

INSPECTION REPORT

THE DORMSTON SCHOOL

Sedgley, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103855

Headteacher: Stephanie J Sherwood

Reporting inspector: Bill Dewar
15458

Dates of inspection: 3 – 6 December 2001

Inspection number: 189723

Short 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: Millbank
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West Midlands

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Norman Caddick

Date of previous inspection: 14 October 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Dormston is a popular, oversubscribed school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 that serves the community of Sedgley in the north of the borough of Dudley close to the border of Wolverhampton. It is a large school of its type with 1141 pupils on roll and an annual intake of 224 pupils. The intake is drawn, in the main, from three local primary schools. Pupils are taken, in all, from 21 schools including schools in Wolverhampton. The school serves an immediate area that is relatively advantaged but significant numbers of pupils come from areas of higher social disadvantage. There are equal numbers of boys and girls overall but significantly more boys than girls in the current Year 11 and more girls than boys in the current Year 10. The school has increased in numbers since the last inspection. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. The intake reflects the full range of ability with about a third of pupils failing to reach the standards expected of 11 year olds in English and a higher proportion in mathematics. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (9.9) is slightly below the national average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs (13.8) is higher than at the time of the last inspection but below the national average. The great majority of pupils are of white British background. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. In the period since the last inspection, a huge building programme has impacted on the work of the school. The current headteacher took up post in January 2001 following the retirement of the previous headteacher who was in post for 17½ years. Over 70 per cent of pupils leaving the school continue in full time education.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Dormston is an effective and increasingly improving school. Though overall standards are broadly average for 14 year olds in national statutory tests, they are well above average at GCSE level. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and very positive relationships with pupils combined with careful attention to examination preparation contribute to pupils' GCSE success. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the school. The new headteacher and key managers in the school have focused appropriately upon the raising of standards and improving the quality of learning in the school. They have embarked upon an ambitious and challenging programme of school improvement. This long term programme is already influencing the way the school works and impacting on the quality of learning and the rate of progress particularly in Key Stage 3. The school provides value for money. It demonstrates that it has the capacity to continue to improve and provide even better value for money.

What the school does well

- The school has sustained well above average overall GCSE results exceeding national trends in some respects despite significant disruptions.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is well supported by senior managers and a motivated, committed staff.
- The school has clear direction and is appropriately focused on providing pupils with learning experiences of high quality. There is a clear agenda for improvement.
- The school continues to promote and achieve positive attitudes, values and behaviour on the part of the pupils.
- The school's life-skills programme makes a particularly effective contribution to the very good provision for personal, social and moral development.

What could be improved

- The school's Key Stage 3 test results which have not kept pace with national trends.
- The use of information gained from assessment and monitoring to secure consistently effective teaching, quality learning and the highest standards.
- The range of opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness.
- The detail of strategic planning and matching of resources to planned priorities.

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 since the last inspection. The strengths of the school identified in the last report (October 1996) have largely been maintained. The school has generally sustained high standards in GCSE examinations. Teaching has improved though issues of consistency remain, for example, in relation to levels of challenge in some lessons and the extent to which pupils understand what they are expected to learn. Pupils with special educational needs are now well supported in lessons as well as socially. They learn well. The school now has a clear commitment to developing strategies for gifted and talented pupils. Since the arrival of the new headteacher, more effective systems to promote and ultimately secure greater consistency of quality, challenge and provision have been put in place. These are already having impact and demonstrate the school's capacity for further improvement in the future. The manner in which policies, priorities and agendas are now determined has improved communication and commitment across the school. Major improvements to the learning environment have been secured through a substantial building programme which is having a positive impact on the quality of education in certain areas such as physical education and drama. However, the inevitable disruption caused by and the time devoted to this programme have slowed progress in some areas. Opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual and multicultural understanding remain too limited.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations in 2001.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils' attainment overall in GCSE examinations is well above average when compared with all schools nationally and attainment in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The overall attainment of both boys and girls is well above average. Improvement has exceeded the national trends (relating to the average National Curriculum points for all core subjects). Performance at Key Stage 4 against prior attainment at Key Stage 3 is above average. The number of pupils obtaining higher GCSE grades is above average when compared with all schools nationally but closer to the average for similar schools. The percentage of higher grade passes has remained broadly static over the last few years and is the same this year as at the time of the last inspection.

