils demonstrates a high level of technical competence.

126. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in their work in Years 10 and 11. High-attaining pupils write in a sustained and mature style and support their arguments by suitable textual references. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in planning and organising their writing, sometimes drawing effectively on word-lists to guide their responses. In small-group or whole-class discussions pupils refer confidently to, and use, key words and note the effects of language use.

127. Teaching is good overall in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. Lesson plans include clear objectives. Across Years 7-9 the implementation of the national strategy for English has had a positive effect on teachers’ medium- and short-term planning. Objectives from its Teaching Framework are suitably used in Years 7 and 8. “Starter activities” in a fair proportion of lessons focus well on the key skills of spelling and vocabulary.

128. Most teachers in the department set high expectations for pupils’ learning, enjoy their work and clearly help pupils to make progress. Oral work is a regular feature in lessons, but there is a tendency in some classes not to allow pupils sufficient time to share and develop their answers. Teachers manage pupils well and assess pupils’ class work satisfactorily.

129. Pupils' attitudes are good throughout the school. The majority of pupils enjoy the subject and listen attentively in classrooms. In most lessons pupils concentrate on what they should learn, are sensibly responsive to one another and are well behaved. A small minority of pupils, however, are disruptive in lessons, thereby undermining the quality of teaching and learning.

130. Pupils' study of literature and language makes a significant contribution to their moral and social development. For example, pupils consider issues such as homelessness in the novel, *Stone Cold*, and the social issues of *Blood Brothers*. The department organises a number of extracurricular activities, including National Poetry Day, World Book Day celebrations, theatre visits and theatre in education.

131. The leadership and management of the department have many good features. There are also aspects for improvement. Sound administrative systems are in place for day-to-day management, but long-term, strategic planning is not secure enough. The high degree of staff turnover in the department has also weakened continuity in pupils' education. The appointment of a new second-in-command has the potential to strengthen the overall quality of management and leadership in the department.

132. The progress of pupils is well tracked from the end of Year 9 to Year 11, and two Saturdays in June were used to support GCSE pupils in their preparation for the English examinations. The department does not, in contrast, adequately collate and use data, including that derived from Key Stage 2 national tests, to track pupils' progress from Year 7 to Year 9. The department regularly monitors pupils' written work, however, and in departmental meetings there is always an opportunity to discuss any pupils causing concern. The department has reviewed the slower progress and attainment of boys in Years 7-9 and, after establishing single-sex groups in Year 9, has noted that boys have made improvements in these groups. The department has not, however, been able to sustain the initiative into Years 10-11.

133. Departmental documentation for Years 10-11 is regularly reviewed; the schemes of work for Years 7-9 are being revised to incorporate the units of work developed in the national strategy. The department works closely with the art and music departments, but has not examined carefully the potential advantages of establishing closer curricular links between English and drama, as recommended in the last inspection report. The department has completed an audit of the subject, within the spirit of the national strategy. This has the potential to improve the department further.

## Drama

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

### Strengths:

- pupils work thoughtfully together in groups.
- teachers assess pupils' progress well throughout the school.
- the subject is well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement:

- a clearer progression within the scheme of work for Years 7-9.
- closer links with English.

134. Drama is taught throughout the school. The proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the range A\* C over the period 1997-2000 was consistently around the national average, but (except in 1998) pupils achieved less well in this subject than in most of their other subjects. In 2001, however, a high three-quarters of the pupils entered for GCSE gained a grade in the A\*-C range and three pupils gained the highest A\* grade.

135. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment is broadly average overall. In Year 7, pupils are introduced to drama games, improve their coordinating skills and follow instructions carefully. Pupils in a Year 8 class made good progress on, for example, the theme of bullying, as they built up the profiles of

key characters and explored them through role-play. In a Year 9 class pupils worked effectively in groups to explore their awareness and understanding of the interaction between characters.

136. By the end of Year 11 pupils' overall level of attainment is average. In a Year 11 group, for instance, pupils used Adrian Mitchell's poem, *Saw it in the Papers*, to interpret characterisation soundly: using key questions during "hot-seating"/role-play, pupils explored the reasons and feelings of key characters with great sensitivity. Pupils extend their awareness of characters through dialogue, as they consider such motives as selfishness. A Year 11 group, beginning work on design, used ICT facilities well to download images from the Internet.

137. The overall quality of teaching is good in Years 7-9 and sound in Years 10-11. Lesson plans include clear objectives that, in the best lessons, are written up and displayed. Generally high expectations are set for pupils throughout the school.

138. Pupils' attitudes are good throughout the school. Pupils enjoy their lessons, listen well to one another and evaluate work carefully. They are enthusiastic and well behaved.

139. The drama department is soundly managed and has good administrative and managerial systems in place. A detailed scheme of work generally provides excellent guidance for staff, but lacks sufficient guidance on the progression of activities and skills in Years 7-9. Assessment is carried out effectively and regularly, with the result that there is good evidence to identify pupils' progress in drama. Theatre trips and groups widen the curricular opportunities for pupils. The curricular gap between drama and English that was identified in the last inspection report has not been resolved.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths:

- teaching and learning are good.
- the subject is very well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement:

- more challenging work for gifted and talented pupils.

140. At the end of Year 9 the proportion of pupils who achieved either the basic standard or higher levels expected of 14 year olds in the 2000 national tests was well above the national average. Based upon the average points scored by all pupils, the school's results were also well above the national average for all schools and were above average when compared with those of schools in similar social circumstances. The results in previous years were consistently well above average, but very few pupils achieve the highest levels. Girls and boys perform equally well, contrary to the national trend where girls generally do better than boys. The results in 2001 maintained the standards of previous years.

141. The proportion of pupils who achieved grades in the range A\*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was above the national average. A slightly higher than average proportion of pupils achieved the highest grades (A\* or A), but the proportion who achieved grades A\*B was a little lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieved a grade A\*-G was also a little below average. Based upon the average grade achieved by all pupils in the school who were entered for the examination, pupils made better progress in mathematics than in most of their other subjects. Relative to schools in similar social circumstances, however, results were below average.

142. The GCSE results have steadily improved over recent years, except for a dip in 1999 when relatively few pupils achieved the highest grades. Girls and boys perform equally well, contrary to the national trend, in achieving at least a grade C, but girls gain significantly more of the highest (A\*-B)

grades. The results in 2001 were similar to those of previous years and, additionally, all pupils achieved a grade in the range A\*-G.

143. By the end of Year 9, the standard of work of a larger than average proportion of pupils is at least at the level expected of 14 year olds. A significant proportion achieve higher standards, but this proportion could be higher. Good teaching throughout Years 7-9 generally helps pupils to make good progress in learning, to think mathematically and to present work in ways that are logically correct. These factors help high-attaining pupils in the top sets of Years 7-9 to achieve high standards when solving routine textbook problems in, for example, arithmetic, algebra and geometry. By the end of Year 9, however, such pupils have had too few opportunities to generalise about the patterns and relationships they find in challenging, extended investigations or in tackling problems containing an unusual "twist". This gap in provision fails to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils and, in part, explains why too few pupils achieve the very highest levels in the national tests.

144. During their first year in the school pupils make good progress. A strong emphasis is placed upon numeracy, using the teaching methods suggested by the national numeracy strategy and building upon similar work done in primary schools. Pupils show confidence in their ready recall of basic number facts and methods of mental calculation. Lessons usually begin with a short session designed to raise confidence and accuracy in these skills. At the start of one such lesson in Year 7, for example, pupils held up "number fans" to show their answers to such quick-fire questions as "show in figures the number twenty-six thousand and three". This tactic enabled the teacher to check pupils' understanding instantly and to correct any errors quickly, thus ensuring good progress.

145. Similar strategies are now being extended into Years 8 and 9. For example, a set of lower attaining pupils in Year 8 used small whiteboards on which to write their answers to a rapid sequence of questions on angles and the properties of those formed by a line cutting across parallel lines. Again, the strategy helped pupils to consolidate their knowledge effectively.

