

INSPECTION REPORT

ELTON HIGH SCHOOL

Bury

LEA area: Bury

Unique reference number: 105354

Headteacher: Mr. Neil Scruton

Reporting inspector: Linda Humphreys
7956

Dates of inspection: 17 – 21 September 2001

Inspection number: 189731
Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Walshaw Road Bury
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr R.E. Walker
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

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7956	Linda Humphreys	<i>Registered inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupil's achievements; How well are pupils taught?
14032	Marion Saunders	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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8756	<i>Pat Hanage</i>	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
23246	John Mitchell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
28175	Jackie Goodman	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
30899	Kenneth Boden	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
15407	Muriel Harrison	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
31191	David Sylph	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
30596	Jack Brown	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology.	
8157	Pam Haezwindt	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages;	
8744	Russell Whiteley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
17987	Brian Coates	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
4372	Ralph Fordham	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.	
4417	Peter Stevens	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs; Equal opportunities; English as an additional language.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Elton High School is a mixed comprehensive school in a residential area of Bury. It serves some 900 pupils aged 11-16, slightly more boys than girls. The school draws its pupils largely from eight primary schools both in Bury, and in neighbouring boroughs. Nine per cent of pupils belong to ethnic minority groups, and seven per cent speak English as an additional language, which is higher than in most schools. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals has risen since the last inspection from 12 per cent to 14.7 per cent, and is continuing to rise: the percentage is 9.3 in Year 11, compared to 19.4 in Year 7. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is broadly average, although there is a smaller proportion of very high attainers than in some comprehensive schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average, much the same as during the last inspection. A unit for hearing impaired pupils is located in the school. The school has relatively little difficulty in recruiting staff, and there is only one unfilled teaching vacancy. The buildings have undergone considerable extension and refurbishment since the last inspection, and a new classroom block was under construction when this inspection took place.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school's strengths outweigh the areas needing improvement. The school achieves good standards, particularly in GCSE examinations. Pupils show enthusiasm for school and nearly all behave well. The quality of teaching and care for pupils is good, and relationships are warm. Leadership and management are good, but senior managers' unrealistic workloads result in some aspects of the school's work not being well managed. GCSE results and the quality of teaching have improved considerably since the last inspection, but some other issues identified then have not been improved enough. The school provides good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils' attainment is above average, and pupils achieve well and make good progress in most subjects.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils like school and are keen to learn, and most behave well.
- Care for pupils is good, and characterised by the warmth of relationships.
- Leadership, and management of most aspects of the school's work, are good.
- Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Statutory requirements for religious education and sex education are not met.
- The management of some areas of the school's work.
- Leadership and management of modern foreign languages.
- The behaviour of a very small minority of pupils, mainly boys.
- Accommodation remains tight, and maintaining the buildings absorbs a substantial proportion of income.
- The learning resource centre is inadequate.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996. Since then, results in GCSE examinations have improved significantly, from 43 per cent 5 or more A*-C grades in 1996 to 56.7 per cent in 2001. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. Good progress has been made in some of the key issues of the last inspection. Standards have risen in the under-performing subjects. Teaching provides good opportunities for pupils to learn independently, although the learning resource centre is unsatisfactory. Pupils' individual education plans have improved considerably, and are used well in planning pupils' learning. The school plans for all pupils to receive their entitlement to information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 4, but, as there are no effective systems for tracking pupils' experience of ICT, nor for assessing progress, the school finds it hard to check that the intention is realised. Consequently, the issue of monitoring ICT across the curriculum is still not resolved in Key Stage 4, and, although there are good arrangements for monitoring some of the school's work, other areas are not adequately monitored.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> <i>D</i> <i>well below average</i> E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	B	

GCSE results have been close to the national average, and, in 2000, are above the average in schools in similar economic circumstances. The trend in average points scored in Key Stage 3 tests and in GCSE examinations is below the national trend over the years between the last inspection and 2000, but results improved significantly, particularly in GCSE, in 2001. Attainment in English and science is above average in both key stages, and is particularly high in science in Key Stage 4; attainment in mathematics is average, but there are signs of improvement. Pupils' achievement is good in many subjects in both key stages. The school's targets for 2000 were not met, but 2001 results indicate that this year's targets, although considerably more challenging, have been exceeded.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like school, and are very keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Generally good. Most pupils behave well, with the exception of a very small minority, mainly boys.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are good, and pupils show consideration for each other, and for the wider community.
Attendance	In line with national averages.

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.

There is little difference between the quality of teaching in each of the key stages. Teaching is good in English and mathematics, where the influence of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy is evident, and in science and most other subjects, except modern foreign languages, where there is a larger proportion of satisfactory teaching. Many subjects contribute well to teaching literacy and numeracy. Teachers’ knowledge of pupils’ learning needs, and carefully structured lessons, with a variety of activities keep pupils interested, and give them confidence to try hard.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced, but in Key Stage 4, offering large numbers of GCSE courses has adverse effects on some timetabling. Few alternatives to GCSE accreditation are available. Statutory requirements for religious education (RE) are not met in Key Stage 4.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, except that arrangements to review the progress of pupils with special educational needs without statements of need are unsatisfactory
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good.
Provision for pupils’ personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory for spiritual and cultural development; very good for moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well. The school’s procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good, assessment is good, and the warmth of relationships ensures that pupils are well cared for.

The school works well in partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher, senior and middle managers is very good. Many aspects of the school's work, including nearly all subjects, are well managed. However, all senior staff bear unrealistically high workloads, and this results in inadequacies in some aspects of the school's evaluation of its work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good understanding of their role and are fully involved in the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good in some respects but unsatisfactory in others.
The strategic use of resources	Good.

Staffing is good, resources are satisfactory, but accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school employs a very businesslike approach to securing best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and are making good progress. • Teaching is good, and pupils are expected to work hard. • The school is well led and managed. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour. • Homework. • The information about how their children are getting on. • The closeness with which the school works with parents.

The inspection agrees with parents' positive views. The school has good procedures for working closely with parents, but although reports are sent home frequently, they do not always contain enough information. There is some poor behaviour, mainly by a very small minority of boys, and this is not always well managed. Homework generally supports learning well, although teachers' long-term absence has sometimes resulted in smaller amounts and less appropriate work. Many parents express appreciation for the dedication of the headteacher.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is broadly average. Recent results in national tests at the end of primary school indicate slightly higher levels than are achieved nationally, but the school does not have complete results for all year groups within the school, and inspection evidence suggests that the range of attainment on entry is average.
2. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is also broadly average in mathematics and most other subjects, but attainment in English, science, design and technology (DT), geography, and ICT is above average. Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 are above the national average in English, and in line with the national average in mathematics and science. In comparison with schools in similar economic circumstances, the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected level is above average in English, and well above average in mathematics and science. However, the percentage of pupils who achieve higher grades is above average in English and mathematics, and well above average in science. When the average points scored by pupils is considered, results in English are above the national average, and well above those in similar schools. Results in mathematics and science are in line with the national average, and mathematics results are above the average in similar schools, whereas those in science are well above average.
3. In 2001, results in tests in science were much the same as in the previous year, but English results improved very considerably: whereas, in 2000, 69 per cent of pupils gained at least Level 5, this year 88 per cent of pupils did so, and 56 per cent of pupils gained the higher levels compared to 28 per cent in the previous year. Mathematics results also show a big increase at the higher levels. Over the four years from 1996 to 2000, the trend in the school's results was below the national trend. In relation to the national averages for each group, boys' results in English are significantly lower than those of girls, in mathematics they are slightly lower, but in science boys' results are higher.
4. Results in teacher assessments in other subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, show attainment which is broadly average in geography and history and well above average in DT and ICT. Results in 2001 are similar, with an improvement in history. Inspection evidence, at the beginning of the autumn term, suggests that attainment is improving in geography, but that in DT and ICT, standards, although certainly above average, are not yet as high as in these assessments. Girls tend to do better than boys in DT and ICT, but it is hard to identify the reasons for this.
5. Pupils' achievement in many subjects, including mathematics, is satisfactory, and pupils achieve well in English, science, DT, geography, ICT and music. In all of these subjects, this can be traced, in particular, to effective lesson structure which caters well for the learning of all pupils. The school monitors the progress made by different groups, including girls and boys, and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. It has identified the differences between boys and girls, but there is no evidence to suggest that ethnic minority pupils make significantly different progress to that made by other pupils.
6. In 2000, results in GCSE examinations are close to the average for the proportions of pupils scoring 5 or more grades A*-C, but they are below average for the percentage of

pupils scoring 5 or more grades A*-G, and one or more grades A*-G. The proportion of 5 or more A*-C grades is above that scored in schools in similar economic circumstances, and is well above that scored in schools where pupils had results in Key Stage 3 tests in 1998 which are similar to those scored by this school's pupils. The proportion gaining 5 or more A*-G grades is about the same as in both these comparisons, but the proportion with one A*-G grade is below average each time. The school believes this is because a few pupils, often those with a poor record of attendance in Year 11, do not attend for GCSE examinations.

7. The average points scored by pupils is in line with the national average, but boys' score is below the average for boys, whereas girls' score is above the average for girls. However, pupils' average points score is above the average scored in schools in similar circumstances, and it is well above the average scored in schools with similar Key Stage 3 results in 1998.

8. Over the five years from 1996 to 2000, the trend in the average points scored is below the national trend. However, this school's average score in 1996 was higher than the starting point in most schools. In 1997, boys' results exceeded the national average for boys, whereas girls' results were below the average for girls. However, since then, this trend has gradually been reversed, and girls are doing increasingly better than boys.

9. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 are higher than in 2000:

- * 5 or more grades A*-C: 46.5 per cent in 2000, 56 per cent in 2001;
- * 5 or more grades A*-G: 89.4 per cent in 2000, 97.8 per cent in 2001;
- * average points score: 38.4 in 2000, 41.4 in 2001.

When the school was inspected, it was waiting for the results of appeals to examination boards in some subjects.

10. In 2000 GCSE examinations, there is considerable variation in the results gained in different subjects, and this pattern is repeated in 2001. In 2000, the proportion of A*-C grades is well above the national average in art and design, German, science and religious education, and above average in English and DT. Results in history and physical education (PE) are broadly average, in geography and mathematics they are just below average, and they are below average in English literature and French. There are significant differences in the results gained by boys and girls. In most subjects, girls outperform boys, but the opposite is the case in history, ICT and graphic design. In 2001, girls continue to do better, but the gap is reduced in most subjects. Boys outperform girls in drama, media studies and religious education (RE), although the entry numbers in drama and RE are small. Results in history are the reverse of 2000: the ten per cent difference of boys' results above girls' is now a ten per cent difference of girls' above boys'.

11. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards in mathematics, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, RE and PE are broadly average. In English, art, DT, geography, history and music standards are above average, and standards in science are well above average. Pupils make good progress in most subjects in Key Stage 4, and achieve well, thanks to good teaching and monitoring of pupils' progress, and careful preparation for examinations. In mathematics, most pupils make satisfactory progress and higher attaining pupils make good progress, but there is evidence to indicate that the rate of progress has begun to accelerate this year. In ICT, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, but no better, because not all subjects provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate their capability through Key Stage 4. Shortcomings in some modern foreign languages teaching, and staff absence are factors behind achievement which is also

satisfactory but not good. Some pupils have less time for RE than others, and some have no RE, except for what is provided in tutor times. The achievement of those who do have adequate time is satisfactory, but some pupils have little chance to make progress.

12. The school failed to meet the targets it set for GCSE examinations in 2000. However, 2001 results indicate that the school has exceeded its targets for this year, even though most were considerably more challenging.

13. Standards of literacy are good. Teachers pay specific attention to developing pupils' literacy skills in nearly all subjects. As a result, pupils are able to cope well with the reading and writing demands of the curriculum in both key stages. Systematic attention is given to key words, writing frames, matters of spelling and punctuation, and a school-wide marking policy is coherently and consistently applied. The impact of the National Literacy Strategy is clear in teaching methods and in the progress pupils make. For example, in history, pupils are able to write and speak confidently for different audiences. In geography, pupils show good conceptual understanding and command of geographical terminology. In DT, pupils present well-structured and accurate project work. In expressive arts in Key Stage 4, pupils' speaking and listening in improvised and scripted drama is of a high standard.

14. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. There is an increased emphasis on teaching these skills, particularly in Key Stage 3, and as a result pupils usually have the numerical skills they need to make progress in other subjects. The numeracy co-ordinator and mathematics teachers have worked hard and effectively to introduce strategies and methods from the National Numeracy Framework into the mathematics department. Work with other departments is being planned, so that the skills acquired in mathematics lessons are used and extended in other areas of the curriculum. In art, pupils can use measurement accurately, especially in Key Stage 4, to build up designs. In geography, pupils in both key stages are good at the interpretation of graphs, but in Key Stage 3 there is limited use of raw data and pupils are not confident in drawing graphs. In DT, higher attaining pupils use drawings well, and there are some good examples of the use of questionnaires to gather information.