Pupils' attainment in national tests at age 14 has not kept pace with national trends (relating to the average National Curriculum points for all core subjects). Though results overall are close to the average when compared with all schools nationally, recent performance compares less favourably with that achieved in similar schools.

From work examined and lessons observed in both key stages, pupils are generally achieving at least in line with national levels of expectation for their age and in line with their ability. This is particularly evident in English, mathematics and science. Particularly high standards were observed in English, design and technology (food), physical education (dance) and drama sessions. There was some evidence, from work seen, of marginally below average standards in art and design in Key Stage 3, and below average standards in music in Key Stage 4. Significant variations were observed across different language groups of comparable ability in Key Stage 3. Throughout the school pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress overall. Targets for 2001 were exceeded. The target setting process is becoming more securely based on analysis of individual pupils' capability. Targets at a variety of levels are becoming more challenging.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are mature, responsible and keen to succeed. They respect their teachers, value their learning and one another.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Incidents of bullying are rare and swiftly dealt with.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are given high quality advice and guidance particularly through the life skills programme which is a strength of the school. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils are very good.
Attendance	Good. The attendance rate is well above the national average, unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. The school promotes good attendance through competitions and targets.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are a strength of the school and contribute positively to standards achieved. The school has particularly effective programmes for pupils' personal development.

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 overall, throughout the school, is generally good. It results in good learning. Over two thirds of all the teaching observed was good or better. This is an improvement on the last inspection. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching. In the small sample seen (54 lessons), only three lessons were unsatisfactory. Teaching was equally good in both key stages but most of the very best teaching was observed in Key Stage 3. Teaching was well matched to examination expectations in Key Stage 4. Teaching seen in mathematics and science was good and that seen in English was very good. It was excellent in personal and social education.

Within this overall positive picture, there are some weaknesses and inconsistencies that prevent learning from being as good as it could be. Within some subjects, the quality of teaching varies considerably between teachers. Some teachers display outstanding skills and produce pacy, challenging, interesting and inspiring lessons. In these learning flourishes. Other teachers deliver less adventurous lessons which have less that motivates, challenges, involves or inspires the pupils so progress is less marked.

Features of the best teaching include teachers' very good subject knowledge, the very positive

relationships they establish with pupils and the verve and enthusiasm they bring to the lessons. These, along with the brisk pace of much teaching, help pupils to learn effectively. Learning is also helped by some effective teaching of literacy and numeracy skills but this is not yet equally well developed in all subjects. As yet, teachers are not all making sufficient use of data to monitor pupils' progress and plan future work to match their individual needs. Neither do all teachers make the distinction between what is to be done in lessons and what is to be learnt.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets current statutory requirements. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, though well established in some parts of the curriculum, is not as yet consistent from subject to subject.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is very effective planning and monitoring that enable these pupils to make good progress. Individual education plans contain clear targets. Strategies have been agreed for further improvements.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The provision for moral and social development is very good. Opportunities for spiritual and cultural development are missed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. Great care is taken to advise pupils carefully about their personal development and to ensure their health and safety. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' academic progress is underdeveloped but improving.

There is an optimistic and positive feel to the school. Curriculum decisions are now clearly founded on the needs of the pupils and recent review has resulted in significant changes to be implemented next year. A range of extracurricular activities, for example, in physical education, a breakfast and a homework club, enhance provision but the range of extracurricular opportunities could be broader.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent. She and senior managers have a clear vision for the school. They have strong commitment to achieving high standards, providing high quality learning and supporting pupils' personal development. The quality of leadership for most subjects, pastoral care and special educational needs is also high.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactorily. Governors are committed to continuous improvement. They are kept increasingly well informed and are becoming more actively involved in developments and more confident 'critical friends' to the headteacher and her management team.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Sound and improving. Increasing use is being made of insights gained from evaluations to focus action on those priorities that will make a significant difference to standards and quality. There is recognition of the need for rigorous evaluation of the school's improvement plan.
The strategic use of resources	Weak. The school manages its resources carefully. The school's ability to achieve best value for money is currently limited by imprecise links between planned improvement priorities and spending decisions. Moreover the impact of spending decisions on standards achieved and quality of learning is not systematically evaluated.