146. Pupils' achievements in Years 7 and 8 are good overall. In each year, for example, pupils improve their skills in manipulating algebraic expressions of increasing complexity, raise their knowledge of geometry and increase their methods of representing and interpreting data. Although the numbers of boys and girls vary in the upper and lower sets in Years 7-9, they do equally well overall. Low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress over a broad range of the subject. One such set of pupils, in a well-prepared lesson in Year 8, for example, used sets of cards to match the correct word(s) of types of angles to diagrams that illustrated the concepts. The appropriate level of challenge in the work sustained their interest and motivation throughout the lesson and improved their knowledge of the subject.

147. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is above average. In 2001 all pupils were entered for the GCSE examination: most prepare for the intermediate tier and about one in six pupils enter for the higher tier. Higher-attaining pupils gain a good working knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and data-handling, and use their skills to solve problems successfully. The gifted and talented show flair in completing extended investigations of mathematical problems for the coursework element of their GCSE assessment. One such pupil, for example, who had also been entered for statistics, used a range of relatively advanced statistical methods to justify her hypothesis of a positive correlation between the marks Year 11 pupils had gained in the mock examinations in science and mathematics.

148. Pupils in the middle sets gain a sound understanding of the skills and knowledge expected for the intermediate tier. For instance, as a result of very skilful questioning by their teacher, one such set of pupils pooled their knowledge of the properties and relationships between the sides and angles of triangles. This enabled them to proceed with confidence to use their knowledge of algebra, geometry and trigonometry to find the areas of triangles, given appropriate lengths of sides and angles.

149. In contrast, during some lessons, despite pupils being often required to explain their thinking and describe their methods of solution to others, the teaching fails to develop sufficiently pupils' independence

in tackling new problems. In consequence, the attainment of these pupils in GCSE examinations is below what it could be. As a result of good teaching in small groups, low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in a limited range of the subject, matched to the foundation tier. They generally achieve an average level of competence, especially in numeracy.

150. Pupils' progress in Year 10 is good. They learn thoroughly many of the skills and techniques required for GCSE examinations. They use well their skills in, for example, arithmetic and algebra to solve problems in everyday situations, using standard units of measurement, time and money. In the upper sets pupils deepen their knowledge of algebraic techniques and learn to solve such equations as  $3^x = 1/9$  that require a thorough knowledge of the laws of indices. They learn to recognise the general shapes of graphs of appropriate standard functions as well as to extend their knowledge of such statistical methods as cumulative frequency. In contrast, pupils have too few opportunities to pursue extended investigations of mathematical situations that help to prepare the ground for GCSE coursework.

151. Pupils' response to the teaching they receive is good or very good in about equal proportions of lessons. Their attitudes are positive and cooperative. Most pupils work hard and wish to succeed. Almost all take pride in their work and present it neatly and logically, using mathematical symbols and terminology correctly. Several of the extended investigations in Year 11 were presented to a high standard, using ICT. The teachers' efforts to promote mathematics through entry to national competitions and challenging puzzles contribute to the formation of positive attitudes in pupils. Equally, the frequent requests by teachers for pupils to explain their answers to the class raise their confidence and improve attitudes. These factors, in part, enable boys to succeed as highly as girls.

152. Behaviour in lessons is mostly very good. Pupils generally show respect for teachers and respond positively to admonition. A few pupils, however, readily become disruptive and uncooperative, especially when they think they can escape the vigilance of the teacher. Almost all pupils form constructive relationships with their teachers and peers, and enjoy sharing humour. They work well together on tasks in small groups and frequently help one another to clarify misunderstandings.

153. Teaching is good overall, and in two out of every five lessons seen it was very good. Its quality has improved since the last inspection. Teachers are well qualified and have a good range of relevant experience; the team includes a newly qualified teacher. Their good subject knowledge and high expectations of what pupils can do usually ensure that lessons match the needs of pupils well and lead to good learning.

154. A middle set in Year 11, for example, spent the first half of a lesson learning to find the scale factor of enlarged similar shapes. Pupils used geometrical instruments with good levels of accuracy and completed the tasks successfully. Their flagging interest was aroused by a puzzle. To cries of "I get it!", pupils enthusiastically engaged with the task and many devised systematic ways of ensuring that they included all possible answers. Although a few opportunities are missed in some lessons where questions do not contain that extra "twist" to extend learning yet more, many good opportunities are provided for pupils at all levels to tackle appropriately challenging and varied mathematical problems.

155. Methods of teaching include clear demonstrations and explanations of mathematical skills and techniques. In many lessons good questioning and well-managed discussions, where pupils are required to explain their thinking, develop their understanding and confidence securely. In contrast, in a few lessons, teachers are too eager to tell pupils what to do or, by closed questions, lead pupils to the right answer without them having to think much about it. This results in some pupils having too high a dependence on their teachers and, in part, inhibits their achievements. In a few lessons pupils make good progress because teachers alternate short bursts of teaching, during which well-posed questions help pupils to clarify their understanding, with tasks to be completed in a given time. This strategy is not used often enough as a means of increasing the rate of learning.

156. Skills and routines are practised thoroughly. Pupils are taught to use them well to tackle problems in everyday settings. Practical work is used effectively to help pupils to understand new or abstract ideas. For example, low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in Year 11

measured the circumference and diameter of a number of circular objects to help them to deduce, with reasonable accuracy, the relationship between these two variables.

157. In Year 11 a few good opportunities are provided for pupils to investigate mathematical problems that require them to decide on lines of enquiry, justify their thinking and hypotheses, and reach general conclusions from their working. This method of learning mathematics is not used often enough in Years 7-10. The schemes of work contain a rich resource for such problems: some of the shorter ones, used occasionally, are particularly suitable to arouse pupils' interest at the start of lessons and establish a positive climate for learning.

158. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers' high expectations of good behaviour and effective strategies for handling misdemeanours ensure a calm climate for learning. The pace and progress in lessons are generally good. Resources, particularly overhead projectors, textbooks and graphic calculators, are used well. The use of computers to enhance learning is unsatisfactory, a weakness hinted at in the last inspection.

159. During lessons teachers make good, ongoing assessments of pupils' understanding; as a result, many misunderstandings are quickly cleared up with individual pupils. Formal, written assessments are made with sufficient regularity and each pupil's progress is carefully and systematically tracked. Pupils' work is marked regularly: both attainment and progress are assessed, the former by a mark out of ten (or a percentage) and the latter by a comment. Only occasionally are ways of improving work indicated in writing. Homework is set regularly and, in general, tackled successfully.

160. The department is very well led and managed. Pupils' performance, from entry and throughout the school, is carefully analysed for trends and indications of weaknesses in teaching. Such analysis, in part, contributes to the department's success in enabling boys and girls to generally perform equally well in examinations. This aspect of the department's work provides a good model for others departments.

161. Pupils' general standard of numeracy is good and supports their learning in other subjects effectively. In science, for example, pupils handle numbers well and are strongly encouraged to estimate appropriate answers before making calculations. In both science and design and technology pupils estimate and measure with reasonable accuracy and generally use correct abbreviations for the units of measurement they use. In modern foreign languages good use is made of everyday situations that involve money and measures.

162. In science, design and technology, geography and history pupils draw and interpret appropriate graphs and, where necessary, recognise relationships between variables. Pupils' knowledge of common shapes and their properties is used well in art and in design and technology. Most pupils use calculators appropriately: very few were seen using them to perform simple calculations that should be done mentally. Overall, despite the few pupils who thought  $4.2 \times 10$  was 40.2, pupils' standard of numeracy is good.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths:

- results in GCSE are consistently above the national average.
- good teaching.
- the emphasis in lessons on practical investigations and the daily relevance of science.
- the good level of pupils' interest and behaviour.

### Areas for improvement:

- still greater use of data about pupils' attainments to set targets and identify underperformance.
- greater proficiency in pupils' use of scientific and technical words.