15. In Key Stage 3, where pupils have discrete lessons in ICT, they develop good capability, which enables them to use ICT skills for the demands of most other subjects. There is no timetabled ICT in Key Stage 4, and opportunities to use these skills are not planned in all subjects, so pupils' skills are not developed consistently. Pupils are able to use ICT where opportunities are provided.

16. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages, whatever the nature or severity of their needs. This is evident both in lessons and in end of key stage results. Particularly good progress is made in science, where nearly half of the pupils with special educational needs who left last summer made the equivalent of four years' progress over Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievement is produced through the effective way teachers provide for pupils' individual learning needs, as well as through the high quality of support provided by classroom assistants. The school identifies pupils with particular gifts and talents, and has begun to provide for their needs. This is a relatively recent step, and the school does not monitor the provision made to see whether it is appropriately challenging. Results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations show that higher attainers achieve high results in most subjects. The attainment and progress of pupils who have English as an additional language are monitored and reported. A very high proportion of these pupils use English with the same command as a first language user, and there is no apparent difference in attainment and progress between these pupils and others.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Pupils' attitudes towards school are very good. Most pupils like school, are very enthusiastic and keen to participate in lessons. This is a great strength of the school and underpins the quality and range of learning which takes place in every subject. A large number of pupils of all ages take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities particularly during lunchtime.

18. Behaviour is generally good. In most lessons, pupils behave very well, which enables them to learn. However, there is a small minority of pupils, mainly boys, whose behaviour is unsatisfactory and which, if not well managed, disrupts the learning of others. Behaviour around the school and at breaktimes is sometimes boisterous, but it is good-natured. Pupils acknowledge that there are a few instances of bullying, but they are confident that these are quickly and appropriately dealt with.

19. The incidents of fixed term exclusions have risen significantly over the past two years, but this is the result of a proactive behaviour management policy rather than indicating worsening behaviour. The school is using more one and two-day periods of exclusion, and reducing the number of longer periods, as part of a planned approach to managing challenging behaviour and promoting better attendance by some pupils.

20. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is very good and a major strength of the school. At all ages, pupils identify this as important to them and their ability to achieve well. This is evident in lessons. The same warmth is also evident between pupils.

21. Within lessons, most pupils show a willingness and ability to work collaboratively. An example was seen in a Year 8 history lesson, where pupils undertook a decision making exercise related to taxation and government spending. Co-operative working also contributes to pupils' ability to reflect upon different values and beliefs. In a Year 10 geography class, for example, pupils showed a good level of respect and understanding, when considering the impact of the floods in Bangladesh on those who live there.

22. In both assemblies and religious education lessons pupils demonstrate a willingness and ability to consider their own actions and the impact upon others. They are keen to consider contemporary moral issues, such as current events in America. They also show an awareness of the importance of tradition and customs.

23. In many lessons pupils respond well to opportunities to work independently, and there is a range of opportunities for independent research both within class and through homework. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and take some responsibility. Examples are the mentoring scheme between Year 11 and Year 7, the paired reading which ranges across the school, and the system of tutor group captains and teaching group monitors. These contribute toward pupils' good personal development and to relationships throughout the school.

24. Attendance at the school is in line with national averages. Registers are accurately completed and lessons start on time. Punctuality has improved since the last inspection but at the start of the day it is dependent upon the prompt arrival of school buses.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 97.5 per cent of lessons: only four less than satisfactory lessons were seen. Teaching is good in 51 per cent of lessons, and very good in 15 per cent, with an example of excellent teaching.

26. Two of the four lessons which were not satisfactory were taught by a temporary supply teacher. The main shortcomings in these lessons are inappropriate teaching methods, which did not develop pupils' modern foreign language skills or understanding. In other lessons there is some unsuccessful management of provocative behaviour and low motivation, with the result that little learning takes place. In one instance, the lesson plan did not provide careful steps to help pupils learn a new skill, and the teacher's input was too long and lacked clarity, so pupils found it hard to get on with the task.

27. In the majority of lessons, however, teachers manage behaviour well. Most pupils are well behaved and interested in learning, but there is a very small minority of pupils, mostly boys, whose behaviour is difficult to control. Teachers use effective strategies to prevent challenging behaviour from stopping others learning, but in some lessons the need to devote time and energy to managing this means that learning, although satisfactory, is less than pupils might achieve in other circumstances.

28. The features of the good teaching in this school are teachers' awareness of the individual needs of all the pupils in their groups, good relationships, tightly structured lessons, and good use of questioning.

29. The school's assessment procedures provide information for teachers on pupils' progress, and this information is well used. Teachers are alert to pupils' needs and not only plan carefully for them, but target pupils to make sure that they make progress. A strong feature is the way in which most teachers, when teaching classes with a very high proportion of pupils with varied and complex difficulties, are successful in providing for their individual needs.

30. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught in both mainstream classes and in specialist classes. Where pupils are withdrawn from normal classes, such as pupils with specific learning difficulties, teachers take account of the lesson plans from which pupils have been withdrawn in planning what they do. The quality of the support provided in classes by the special support assistants is very high. They arrive at lessons well prepared, familiar with pupils' IEPs, and knowing the scheme of work, what has gone before the lesson and what is to follow.

31. The varying needs of pupils within groups are met, often by expert use of questioning. Many teachers use skilful techniques to build on pupils' answers to develop their knowledge and understanding: responses are often turned back on pupils to make them think further and harder. Teachers are persistent in using this interaction to develop learning. In a geography lesson on floods in Bangladesh, the teacher used questions to ensure that all participated, with probing and challenging questions to make pupils think about their answers and extend their knowledge. Pupils were then able to write detailed and thoughtful responses about the flooding.

32. The relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are very warm in this school. This makes pupils feel secure and confident to take part in lessons, ask questions and continue to respond when further challenged. A good example is in music, where relatively new teachers have established very good relationships with

pupils. This, supported by careful lesson planning, is enabling pupils to feel confident enough to take part in performing and composing activities, and to discuss each other's work constructively and sensitively.

33. Many subjects use carefully structured lessons. The literacy and numeracy strategies are developed well in English and mathematics lessons in Year 7. For example, a Year 7 English lesson on factual texts and persuasive writing was planned with clarity and precision along the literacy strategy framework of introduction, group and/or individual tasks, and final summary session. Pupils learned to distinguish fact from opinion, and to recognise and understand the stylistic features of text which signal the distinctions between the two, well supported by strategies such as the use of individual answer boards, which enable all pupils to venture a response which can be seen only by the teacher. This engenders confidence by overcoming the fear of making a wrong answer. This confidence to risk answering a difficult question, and the brisk pace of well-prepared activities enabled Year 7 pupils to make very good progress in a mathematics lesson on multiplication.

34. Other subjects also structure lessons well in other year groups. The structure of a science lesson in a series on transport and support in plants with lower attaining Year 11 pupils was designed to promote pace and maintain pupils' interest. After an initial question and answer session to revise and reinforce previous work, a variety of activities were provided to help pupils maintain concentration. A well-planned and -organised French lesson kept pupils interested in learning to describe their bedroom with a brisk series of activities very well matched to pupils' capabilities.

35. Marking is done regularly and conscientiously but there are significant variations in practice. Most teachers mark according to the school marking policy, which requires an effort and an assessment grade. However, pupils do not receive advice from all their teachers on how to improve their work and comments at the end of pieces of work are sometimes too vague to be of any real help. Examples of good practice in this respect are seen in the design and technology department where constructive comments and advice to pupils on how to improve are consistently given. Most subjects use regular testing to check on how pupils are progressing.

36. Parents expressed concern about homework, mentioning inconsistency in the amount set and the frequency. From the evidence available during the inspection, homework is an effective part of learning in most subjects, although there are examples of teachers' longer-term absence resulting in smaller amounts and less effective tasks being set.

37. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than of higher quality, teaching is relatively dull and less energetic, and the pace of learning is casual. In these lessons pupils are not pushed to think hard and so, although they very often complete an adequate amount of work, they develop less understanding than in better lessons. Some poor behaviour takes place in lessons where the content is not presented in a way which interests pupils.

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

38. The Key Stage 3 curriculum meets statutory requirements and includes all national curriculum subjects, RE, personal, social and health education (PSE), and sex education.

In Years 8 and 9, pupils also have the opportunity to learn a second modern language. ICT is taught throughout Years 7 to 9 in discrete lessons. This equips pupils well to use computers as routine tools across a wide range of subject areas. Whilst the curriculum is generally well balanced and broadly based, there are imbalances in the allocation of time to some subject areas. For instance, one group in geography, and one group in history in Year 9 have one lesson each fewer than other pupils, in order to allow for the study of a second foreign language. The school tries to compensate for this by allocating an extra morning for geography and history every half term, when enrichment activities are introduced. However, the time allowed for normal lessons is not enough for pupils to experience the full range of the geography or the history curriculum.

39. In Year 7, pupils are placed in mixed ability groups for all subjects apart from English, mathematics, where they are split into half year groups within which they are then grouped according to prior attainment. In Year 8, pupils are grouped according to prior attainment in English, mathematics and DT. For other subjects, pupils are placed in two bands, according to prior attainment. In the upper band, pupils are grouped in sets according to prior attainment for geography and history. For the remaining subjects, they are grouped in sets according to prior attainment in a combination of modern foreign languages and science. In the lower band, pupils work in mixed ability groups. In Year 9, pupils are grouped according to prior attainment in English, DT, mathematics and science. For other subjects, pupils are grouped in two bands, and in sets within each band, based on prior attainment. These grouping arrangements are, on the whole, effective and enable staff to provide for individual needs. However, the arrangements also result in some groups containing a high proportion of pupils whose behaviour is difficult to manage, and some teachers find it hard to control these groups and ensure that pupils learn.

40. The school has made a good start with implementing the literacy and numeracy strategies in Year 7. In both English and mathematics, lesson planning benefits from the strategies' structured approach and is a strength. Throughout the school, activities such as paired reading and the emphasis on key vocabulary in subjects support pupils' progress in literacy. Extra planning time has been made available to mathematics to provide opportunities for team teaching and planning within the department. Staff have reviewed schemes of work to identify further opportunities for including numeracy in subjects.

41. All departments' curriculum planning, including schemes of work, is at least satisfactory, and in many subjects it is good. The history and science schemes are very good and the geography scheme is excellent.

42. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 does not meet statutory requirements, in that there are a number of pupils in Year 11 who do not receive their entitlement to RE and therefore also the aspects of sex education taught in RE lessons. These pupils had no RE in their previous school year. There is also a further group of pupils in Year 10 whose entitlement to RE is significantly eroded by time allocated to other subjects. There are no discrete ICT lessons in these two years, and pupils' entitlement to develop their capability in this subject is intended to be provided within English, DT, mathematics and science for the most part, and consolidated through opportunities within other subjects. However, three subjects, including mathematics, reported difficulties in gaining adequate access to computers. The school has no clear systems for tracking pupils' experience of ICT across all subjects, nor for assessing pupils' progress through Years 10 and 11.

43. Comprehensive arrangements are in place to help pupils at age 14 choose subjects which match their needs and interests. All pupils study English, both language and literature, mathematics, double science and PE. All have access to personal health and

social education (PHSE), which includes careers and RE, but some pupils have less time for this because other subjects are taught in some personal, social and health education time. There is a wide choice of other GCSE courses, including Urdu and media studies, and an art and design course is run after school hours for pupils who wish to take a GCSE course but are unable to fit it into their normal timetable. Pupils are able to study two modern languages and only a few pupils take no languages at all. A significant number of pupils follows ten GCSE courses, and these are the pupils who have insufficient time left for RE, if they do not study GCSE RE. The needs of less academic pupils are addressed with courses in key skills and alternative accreditation in modern foreign languages. However, there are very few opportunities for the learning of pupils with special educational needs to be suitably accredited. The school's drive to encourage reluctant pupils to stay in education includes arranging for four pupils to study entirely at a local college. However, there are no further opportunities for other pupils to choose vocational courses in school, and so some pupils who have expressed a preference for some vocational elements, such as business studies and child care, have been disappointed.

44. Taught time is 24 hours in all year groups, which meets the statutory minimum but is below the average in schools nationally. Lessons of thirty-five minutes duration are generally timetabled in double lessons. In some of these seventy minute lessons, pupils find it hard to sustain concentration for the last ten to fifteen minutes, and the pace of learning often slows. The need to review the length of both lessons and the school day is included in the current school development plan.