The leadership of the headteacher has provided a new focus and direction for the work of the school and generated a shared commitment to improvement.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high expectations for pupils to do their best. • The good progress. • The good behaviour. • The good teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extracurricular activities. • The information provided about how their child is getting on. • The way the school works with parents.

Only a minority of parents made their views known but these were generally very supportive of the school. Inspection evidence supports parents' positive views of the school. The team feels that the current range of extracurricular opportunities enhances the curriculum but agree that the range could be broader (for example, in music). Reports are legally satisfactory but there are considerable variations in the way teachers report progress. The school increasingly encourages parents to work with it.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school has sustained well above average overall GCSE results exceeding national trends in some respects despite significant disruption.

1. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in GCSE examinations remains well above average. This is a strength given the extent of disruption caused to the school in the period 1997 to 2000 by extensive building work.
2. Pupils have, overall, continued to achieve very well in comparison with the national picture in the period since the last inspection in relation to their average total points score and the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more or one or more A*-G passes. Performance in 2001 is no exception. Boys' and girls' results have also remained well above average in the same period. Pupils continue to achieve very well in these respects when compared with pupils in schools serving pupils from similar backgrounds. This comparison is with those schools that have a broadly similar percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
3. The upward trend in the school's average points score for all of the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) has exceeded national trends. Currently, overall standards achieved in English and mathematics are above the national average and the average for similar schools. Those achieved in science are close to the national average and the average for similar schools. The school's current examination entry policy contributes to its high average points score.
4. If account is taken of their average points score in national tests at age 14, pupils' progress in 2000 and 2001 was also high in comparison with similar schools.
5. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grades (A*-C) has also consistently remained above the national average in the period since the last inspection and the 2001 performance is no exception. In the year of the last inspection, 56 per cent of pupils achieved five or more higher grades. Over the interim period, this figure has remained broadly similar and in 2001 still stands at 56 per cent. Pupils still achieve at least as well in this respect as pupils in schools that serve pupils from similar backgrounds.
6. From the work examined and lessons observed in Key Stage 4, there is evidence that overall and most specifically in relation to English, mathematics and science, pupils are generally achieving at least in line with national levels of expectation for their age or higher. Particularly high standards were observed in English, design and technology (food) lessons seen. There was some evidence, from work seen, of below average standards in music. Teaching in Key Stage 4 is well matched to examination expectations and this contributes to standards achieved.
7. The school is aware of the fact that its results in relation to achievement of higher grades have remained static at a time when, nationally, there have been significant improvements. The school has instituted a range of agendas designed to improve

rather than just sustain results. These agendas are specifically designed to impact on the effectiveness of teaching, quality of learning and consistency of standards. In this last respect, senior managers have increasingly discussed anomalies and discrepancies within the overall analysis of examination performance with middle managers. They have explored reasons why performance in particular subjects is above or below relevant averages and intended improvement strategies. Though the monitoring and assessment of pupils' academic progress is still underdeveloped, the school is currently improving its capacity to identify and address underachievement on the part of identified groups of pupils.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is well supported by senior managers and a motivated, committed staff.