163. On entry to the school in Year 7, pupils' attainment in the subject is close to the national average. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment in the national tests is usually well above the national average. In 2000, for example, 79 per cent of pupils gained a Level 5 or above, compared with the national average of 59 per cent. The high level of these test results has been maintained over the last five years. When compared with the results in schools of a similar background, this school's results place it in the top quarter of all such schools. Boys and girls generally do equally well; in 2000 boys' performance was slightly higher than that of girls.

164. The majority of pupils in Year 10-11 follow a GCSE double award science course that has an emphasis on science in everyday life. Approximately 50 pupils are entered for the higher-tier papers each year, whilst the remainder take the restricted foundation papers that carry a maximum of grade C. Overall GCSE grades have risen strongly over the last five years, moving from a position that was below average to one that is now well above average: in 2001, for instance, three out of every five pupils in the school gained at least a C grade, a result that was the best ever in the school. Boys and girls usually do equally well overall, although girls had a slight lead in 2000 and 2001. In most years the proportion of the higher (A\*-B) grades achieved is better than the national average.

165. A group of lower-attaining pupils takes the *Science Plus* award throughout Year 10 that records and rewards their achievement for the acquisition of scientific skills. This provides a firm basis for them to take GCSE single award science at the end of Year 11. This scheme works particularly well with statemented pupils. In most years these pupils make good progress on the scheme and all receive at least a G grade. In some years a small number of this group of pupils have achieved a GCSE grade C in single award science.

166. Pupils make good overall progress in the subject in Years 7-9 and maintain this rate of progress in Years 10-11. A5-sized information sheets, containing precise, salient points (and to be glued in notebooks), are regularly given to pupils. As a direct result of this approach, the time for taking notes in lessons is sensibly reduced and the freed-up time used to encourage pupils to talk about science in daily life and for teachers to check out their understanding.

167. Good lessons were observed throughout the school. In these pupils make considerable gains in their knowledge and understanding, often as a result of teachers' careful planning and varied teaching that actively engages the interest of pupils. This approach was typified by the progress made by a set of lower-attaining pupils in Year 10. They extended their understanding of blood considerably, as a result of teacher-led discussions, practical work, question and answer sessions, a board-work summary, note-taking, scientific models and selected video sequences. Similarly, pupils understood aspects of sound clearly, partly because the teacher gave a suitable demonstration using a signal generator and oscilloscope.

168. Many pupils acquire above average competence throughout the school in all aspects of the manipulation of scientific data, using graphs and formulae. This is partly the result of frequent opportunities to develop their proficiency in lessons and homework – although middle-range pupils often do not label the axes in graphs and sometimes omit the units of measurement. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils used data well to calculate the energy released when a fuel is burned, benefiting from a carefully planned sequence of steps that enabled them to estimate the answer before the final calculation.

169. Most teachers have a large repertoire of scientific examples and anecdotes that they use to illustrate their lessons. These bring reality to lessons and engage pupils' interest. The example of the manufacture of the explosive trinitrotoluene (TNT) and the need for accurate mixing of the appropriate chemicals were well received during a lesson on the common, universal use of chemical formulae. This lesson also used multilingual texts, containing standard chemical symbols and formulae, to stress how scientific communication can occur between scientists whose first language is not English.

170. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy – and gain confidence and skill through – the practical work that is offered in most lessons: investigative and experimental work is a strong feature of the department. Following experimental activities, pupils generally reflect well on their findings, appropriately

reconsidering their initial thoughts and predictions. Middle-attaining groups in particular increase their knowledge and understanding well from the range of practical activities provided. As a result, pupils of all abilities tend to act in a thoroughly scientific manner, frequently asking questions that indicate that their scientific curiosity has been aroused. Teachers work hard to refine the scale and scope of investigations, as they identify suitable activities for pupils of different levels of ability.

171. The organisation of pupils into classes of similar attainment ensures that pupils are offered appropriately challenging experiences in the subject. The department is beginning to address the small underachievement of boys in Years 10-11, where the overall progress of middle-range pupils is lower than that of girls. In Year 10, for example, one class is composed only of boys and the long-term effect of this arrangement is being monitored. Pupils with statements of educational need are usually suitably supported by non-teaching assistants. This arrangement ensures that these pupils are fully integrated into practical and investigative activities. They and other pupils with learning difficulties generally make good progress.

172. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good, and usually very good in the sets of high-attaining pupils. The vast majority respond instantly in class, during discussions and when approached as individuals. At times, they bombard their teachers with sensible questions, as they seek out in-depth understanding of the concept or topic being covered. Nearly all pupils want to learn and show interest. Pupils of different abilities say they enjoy science lessons; many in the top sets in the current Year 11 say that they intend to opt for science subjects in local colleges for post-16 study, continuing the pattern of recent years. Pupils have realistic career aspirations. Several Year 10 pupils plan to explore further their interest in science-related careers through work experience.

173. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to (in two lessons seen) unsatisfactory, but is good overall throughout the school. Staff maximise the time to be spent on practical activities, lead demonstrations well and check pupils' understanding thoroughly. An extensive bank of information, questions and enrichment materials (some commercial, but much prepared in the school) enables teachers to "pick and mix" appropriate documents to enhance lessons. Much material has been developed to target different levels of ability.

174. The science staff themselves are very willing to learn. They have undertaken training to increase, for instance, their capability and confidence in the use of ICT. Three good lessons on data-logging, Internet access and a Powerpoint presentation showed that teachers' recently acquired competence was being put to good use with pupils. Staff are well tuned in to current developments in science education and external examinations. The department welcomes teachers under training and the new experiences they bring.

175. There are also aspects of work that require improvement. Non-functioning equipment, a pedestrian pace, insufficient teaching input or little interaction with the class are the weaknesses of a few lessons. During the inspection, there were few occasions when lessons made significant contributions to improving pupils' literacy. Rarely in lessons were pupils asked to read aloud, although they were usually conversant with the meaning of the scientific words they encountered. Overall, there is insufficient emphasis in planning documents on key scientific and technical words and laboratory walls are underused to display exemplars of scientific matter. In contrast, the inclusion of scientific guidance and the periodic table in the *Student Planner* add to the profile of the subject within the school.

176. The head of department has collated an extensive bank of statistics that covers pupils' attainment on entry to the school and over Years 7-11. These are used effectively to form teaching sets and monitor progress, but underused to set targets or identify underperformance. Textbooks are largely adequate in number, but some are outdated. The department has recently taken delivery of two additional computers and data-logging equipment. There is sufficient ICT equipment either in the department or by access to the school's computer suites.

177. The department has one small and four larger laboratories that date from the initial construction of the school. The school is short of one laboratory to allow six parallel classes to be timetabled in a



laboratory at the same time. The current staff rotation with their teaching groups into a non-laboratory classroom hinders the sequencing of concepts and activities. There is a need to update utility supplies throughout the serviceable, but well-worn, laboratories.

178. The department operates a policy of annually making one significant visit or field trip with each year group. In recent years these visits have been to a local water treatment plant, Robin Hoods Bay (for ecology studies), Drax Power Station and presentation lectures hosted by the Royal Society of Chemistry. These visits provide the necessary, additional background for the type of "contextual" science that is at the heart of the school's good provision. The department runs a regular science club and staff of the department contribute to the wider extracurricular activities offered by the school. The department has an adequate level of technician support.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths:

- the standard of work in ceramics and textiles.
- thoughtful planning to raise GCSE performance.

### Areas for improvement:

- the need to reach higher standards in drawing and painting.
- basic observational drawing earlier in the school.
- the display of high standard work as a model for others.
- the use of computers to generate creative artwork.

179. On entry to the school, many pupils have limited experience of the subject. In recent official assessments at the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils achieve the level expected. In GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades in the range A-C in 2000 was significantly below the national average for the subject. Pupils' attainment in this subject has been significantly below what they have achieved in most of their other subjects during the 1998-2000 period. There is, however, evidence of a trend of improving results from a very low base.