45. The school strives to meet the individual needs of all pupils within the constraints of the time available. However, the attempt to do this has created problems. The result of providing for some pupils to choose to study ten GCSE courses is that some pupils lose their entitlement to RE and sex education partially, and some lose it completely. The arrangements for a small number of Year 10 pupils wishing to study two languages is inappropriate and ineffective. These pupils are included in a set of considerably lower attaining pupils, thereby demanding that the teacher provide, within every lesson, work at two very different levels for pupils with very different needs. Neither group can receive a full lesson of teaching and learning at an appropriate level. Inspection found that the dual linguists had made little progress, and that the development of their oral skills, in particular, was being neglected. The schools' strategic decisions about the curriculum for this age group are too often informed by the desire to provide for pupils' wishes for GCSE courses, without considering the effect on the curriculum as a whole.

46. The curriculum in both key stages is broadened by a structured and coherent PSE programme, which is taught by form tutors in units sequenced for pupils' development as they move through the school. Careers education is one of the elements contained within the PSE programme. The quality of the careers programme developed by the school is good. It commences in Year 7 and is developed each year as pupils progress through the school. However, the time allocated to PSE is eroded for some pupils to meet time needs in other subjects. No lessons could be observed during the inspection.

47. Pupils with special educational needs have equal access to the curriculum as other pupils, and the varied arrangements in place enhance the provision for them. This includes withdrawal in individual and small groups for pupils with Specific learning difficulties, good in-class support for pupils at Stage 3 and above of the Code of Practice for special educational needs, and small classes where a high proportion of pupils have severe, varied or complex difficulties. At the time of the last inspection, the quality of Individual education plans (IEP) was unsatisfactory. The school has expended much effort over a considerable period of time to improve IEPs, and the quality of many is now good.

Some subject IEPs, such as history, include sufficient aspects of pupils' learning and development that teachers are able to respond to individual difficulties effectively.

48. The school has put in place arrangements to identify able, gifted and talented pupils in all curriculum areas. It makes some provision for these pupils, such as early entry for GCSE examinations, extra GCSE courses such as media studies, and the opportunity to study GCSE art and design out of school hours. Pupils also have opportunities to visit theatres and art galleries, and to take part in public speaking. Within the curriculum, provision often takes the form of routine extension work, rather than imaginatively providing a high degree of challenge and opportunities for lateral and creative thought in tackling tasks. A review of the progress made is planned for later this term. Whilst a good start has been made with identification procedures, careful evaluation of the provision is needed to ensure that it is appropriate to inspire these pupils.

49. There is a wide range of extra curricular activities, including sport, music, drama, subject clubs, and trips and visits. Many teachers give generously of their time to organise clubs and activities linked to subjects, leisure pursuits, visits, team games and outdoor activities. Participation rates across the range of activities are high.

50. The school has made progress since the last inspection in providing equal access to art, and in planning for all pupils to receive their statutory entitlement to ICT. However, some pupils still do not have the same time for personal, social and health education as others. Some pupils still have a low time allocation for RE, while others have no RE lessons in Year 11. Since the last inspection the school has won a Schools' Curriculum award and a Sportsmark award.

51. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral and social development. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Provision for moral development is a strength in the school. Planned provision is largely through the PSE programme and in RE. Topics such as attitudes to bullying, sex education, drugs awareness and alcohol abuse provide a sound curriculum for discussion and development. The school has clear expectations of pupils knowing right from wrong, and students respond well when they are corrected. The headteacher and staff provide good role models for pupils. Assemblies make a significant contribution, and include topics such as codes of conduct, making moral decisions, prejudice, honesty and tolerance. Some subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. In RE, pupils respond to aspects of morality using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. In geography, pupils identify right and wrong consistently by appealing to values and principles when considering conservation issues. In English, pupils reflect on the wider consequences of their actions and choices through discussion of literature. In science, examining a range of issues such as drug abuse and environmental questions makes a significant contribution to the development of a moral standpoint.

52. Provision for social development is also very good. The school provides opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The PSE programme provides many opportunities in this area. Topics include health and safety, use of leisure time, community projects, politics, and taking responsibilities. There is a prefect system that has a high profile. The head boy and girl represent the school. Year 11 pupils act as mentors for Year 7 pupils, and Year 10 pupils take part in paired reading with younger ones. The school council, Police youth forum, and sports captaincies all provide opportunities for pupils to exercise social responsibility. The use of tutor group captains to assist tutors also provides pupils of all ages with the opportunity to take responsibility. Pupils also raise funds for charities. Assemblies also make a significant contribution to social development. Topics such as helping others and support for charities are good

examples. Some subjects also provide opportunities. For example, in DT, pupils are encouraged to look at the social context within which all design projects are set. Awareness of the needs of others, both locally and in the wider world, is integral to geographical case studies, discussions in English literature and the study of different artists in art.

53. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. There are assemblies each day for Years 8 to 11. In Year 7, collective worship is planned through a thought for the day programme to be included in morning form time. The quality of this activity varies, and, as a consequence, the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is not met. Assemblies make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual education. For example, topics such as forgiveness, gifts and talents, creation and the wonders of nature all provide opportunities for spiritual reflection. Pupils are familiar with the use of prayer and they respond appropriately. However, the use of prayers is not always linked with the assembly theme. There is little evidence of any planning in departments for spiritual development, and the PSE programme does not make any significant contribution in this area. A Christian group for pupils meets regularly and is linked to the RE department. In some subjects, opportunities for the spiritual development of students were observed. For example, in music and English, pupils value and use their imaginative and creative faculties to explore meaning. They also express their values and beliefs openly and honestly, and demonstrate a tolerance for the views of others in geography, history and English.

54. Provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory. Assemblies include topics such as tolerance and difference, and provision is made for Muslim pupils' needs, and this helps pupils to understand other cultures and traditions. The school's curriculum, however, does not provide planned opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country, although there are aspects of religious education that make a significant contribution. The PSE programme does not include this. Some subjects do make a significant contribution to the cultural development of pupils. For example, in modern foreign languages, there are visits to Germany, and a Spanish club. In geography, case studies on Japan and immigrant workers help pupils to understand different cultural backgrounds. There are many opportunities for pupils to look at work of many cultural traditions in art. In music and drama, concerts and productions contribute well.

55. Since the last inspection, the provision for the moral development of pupils has continued to be a strength. The provision for social development has improved significantly. There has, however, been little improvement in the provision for spiritual and cultural development. In addition, the statutory requirement for an act of collective worship is not always met for Year 7 pupils. The school has conducted an audit of departments' contributions to this area, which will provide a useful starting point for planning a thorough, coordinated approach.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

56. Care for pupils in this school is characterised by the warmth and concern showed by staff. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils make a major contribution to the way in which the school provides a secure and caring environment for all its pupils.

57. There are good procedures for both child protection and health and safety, but not all departments record annual risk assessments.

58. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good, particularly for those pupils identified as at risk through the school's social inclusion policy. The school makes contact with the parents of pupils with an unexplained absence during the same day. The parents of some pupils are issued with pagers to enable rapid early contact. The school has increased the amount of time its education welfare officer spends in school, and this is used to good effect in both monitoring attendance and providing individual counselling. There is a good system for monitoring internal truancy from lessons, and the school analyses in detail trends in pupils' absenteeism.

59. There are good policies and procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and to prevent bullying. These are used very effectively in most cases and are well understood by pupils throughout the school. The majority of teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in lessons. The enthusiasm and hard work of a number of staff has enabled the school to make a good start in implementing its social inclusion policy, which is aimed at encouraging pupils with poor attendance records to come to school more regularly. The school uses a good range of strategies to promote inclusion and an evaluation of the first year's progress has shaped the provision for this year.

60. There is a well-structured pastoral system, and form tutors play a key role in teaching PSE to their form groups. There is a carefully planned programme for this, which is timetabled for each week on a 'rolling programme' whereby a different double lesson each week is replaced by PSE. No lessons could be observed during the inspection, because they were timetabled for Friday afternoon. There is a good quality careers programme. Pupils' personal development is well monitored.

61. The school has good strategies for identifying the needs of individual pupils, whether these be special education needs or the needs of pupils with particular gifts or talents.

62. The school uses the information gathered from primary schools and from support services effectively. The school fully meets its statutory responsibilities in respect of pupils at Stage 5 of the Code of Practice. The support provided by the local education authority through the various support agencies is of a high quality and is well used by the school. Pupils take an active part in their annual review and are encouraged to express their own views. Present arrangements to review the progress of non-statemented pupils are unsatisfactory. There are formal reviews for many pupils at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice, but there are no arrangements to ensure that the progress of all pupils on the special needs register are regularly and consistently reviewed. Whilst significant progress has been made in the quality of the contribution of subject departments to the annual review process, there are still weaknesses in some areas. Subject reports often fail to identify clearly the progress made in knowledge and understanding of that subject.

63. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the changing facilities at the school, but office space for staff with pastoral responsibility remains inadequate.

64. Procedures for assessing the attainment of pupils are good. Baseline data, such as the results of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 attainment tests, are collected, along with the results of other predictive tests, so that the school is able to make some predictions about future performance. This information is disseminated to teachers to help them in planning their work. All departments use a whole school grading system for attainment and effort to accumulate information about pupils as they move through the school. Although this scheme does not give pupils' attainment directly in relation to National Curriculum levels, the school has a simple means of generating such information from the grades.

65. Most departmental assessment policies are clear, well understood and closely followed by all teachers in the department. Assessment is good in most subjects, very good in history, science and PE, and excellent in geography. Effective use is made of tests or tasks which are standardised across a year group and, although there is some variation in the quality and extent of this practice, it is good in all the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In PE, assessment in Key Stage 4 is standardised across the year group, and good use is made of video recording as part of the assessment process. In history, grade descriptors are used to ensure consistency across all the teaching staff.

66. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress through the school are satisfactory overall, with some examples of very good practice, such as history in both key stages and science in Key Stage 4. Departments set targets at both key stages for overall performance by the department and for individual pupils. The latter process takes the form of a target on the school grading system which is converted into a National Curriculum level or GCSE grade. Targets are determined on the basis of prior attainment in tests and examinations. Good record-keeping by most departments ensures that it is possible to monitor effectively pupils' progress towards their targets. Brief reports on attainment and effort are sent home termly, to enable pupils and parents to see how pupils are progressing.

67. Most departments use assessment data to form groups of pupils and sometimes move pupils between groups as a result of the monitoring process. A scheme, overseen by senior management, whereby heads of department are responsible for identifying underachieving pupils at Key Stage 4, has a positive impact on standards achieved in GCSE examinations.

68. Whilst there is good practice at department level, the school does not coordinate the collection of data well enough. During the inspection, it was sometimes difficult to agree definitive data, as varying versions were supplied by different sources within the school. The results of modern foreign languages and music teacher assessments in 2000 were not available to inspectors.

69. National comparative data is not consistently used to assess the achievement of pupils from the beginning to the end of a key stage, which allows pupils' progress to be compared with the progress made nationally. Until very recently, the school has not had Key Stage 2 results for all its new pupils, who come from a large number of primary schools. Whilst some subjects undertake this analysis, others do not, and there is no co-ordinated overall approach. In the same way, the school does not use national comparisons to check the progress pupils make from Key Stage 3 to GCSE examinations.

70. The use of assessment data to inform curriculum development is satisfactory. Most faculties analyse their examination results, but the information so obtained is not always well used, although some good practice exists. Some departments realise the value of analysing results with a view to identifying weaknesses and modifying teaching programmes accordingly. This is being done in, for example, English, geography, history, and modern foreign languages.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

71. Most parents feel that the school does a good job of educating their children. Parents are particularly pleased with the way the school encourages their children to work hard and achieve their best. They also feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. A significant number of parents are unhappy with the amount of homework, but the inspection team found that homework is set regularly, in line with the homework policy, and is not usually excessive.

72. The school provides parents with a good range of information concerning the day-to-day events of the school. Annual reports to parents on pupils' progress provide clear information about what pupils can do, but some subjects provide only limited information on how pupils can improve the standard of their work. The school has, in recent years, introduced a meeting early in the autumn term, when parents of pupils with special educational needs can come to discuss provision or concerns, and are able to look at their child's IEP. Staff respond to parental concerns as they arise and, equally, staff keep parents informed of any concerns which they in turn may have. However, arrangements to keep parents of some pupils on the special educational register informed of their child's progress regularly and consistently during the year are unsatisfactory.

73. Parents are invited to a range of school events, including information evenings. For example, during the inspection there was an evening meeting for parents to share with them information on the school's sex education policy and the way sex education is taught in the school.

74. The school has good effective links with parents. Staff with pastoral responsibilities are readily available to parents, and parents praise the accessibility of the headteacher inside and outside of school hours. The school involves parents immediately there is any cause for concern. There is an active Parent Teacher Association which organises both social and fundraising events. Parents are consulted annually and the school tries to incorporate their views when practicable. An example is the recent change in the school uniform policy, which now allows girls to wear trousers.

75. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning. The majority of parents attend parents' evenings to consider their child's progress. Parents work closely with the school in its efforts to help pupils with behaviour difficulties and in ensuring that pupils attend school regularly.

76. Since the last inspection the school has ensured that parents of pupils with special educational needs are more actively involved in their child's education plan.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

77. The leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff is very effective and gives a clear sense of purpose and direction to the school's continued development and improvement. It has been successful in developing a very happy and supportive environment for pupils' learning, and a shared sense of purpose amongst staff, governors, pupils and parents. The management of the majority of the school's work is good, but a number of important areas are not well managed.

78. The school has clear, comprehensive and appropriate aims, which are clearly evident in documentation and in development priorities, and are reflected in the daily life of

the school, where they are, to a large extent, achieved successfully.

79. The governing body has a good understanding of its roles and responsibilities, and works well with the headteacher and senior staff in fulfilling these effectively. Governors are conscious of the school's main priorities for development and, together with the senior management team, have identified strategies to respond to them. They are fully involved in the work of the school, some through their links with faculties, others through involvement in working groups, such as those on drug and sex education, and many through the expertise they bring to the various committees on which they serve.

80. The school benefits immensely from the dedicated leadership of the headteacher, which is focused on establishing a good quality of education for all pupils and ensuring realistically high standards. This is reflected to a high degree in some of the school's current initiatives, which include improving provision for able and gifted pupils and for pupils with special educational needs, and promoting social and educational inclusion. His clear vision for the school is shared by governors and all staff, who work very hard to realise it, and it is recognised and appreciated by parents.

81. There is a clear management structure, including line management and other responsibilities. The headteacher and senior managers undertake their tasks conscientiously, but all bear an unrealistic range and number of responsibilities, along with a very significant teaching commitment. This places unreasonable demands on them, and results in some elements of their roles not being undertaken effectively, for example the lack of effective strategic decisions about the curriculum.

82. The arrangements for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are good at both subject department and whole school level. However arrangements for monitoring other parts of the school's work are unsatisfactory. The impact of curriculum decisions about time allocations, grouping and subject combinations on pupils' statutory entitlement and on standards has not been adequately evaluated. The recording and collation of data, such as results of teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, is unsatisfactory, and this has not been adequately monitored.

83. The quality of leadership and management of subjects is generally good. It is particularly good in geography, history and science, but it is weak in modern foreign languages. Some recently appointed subject leaders, such as those in mathematics and music, have made a considerable impact on improving the quality of education offered by their department in a very short time. The pastoral system is very effective and the pastoral and academic roles of tutors are linked well.

84. Staff know their pupils very well and work hard to meet their individual needs. There are good arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic and personal development. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in developing provision for pupils with special educational needs. Through the coordinator's hard work and commitment the quality of provision has been enhanced. However a significant amount of her time is spent on routine administrative tasks, which is not the most effective and efficient use of her time. The role and responsibilities of link staff within subject areas are not sufficiently well defined for them to play an effective part.

85. Planning for school development, both at whole school and faculty and department level, is good and reflects the aims of the school. There is a clear framework for development planning and review, linked to the budget cycle. Priorities for action are identified through a system of detailed consultations with staff and governors. Faculty

targets are linked to whole school priorities. The present plan appropriately covers a three-year period and the plan for the current year is set out in great detail. Resources are appropriately targeted and provide effectively for curriculum maintenance and development, such as spending on computers. However strategies for the implementation of some plans lack the necessary rigour to support the achievement of objectives, for example the introduction of key skills.

86. The school is well led and managed on a day-to-day basis. Good communications ensure that staff are kept informed, and well established routines contribute to the smooth running of the school. Day to day administration is efficient and effective. All staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are highly committed to the work of the school and to pupils' well being. The school is an orderly community where relationships are very good. Core values are reflected in the way that most pupils are considerate of the needs and feelings of others, and are keen to do well.

87. All statutory policies have been agreed. The school meets statutory responsibilities in all areas apart from RE in Key Stage 4, and a daily act of collective worship in Year 7. A group of Year 10 pupils have a reduced time allocation for religious education, and a group of pupils in Year 11 have no religious education lessons at all, and therefore less sex education, because the moral and social aspects are taught in religious education.

88. School development is supported through careful financial planning. However, the level of surplus projected for the current financial year is very low. Whilst the school is confident that it will not go into deficit, future planning should ensure that more money is available for any contingency which might arise. Budget preparation control is detailed and thorough. However, whilst funding for special educational needs had been used effectively to develop good quality provision, the information on how funding allocated for special educational needs is used is not detailed enough. Information technology is effectively used for administration purposes as well as to support learning. The school employs a very businesslike approach to securing best value. Spending decisions have been effective in improving the quality of both the environment and of the curriculum, although the school is obliged to spend a higher proportion of its income on building maintenance than most schools. A number of indicators, including improving GCSE results, the quality of teaching and care for pupils, pupils' enthusiasm for school, and the quality of leadership, show the school to be effective. Unit costs are high, but the school spends a higher proportion of its income on maintaining its buildings than many schools have to, and provides good value for money.

89. The expertise and experience of the teaching staff are well matched to the school's curriculum. Most classes are taught by specialists in that subject. Where non-specialists are deployed, they are well supported and there is no adverse effect on standards. However, the work of one short-term supply teacher in school during the inspection was unsatisfactory. There are very good induction arrangements for all staff. The programme is organised by the head teacher with a particular emphasis on the ethos of the school, and new staff feel welcomed. An appropriate professional development programme is in place and is effectively linked with performance management. Several departments, for example English, have already completed their ICT New Opportunities Fund training. Numeracy training has had a positive impact on methods and strategies used by the mathematics department. The school has gained the Investors in People award since the last inspection. Support staff play a valuable role in school life, with their skilled work with pupils with special educational needs.

90. Although substantial improvements have been made to the school's accommodation

since the last inspection, it remains unsatisfactory. Considerable effort and investment has been made to address the problems identified in 1996. Walkways between buildings have been provided, the four science rooms have been refurbished, the physical education changing rooms and showers have been improved, and the dining room extended. A new English block was almost ready for occupation when the inspection took place. Specialist accommodation is satisfactory in design and technology, English, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education and science. Nevertheless, because few departments have enough rooms for all their teachers, much teaching has to go on in non-specialist rooms. This often causes inconvenience in transporting books and materials, but sometimes means that lessons take place in unsuitable rooms. The accommodation for art, music, drama, and special educational needs is unsatisfactory.

91. Art teachers work in cramped accommodation, particularly with younger pupils, and one room has no supply of water. The keyboard room for music is stuffy and cramped, and is some distance from the other teaching room. There are no music practice rooms. The one room dedicated to special educational needs functions as a teaching room, an office, and a location for review meetings. The room for drama teaching doubles as a dining area. It has no facilities for blackout, lighting or sound and limits what can be done in the subject.

92. Most subjects have adequate books and equipment, except for modern foreign languages, where there are very few reading books. Some subjects, such as geography and religious education have a good quantity of varied texts, and religious education also has a good stock of videos. Mathematics has provided good resources for the numeracy strategy in Year 7. Resources for information and communications technology are good in English, design technology, science and physical education, and particularly good in the case of history, which has its own computer suite. The school's ratio of computers to pupils is much the same as in other schools. However, some departments, including geography, mathematics and modern foreign languages do not have frequent enough access to the school's computers. The information and communications technology owned by the music department was not working at the time of the inspection.

93. The Learning Resource Centre does not support learning well. Although the newly appointed teacher in charge is clear about what is needed for its development, she has very little time allocated for her library responsibilities. There is nobody associated with the Centre with specialist experience of library management. The stock is poorly organised and much of it is dated. The Centre is not staffed during lesson time nor is there timetabled access for subject departments. It is therefore an undeveloped resource, poorly coordinated with the good provision made for literacy by subject departments, and provides very limited support for research activities.

94. Since the last inspection good progress has been made in focusing more closely on a smaller number of items for school development. The inconsistencies in monitoring the implementation of school policies still remain in some aspects of the school's work, although assessment is generally now more consistent.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

95. In order to raise standards further and improve the quality of education provided by the school, governors should:

- Ensure that statutory requirements for RE, sex education and a daily act of collective worship are met.
(Paragraphs: 11, 42, 43, 55, 87, 247, 254)
- Improve the management of the school's work by.
 - * Improving the management of modern foreign languages.
(Paragraphs: 11, 26, 68, 83, 207-209, 214-218)
 - * Reviewing the responsibilities of senior staff to make their commitments more manageable.
(Paragraphs: 77, 81, 82, 94, 121)
 - * Ensure that data is consistently collected and analysed, so that it can be used in a co-ordinated way in monitoring and planning the school's work.
(Paragraphs: 68-70, 82, 204, 252)
 - * Reviewing the way strategic decisions about the curriculum are made.
(Paragraphs: 11, 38, 42-46, 48, 172, 196)
 - * Improving strategies to manage the behaviour of the very small proportion of boys who misbehave.
(Paragraphs: 18, 26, 27, 37, 137, 193, 237)
- Improve the learning resource centre so that it can support learning well.
(Paragraphs: 93, 123)
- Persevere with efforts to improve accommodation, as finances allow.
(Paragraphs: 63, 90, 91, 122, 154, 162, 229)

96. In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- * Improve some subjects' access to ICT facilities.
(Paragraphs: 15, 141, 185, 199, 202, 204, 217, 228)
- * Improve the consistency of the quality of marking.
(Paragraphs: 35, 140)
- * Extend the opportunities for pupils to learn about the cultural diversity of contemporary society.
(Paragraph: 54)
- * Include adequate details of the success of the school's policy for pupils with special educational needs in the governors' annual report to parents.
(Paragraph: 88)
- * Ensure that the progress of all pupils with special educational needs is adequately reviewed.
(Paragraphs: 62, 72)
- * Enable the co-ordinator for special educational needs to use her time on professional, rather than administrative matters.
(Paragraph: 84)

Hearing Impaired Resource Provision

97. The school makes good provision for pupils with hearing impairment through its discrete resource unit and its integrated approach. The unit at present provides support to six pupils with mild to severe hearing loss. Three of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs which acknowledges that in addition to their hearing loss they experience other major difficulties. The other three pupils receive audiological support.

98. The quality of the resource unit provision is good. The unit is well managed. Effective liaison with primary schools, pupils and parents prior to admission ensures a smooth transition from primary to secondary school. The fact that both the teacher and the support assistant from the resource unit work part of the week in primary schools is another positive feature of the provision. Pupils, on admission, are integrated into the mainstream curriculum, though they do receive some support within the unit and their progress and response are carefully monitored. The quality of support provided by unit staff, support assistants and subject teachers within the mainstream classroom is good. Arrangements for the induction of new mainstream staff are thorough and comprehensive. They ensure that staff understand, and are sensitive to, the nature and degree of pupils' difficulties, and help them understand what hearing impairment means within the context of a busy classroom. They are given support in identifying appropriate strategies that will be helpful in meeting pupils' needs. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that all staff involved in teaching pupils with hearing impairment receive a detailed pupil profile. In-class support is well planned. A good feature of the provision is the training provided to other Year 7 pupils in the class. This includes discussing sound, and sound thresholds, as well as a filtered speech activity, so that they are more able to appreciate what it means to be hearing impaired.

99. Pupils supported through the resource provision make good progress. This progress is carefully monitored through end of unit tests, grade cards and end of key stage results. The progress made in expressive and receptive language is also monitored. Unit staff readily respond to the concerns expressed by other staff, parents and pupils.

100. Clearly the various learning difficulties experienced by these children are aggravated as a result of their hearing impairment. However, as a result of the high quality of support they receive from all the staff involved, they are fully integrated into the school and make good progress.

101. The resource base provides a warm, friendly and stimulating environment. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and are evident whether pupils are in the base or in classrooms.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	160
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	72

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	24	82	49	3	0	1
Percentage	0.6	15	51.2	30.6	1.9	0	0.6

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	900
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	133

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	36
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	156

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	58

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	102	79	181

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	60	72	66
	Girls	65	57	48
	Total	125	129	114
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	69(61)	71(67)	63(64)
	National	63(63)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	28(28)	38(44)	32(22)
	National	28(28)	42(38)	30(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	55	74	63
	Girls	64	60	49
	Total	119	134	112
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	67(67)	74(72)	63(63)
	National	64(64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	36(35)	41(51)	30(21)
	National	31(31)	39(37)	29(28)

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
	2000	96	74	170

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	37	86	90
	Girls	42	66	70
	Total	79	152	160
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46.5(48)	89.4(94)	94(99)
	National	47.4(46.6)	90.6(90.9)	95.6(95.8)

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

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	53
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	8
White	824
Any other minority ethnic group	11

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	6	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	73	3
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)	52.85
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Education support staff:

Y7– Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	373.25

Deployment of teachers:

Y7– Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.34
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Average teaching group size:

Y7– Y11

Key Stage 3	23.2
Key Stage 4	21.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2,407,229.00
Total expenditure	2,380,239.00
Expenditure per pupil	2601.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	21,296.00
Balance carried forward to next year	48,286.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	908
Number of questionnaires returned	267

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	54	7	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	44	7	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	47	14	5	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	50	22	2	1
The teaching is good.	34	57	6	2	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	46	11	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	30	8	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	38	6	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	48	13	6	3
The school is well led and managed.	48	39	5	5	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	47	9	4	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	48	11	2	9

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

ENGLISH

104. Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths:

- The impact of the literacy strategy on the clarity of learning objectives.
- Teachers' high expectations.
- Strong and sympathetic relationships.
- The use of homework.