8. The new headteacher has been a powerful driving force. She has effectively managed changes in a school that, in many respects, could already be perceived as successful and doing well. She has done this in ways that have broadly empowered teaching staff at all levels and taken them with her. The headteacher shows real concern for staff welfare.
9. She has a clear commitment to ensuring all members of the school community feel valued, are kept well informed and are clear about roles, responsibilities and expectations. This is particularly evident in relation to the governing body who are increasingly actively involved in development and becoming more confident in providing the essential critical friendship expected by the headteacher and senior managers. The curriculum committee now has a clear remit to review what goes on in school.
10. The senior management team is broad based. Their strengths and responsibilities complement each other and combine to create an effective team. They have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and carry out a variety of roles and responsibilities including leading identified whole-school issues identified in the improvement plan, acting as mentor to identified departments and engaging in a growing range of monitoring and review activity.
11. Delegation of responsibilities is not confined to senior staff. Middle managers are increasingly expected to monitor key issues in their departmental improvement plans and aspects of departmental priorities. Relevant follow-up is also expected. The quality of leadership for most subjects, pastoral care and special educational needs is high.
12. A series of working parties has been established to review policy, disseminate good practice and steer improvement in a wide variety of areas. These have already generated a range of positive outcomes, for example, in relation to planned provision in the curriculum for citizenship. Membership of the working parties is broad based but leadership is not automatically in the hands of more senior staff. Staff spoken to generally appreciate the inclusive management style in the school and the opportunities now provided to participate directly in shaping policy and agendas.
13. There is significant emphasis on highly visible management, open and positive relationships and discussions. The interests of pupils are central to key decisions.

14. As new systems and processes become established and consolidated it is recognized that attention needs to be given to provision of adequate time for key staff to engage in identified agendas and delegated responsibilities. Equally, it is appreciated that with increased delegation must come more identifiable accountability. It is also clear that given changing expectations and on-going developments (for example, in relation to data) the relevance or focus of roles, responsibilities and structures will need constant review. Performance management arrangements and relationships have been appropriately established.

The school has clear direction and is appropriately focused on providing pupils with learning experiences of high quality. There is a clear agenda for improvement.

15. Governors, senior managers and staff broadly share the headteacher's vision and aspirations for Dormston School. They are committed to achieving higher standards, providing high quality learning and effective support for pupils' personal development in the context of a caring environment. Such aspirations are articulated in a comprehensive agenda for improvement set out in the school improvement plan.
16. The plan was drawn up following a range of reviews carried out within the school and by external consultants. The senior management team initially identified a number of key whole-school issues. The production of the plan involved thorough consultation with staff and governors. The plan identifies a range of priorities, related agendas and linked responsibilities which the inspection team feels are highly relevant to the school's needs. Agendas are on-going, paced and not designed to be a 'quick fix'. They have been planned and are being executed in such a way as to embed certain processes and systems within the culture of the school. As such, they have already had a measure of success. Identified agendas particularly focus on improving the learning experiences for pupils, improving the curriculum for the benefit of pupils, improving the school environment, improving by monitoring and improving external relationships. Subject improvement plans complement and relate to whole-school plans and are appropriately focused on standards.
17. The process undertaken and expectations arising from such planning represent a significant cultural change for the school. Evidence from the inspection substantiates evidence from the school's own review of progress so far that suggests that, though in their early stages, identified agendas are already beginning to impact on teaching and learning in areas of the school. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 3, especially in Year 7. The plan and its progressive implementation clearly demonstrate the school's capacity to improve in the future.
18. Though the current document does not detail explicit evaluation procedures or responsibilities that are linked to clear, specific, measurable success criteria, there is commitment to and planning for such evaluations to judge the impact of the plan and inform future needs and developments. The fact that budget and planning cycles are not as yet effectively linked, has not been allowed to deflect from the urgency of moving forward on stated agendas but has been problematic this year.
19. As the inclusive planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation culture becomes embedded in the school, more clearly defined longer term strategic objectives will enable the school to determine more easily what are the most important

developments at any time and the order in which they should be funded.

The school continues to promote and achieve positive attitudes, values and behaviour on the part of the pupils.