180. The standard of work achieved by the end of Year 9 is broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall over Years 7-9. Initial observational studies of shells, for example, are successfully developed in a range of media such as wax crayon, pen and ink, and colour wash techniques, as a result of the good practical demonstrations by teachers to the whole class and individual pupils. Pupils incorporate art from other cultures appropriately – such as aboriginal symbols in textiles or African patterns in small-scale, ceramic masks – but do not use the stimulus of the local environment enough. Pupils' imagination is successfully sparked by, for instance, story-telling, leading to them completing and creatively illustrating the tale.

181. Pupils design simple decorative patterns, based, for instance, on studies of cogs and wheels, to a satisfactory standard and then adapt and develop these in small-scale, surface printing. By the end of Year 9, pupils' knowledge of artists and different art movements is insufficient, partly because they do not visit galleries during this stage or encounter sufficient practising artists. The standard of figure-drawing is below average: many pupils lack confidence in this aspect, partly because they have not been taught and practised basic observational skills early enough.

182. By the end of Year 11 pupils' standard of work for GCSE is close to average. Despite the relative underperformance of pupils in this subject in earlier years, results are improving: in 2001 just over half the candidates gained a grade in the range A-C; all three A\*/A grades were gained by boys. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall in Years 10 to 11. It is good in such aspects as the well-made and highly imaginative ceramic animal forms. Pupils' skill in drawing and painting is, however, unsatisfactory: it has been insufficiently developed from earlier stages – partly because breadth of experience in a wide range of different media has been emphasised at the expense of doing any two-dimensional activity really well.

183. In Years 10-11, pupils successfully use influences from other cultures in large-scale, batik fabric work. Knowledge of colour effects, derived from technical exercises, is put to good, vibrant use. Sketchbooks are used effectively for recording ideas and experimenting. Pupils take notes and write with confidence about art and artists that they have researched from the good departmental stock of art books, from the Internet or from a visit to an art gallery. The majority are unable, however, to identify or describe such work in conversation, because they lack regular practice in doing so. Pupils in these years are over-reliant on their teachers directing activities and do not take sufficient responsibility for their own work. Learning is, in most other respects, satisfactory. It is aided by teachers analysing with pupils the display of previous examination work and grades. This good practice clarifies for pupils what they need to do to improve their own work and achieve well.

184. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactory standards in design, owing to teachers' clear identification of their individual needs and to the regular and precise instruction and craft demonstration provided by teachers and support staff. There is no significant difference in the overall achievement of boys and girls.

185. The quality of teaching is sound overall, quite often good and occasionally very good. The practice of seating individual boys and girls together in Years 7-9 is helping to raise standards of work, because pupils' complementary strengths and insights help one another. Teaching is generally successful in arousing and maintaining pupils' interest in the subject. Year 8 pupils, for example, were engrossed by descriptions of how the police use different drawing techniques to identify people: this resulted in pupils working hard to produce recognisable line and tonal pencil portrait drawings of themselves from mirrors.

186. The management of large groups of pupils is good, particularly in the cramped working conditions in one studio. The completion of many practical tasks is wisely linked to a deadline and this creates a sense of urgency and positive activity. At other times teachers over-dominate lessons, pupils are too passive and a suitably positive work ethic is not developed. Appropriate homework tasks are regularly set throughout the school to extend classroom study.

187. The head of department provides sound leadership in establishing the means for promoting higher examination standards, particularly for boys identified as underachieving. There has been satisfactory progress overall since the last inspection, but there is still more to do. The regular emphasis on key skills has made a positive impact on pupils' creative writing about art and on their technical note-taking. Concepts of measurement and proportion are satisfactorily understood, but their practical application is limited by pupils' imprecise drawing skills. Some pupils use computers to present text or to research artwork. The department is now equipped with good computer resources, but these are not used to generate creative artwork. The amount of technical help available is low, especially in view of the amount of ceramics work undertaken.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths:

- very good leadership of the subject.
- high quality of teaching throughout the department.
- good standard achieved by pupils at GCSE.
- the effectiveness of industrial placements for staff.

### Areas for improvement:

- assessment procedures for Years 7-9.
- an increased focus on gifted and talented pupils.
- timetable arrangements for Years 10-11.

188. The department has made good progress in improving the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Standards in GCSE have continued to rise, pupils' industrial awareness is much improved and appropriate attention has been given to tracking, and understanding the difference between, the achievement of boys and girls. Displays in classrooms are relevant, attractive and well maintained.

189. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall level of attainment is slightly above average: almost all achieve at least the expected level for their age and a significant minority achieve more. In the period 1998-2001 teachers' assessments show that there has been an overall improvement in pupils' attainments to reach this above average level.

190. From the evidence of design work and practical projects pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average and reflects teachers' assessments in 2001. In food technology pupils learn to adapt and modify recipes as well as to evaluate their own and other pupils' results. In textiles they learn to investigate the properties of materials thoroughly as well as to use hand and sewing-machine techniques when constructing artefacts and garments. Designing and making in resistant materials often incorporate the use of a computer. Standards of written work are generally good: pupils cope well with presenting their ideas, both formally and informally, using hand-drawing techniques and computer graphics.

191. By the end of Year 11, pupils' performance is generally above average in the aspect of the subject within which they have chosen to specialise. Over the period 1999-2001 the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the ranges A\*-C and A\*-G in GCSE was well above the national average, although in 2001 fewer pupils than usual achieved the highest grades. Pupils' performance in this range of subjects is significantly above what they achieve in most of their other subjects. Pupils perform and achieve well in all areas of the subject.

192. The Year 11 examination coursework of last year's pupils, seen during the inspection, showed thorough research and analysis and high levels of design, evaluation and presentation. This was particularly evident in graphics and textiles. One memorable project of high quality produced a textile that would be appreciated by blind people. The present Year 11, who have just started the second year of their examination course, listen carefully and are well used to solving problems, drawing on their past experiences in the subject to guide their current thinking and planning.

193. Pupils generally learn very well. Their progress is good in such tasks as designing and making a desk tidy in Year 7 and a ball-bearing game in Year 8. Here pupils learn to communicate their ideas, using orthographic projection, and to acquire skilfulness in using a range of wood and metal-working tools. In textiles Year 8 pupils learn carefully about the use of protective clothing before designing and making their own apron, whilst Year 7 pupils familiarise themselves with safe working practices in the kitchen before working on a recipe for scones. Class learning is well supported by suitable homework activities.

194. In textiles pupils in Year 10 learn about the psychology behind promotional products before undertaking a similar task themselves. In two food groups, for example, pupils prepared and cooked scone recipes and then evaluated the results, whilst in resistant materials a group (composed mainly of boys) demonstrated their awareness of safety procedures in a workshop environment. Throughout the school both boys and girls benefit greatly from the tasks set, the time allowed and the resources provided.

195. Key technical words are reinforced in all lessons and appropriate opportunities are offered for pupils to read aloud, either singly or in unison. Dictionaries are available, though rarely used. Standards of written work, including note-making, are very good and spelling is usually accurate. Boys are often quicker to answer questions, but girls often give more considered responses. In all years good use is made of computers for research, design, communication and control.

196. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good throughout the school. Pupils (apart from the Year 7 pupils who were new to the school) are punctual to lessons. They are generally well prepared, keen to learn and listen well. The exceptions are a few boys in Years 7 and 8 who lack

self-discipline and have yet to learn to conform to the high standards expected of them by their teachers. During the two-hour sessions even the youngest pupils sustain interest and concentration. Talk in lessons is usually about the task being undertaken. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about their projects.

197. The quality of teaching is very good overall throughout the school. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, normally good or better and very good in the majority of lessons. Very secure subject knowledge and planning, reinforced by very good (and occasionally excellent) demonstrations, are strong features of this practice. Teachers work very well as a team – as is evident in the reinforcement of strategies for literacy and numeracy and the provision for ICT. Health and safety issues are high priorities. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well either by learning support assistants or by teachers' interventions. Good work has been undertaken in modifying worksheets to take account of boys' learning needs. Girls have also benefited from this approach. Areas for improvement include more consideration of the needs of the gifted and talented pupils and the greater use of assessment during lessons (especially in Years 7-9) to guide planning and improve pupils' learning still further.

198. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Departmental documentation is excellent. Knowledge of national initiatives as well as examination experience beyond the school inform departmental vision and lead to very good practice. Good pupil insight and understanding are particularly evident in food technology, as a result of regular, industrial placements for teachers. Teachers reinforce moral and social issues strongly, but the development of multicultural awareness is modest.

199. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory for Years 7-9. All teachers mark work regularly and record results. There is, however, no overall vision or consistent approach to assessing the work of pupils in Years 7-9. This is a significant weakness in an otherwise outstanding department. Concern is felt within the department about the lack of a double lesson for Years 10-11 after this extended form of provision has been found to work very well in Years 7-9. Statutory requirements are met.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths:

- GCSE results are well above average: girls achieve particularly well.
- teaching is generally well planned and effective.
- fieldwork and the use of ICT.
- the assessment, recording and purposeful use of data about pupils' progress.
- the quality of leadership and management of the subject.

### Areas for improvement:

- the standards achieved by boys.
- systematic provision for the highest-attaining pupils.

200. Pupils' overall level of attainment at the end of Year 9 is broadly average. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 2000 at the end of Year 9, results indicated that standards were above those expected nationally, whilst the assessments in 2001 indicated that attainment was average. Overall, however, the results since 1998 indicate that the level of attainment has been steadily rising. The overall results achieved by girls are consistently much higher than those of boys at all levels.

201. By the end of Year 11 pupils' overall level of attainment is above the national average. Results in the GCSE examination have risen steadily since 1997 and reached a point well above the national average in 2000. This high standard was broadly maintained in 2001, but the proportion achieving the highest A\*/A grades was at the national norm. Pupils' performance in the subject in GCSE is consistently above what they achieve in most of their other subjects. The results achieved by girls were significantly higher at all levels than those achieved by boys.

202. Examination results are thoroughly analysed by the department and indicate that pupils make good progress in this subject. A very clear strategy for improvement, with a particular concentration on boys, has been implemented: this focuses sensibly on close monitoring of pupils' progress, additional support for GCSE coursework and the experimental strategies to raise the achievement of boys (as, for example, the use of single-sex groups in Year 9).

203. Pupils have a good knowledge of the environment and how landscapes are formed. They can describe clearly how people live and work in different areas of the world, but they have an unsatisfactory knowledge of where places are and find it difficult to accurately describe the location of places when they are found. Pupils have a sound knowledge of geographical terms. In Years 10-11 they make increasingly good use of specialist vocabulary in written work, with the higher-attaining pupils using it very effectively in GCSE coursework.

204. The links between people and their environment are clearly understood. Pupils in Year 10, for example, write accurately about the need for National Parks and for good management of fragile environments to reduce the effects of tourism on the landscape. They also have a good understanding of geographical models: in Years 10-11 they use them effectively to explain and compare types of farming, industry and the patterns of land use in cities. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. They have a sound basic knowledge of the subject and their work is generally accurate.

205. Pupils extract information effectively from a range of resource materials to complete exercises and for research. They have good mapwork and atlas skills. For instance, pupils in Year 8 used different parts of an atlas quickly and successfully to find the countries of the European Union, their location, populations and capital cities. Pupils have a good knowledge of the methodology of geographical enquiry, the collection of data and the analysis of information to draw conclusions. The coursework presented by girls is generally more detailed, better presented and overall of a higher standard than that of boys. All pupils have good numerical skills in using tables and graphs effectively. Written work is well presented and pupils take notes effectively. The higher-attaining pupils write accurately and present fluent arguments, expressing their point of view with the use of appropriate geographical terms.

206. The quality of teaching is good in the majority of lessons, but there are weaknesses in some areas. Lessons are well prepared and organised, so they start promptly and proceed smoothly at a good pace. Teachers plan lessons carefully, with clear objectives and as part of a sequence, and incorporate a good variety of purposeful and well-focused activities to extend and reinforce what is being learned. In one lesson, for example, pupils in Year 9 were studying coastal features. Following brisk questioning, they studied the formation of features in a textbook and on a computer, watched short clips of a video, took notes and completed an exercise to reinforce their understanding. Throughout pupils were encouraged to use geographical terms and challenged to make links between cliffs and beaches, making good progress in their understanding. Teachers' relationships with pupils are good and teachers intervene effectively to maintain the pace of lessons and establish a good working atmosphere.

207. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and their explanations are clear. They often do not, however, use their knowledge effectively to ask incisive questions, sufficiently challenge and arouse the curiosity of pupils or use the conclusion of lessons to clearly assess the progress made by pupils towards achieving the lesson objectives. Generally work is pitched at an appropriate level and is well matched to the requirements of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Few specific strategies are used, however, to extend and challenge the highest-attaining pupils. Marking is up to date and consistent. Homework is purposeful and set regularly.

208. Pupils generally learn well and make good progress. They assimilate information quickly, try hard and work at a good pace. Pupils in one lesson in Year 7, for instance, rapidly learned the basic skill of grid references. By the end of the lesson they had worked through a series of well thought out exercises and were effectively using photographs, maps and grid references to identify and locate features on a map. Pupils generally maintain concentration throughout lessons, but a minority of pupils (mainly boys) are easily distracted and require the teacher to intervene for them to maintain focus.

209. Pupils have a good attitude to the subject. They are attentive and listen carefully. They arrive promptly to lessons, are well behaved, generally confident and make a good contribution to lessons. Work is usually complete and well presented, and books are maintained in good order. A minority of boys work at a slow pace, complete work with brief answers and make slower progress than the majority of the group. Pupils cooperate effectively with one another.

210. The curriculum is of very good quality and fully complies with national requirements. The scheme of work is well thought out. It includes regular, purposeful opportunities to learn the skills required to use ICT in the subject and for fieldwork (which culminates in a residential visit to Edinburgh to study urban geography). The procedures for assessment are good. There are regular assessments during each unit of work: results are recorded efficiently and are used effectively to monitor pupils' progress. The subject is taught by two well-qualified teachers. Accommodation in two adjacent rooms is of good quality and the environment is enhanced with good displays of pupils' work. Resources are of good quality and sufficient in quantity.

211. The leadership of the department is good. Standards, especially in Years 10-11, are high. The department is well organised and has a clear sense of direction. It has improved on the high standards set at the time of the last inspection and the hardworking staff have the desire, organisation and policies to raise standards, particularly those of boys, still further.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths:

- teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- most pupils make good progress.
- pupils' attitudes to the subject are good.

### Areas for improvement:

- the depth of questioning for the highest-attaining pupils.
- the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in Years 7 to 9.
- deeper investigation of the reasons for unsatisfactory performance in GCSE examinations.
- the department does not have enough textbooks or computers.

212. By the end of Year 9 pupils' overall level of attainment is broadly in line with that expected nationally. This is a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils begin Year 7 with attainment close to the national average. In 2000 teachers assessed their pupils as being overall in line with the national average by the end of Year 9; results in 2001 were of a similar standard. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The highest-attaining pupils usually make good progress. In a minority of lessons, however, teachers do not deepen pupils' understanding enough, because they do not ask probing questions.

213. Overall results in the GCSE examinations in 1999 and 2000 were below the national average, although the performance of girls in 2000 was above the national average for girls. In 2001 the proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C was well below the (provisional) national average. These results largely reflected the prior attainment of the pupils, although a minority did not achieve as well as their work during the course indicated they should have done. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A or A\* has risen steadily since 1997 from significantly below average to below average in 2000, but this proportion fell in 2001. Pupils in this school tend to perform worse in this subject in GCSE than they do in most of their other subjects.