Areas for improvement:

- Extend the successful structured planning in Year 7 to other years.
- Key Stage 3 pupils' access to literature from other cultures.
- Arrangements for grouping pupils in lessons.

105. Key Stage 3 results in the 2000 National Curriculum tests are above the national average, and well above the average of similar schools. Girls' performance was better than boys'. Results have improved over the last three years, though at a rate below the national trend of improvement. Results in 2001 tests are substantially better than in 2000.

106. In GCSE examinations in English language in 2000, results are above the national average. Fifty nine per cent of pupils gained A*-C grades compared with 56.1 per cent nationally. Girls' results are significantly above average and boys' a little below average. Results in English literature are below the national average. Here too there are considerable differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Whereas girls' results are better than the national girls' average, boys' results are significantly below the average for boys. When the average points scored by pupils is considered, similar differences between the genders are apparent. Girls attain a higher points score in English than in their other GCSE subjects, whereas boys' score is below their score in other subjects. The comparatively disappointing boys' results in 2000 are accounted for mainly by poor examination responses to poetry, according to the school. Strategies are in place to address the issue. Results in English in 2001 are much the same for boys, but significantly lower for girls than in 2000. Boys' results in English literature in this year have improved by a significant margin, whereas girls' results have declined.

107. Drama is part of the English curriculum in Key Stage 3, and features in Key Stage 4 as an element in expressive arts or as a separate GCSE option. There is an erratic pattern of achievement over time due to the varying size and constitution of groups from year to year. Pupils consistently achieve at or above their predicted standard however. This is also the case for media studies, also offered as an option at GCSE.

108. Attainment is above average in both key stages. Average and lower attaining pupils reach average levels. This is due to well-focused planning and teaching, particularly for lower attaining pupils. A greater proportion of pupils attain higher levels than is usual.

109. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils analyse stories and other texts. They write creatively and confidently with a good grasp of grammatical convention and a secure sense of audience. The least able are well supported by the close attention given to basic skills. All pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to write in a variety of styles for a variety of

purposes. For example, an able pupil wrote an interview with the Nurse from *Romeo and Juliet*, showing remarkable insight into motivation and character through a skilfully handled scripted dialogue. A lower attaining pupil studying *Macbeth* recreated a witches' spell: 'I beat this cloth upon the stone/To raise the wind in the devils' name.'

110. In Key Stage 4, lower attaining pupils are given clear frameworks for writing, spelling and grammar to encourage neat presentation and accuracy. Average attaining girls write more than boys, but there is no difference in the quality of work. Pupils analyse advertisements and newspaper articles, for example, with a sound grasp of critical terminology. They argue and comment intelligently and well. Higher attaining pupils frequently produce outstanding original writing. A piece entitled *Life, Men and a Six Year Sentence* used a number of narrative voices to tell a complex story with sophistication. Pupils have satisfactory access to ICT facilities, and use them confidently for writing, editing, spell-checking, and attractive presentation. The quality and range of work is similar in drama and media studies.

111. Standards of reading also are good in both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are able to read and understand narrative, information and media texts. In one lesson, for example, able pupils read from previously prepared scripts to tape record interviews with characters from *Goodnight Mr. Tom*. In a lesson where lower attaining pupils read *Buddy*, pupils responded to close questioning about Buddy's feelings. They identified significant points, interpreted matters of style and inference, and justified their choice of detail from the text to illustrate Buddy's state of mind.

112. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to study narratives and poems from other cultures in Key Stage 3. It is apparent that pupils, particularly boys, do not do themselves justice in examinations which call for a personal response to such texts.

113. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' ability to offer and explain their personal response to texts is well developed. They understand that texts can carry a variety of meanings. The highest attaining pupils are alert to features of style and organisation in what they read and have the critical vocabulary to comment on matters of intention and effect. Lower attaining pupils are also able to frame their responses to texts capably, though they depend on considerable support from teachers to focus and extend their reading. For example, in a lesson comparing *Lamb to the Slaughter* with *The Speckled Band*, the clear structure for note taking and the teacher's alert questioning gave pupils a framework for a close understanding of the texts.

114. In most lessons and work boys and girls achieve at equivalent levels. Certainly girls write at greater length than boys. Where there is inattention or poor behaviour, it is boys, rather than girls, whose achievement is affected. In examinations, high attaining boys and girls do equally well, and the distinction is in average attaining pupils. Girls require less supervision and external motivation to achieve in line with their ability. Boys benefit, in lessons, from the energetic interventions of teachers to keep them properly on track. It might help boys if more practice in writing under timed conditions and the encouragement of greater autonomy were provided. Pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with special needs achieve well.

115. Standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory in both key stages. Pupils respond to teachers' questions intelligently and alertly, and are usually required to extend and justify what they say. There is, however, little discussion and refining of responses through pair or group work, and pupils, particularly boys, would benefit from sharing interpretation of texts through carefully managed group work. There is little evidence of

groupings organised to promote particular learning objectives, such as developing speaking and listening skills or examining poetry, by, for example, mixing boys and girls. Normally boys sit with boys in friendship groups. This is not the case in drama. In the two lessons observed in Key Stage 4, pupils were brought by challenging teaching to develop considerable oral skills. A set of improvisations on the theme of surrealism led into very successful interpretations of an extract from *Blithe Spirit*, and indicated pupils' capacity for achievement in this area given the right opportunities.

116. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. About half is good, and just under one third is very good. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is better than in Key Stage 4. Key Stage 3 teaching has been significantly enhanced through the adaptation of the procedures of the National Literacy Strategy to define learning objectives and frame the varied activities of lessons.

117. Teachers structure lessons carefully. Curricular planning and teaching methods effectively reflect the techniques and content of the national literacy strategy, particularly in Key Stage 3. Teachers' knowledge provides a secure basis for the development of pupils' understanding, so that concepts and technical vocabulary of increasing sophistication become available to them. Skilfully focused questions lead pupils to develop critical intelligence in reading a variety of texts. Most lessons are taught with pace and energy. Above all teachers know their pupils very well, so that high expectations convert into challenges that, though demanding, are manageable and understood. For example, in a Year 11 media studies lesson, pupils learned about camera angles, then used this analysis to design a storyboard with computer technology, producing sophisticated work in response to appropriately challenging but supportive teaching.

118. Not surprisingly therefore pupils' attitudes in their English work are good. They expect to work hard and co-operatively, and the atmosphere in lessons is purposeful, productive, and positive. Homework is used well to extend and consolidate learning. Marking is consistent and the system rewarding achievement and effort is well understood by pupils. Detailed and precise comment and target setting enable pupils to improve their work, but there is some inconsistency in the amount and focus of written feedback.

119. Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good there is comparative lack of pace, and learning objectives are not set out clearly enough. The very tightly structured lesson planning seen currently in some Year 7 schemes of work could be extended to other years.

120. Curricular provision for English is good. The inclusion of drama and media studies in Key Stage 3 enables pupils to make choices at Key Stage 4 to extend and develop such interests. Both subjects operate optional accelerated courses as part of the strategy to challenge and motivate gifted and talented pupils. Pupils' commitment and achievement in these areas point to the success of the provision. Extra curricular provision is very good. All pupils who wish to take part in the annual school production can do so. Many pupils have gone on to make appearances in television series, taken leading roles in adult theatre productions, and have pursued their interest in theatre at University.

121. The department is well led. Examination results and pupils' progress are analysed systematically, and consequent curricular developments thoughtfully overseen. The head of department provides a model of good teaching, showing how a student-centred approach is consistent with rigour and high expectation. However, he has too many senior management responsibilities to always give departmental concerns the priority needed. For instance, it is recognised that schemes of work need updating to take account of recent developments in the teaching of literacy.

122. Since the last inspection, comprehensive and explicit coverage of a wide variety of genres and audiences has been established, and pupils now have adequate access to ICT facilities and evident competence in its use. However, accommodation for drama remains unsatisfactory. The teaching room doubles as a dining area and has no facilities for blackout, lighting or sound. The poor provision restricts the activities which can be undertaken and therefore limits what pupils are able to achieve.

123. The school's learning resource centre's stock is poorly organised, and much of it is dated.

124. Insufficient time is allowed for the management, development and staffing of the centre.

125. It is an undeveloped resource, poorly co-ordinated with the good provision made for literacy at subject level.

MATHEMATICS

126. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory, and improving, thanks to strong leadership and clear direction from a new head of department.

Strengths:

- Good teaching, based on secure subject knowledge and effective class management
- Pupils' good behaviour and hard work.
- The impact of strategies and resources from the National Numeracy Strategy, particularly in Key Stage 3, but also beginning to influence work in Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement:

- Not enough opportunities to use ICT.
- Inconsistencies in the frequency and quality of marking.
- Improving the quality of satisfactory teaching to that of the better teaching in the department.

127. At the end of Year 9, attainment is in line with national expectations, and some pupils in the top sets reach high standards. The National Curriculum Key Stage 3 test results in 2000 are in line with national averages, and above those of similar schools. In the 2001 tests, there is a big improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. This confirms the standards of work seen in the inspection.

128. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils have good algebraic skills and can use standard form, calculate angles in diagrams formed by intersecting and parallel lines, and recognise any correlation between sets of data. Average attaining pupils solve linear equations, calculate the probability of given events happening, and have developed the accurate use of a number of standard techniques. Lower attaining pupils can draw different types of graphs, and recognise symmetry. They can substitute in simple algebraic expressions and work out straightforward arithmetical calculations.

129. By the end of Year 11, pupils reach standards in line with national expectations, and, again, some pupils in the top set achieve high standards. The 2000 GCSE results are in line with national averages at A*-C and at A*-G. Comparison of the 2000 GCSE results to those of schools with similar prior attainment at Key Stage 3 (i.e. similar 1998

Key Stage 3 test results) shows that most pupils achieved results in line with those of this group of schools. However, higher attainers did better than others in this group. Results in GCSE in 2001 are better than those in 2000. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls in 2001, in comparison to 2000, when a higher proportion of girls than boys gained A* to C grades. Nearly all pupils are entered for the GCSE examination, and nearly all achieve a pass grade.

130. By the end of Year 11, higher attainers can simplify a wide range of algebraic expressions. They are able to choose from, and successfully use, a wide range of skills to answer increasingly complex problems. Average attainers can apply the correct formulae to the solution of problems and investigate problems methodically. Lower attainers can apply standard techniques to more straightforward questions, but have more difficulties in coping with unusual or complex ones.

131. Over the past four years, there have been some fluctuations in external assessment results. There has been a small downward trend in both Key Stage 3 and GCSE results, particularly in comparison with the national trend. The 2001 results show an improvement in GCSE in the percentage reaching both A*-C and A*-G grades, and an improvement in Key Stage 3 tests for the higher grades of Level 6 and above. The 2001 results show there was a small decrease in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above, but the school feels that this may have been due to staffing problems for one particular class. During the inspection, no difference at either key stage was seen in the attainment or achievement of boys and girls, or of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Scrutiny of work and the school's assessment analysis also support this. Standards are similar across all aspects of mathematics.

132. Achievement in lessons is good through Key Stages 3 and 4 for most pupils, including those with special educational needs. Good teaching, and pupils' positive attitudes, hard work and good behaviour are all factors in this progress. Materials and methods are adapted for each group: for example, textbooks used for lower attainers are easier to read. Teachers, and support staff, monitor pupils' progress in class carefully, making sure that any language problems are identified and dealt with.

133. At both key stages, external assessment results, and scrutiny of previous years' work shows that, for most average and lower attaining pupils, achievement over time is satisfactory. The inspection took place at the beginning of a school year and lesson observations, and scrutiny of the work done this term showed that pupils' rate of progress is improving. This good rate of progress should lead to improving standards and good achievement over time for average and lower attainers.

134. For higher attainers in both key stages, achievement over time is already good. Key factors in the good achievement of higher attainers are the early development of good algebraic skills, and the quality and quantity of work covered.