20. Parents substantially believe that the school promotes good attitudes and values and helps their children to become mature and responsible. The inspection team's observations confirm this view. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are a strength of the school and contribute positively to standards achieved.
21. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. Incidents of bullying are rare and swiftly dealt with. The level of temporary exclusions is comparatively low. Pupils cope responsibly with narrow corridors and staircases and are generally punctual to lessons despite the complexities of the site. Inspectors particularly noted the consideration shown both to guests and those with disabilities when moving around the school. Older pupils help pupils new to the school to settle in.
22. In lessons observed, inspectors noted that attitudes to learning were overwhelmingly positive. This was particularly evident in a Year 7 life skills session where the courtesy, trust and mutual self respect displayed by the pupils together with their enthusiasm and concentration greatly contributed to the success of the lesson and the extent of pupils' learning. Pupils in general are responsible and keen to succeed. Pupils are generally positive about the school and show appreciation for their teachers. Pupils have increasing opportunities to take responsibility, for example, through the School Council. Opportunities to take more responsibility for their own learning are appreciated by pupils when provided. In a Year 9 design and technology lesson, for example, some pupils were able to move to an adjacent computer room, where they worked independently on their own evaluations to good effect.
23. The school's commitment to positive attitudes, values and behaviour is clearly expressed in its aims and promoted through a range of policies and agendas. Evidence suggests that Dormston pupils are generally highly regarded when they go to further education institutions.

The school's life skills programme makes a particularly effective contribution to the very good provision for personal, social and moral development.

24. The school has a very clear commitment to creating a friendly, caring community and preparing all pupils for life, developing skills and attitudes needed to be a good citizen in a challenging world. The school takes obvious pride in its reputation as a caring and supportive school and invests considerable time and effort in these aspects of its work.
25. The school's commitment to the care and support of pupils is reflected in a range of structures and procedures. These are founded on secure and very positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils. Continuity of pastoral staff is viewed as a high priority in the school. For this reason form and year tutors move with their pupils as they proceed through the school from Year 7 to Year 11. Such continuity ensures that pastoral staff are well informed about and knowledgeable of their pupils

and are therefore better equipped to deal with personal problems and monitor personal development. Pupils have an entitlement to individual counselling, review and guidance time with their tutors. This enables regular discussion of progress in aspects of school and personal life at regular intervals. There is an individual mentoring scheme in Year 11 for those pupils who may be experiencing problems with examination pressures, coursework expectations etc.

26. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' academic progress is currently being developed and improved through the creation of pupil level databases. Some tutors, at present, are more confident than others in using such data. Once fully in place and consistently utilized such databases will make the process of tracking pupils, monitoring their academic progress easier and lead to more effective identification of underachievement at an early stage.
27. Staff are currently well informed about the needs of pupils with special educational needs by clear individual education plans. These identify problems confronted by specific pupils and inform the planning of lessons and support that will help them to learn more. Consequently, such pupils are increasingly well supported both in lessons and socially. The planning for and monitoring of pupils with special educational needs contributes to their good progress.
28. Pupils are being very effectively helped to develop as citizens through the opportunities for social development provided by the school. Pupils respond well to staff. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to exercise responsibility when such opportunities are provided in the school or in lessons. A School Council has been established and older pupils share responsibility for ensuring smooth movement round the school site and induction of new pupils into the school. Pupils participate in work experience, residential visits, charitable work and community projects. A working party is currently engaged in exploring ways in which citizenship can be developed through the school curriculum and local community projects.
29. The school continues to cater very well for pupils' moral development. A clear code of conduct, together with reward systems, recognize achievement and support the development of appropriate values and behaviour. Pupils respond positively to these, are anxious to succeed and behave well in lessons and around the school. The anti-bullying policy makes clear that such behaviour will not be tolerated and discussions with parents and pupils indicates that such incidents, though rare, are firmly and swiftly dealt with. Respect and concern for others is generally well established and manifested by the way guests are helped and those with disabilities given space and time to manoeuvre the narrow corridors and staircases. The school is committed to reviewing relevant policies to ensure clarity and relevance.
30. The life skills programme makes a particularly effective contribution to the school's provision for personal, social and moral education. The course is taught for a lesson a week and embraces a wide range of topics including health, sex, careers education, record of achievement and examination study skills. Though substantially taught by tutors, external specialists are drawn upon as appropriate to provide contributions on health care, politics, legal issues, careers etc. During the inspection, particularly effective sessions were observed that sensitively handled sexual concerns and gave

insights to the nature of friendship in Years 9 and 7 respectively. The content and organization of assemblies observed clearly indicated that they also provide positive contributions to the development of social and moral awareness in Dormston School.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school's Key Stage 3 test results which have not kept pace with national trends.