214. The overall standard of work of pupils currently following the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 is a little above the national average, a similar standard to that reported at the last inspection; a minority

produce below average work. Pupils with special educational needs reach below average standards, but make good progress.

215. Pupils in Years 7-9 generally have sound knowledge and understanding about the past. They see, and explain successfully, changes and continuities over a period of time – as, for example, in their work in Year 9 on the changes from village life to industrial towns between 1750 and 1890. Lower attainers, however, have difficulty in seeing complex changes.

216. Pupils use a range of sources well to describe and explain the past. Pupils in Year 7, for example, explained well the qualities needed to be a king in early medieval England; the highest attainers linked these qualities to the rival claimants to the throne in 1066. Year 8 pupils used a series of text and picture sources to build up an overview of aspects of life in Britain between 1500 and 1700. Pupils in Year 9 used a series of maps of the local area, covering a period from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, to make valid deductions about what had changed. The work of the highest attainers shows good understanding of change and continuity, but many pupils find interpreting maps difficult.

217. The overall standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 was above the national average. Most pupils taking GCSE have good knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. Pupils in Year 11 show good understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of different types of sources of evidence available to historians. They explained soundly, for example, the problems of using eye-witness accounts and diaries, and evaluated effectively a strip cartoon as a source for studying trench warfare. The highest attainers' critical evaluation of the source was of a high standard. Whilst most pupils assess the reliability of sources successfully, many find it more difficult to assess the usefulness of particular sources to historians. Examples of coursework seen, particularly those from boys, were of a very good standard and indicated the potential to reach the top grades in GCSE.

218. As at the time of the last inspection, the teaching is good overall and occasionally very good. Teachers know their subject well at all levels and communicate it effectively, often in a lively and stimulating way. A lesson on the claims to the English throne in 1066, for instance, created much interest and enthusiasm among the pupils, many of whom (in their first history lesson in the school) had said that they did not like history. A large number had changed their minds by the end of the lesson.

219. Most pupils acquire sound knowledge and understanding about the past. Lessons are well planned, taking good account of pupils' abilities. In many lessons teachers provide appropriately modified worksheets for lower attainers to guide them through the work and enable them to make good progress. In some lessons the highest attainers are not sufficiently challenged, as teachers do not ask pupils to expand on their initial answer to show depth of understanding. This was especially noticeable in two lessons with Year 11 pupils and is one reason for some underachievement in the subject.

220. An appropriate variety of teaching methods, including individual study, work in pairs and groups and whole-class discussion, ensures that pupils have good opportunities to learn in a range of different ways. Lessons are sometimes broken into a series of short activities, interspersed with short feedback sessions, in which teachers check pupils' progress. This was particularly successful in a lesson with pupils in Year 7 on the qualities needed to be a medieval king. When pupils work in groups, teachers manage the lessons very effectively, ensuring that all pupils contribute to the work.

221. Teachers use an appropriate range of resources that stimulate interest in pupils. In Year 9, for example, pupils used a series of coloured drawings to investigate changes to a settlement between 1750 and 1890. The close examination of the drawings required by the teacher motivated the pupils, especially the boys, to work hard and make good progress.

222. Teachers expect their pupils to work hard. They maintain a good working environment with friendly, but when necessary firm, discipline. Pupils listen well to teachers' instructions and explanations. When working individually, they generally concentrate on the task in hand. A small minority, however, are

easily distracted and need reminders from their teachers to keep them focused on work. Pupils' positive approach to their work and their good behaviour are important contributory factors to their good progress.

223. The subject meets the statutory teaching requirements for Years 7-9. There is a good ethos for learning throughout the department and a strong commitment to improving the below average performance of pupils taking GCSE examinations. There are, however, some important weaknesses in the subject's leadership and management. The system of assessment for Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory, because it does not provide adequate or accurate measurement of pupils' attainment or progress through these years. The nature and time-limits of some coursework set for pupils on the GCSE course restrict the potential for higher-attaining pupils to achieve the top standards. The investigation of why some pupils appear to have under-performed in GCSE examinations has not been sufficiently rigorous. There is no formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching within the department.

224. The accommodation is sufficient, but the rooms are spread across the school's site, making efficient management of resources difficult and the establishment of a history teaching area impossible. One room is too small to allow any variety of teaching styles. The department does not have sufficient textbooks. Pupils often have to share books and those taking the GCSE course do not have a book for use at home. There are no computers in the department for use by pupils, and the department cannot always use the centrally provided ICT facilities to enhance pupils' learning at times to suit the subject's needs. This is a weakness. The department does, however, make effective use of field work.

## Humanities

225. The overall quality of provision is **satisfactory**. Pupils' attainment is in line with what is expected nationally. GCSE results for 2000 were above the national average and improved further in 2001. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge of such social issues as abortion and family life, and debate issues effectively. Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned with appropriate exercises. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject and generally work hard. The course is well planned.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is **good** in Years 7-9, but **unsatisfactory** in Years 10-11.

### Strengths:

- the specialist teaching of ICT in Years 7-9.
- most pupils' good progress in using ICT in Years 7-9.
- the good provision of ICT in science, design and technology, and geography.

### Areas for improvement:

- to meet statutory requirements for the subject in Years 10-11.
- assessment of pupils' standards in ICT.
- the management and teaching of ICT in Years 10-11.
- accreditation in ICT.
- the provision of ICT in English, mathematics, art, history and modern foreign languages.
- ventilation in the specialist ICT rooms.

226. The previous inspection reported that there was a need to improve the planning of ICT provision to meet the increasing demand for it in the school. Good progress has been made since 1996 in providing more computer rooms and a wide range of computers and printers. A good ICT technician has been appointed, who also acts as a valuable link with contributory primary schools.



227. Serious weaknesses, however, remain. The timetabling pattern for teaching ICT is the same as at the time of the last inspection and there is no external accreditation for the subject. Specialist teachers ensure that the programmes of study are appropriately covered in Years 7-9. This does not occur in Years 10-11, because the teaching and use of ICT are done entirely through subject departments. There is good provision through science, design and technology, and geography, but inadequate provision in English, mathematics, art, history and modern foreign languages. Overall, statutory requirements are not met for Years 10-11. Although all staff have received national training in using hardware and software, the use of computers to support and enhance learning is patchy across the school.

228. By the end of Year 9 attainment is broadly average and most pupils achieve well. Many pupils use computers at home that have access to the Internet and thereby enhance their skills. Their regular ICT lessons give them good practice in using software for presentations, word processing, datahandling, spreadsheets and controlling devices. The review, modification and evaluation of work are important features in each project undertaken. The assessments made by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicated that the proportion of pupils achieving Levels 5 and 6 are in line with the national average. Inspection data supports this assessment. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress.

229. Progress slows in Years 10-11. Attainment and use range from high to weak: overall, however, attainment by the end of Year 11 is a little below average. The best provision is in design and technology, where computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) and graphics software are well used, and in science and geography, where projects are mapped against ICT programmes of study. In these subjects pupils are encouraged to use computers to find information and to use electronic means to communicate effectively. The weakest usage is in mathematics, art and history. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall.

230. Throughout Years 7-9, pupils enjoy their computer lessons and approach their work with enthusiasm. They appreciate the facilities provided for them and handle them with care. Cramped conditions in one room and lack of cooling fans in both rooms mean that pupils do not work in ideal conditions. They nevertheless concentrate well and work at a good pace. Pupils have positive attitudes when working with computers in all subjects except art.

231. The quality of teaching in the separate ICT lessons in Years 7-9 is always at least good and often very good. Specialist teachers have deep knowledge and understanding of the applications of ICT. Their work is well planned and they ensure that pupils acquire good habits of work. High expectations and challenge are strong features of this practice. Literacy and numeracy skills are constantly reinforced. Listening skills are given high priority. The assessment of pupils' work is not strong, however, and teachers have little understanding of pupils' experience of ICT in the primary years. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are not fully considered.