135. In Key Stage 3, pupils are developing a good skill base across all aspects of mathematics. They develop speed and accuracy in calculations and in explaining what methods they are using and why. As they progress into Key Stage 4, they revisit their earlier work and improve those skills, then learn new ones as the work becomes more demanding. During Key Stage 3, higher attaining pupils acquire confidence and show great skill in the use and understanding of algebraic techniques. Their work in Key Stage 4 builds on this, and provides good opportunities for mathematically gifted pupils to rapidly extend their repertoire of knowledge and techniques and apply it to much more complex situations. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils know that

additional help is always available if needed, so they are encouraged to participate and are not afraid to make mistakes. This atmosphere helps them to make good progress.

136. The quality of teaching is good. It is very good in about one in 6 lessons, it is good in just over one third of lessons and satisfactory in just under a half. There is no unsatisfactory teaching.

137. One of the strengths of teaching is very good class management, including clearly understood classroom routines. In some classes there are a small number of pupils who can be disruptive by not working, being difficult and trying to distract others. Teachers display a calm persistence in dealing with these pupils, making sure that they maintain a classroom atmosphere in which the other pupils can work productively.

138. Another strength of teaching is the ability to present mathematical ideas and methods in a way that is appropriate for different groups of pupils. The practice of using a short sequence of questions, often oral, at the beginning of lessons helps pupils to quickly focus on learning mathematics. In the lessons where teaching is good or very good, an introductory section is followed by an enjoyable and well-planned series of activities; some small group, others individual or whole class. These well-structured lessons, often building effectively on ideas from the National Numeracy Framework, capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm. As a result, pupils work hard and make progress, often tackling more difficult questions than they thought they could. For example, in a Year 7 class, lower attaining pupils made very good progress in improving the speed and accuracy of their calculations and in understanding and using simple algebraic notation. This was due to the sequence of activities, which increased the level of difficulty in very small steps that pupils could cope with. In most lessons, teachers make good use of time. However, when teaching is satisfactory, rather than good or better, the teacher often spends too much time with individuals, as opposed to working with the whole class. This can lead to slower progress for other pupils, who often take the opportunity to stop working for a while. Another characteristic of these lessons is that the activities and strategies used do not capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm as effectively.

139. Before taking up his appointment in September, the head of department spent considerable time in the school in the summer term, including observing teaching. As a result, key priorities for the department were rapidly identified, and effective action has already been taken on many. A programme of systematic classroom observation and scrutiny of written work has been planned for this year. Departmental documentation is currently being reviewed and updated. The well qualified and experienced mathematics staff work well together; their joint planning and team teaching in Year 7 is effective in sharing good ideas and widening the range of methods which teachers use confidently. Teachers use a wide range of data well, including regular end of topic test results, to assess progress and take any necessary action if pupils are falling behind.

140. Pupils' work is usually marked regularly and feedback on work carried out in class is clear. However, there is some variation in the frequency of the marking and in the helpfulness of written comments in giving pupils guidance as to how to improve. Practice in marking is much better this term than previously. Presentation of written work is good as pupils take great pride in their work. Homework is set regularly and reinforces work done in class.

141. The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements and most pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. Progress from primary school to secondary school is very good, helped by use of bridging units. Setting in all years helps teachers to target work

more closely for all pupils. When pupils have the opportunities to use ICT they do so confidently. For example in a Year 11 lesson, pupils were using a graph programme to

explore different algebraic functions; this enabled them to work quickly and to identify a much wider range of patterns more easily. However, there are not enough opportunities to use ICT; limited access to computers is a key factor in this.

142. Satisfactory progress has been made in tackling the issues raised at the last inspection. Teaching has improved. However, there are still not enough opportunities to use ICT and there could be more emphasis on multicultural matters in the mathematics curriculum.

SCIENCE

143. Overall, the quality of provision in science is very good.

Strengths:

- Pupils reach standards well above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Achievement of all pupils by the end of Year 11, including those with special educational needs, is very good.
- Teaching is good.
- Leadership and management by the head of science are very good.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve the monitoring of pupils' progress at Key Stage 3 to the standard of that at Key Stage 4.
- Links with primary schools.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils.

144. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average. In the national tests in 2000, the percentages of pupils reaching at least Level 5 and those reaching at least Level 6 were both just above the corresponding national averages. Compared with schools which have pupils from similar social backgrounds, attainment is very high at both levels. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls and the trend of results over the four years up to 2000 is very similar to that seen nationally. However, in the national tests in 2001, the percentage of pupils reaching at least Level 5 was significantly greater than in 2000, and attainment at Level 6 also rose.

145. Standards attained in lessons and in the written work seen during the inspection are at least in line with those represented by the test results, and often higher. From Year 7 onwards, all pupils acquire good experimental skills and, by age 14, they can carry out and report effectively on investigations in biological, chemical and physical contexts. High attaining pupils in Year 9 show secure understanding across a wide range of work. They understand, for example, structure and function of human organs and some successfully tackle work characteristic of Key Stage 4, such as balancing chemical equations. Many pupils of average and low attainment, and with special educational needs, attain significantly above expectations. Although their understanding is less secure, they demonstrate good knowledge of topics such as predator-prey relationships and some can work confidently with chemical symbols.

146. By age 16, attainment is well above average. In 2000, GCSE examination results for double award science are well above average, particularly for girls at the highest grades of A and A*. Performance in science is significantly better than in the other core subjects of English and mathematics. There was further improvement in 2001 and in this year boys

outperformed girls at the very highest grades. All pupils achieved at least grade G in 2001, all but 5 pupils out of 180 achieved at least grade F, and almost one pupil in three achieved at least grade B. Results in science examinations have improved significantly in recent years.

147. In lessons and in written work seen during the inspection, many pupils achieve standards well above expectations for their age. High attaining pupils demonstrate, in their reports on experimental investigations, very good understanding of the concepts underpinning their work. Well before the end of the key stage, some can solve quantitative problems on the transmission of pressure in fluids. Although lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs show weaknesses in planning and evaluating their experimental work, they achieve good standards in observation and analysis of results. The high standard of presentation of written work is a feature of the large majority of pupils of all levels of attainment, both boys and girls. There are no evident differences in the attainment and achievement of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

148. Achievement is good in Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 9, most pupils, and particularly those with high and average prior attainment, acquire knowledge, understanding and skills above the levels to be expected from their attainment at the beginning of the key stage. By the end of Key Stage 4, progress has accelerated, and the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good. Pupils achieve well because the teaching of each group is well focussed on pupils' needs, and because the very evident mutual respect between pupils and teachers consistently engenders a positive atmosphere for learning. Strong leadership from the head of science, and the provision of coherent schemes of work which give teachers access to a wide variety of teaching resources without being over prescriptive, contribute significantly to pupils' progress. Emphasis on the progressive development of the scientific literacy of all pupils at both key stages ensures that they can write and speak effectively about their work. A careful progress monitoring procedure in Key Stage 4 has a positive impact on standards achieved in GCSE examinations, although this is not yet as well developed in the first three years.

149. Teaching is good overall. Teaching is good in over two thirds of lessons, and very good in about one sixth. There is no unsatisfactory teaching.

150. Teachers' good subject knowledge engenders pupils' confidence; lessons are well planned, with high expectations of pupils, and delivered with a good variety of teaching methods. In lessons where learning is good or very good, teaching is carefully structured according to the needs of the class, and pupils' attention is constantly engaged in a varied range of different activities, driving lessons forward at a brisk pace. In such lessons, pupils of all levels of prior attainment acquire new knowledge and skills rapidly, such as in a Year 8 lesson in which pupils enjoyed a 'bingo' session at the end to reinforce their learning of the structure and function of the digestive system.

151. Persistent questioning in which pupils' answers are frequently turned back on them or modified to promote further response is also used very effectively to aid the development of understanding of complex topics such as functions of plants as organisms.

152. Several aspects of pupil management make significant contributions to pupils' learning. For example, good relations between pupils and teachers are characteristics of almost all lessons. Lively teaching, patience and the use of humour keep lessons going, while at the same time effectively defusing situations which sometimes arise due to the

immature behaviour of a small minority of mainly, but not exclusively, boys. The use of praise, particularly of pupils with little confidence, encourages the achievement of standards of work above pupils' own expectations of themselves, such as in a lesson in which Year 7 pupils learned how to make measurements and display their results in a chart. Teachers ensure continuity of learning by consistently making good links with previous lessons with lively reviews of previous work, so that pupils can build on their prior attainment. This is particularly important when a topic stretches continuously over a number of lessons, for example the study of factors affecting the rate of a chemical reaction. Pupils with low attainment and with special educational needs, taught in small groups, show good gains in knowledge and understanding as a result of well targeted support from classroom support assistants and teachers. In the few lessons judged satisfactory rather than any better, the pace is slower, some aspects of planning are weaker so that, for example, pupils spend too much time on a single activity, or the teacher does not explain the task adequately.

153. Leadership and management are very good. The experienced head of science has a clear focus on the best interests of all pupils, a firm grip on the work of the department and a determination to continue to raise standards. There is a strong multi-layered foundation on which to build achievement. Procedures for assessing and recording attainment are very good, and so teachers can effectively monitor progress using the database of assessment data thus created. There is a well-established procedure for monitoring the work of teachers in a variety of ways, including a programme of lesson observation. Older pupils' progress is well monitored by the head of science, although this is not as well-developed in Key Stage 3. The curriculum is well structured with schemes of work, which are written to a common format and provide a good range of materials and methods from which teachers can make choices appropriate to specific situations.

154. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. All the issues raised have been addressed. Examination results have improved significantly at both age 14 and 16, particularly GCSE results, which have been well above the national average in the last two years. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. There has been marked improvement in teaching. Teaching schemes have improved so that lessons can successively build effectively on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, although links with primary schools are still unsatisfactory. All teachers have access to assessment information via the computer data collection software, and they make good use of this in their planning. Accommodation is now satisfactory, although the use of one particular room for both art and science causes some inconvenience to both departments, and particularly for the hardworking technicians, who provide good service to the science department within a limited time allocation.

ART AND DESIGN

155. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is good.

Strengths:

- Pupils' skills in drawing and the use of materials.
- Teachers' expectations of behaviour and pace of work.
- Pupils' enthusiasm and commitment.
- Extra-curricular provision.
- Staff teamwork.

Areas for improvement:

- Pupils' capacity for conceptual and imaginative thinking.
- Opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a creative tool.
- Quality of accommodation.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils.

156. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are in line with national expectations and pupils' achievement over the key stage is satisfactory. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above average. The percentage of passes at GCSE grades A*-C is above the national average in 1998, 1999 and 2000. The percentage of passes at GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 is 78.14 per cent. There are significant differences in the results gained by boys and by girls: in both syllabuses entered, girls' gain more higher grades than boys. This difference is not apparent in the work observed during the inspection. Achievement over Key Stage 4, including that of pupils with special educational needs and of those for whom English is a second language, is good.

157. In Key Stage 3, pupils work successfully in two and three dimensions with a wide range of materials. Pupils develop sound basic skills and techniques for using these materials. The work produced by pupils in surface pattern and tonal drawing is particularly successful because of its richness and confidence. In Key Stage 4, pupils' observational drawing skills show fluency and accuracy. Drawings of reflective surfaces demonstrate a sophisticated use of tonal quality. Pupils of all abilities finish and present their work to a high standard. Sketchbooks are used constructively and contain useful evaluative comments. The influence of the work of other artists, including art work from other cultures, is evident in pupils' design work in all years. However, there is more evidence of the development of technical skills than of conceptual thinking and imaginative experimentation.

158. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is good in 60 per cent of lessons, with one further example of very good teaching.

159. Teachers' high expectations of behaviour result in a good learning environment, and pupils develop a positive attitude to learning. Clear lesson planning and frequent reinforcement of information ensures that pupils have a sound knowledge of skills, specialist vocabulary and techniques. In Key Stage 4, teachers provide a secure working structure, which encourages pupils to produce work of quality and quantity for the GCSE examination. Pupils extend their skills and aspire to standards evident in the work of others displayed within the department. However, instructions are sometimes too prescriptive and there are too few occasions when pupils have the opportunity to frame their thoughts through sustained reflection, or take part in discussions which challenge their perceptions of their own and others' work. This means that they do not always appreciate the wider applications of skills-based exercises. Schemes of work include differentiated material. The department identifies gifted and talented pupils, who are offered some opportunities to develop their skills and interests, but a comprehensive programme to cater for these pupils has not yet been developed.

160. Pupils respond well to teachers' expectations of behaviour and pace of work. When given the opportunity, they make thoughtful and enthusiastic responses to questions. In Key Stage 4, pupils show involvement and perseverance in completing and presenting work to a high standard. A minority of boys in Key Stage 4 are less motivated than other pupils and work at a slower pace. However, teachers use successful work produced by boys as examples to motivate those boys who need encouragement to fulfil their potential. The department is building up a comprehensive picture of pupils' attainment and achievement through regular recording of assessment information.