31. Attainment at Key Stage 3 has not kept pace with national improvement trends. Though there have been some significant upward and downward trends from year to year in the period since the last inspection, particularly in English and science, the overall trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for all core subjects is below the national improvement trend.
32. At age 14, pupils' average points score in national tests in 2001 was close to the national average overall. The average points scores in English, mathematics and science tests were uniformly close to the national average. However, some recent comparisons with results achieved in similar schools have been less favourable.
33. In the years since the last inspection when compared with schools nationally the percentage of pupils obtaining Level 5+ and Level 6+ in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science has been at least average and, on occasion, higher. Though there has been some relative improvement in 2001 test results, comparisons with the performance of pupils in similar schools, in relation to the above, remain unfavourable in a number of respects.
34. From the work examined and lessons observed in Key Stage 3, there is evidence that overall and most specifically in relation to English, mathematics and science, pupils are generally achieving at least in line with national levels of expectation for their age. Particularly high standards were observed in English, drama, design and technology (food) and physical education (dance). There was some evidence, from work seen, of marginally below average standards in art and design and significant variation was observed across different language groups of comparable ability.
35. The school is aware of the fact that improvement agendas need to be particularly, though not exclusively, focused on Key Stage 3. Early indications are that established agendas are beginning to impact on the effectiveness of teaching and quality of learning with consequent impact on rates of progress, particularly in Year 7. There are already, for example, pockets of good practice in the application and reinforcement of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, which are specifically impacting on pupils' progress and standards in Key Stage 3. Effective reinforcement skills of literacy and numeracy observed in design and technology (food) and physical education (dance) sessions in Year 7, for example, clearly contributed to the extent of pupils' learning in these lessons. The quantity and quality of information available about pupils' capabilities and potential has improved. Some teachers are already making effective use of such data to match work more closely to pupils' individual needs, though such practice is not as yet consistent across all staff.

The use of information gained from assessment and monitoring to secure consistently

effective teaching, quality learning and the highest standards.

36. The school has a clear commitment to achieving higher standards and providing pupils with learning experiences of high quality. This commitment is reflected in a comprehensive improvement plan that embraces agendas relating to improving pupils' learning experiences, the curriculum, the school environment and external relationships. Developing the use of assessment data and systems of monitoring and departmental review within the school are also given a high priority within the improvement plan. Though these agendas have been in place for less than a year, inspection evidence and that from the school's own review process indicates that some progress has been made in all identified whole school priorities, to good effect.
37. However, inspection evidence derived from lesson observation and the scrutiny of samples of pupils' work and teachers' marking also points to the urgency of rigorously pursuing and successfully completing these agendas. Given current inconsistencies of practice in a number of key areas, the agendas relating to the use of assessment information and data and the development of monitoring within the school are particularly relevant to securing more consistently effective teaching and learning and the highest standards.
38. Significant improvements have been made to the range and accessibility of assessment information and data available within the school. Increasing use is being made of insights gained from the analysis of such information to focus actions more and more on those priorities that will make a significant difference to standards and quality. The school is increasingly able to monitor the relative progress of identified groups of pupils within the school such as boys, girls and pupils with special educational needs to inform agendas designed to counter under achievement. Target setting processes in the school are becoming more securely based on analysis of pupils' capabilities and targets set at a variety of levels are becoming increasingly challenging.
39. Despite such improvements and the increasing amount of information that is available about pupils' attainment and capabilities, the overall use of such information in planning further improvements in teaching and learning and evaluating the impact of improvement agendas on standards remains under-exploited. Some departments, for example, mathematics are becoming confident in using such data to plan improvements. A number of individual staff are skilfully using available assessment information to inform their planning and are setting appropriately challenging objectives for pupils. In a Year 9 history lesson, for example, high expectations on the part of the teacher, derived from a thorough knowledge of pupils' capabilities, gave rise to a range of suitably challenging tasks with consequent impact on pupils' learning and progress in the session. The school aspires to but is, however, still some way off, a situation where all teachers confidently understand and plan for what each pupil needs to do to improve by reference to relevant assessment information and data. Not all form tutors are as yet confidently tracking the academic progress of their pupils through reference to relevant data so as to identify and address under-achievement at the earliest possible stage.
40. More systematic lesson observation, work scrutiny and departmental reviews are becoming established. Such monitoring is not as yet ensuring consistently high