232. The leadership of the specialist ICT provision is good and the documentation produced is excellent. There is a gap, however, between the school's intention and practice for the cross-curricular teaching and application of ICT, particularly in Years 10-11. There has been an audit of each department's planned use of ICT and bookings for the ICT room have recently been more numerous. Frustrations have arisen when teachers are unable to gain access to specialist rooms or when printers are unreliable. The school has recently responded well by providing more computers for subject departments and by updating printers. Good twilight sessions are provided for the training of staff and these are well attended. The ICT rooms are well used by the community during evening sessions.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths:

- the achievement of girls.
- the good quality of teaching.
- good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- the range of foreign visits.

### Areas for improvement:

- the achievement of boys.
- the use of ICT.
- the provision of textbooks in Years 7-9.

233. In 2000 the proportions of pupils attaining grades in the range A\*-C in the full-course GCSE examinations in French, German and Spanish were above the national average. Girls achieved better than girls typically do nationally in French and Spanish. Boys achieved better than boys do nationally in German, but they were significantly below the national average in French and Spanish. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-G was above the national average in German and very close to the national average in French and Spanish.

234. In 2001, boys showed a much improved performance in the GCSE French examination, in contrast to a weaker performance in German. Spanish, however, shows the biggest imbalance between the sexes, with a difference of 35 percentage points between boys and girls in achieving grades in the range A\*-C.

235. Pupils' overall attainment in their first foreign language (either French or Spanish) by the end of Year 9 is average. The inspection took place during the first full week of the new academic year and for many pupils the observed lessons were their first lesson after the summer break. Many of the lessons were planned to revise past work and to reinforce foreign language confidence. Pupils show a sound understanding both of the foreign languages their teachers use in class and of the phrases that they are required to use when they need to ask their teachers for help. In oral work pupils speak in complete sentences, when answering questions, and can both ask and answer questions in pairs, using prompts. Pupils complete much writing in their exercise books: these show a good coverage of topic vocabulary and of relevant, grammatical constructions. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a good knowledge of the past tenses in French and Spanish.

236. Pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 11 is average in French and German, and above average in Spanish. Higher attainers in a Year 11 lesson in French, for example, demonstrated a reasonable recall of the perfect tense with *avoir*, but they were less secure with verbs of motion and with reflexive verbs. Oral replies to questions in several lessons were short, with insufficient encouragement to pupils to extend their answers. Pronunciation ranges from satisfactory to good throughout the school, and is sound overall.

237. Coursework produced in French and Spanish indicates that pupils have a good knowledge of topic vocabulary. Higher attainers are appropriately and more consistently accurate than other pupils. Girls are far more accurate overall than boys in written French, particularly in the use of the past tenses. Scrutiny of a limited range of German writing showed less fluency and accuracy than in French, particularly with word order, genders and capital letters.

238. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, although that of girls is better than boys'. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good and these pupils make sound progress overall through the school. They are well integrated into classes.

239. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good. Pupils apply themselves well to tasks and listen carefully, for example, to cassette recordings. They work cooperatively with partners in paired work. Very occasionally, pupils are slow to settle down or are talkative when they change from one task to another.

240. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have sound subject knowledge. In the majority of lessons they make good use of a foreign language in class, but there is room for further improvement in this aspect. Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives. Resources are well used – as, for instance, when flash cards were used in a Year 8 Spanish lesson to revise leisure activities from the holidays. Many lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to hear and speak a foreign language. Chorus work is appropriately used to help pupils to consolidate vocabulary or phrases and to improve pronunciation, but there is often insufficient challenge to individual pupils afterwards. The introduction of different activities and skills in lessons helped pupils to maintain their concentration. The use of frequent and effective questions in a Year 11 Spanish and a Year 11 French lesson, for example, helped particularly to keep the boys alert.

241. In addition to consolidation, pupils also acquire new knowledge in lessons. In a Year 8 French lesson, for instance, pupils learned the names of members of the textbook family and were given a short time to memorise them. In the German lessons in Years 10 and 11, pupils acquired many useful words and phrases. A strength of the department is the interweaving of relevant grammatical points into every lesson, thereby making a good contribution to pupils acquiring key skills. Very occasionally, opportunities to encourage pupils to speak are missed and the pupils remain passive. Unhelpfully, not every lesson finishes with an evaluation of what has been learned during the lesson. Homework is set regularly to consolidate or extend work begun in class. Relationships are good and teachers know their pupils very well.

242. The department meets the statutory requirement to teach the National Curriculum. The leadership and management of the department are good overall. The department makes a good contribution to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department has undertaken work and produced statistics, following a questionnaire to over 300 pupils, in an effort to understand pupils' opinions about language learning and their attitudes towards the four key skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. This project was partly undertaken with a view to improving boys' achievement. In addition, an interesting trial was carried out last year with single-sex classes in Year 9. There is insufficient use of ICT and there are not enough textbooks for pupils in Years 7-9.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths:

- pupils' success in GCSE.
- instrumental tuition for individual pupils.
- the range of extracurricular activities.

### Areas for improvement:

- assessment: criteria need to be displayed and used in daily activities.
- the use of computer-assisted music in Years 7-9.
- music does not permeate the school's life enough.

243. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 9, their attainment is in line with the national average. Pupils perform and compose satisfactorily on percussion instruments and keyboards. Those who learn other instruments use them to good effect in some lessons. During the inspection, for example, pupils used keyboards in a lesson on The Blues. For this they heard a recording of Glenn Miller's *In the Mood*, in which they identified the 12-bar blues sequence, then learned to play the melody and bass line, using a simple, written arrangement. Most pupils at this stage have to rely on letter names added to stave notation. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a broad acquaintance with some major composers and their

works – as, for example, Bach and Vivaldi – together with a knowledge of relevant musical elements and such simple structures as the “sandwich” form.

244. Pupils’ overall attainment by the end of Year 11 is above the national average. In the GCSE examinations of 1998-2000, taken together, 25 out of 36 pupils gained grades in the range A\*-C; none, however, gained an A\* grade. During the inspection, pupils clearly demonstrated good standards in instrumental lessons, on tape-recording and in their manuscripts. In a class lesson on “listening”, pupils compared the treatment of a Russian folk tune by two different composers, Balakirev and Tchaikovsky. They demonstrated fair background knowledge by, for example, noting modulation, recognition of orchestration and ornamentation, together with a broad appreciation of the musical period in which the pieces were written. Both talented pupils and those with special education needs generally make good progress.

245. The quality of learning in Years 7-11 is good overall. Pupils enter the school with widely varying musical attainments – from pupils who have already gained Grade V in music examinations to those with very limited skills. Early lessons rightly emphasise the importance of singing and rhythmic work. All pupils are introduced to the electronic keyboard on which they learn note-names, scales and chords, in order to play given tunes, improvise and compose. They are introduced to a fair range of music, including music by Beethoven and Britten, North Indian classical music and Western popular music.

246. In Years 10-11 pupils also learn well. At this stage they begin to take more responsibility for their own learning and realise the need to perform in front of other pupils. In a lesson in Year 10, for instance, pupils invented a rondo, using percussion instruments. In this lesson they worked hard to produce music within the form and to keep a steady beat. A pupil with special educational needs was well integrated in one group, in which both her peers and classroom support assistant helped by tapping the beat for her. In both years, pupils have good attitudes to their work and take a serious interest in it.

247. Overall, pupils’ attitudes to learning are good throughout the school – and especially so in Year 11, where they develop a mature approach to the subject. Attitudes are less good in a minority of classes (though broadly satisfactory), notably in Year 9. Some pupils in these classes (mainly boys) tend to cause distractions, in response to which the teacher has to interrupt the flow of the lesson and take up time. On the whole, however, the teachers’ careful attention to the design and pace of lessons, together with insistence on good discipline, ensures that sufficient progress is made by the whole class.

248. Teaching across the department ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good overall. The good teaching (the majority) is characterised by a broad and secure subject knowledge and expertise. Frequently the teacher uses her own personal musical skills to demonstrate how a piece should be played or sung, or to direct pupils in their listening tests. Satisfactory attention is paid to the teaching of literacy, especially to the spelling, use and understanding of the technical language of music. Pupils are also taught to explain and describe their own compositions clearly.