161. Pupils are given good opportunities to experience art and design, both within the curriculum and through extra-curricular opportunities. The department offers a choice of two syllabuses for GCSE. There are well-subscribed lunchtime activities for pupils from both key stages, an annual artist's residency and visits to local galleries and abroad. These activities, together with teachers' expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour, make a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development. Although many examples of work from other cultures are provided in the department, these could be used more fully for exploring cultural traditions, values and beliefs.

162. Since the last inspection, accommodation has not improved. Although the existing accommodation is made to look as attractive as possible by rich, colourful and interesting displays, teaching conditions are cramped, especially in Key Stage 3 classes. There is no designated working area for three-dimensional work, and some teaching takes place in non-specialist rooms with no water supply.

163. The department is well managed and supported within the school. Staff in the department work effectively as a team. Monitoring of teaching and identification of professional development priorities are part of the regular activities of the department. This ensures that all aspects of teaching practice and its outcomes are shared between teachers, which results in a coherent direction and unity of purpose for the department. It is in a strong position, therefore to consider ways of encouraging pupils to engage in more conceptual thinking, and to challenge them to develop even more imaginative and individual responses to the many useful starting points offered in the schemes of work, and to participate in discussion about issues related to the visual arts and their place in the cultures of the world.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- Good teaching supported by well-planned courses, enables pupils to develop a good understanding of the design process and reach above average standards.
- Good leadership.

Areas for improvement:

- Further development of the curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16.
- More precise use of homework.
- Greater use of marking to give pupils constructive advice.

165. The attainment of pupils aged 14 is above average. Teacher assessments in 2000 and 2001 suggest that attainment is well above average, but this is not borne out by the work seen during the inspection. Higher attaining pupils use a range of research methods, including the Internet and CD ROM, to gather information in support of design projects. The information is usually analysed well and the results presented using good graphic skills. Pupils understand the need for planning and organisation to manage time, effort and resources so that manufacturing can take place effectively. All pupils in a Year 9 resistant materials group were able to use 2 and 3 dimensional drawings to develop their ideas for a balancing toy. Carefully structured project booklets, prepared for different levels of ability, guide lower achieving pupils and pupils with special needs through designing and making. This enables them to make good progress. No significant

difference was observed in the performance of boys and girls, and pupils having English as an additional language worked to the same standard as their peers. As pupils enter the school with average attainment, their achievement in this key stage is good.

166. Attainment of pupils aged 16 is above average, and pupils achieve well, continuing the progress made in Key Stage 3. GCSE results in 2000 are above average: nearly 56 per cent of pupils gained A* to C grades against a national average of 50 per cent. This represents a considerable improvement on figures for previous years, which had shown a steady decline since the last inspection. Girls achieved better results in resistant materials and food technology than boys. In graphic products, however, boys outperformed girls, but this was in line with pupils' prior attainment in the subject. Results in 2001 show some improvement across all three component areas of design and technology.

167. Work seen during the inspection reflects these results. Pupils compile detailed and comprehensive design folders. Many food technology folders, for example, show that pupils understand the importance of planning and developing ideas, and can use hand drawn and computer generated methods to do so. ICT skills are used effectively to compile questionnaires, analyse results and present them in bar and pie charts. Higher attaining pupils write extended evaluations of their work. Lower attaining pupils have greater difficulty with the reasoning behind work. For example, pupils in a Year 10 graphics group were unclear about the relative merits of pictorial and orthographic styles of drawing, but were able to make satisfactory progress and achieve improved understanding by working systematically through the mechanical processes of each. Pupils in a higher attaining group, working on the same topic, were able to work with greater independence and individuality because they could see the meaning and relevance of the work. They made correspondingly greater progress and achieved a higher level of understanding.

168. Teaching is good in about three quarters of lessons, and satisfactory in the remainder. There is no unsatisfactory teaching.

169. Lessons are planned with clear objectives, which are fully explained to pupils. For example, pupils in a Year 8 food technology lesson, knowing precisely what was expected of them, worked with a sense of purpose to plan the contents of a lunch box. Teachers' knowledge and expertise in managing time and resources contribute significantly to the generally positive attitudes and constructive relationships seen in most lessons, as do pupils' interest and desire to learn. For example, Year 8 pupils, many of whom had special needs, co-operated well with each other as they worked on a batik project. They spoke politely, shared equipment, worked with interest and were keen to discuss their work. The teacher's management of the working situation enabled all pupils to improve their practical skills, and the lesson usefully also supported the development of personal organisation skills and understanding of technical vocabulary.

170. Teachers set appropriate and realistically high challenges for pupils. In a Year 8 lesson making 3-dimensional models, the teacher used good examples of previous work to encourage pupils to improve by understanding how to produce better work, and made it clear that she would not accept less than their best. Pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language are well supported. For example, a special needs pupil, in Year 10 food technology, was able to complete the preparation of a dish using alternative protein products successfully with the help of his teacher and a learning support assistant. Some homework tasks are not carefully structured to present a real challenge to pupils. In some cases teachers do not use the marking of pupils' work as an opportunity to give them constructive advice for improvement.

171. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department, who also carries wider faculty and school responsibilities, has built a good team spirit. The appointment of leaders for each technology area now allows delegation and has already had beneficial effects on the planning and delivery of the curriculum.

Teaching is monitored, and pupils' results are analysed and used to develop the curriculum. Strategies for providing for the needs of able pupils are beginning to influence teaching methods and materials. Greater use of ICT is improving the content and presentation of pupils' work. Good assessment procedures are used, and teachers have access to assessment information through a comprehensive database. This has improved target-setting procedures. Pupils are made aware of what they must do to improve through grade descriptions for each technology project.

172. The curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 14 includes electronics and control technology, and is further enriched by textiles and 3-dimensional work taught by art teachers. With the exception of computer-aided design and manufacture, ICT is used well at all stages. However, the curriculum for pupils aged 15 to 16 is relatively narrow. There is no opportunity for pupils to continue with textiles or electronics, nor do they have the opportunity to seek accreditation through alternatives to GCSE.

173. Teachers put a great deal of time and effort into extending the curriculum through extra coursework sessions and this has contributed to the rise in standards, but there is little opportunity for pupils to enrich their experience of technology through visits. Some large teaching groups make the management of individual practical work difficult, particularly in examination groups. Funding provides adequate consumable materials and textbooks, but it is insufficient to provide additional computer-aided manufacturing equipment to supplement the small vinyl cutter at present in use.

174. Since the last inspection, good improvements have been made in GCSE results, departmental administration and the teaching of design skills. In all other aspects the high standards mentioned in the last report have been maintained.

GEOGRAPHY

175. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is very good.

Strengths:

- Very good teaching in 50 percent of lessons.
- A consistently rising trend in results at both key stages.
- Very good detailed planning for schemes of work, allied to recent curriculum changes, has led to very good improvements in the teaching of basic skills.
- Deeply committed leadership.
- Best possible use is made in all years of the limited access to ICT.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education should be realised in the schemes of work.
- A wider range of writing styles, especially at Key Stage 3.
- Fieldwork for Year 8 pupils.
- Library provision to encourage research.
- Wider use of ICT.

176. Standards at age 14 are above the national average. The results achieved by pupils in National Curriculum teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 has increased steadily. In 1998, 50.5 per cent of pupils achieved Level 5 or above, and in 2000 the percentage is 63.5 percent, which is in line with the national average. In 2001 68.5 per cent of pupils reached this standard. The difference between boys' and girls' results is reducing. All pupils at both key stages learn to understand and use key words, interpret

graphs and maps, use data, and write answers in sentences. All pupils demonstrate skill with atlases and charts, and are able to extract and use information from them with confidence. Lower attainers produce satisfactory written work and simple conclusions to enquiry projects and fieldwork, whilst high attainers produce more detailed written work, evidence-based conclusions and evaluations to complete the study. Given broadly average levels of attainment on entry, pupils achieve well in the first three years.

177. At age 16, standards are also above average. GCSE results have shown a consistently rising trend since 1997 when 35.8 percent of pupils gained grades A*-C and 95.1 percent grades A*-G. In 2000, 51.8 percent of pupils gained A*-C and 97.6 percent A*-G, broadly in line with the national average. There is further improvement in 2001 when 66 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C and 100 per cent gained A*-G. Girls' results are 14 per cent above those for boys in 2000 and 10 per cent higher in 2001, but there are no differences between the results of other groups of pupils. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is also good. Higher attainers make very good progress in all years. The high expectations of teachers and the provision of exercises involving data interpretation and problem solving activities have raised the level of pupils' skills at both key stages and encouraged a thoughtful approach to work. This has led to higher achievement levels for all pupils, particularly for higher attainers.

178. In all GCSE classes pupils are rigorously taught to write about why patterns and events occur and to make judgements on the effects. Pupils collect and present data for a fieldwork enquiry and generate graphs using ICT. In one Year 11 class, pupils used a multimedia presentation of a 'virtual field trip' produced by the teacher, to explore Salford Quays and explain and evaluate the regeneration there. This led to an evaluation of the needs of Ordsall and a decision making exercise on its regeneration.

179. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is good in 14 per cent of lessons, very good in 43 per cent, with an example of excellent teaching. The particular strengths of the teaching in geography are high expectations of pupils, and the use of time, support staff and resources. Consistently improving results are the result of well thought out and skilful teaching.

180. Teachers set high expectations for all pupils, and plan carefully to enable pupils of all prior attainment to meet demands. Those with special educational needs are supported with good resources, targeted literacy support and very good individual encouragement. A Year 8 lesson on population density provides a very good example of how meticulous planning for the needs of all pupils resulted in very good learning. Pupils used atlas maps to test a hypothesis about population distribution. Low attainers used atlas evidence to complete a table and had introductory words provided to help them. Additional work set for high attainers included the completion of a reverse hypothesis, and written work to be completed independently. The evidence provision and hypothesis testing provided a similar learning experience for all pupils at levels of activity suitable for individual needs.

181. Careful attention to pupils' literacy development inspires work on geography language skills. For example, a Year 11 group creating a case study of Bangladesh were taught useful conjunctions and phrases. This enabled them to write a well-reasoned report on plans for future flood emergencies, taking into account the resources of a less developed country. Teachers' support for ICT work in geography is knowledgeable and includes after school support when required.

182. An excellent lesson on the Bangladesh floods of 1998 with pupils in a Year 10 group further illustrates what makes this department's teaching so effective. A stimulating,

thoughtful introduction used a photo of young people smiling in flooded fields, and pupils were asked to provide the story behind the picture. This was followed by a clear explanation of tasks and targeted questioning to ensure all pupils understood the causes of the floods, and also became aware of the effects on local people. Excellent timing and pace ensured a very high level of concentration and productive intellectual effort. Skilful questioning by teachers contributes to the very good concentration demonstrated by most pupils, and enables them to develop understanding by thinking things through in depth. The distribution of questions to all pupils in groups and the positive acknowledgement given to pupils' responses encourages pupils to participate enthusiastically in learning.

183. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, but could be improved, teachers sometimes talk too much, restricting the extent to which pupils can participate and slowing the pace of the lesson. This type of lesson is less interesting than others.

184. Department leadership is very good and is characterised by a determined commitment to raise standards for all pupils. The quality of teaching, curriculum planning and assessment is very good. All assessment is standardised, procedures for continuous assessment across key stages are very good, and target setting is based on a wide range of data. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own performance and advised on ways to improve. The work of the department is very well monitored.

185. Since the previous inspection, the results at both key stages have improved steadily. Target setting is established and well used. The teaching of skills is much improved: pupils understand and use key words, their atlas work is confident, and they handle a variety of resources for the same task, such as photos, text, and atlases, with competence. The use of ICT could be further extended.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- Good teaching.
- Successful strategies to improve examination results.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils.
- Effective leadership and management with a clear focus on raising standards.

Areas for improvement:

- Ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to ICT in history.
- Increase curriculum time devoted to non-European history in Key Stage 3.
- Develop further opportunities for pupils to work independently.

187. The standard of work in Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with national expectations. By the end of Year 9, pupils of all abilities have developed their knowledge and understanding of history. Across the ability range most pupils can explain reasons for historical changes. They make appropriate use of historical sources to extract information and deploy it in their written work. Higher attainers can evaluate these sources. All pupils understand that history can be interpreted in different ways. The standard of pupils' structured writing, and their use of historical concepts and terminology, are both above average. In 2000, attainment as measured in National Curriculum assessments is broadly in line with national standards, as it had been over the previous years. However, attainment in 2001 is higher than this. In both years, girls' attainment is higher than that of

boys.