quality teaching and learning across the whole school or, on occasion, within specific departments. However, the overall quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. As evidenced in a range of lessons observed that were judged to be of the highest quality, (for example, in a Year 9 English lesson, a Year 9 science lesson, a Year 7 design and technology lesson and a Year 7 mathematics lesson), pupils' progress is greatly enhanced when they understand just what learning is expected of them. Such practice is not as yet uniformly established across all teaching. Not all teachers make the distinction between what is to be done in a lesson and what is to be learnt.

41. Monitoring does not as yet ensure consistent implementation of all established policies. Some practice in relation to marking and assessment varies across the school. At best, constructive diagnostic marking of exercise books that is related to clearly understood criteria, (such as that seen in some Year 11 design and technology folders) and helpful assessments made by means of judicious questioning during lessons, (as evidenced in a Year 9 science lesson on cells and body systems) helps pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. Such practice is appreciated by the pupils. Not all marking and assessment practice seen made such a positive contribution to pupils' progress or motivation.

The range of opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness.

42. The school has a clear commitment in its aims to encourage tolerance and respect for all. The last inspection report identified in the key issues a need to ensure pupils had further opportunities to develop their spiritual and multicultural understanding. Despite some developments and practice, inspection evidence suggests there has been insufficient progress in these areas and existing opportunities remain too limited.
43. The school continues, through some assemblies and lessons, to provide opportunities for pupils to explore different beliefs, values and cultures. Subjects such as English, history, geography and religious education make an identifiable contribution to providing some insight into different faiths, traditions and cultures, past and present. Opportunities are missed, however, across the broader curriculum to broaden pupils' appreciation of their own culture and traditions as well as those of others represented in the wider community. New facilities have enabled the school to increase the frequency and quality of assemblies offered to pupils. A weekly chaplaincy has been started involving three members of the local clergy. Despite this, the quality of assemblies in many respects and positive contribution they make to other aspects of pupils' personal development, the school still fails to comply with statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship. In assemblies and tutor periods observed, there was not always an opportunity for pupils to be brought together in an act of worship or period of joint reflection.
44. Though the development of provision for spiritual and cultural development is not explicitly featured in the current school improvement plan, there is a commitment to reviewing school policy and practice through the establishment of a working party. No team leader, time or deadline for published outcomes has been fixed as yet.
45. In developing this area of its work, the school should consider carefully what is meant by spiritual awareness and how it can be developed across the whole curriculum by

giving pupils opportunities to reflect on what they have learnt and, as appropriate, express awe and wonder. Examples of this were identified (for example, in science in relation to the working of the human heart) but many more such opportunities could be exploited across the broad curriculum. The school should also consider the importance of providing more opportunities in lessons and other areas of school life for pupils to be more aware of the cultural diversity around them, celebrate their own culture whilst understanding cultural backgrounds of others through greater contact with relevant role models and experiences.

The detail of strategic planning and matching of resources to planned priorities.