249. Lessons are always prepared in fair detail and each section carefully timed. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and behave well. Pupils are managed effectively overall. In a few instances, however, a few pupils are allowed to slow down the pace of work, because they chat at inappropriate moments or try to distract those near them.

250. The day-to-day assessment of pupils’ work is satisfactory overall and incorporates some good features – as, for example, noting down individual pupils’ performances as they play to the class. Opportunities for assessment are, however, missed when, for example, the criteria for improving performance are not displayed and often not applied to small tasks in the regular, daily work. Homework is set appropriately, especially for the GCSE candidates. Homework also includes regular practice for about 80 pupils who receive instrumental lessons.

251. Accommodation is adequate and soundproofing very good. Teaching spaces are very well maintained and pleasantly lit and organised. The department has a good range of instruments and equipment that are very carefully maintained. At present, there are enough computers with relevant

software to enable all GCSE candidates to become familiar with notational and compositional devices. In Years 7-9, however, computer-assisted music is not available because of the large class sizes and insufficient hardware and software.

252. No extracurricular activities were yet in progress at the time of the inspection. The department normally, however, runs two choirs, a wind band and *ad hoc* groups for around 60 pupils. There are very good opportunities for pupils with special educational needs to take part in the subject. These pupils can experience the therapeutic dimension of music in sessions that are provided by the senior learning support assistant, who is a trained musician. This is an area of good work with considerable potential for further development.

253. Music generally makes a strong contribution to the life of the school, especially through regular concerts and community involvement. Some opportunities to raise the subject's profile and contribution to school life are missed – and especially in the daily assemblies. A team of visiting instrumental teachers makes an important contribution to pupils' musical education.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths:

- the strong, corporate spirit amongst teachers.
- specialist teachers have good subject knowledge.
- very good relationships between teachers and pupils.

### Areas for improvement:

- to widen the narrow range of teaching styles used.
- expectations of pupils are not high enough.
- insufficient time is given for the GCSE course.
- inadequate accommodation for teachers and the GCSE course.
- departmental policies are inadequately documented.

254. By the end of Year 9, boys and girls reach the expected levels of skill in soccer and netball respectively. Ball-control and passing skills are competent and pupils make appropriate progress. Those with special educational needs progress well and are effectively integrated into lessons. Nearly all pupils can swim, but in Years 8 and 9 only a few show much refinement in technique. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have lessons in health-related exercise. Partly as a result of these lessons being shortened to 30 minutes, however, neither boys nor girls progress well nor do they display much knowledge about the functions of the heart and circulatory system or the effects of exercise upon them. The shortness of swimming lessons also contributes significantly to the lack of pupils' refinement in swimming.

255. By the end of Year 11, examination results are generally in line with national standards. Since 1996 the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE results in the range A\*-C has been close to the national mean. In 2001, however, results were considerably higher, as 70 per cent of pupils gained these grades. The overall performance of boys and girls is similar. In theory lessons, pupils sometimes have insufficient opportunity to learn independently as an aid to their understanding of theoretical issues. There is insufficient emphasis on homework to help to improve standards and marking is not thorough enough. In the small amount of homework given some pupils present written work of a good standard and use ICT well, but opportunities to use ICT are overlooked in some GCSE lessons. A minority of pupils use the Internet to retrieve information. Performance in swimming is satisfactory overall: most pupils, including those with special educational needs, can swim a good distance and some have well-developed techniques. A few girls swim very well.

256. Teaching is good overall throughout the school: that by specialist teachers is at least satisfactory, often good and occasionally very good throughout the school. Where it is very good, teachers have

substantial specialist knowledge and demonstrate skills thoroughly to pupils. The very good relationships existing between teachers and classes help pupils to learn, make satisfactory progress and enjoy lessons. The same relationships ensure that all pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.

257. Teachers' preparation is thorough. Lessons generally proceed with pace and purpose. Occasionally, however, teachers' expectations are not high enough and pupils are restricted from planning and evaluating their work sufficiently. Teaching is still over-directive in some lessons. The use of the full range of teaching styles and methods, where appropriate, is needed to help pupils to gain a deep understanding of the subject. Poor organisation occasionally leaves pupils inactive for too long, so hampering their learning and achievement.

258. Teachers use ICT for administrative purposes and the production of teaching materials, but do not use it enough to support the teaching of theory lessons. The last inspection reported that insufficient curricular time was given to areas other than games and this bias still remains. The GCSE course is not specifically timetabled, with the result that the pupils who take the course do not experience their full entitlement to the National Curriculum. Assessment is now generally improved to a satisfactory standard, although pupils require encouragement to set personal attainment targets in the subject.

259. Extracurricular provision is good, particularly in games: many pupils, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, gain much benefit from it. Gymnastics and dance, however, are not strongly represented in this programme.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths:

- good teaching of the subject.
- RE's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement:

- statutory requirements are not met for most pupils in Years 10-11.
- the governing body's oversight of the school's RE provision.

260. As at the time of the last inspection, GCSE Religious Studies is an optional course in Years 10-11. In 2000 only 12 candidates took the GCSE examination: one gained a B grade and four a C grade. Results were much lower in 2001, when only four of the 21 candidates achieved a grade C or higher. At the previous inspection GCSE results were recorded as in line with the national average. Since then staff changes have had an unsettling effect, numbers have fluctuated and in most years results have been well below the national average.

261. The observation of lessons and analysis of work show that, by the end of Year 9, pupils generally reach the standard expected. Pupils have learned how to explore, analyse and reflect on religious issues. They know how to apply religion to human life, in order to learn more about themselves. They know satisfactorily about the beliefs and practices of Christianity and other major religions, but do not understand clearly what makes each a coherent and distinctive religion. The subject contributes very effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. The school does not measure pupils' attainment in the subject accurately.

262. At the end of Year 11, pupils fall well below the standard expected, because there is little distinctive provision in Years 10-11. Other subjects (including the PSRE course) incorporate consideration of important human values, but pupils do not receive religious education in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabus. This omission not only puts the school in breach of its statutory obligation, but also deprives pupils of their educational entitlement. Pupils do not achieve what is expected and parents do not receive an annual report on their child's progress in the subject, as statutorily required. The

previous inspection report identified these weaknesses, but the school's response has been inadequate. The school's current development plan makes no attempt to remedy these defects.

263. Inspection of the work of the present Year 11 GCSE group indicates that they make good progress and that their work is in line to reach the national GCSE average. In Year 10 there is currently no GCSE group, because too few pupils chose it as an option. This represents a substantial loss of provision in the school.

264. Teaching and learning in Years 7-9 and in the Year 11 GCSE group are good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the content and process of RE, the effectiveness of their planning and the management and motivation of pupils are all very good. Teachers carefully explain to pupils what is required and have high expectations of them. Pupils make good progress in acquiring the skills and in developing the knowledge and understanding they need. From the first lesson in Year 7, when they evaluate reasons for studying the subject, pupils are actively involved in what they learn and respond willingly to the intellectual challenge presented to them. The procedures for measuring pupils' progress are, however, too informal and subjective. Assessment in the subject is not a systematic process that is linked to statements of attainment and the setting of targets.

265. The leadership and management of the subject are good in Years 7-9. Teachers show a strong commitment to the improvement of RE and recognise the need to introduce systematic assessment procedures. The school has provided a very good programme of induction and professional development for the main teacher. The overall management of the subject is, however, unsatisfactory.

266. Since the last inspection the school has maintained the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7-9 and pupils have continued to achieve the standard expected by the end of Year 9. In Years 10-11 there are no standards to measure for most pupils. This major defect in the curriculum remains – and, with the current loss of the GCSE course in Year 10, the school's provision is worse than it was in 1996. It is an urgent and long-delayed task for the governing body to meet statutory requirements for the subject.