46. As indicated elsewhere in this report, the school has established, through its school improvement plan, an ambitious and challenging agenda, consistent with a clear commitment to high standards and providing pupils with learning experiences of high quality. The school has undergone a significant culture change as far as its planning procedures are concerned. Evidence indicates that not only are certain planning strategies and expectations being consolidated but identified agendas are already having an impact on teaching and learning in areas of the school, particularly in Key Stage 3. Through the plan, effort and resources are appropriately focused on raising standards and improving quality.
47. Confidence has been expressed in the school's capacity to improve in the future. This confidence not only stems from the impact of some current agendas but also the school's commitment to continue to refine the school's planning processes, building upon what has been put in place already. The current improvement plan lacks adequately detailed or explicit evaluation procedures and related responsibilities. Existing success criteria are insufficiently specific or measurable to enable reliable judgements to be made about the success and impact of current agendas. There is, however, planning for more rigorous evaluation to better inform future developments.
48. The school has established a broad vision for its staff, pupils, partners and site over the next three years. However, without more clearly defined and precise longer term strategic objectives for the school, it is difficult for governors and staff to establish at any time what are the most important developments and the order in which they should be funded.
49. The school's ability to achieve the best value for money is currently limited by the imprecise links between planned improvement priorities and spending decisions. Consequently, there are difficulties in systematically evaluating the impact of specific spending decisions on standards achieved and quality of learning provided.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. The school has systems and strategies in place to promote improvement. In order to build on the school's achievements to date and to further improve standards and quality of learning the headteacher, senior managers and governors should:
 - (1) **Raise Key Stage 3 test results so that:**
 - improvement is at least in line with national trends;

- results compare more favourably with national averages and those for similar schools.

[Paragraphs 31-35]

(2) Develop the planned use of information gained from assessment and monitoring within the school to secure:

- consistently effective teaching that results in quality learning and rapid progress;
- the highest standards;
- consistent implementation of policies.

[Paragraphs 36-41]

(3) Provide more opportunities for spiritual and cultural development so that pupils:

- are more aware of the cultural diversity around them;
- are able to learn from the cultural background of others;
- have opportunities to discuss and express their own beliefs;
- have opportunities to reflect on what they have learnt.

[Paragraphs 42-45]

(4) Develop the strategic use of resources so that spending is more:

- informed by more clearly defined strategic objectives;
- closely linked to planned priorities;
- systematically evaluated in terms of its cost effectiveness.

[Paragraphs 46-49]

The numbers in brackets refer to the main paragraph(s) in the full report where these issues are mentioned.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	11	15	15	3	0	0
Percentage	19	20	28	28	6	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1141
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	112

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	157

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	117	107	224

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	97	63	75
	Girls	52	96	92
	Total	149	159	167
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (67)	71 (72)	75 (65)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	68 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (24)	36 (37)	35 (27)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	53	72	80
	Girls	115	107	104
	Total	168	179	184
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (65)	80 (66)	82 (60)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (31)	50 (39)	38 (29)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	111	111	222

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	59	110	111
	Girls	65	110	111
	Total	124	220	222
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (56)	99 (97)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46.9 (46.6)
	National	39 (38.4)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	32
	National	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	13
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	1101
Any other minority ethnic group	22

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63.46
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18:1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	451

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81.9%
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Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	19	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	2,802,276
Total expenditure	2,786,087
Expenditure per pupil	2,439
Balance brought forward from previous year	80,000
Balance carried forward to next year	96,189

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	28
Key Stage 4	27.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	20
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.06
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1109
Number of questionnaires returned	243

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29.0	57.0	10.0	3.0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40.0	55.0	3.0	1.0	1.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	35.0	56.0	5.0	1.0	4.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24.0	57.0	14.0	5.0	1.0
The teaching is good.	29.0	60.0	7.0	0	3.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25.0	51.0	16.0	7.0	2.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42.0	47.0	7.0	3.0	2.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56.0	42.0	1.0	0	1.0
The school works closely with parents.	19.0	58.0	16.0	5.0	2.0
The school is well led and managed.	27.0	57.0	6.0	3.0	7.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34.0	53.0	7.0	2.0	4.0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22.0	46.0	18.0	5.0	9.0