188. Since the last inspection, there has been a notable improvement in GCSE results, which were at that time well below average. In 2000, GCSE results are broadly in line with the national average, and boys' attainment is higher than that of girls. The 2001 results are similar, but this time girls' attainment was above that of boys. These variations are traceable to pupils' prior attainment rather than to any other factors.

189. Attainment in Key Stage 4 is above average. The standards of work seen during the inspection show a higher level of attainment than that reflected in the most recent examination results. The school has requested a review of the grades awarded. By the end of Year 11, most pupils demonstrate a good level of knowledge and understanding of the twentieth century history topics they have studied. They can analyse the reasons for and the results of historical events. Lower attaining pupils make use of historical sources and identify some similarities and differences between them. Average and higher attainers evaluate these sources, and the most able pupils can compare sources to make connections and draw more general conclusions from them. The level of this work on sources is in line with national standards. However, the standard of essays and course work is above average, and examples of outstanding work were seen. There is no clear evidence of variation in attainment by different ethnic groups.

190. The great majority of pupils show interest, make an effort and take a pride in their work. Relationships between pupils and teacher are positive. In Key Stage 3 higher attainers achieve well, and all other pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4, pupils' achievement is good, when their prior attainment is considered. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs set out achievable targets which are specific about history learning, and this, together with appropriate individual support, helps these pupils to make good progress. In some instances, boys take less care with their work than girls.

191. Teaching is satisfactory in a fifth of lessons, good in half and very good in a further fifth. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed.

192. A number of consistent strengths make teaching effective. A particular strength of teaching is the systematic teaching of the literacy skills necessary for pupils to succeed in history. Lessons have clear objectives, which are explained to pupils so that they understand what they are doing. Good planning and use of time mean that pupils work at a productive pace. The materials used by teachers are well matched to pupils' needs so that all pupils, whatever their prior attainment, can learn. Teachers regularly use praise to encourage pupils, and effective questioning ensures that all of them participate in the lesson. Homework is set regularly to extend learning.

193. Pupils are frequently challenged to think for themselves. Since the last inspection, some excellent examples of individual studies have been developed, such as the Year 8 Quarry Bank Mill project. There are, however, limited opportunities in some lessons for pupils to take control of their own learning. Management of behaviour is generally good so that pupils remain on task. However, in the unsatisfactory lesson the behaviour of a minority of boys prevented the rest of the class from making much progress.

194. There is a good programme of educational visits. Information technology is used effectively with many groups to enhance learning in history. Because the department has had only limited access to computers in the past, it has not been able to ensure that every pupil benefited from this. The newly installed computer suite in one of the history rooms should resolve this problem.

195. Work is marked thoroughly and assessed regularly to a common standard: as a result, pupils have a clear understanding of the level at which they are performing. In Years 10 and 11 teachers write full comments on pupils' work to help them improve, but this is less evident in earlier years.

196. Management of the history department is very good. The excellent schemes of work, together with a comprehensive set of departmental policies, ensure a great measure of consistency across the department and provide effective support to staff, particularly those who are less experienced. The departmental development plan has a clear focus on strategies to raise standards. Very good use is made of performance data to monitor learning and to identify under achievement. Examination results are analysed and both teaching and curriculum revised, where necessary, to raise standards. However a reduction in curriculum time for history for some pupils in Year 9 prevents them from enjoying the full range of learning opportunities in the subject, and, at present, insufficient time is devoted to the study of non-European history in Key Stage 3.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

197. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4.

Strengths:

- Teaching and learning in Key Stage 3.

Areas for improvement:

- Monitoring the delivery of ICT across the curriculum in Key Stage 4.
- Assessment of pupils' experiences in ICT to ensure progression in Key Stage 4.
- Increase access to computers.
- Increase depth of learning on graphs and databases.

198. At the end of Key Stage 3, teachers' assessments in 2000 show that standards attained are above the national average. Classroom observations and scrutiny of work confirm these results. The results show an improvement from the previous report. Results for 2001 show that this standard is being maintained. Higher attaining pupils produce good quality presentations using PowerPoint to produce user guides. They can incorporate sound and animation, and adjust the content very effectively to make it easy to use. Lower attaining pupils use spreadsheets to carry out calculations and test the effects of changes. Equivalent standards in ICT are achieved in many other subjects across the curriculum, for example in geography. This is a good improvement on the previous report when standards were judged to be low. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support within lessons, and all pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3.

199. GCSE results for 2000 are above the national average, which represents an improvement from the last report. However, as only 10 pupils out of 165 in the year group were entered for GCSE, it is unreliable to compare results with previous years when the entry was much larger. ICT is taught to most pupils in other subjects in Key Stage 4. The school has no system for monitoring or assessing the planned provision in Key Stage 4, and therefore cannot be certain that each pupil is receiving a full range of experience and is progressing from the previous key stage. However, classroom observations and the scrutiny of a wide range of pupils' work confirm that standards are satisfactory. Pupils have good skills in computer-aided manufacturing, using sensors for data-logging, researching

and refining information from the Internet and in the use of desktop publishing to produce high quality presentations for coursework.. There are weaknesses in computer generated graph drawing and in the production of forms and queries for database work. Boys and girls produce work of equivalent standards. Achievement in the key stage is satisfactory.

200. The quality of teaching of ICT is good in Key Stage 3. Pupils benefit from well-planned lessons taught by specialists, whose subject knowledge and understanding of learning make the acquisition of skills and knowledge easier for all pupils. Pupils leave each lesson with a sense of achievement. Good lessons begin with a lively introduction incorporating the learning objectives and tasks, then followed by individual work on computers. Individual checks on progress and understanding are interspersed with whole class discussions, which help maintain direction and pace. A brief final plenary is used to check that learning objectives have been met. Relationships are good and give pupils the confidence to try for themselves before seeking help. Pupils have many opportunities to apply their ICT skills in other subjects to aid their learning and understanding. For example, in science they use PowerPoint presentations to present information about planets.

201. The teaching of ICT in Key Stage 4 as a specialist subject is mainly good, with only one unsatisfactory lesson observed. The good lessons continue with the same qualities as seen in Key Stage 3. In the unsatisfactory lesson, the introduction was too long with the result that pupils did not fully understand the directions. This meant that further time was used up in the lesson to clarify the learning objectives, consequently the pace slowed and pupils did not achieve as much as could be expected. High ability pupils displayed high levels of understanding in the use of sensors in everyday life when they produced working models of traffic control systems. They started the design process with flowcharts and a computer simulation before constructing a working model.

202. The use of ICT to enhance learning is not consistent across subjects. Good use is made in design technology, geography, physical education and science,. Other subjects use ICT to a lesser extent, and there is little use in music and modern languages. The use of ICT to illustrate understanding and enhance presentation is a common feature in coursework folios. There is an increase in the use of computers to aid teaching and learning since the last inspection. Literacy skills are well used and developed through the frequent opportunities for reading, spell-checking and extended writing. Numeracy skills are enhanced through the production of charts, tables, formulas and the construction of spreadsheets. Pupils with special educational needs use specialised software. However, teachers do not assess progression in ICT skills across the key stage, with the consequence that there are weaknesses in drawing line graphs and in the compilation and querying of databases.

203. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards their learning of ICT and are keen to achieve. They take great pride in displaying and discussing their work. Extra-curricular computer clubs, held before school commences, lunch-breaks and after school, are well attended. Staff and computer prefects provide a valuable source of assistance for the broad range of pupils that attend.

204. The subject is co-ordinated by a separate teacher for each key stage, overseen by the head of the technology faculty. Key stage 3 is well managed, and assessment is a particularly strong feature. The Key Stage 4 co-ordinator has put in a lot of effort in an attempt to ensure access and cross-curriculum teaching. However, the school does not track and monitor pupils' experience of ICT in Key Stage 4, and no assessment of pupils' progress is made. Some subjects report difficulty in gaining enough access to computers.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths:

- Standards overall are in line with national expectations and have been maintained since the previous inspection.
- Teaching and learning is good in Key Stage 4, particularly in German.
- The provision of more than one foreign language in both key stages.

Areas for improvement:

- Leadership and management of the subject.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop to speaking skills.
- Timetabling and staffing arrangements for pupils studying two languages.

206. Standards of attainment in French and German are similar to those in the previous inspection. Results in French at GCSE A*-C are slightly below the national average in 2000, although average points scores are in line with national expectations. In 2001 French results improved. Girls attain higher results than boys, in line with the national trend. In German in 2000, A*-C results are well above the national average at 85.7 per cent, and in 2001 they rose to 96.4 per cent, when the gap in attainment between boys and girls narrowed significantly. There is no difference between the attainment of pupils from different backgrounds.

207. National Curriculum teacher assessments for the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 were not available to inspectors. In 2001, results were not measured against the revised National Curriculum levels. Judged on the evidence available during the inspection, attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. Pupils make sound progress in almost all lessons and achieve satisfactorily. In two lessons, pupils achieved little during the lesson due to inappropriate teaching.

208. By Year 9, most higher and average attaining pupils can speak and write in short sentences on known topics, and pick out some detail from spoken and written texts. Some grammatical awareness is grasped from an early age. All pupils show understanding of instructions and explanations in the foreign language. Some higher attaining pupils write paragraphs and begin to show awareness of tense. Lower attaining pupils operate at word and phrase level. Pupils do not use French or German spontaneously for their own purposes to communicate in the classroom, because they are not taught to do so. There is little evidence of more extended writing, particularly of a creative nature, or of reading for information and enjoyment beyond the course book.

209. In Key Stage 4, by Year 11 pupils' attainment in German in lessons is in line with national averages, and almost all pupils demonstrate attainment which puts them in line for A*-C grades. Similarly, in a Year 10 lesson, higher attaining pupils made good progress when they acquired new knowledge and understanding about the advantages and disadvantages of living in different houses and locations. Generally, pupils grasp language items more rapidly and progress to speaking at more length in this key stage. Their coursework indicates that they progress to writing extended texts on a variety of topics. However, pupils still do not use the spoken language spontaneously in oral work or

in speaking for their own purposes in the classroom, and they do not read texts of any length.

210. Only lower attaining French classes could be observed, because of the school's timetable and teachers' absence. In these lessons, whilst attainment was below the national average, in all cases pupils achieved satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment levels. An example of this is the Certificate of Achievement class. In one lesson, pupils made good progress and, by the end of the lesson, could produce simple sentences describing bedrooms.

211. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and those with English as an additional language make good progress and are well integrated into the lessons. There is no discernable difference in achievement between boys and girls in lessons, apart from in Urdu where girls' prior knowledge was evident. There are, however, more boys in lower attaining groups.

212. Teaching is satisfactory in all lessons apart from two in French. It is satisfactory in half of lessons, and good in about one third. There are examples of good teaching in both key stages, and in both languages. In Key Stage 4 teaching is good in all German lessons, and an example of very good teaching was observed in French.

213. Where the teaching is good, lessons are well planned and structured to attain learning objectives, and clear classroom routines are established. A variety of resources and learning activities excite interest and ensure progress, both from the previous lesson and within the lesson. Such lessons promote pupils' involvement in their own learning, and encourage their independence through the use of research, for example using dictionaries to research new vocabulary and phrases. Teachers show good knowledge of pupils' capabilities and give support for individual pupils so that they can progress. They manage pupils well, and have high expectations of behaviour and effort. These strengths enable pupils to work securely, support them in taking risks and help pupils to become more independent learners, relying less on the teacher.

214. Both unsatisfactory lessons were taught by a temporary teacher. Poor knowledge and understanding of language teaching and learning methodology resulted in pupils learning little or nothing. There are also instances in some otherwise satisfactory lessons where the pace is pedestrian, pupils are passive for too long and resources are uninteresting. Some lessons are conducted mostly in English. The consequence of this is that pupils have limited role models of how to speak. In addition, the over use of written prompts leads pupils to rely on the prompt rather than trying to memorise the language they need to use independently, and so speaking skills develop more slowly. Planning does not always build on what pupils have learnt before, and this slows the rate of pupils' achievement.

215. A general weakness is that, whilst pupils are taught to understand teachers' use of instructions and explanations, there is no specific teaching of the language pupils need to speak in French and German outside of the topics. For example, no pupils ask for things in either language or 'talk' to one another spontaneously.

216. Pupils' behaviour and their approach to language learning is good overall, and in Key Stage 4 it is sometimes very good, and occasionally excellent. This is a factor which enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily.

217. The statutory curriculum is in place, except that not all pupils receive their entitlement to use ICT to help them learn a language. Assessment procedures generally help pupils to achieve, and the department is beginning to use analysis of examination

results. This analysis is not, however, used to develop teaching and learning. Assessment is not securely linked to National Curriculum levels. The department was unable to provide inspectors with accurate results in teachers' assessments for 2001, and provided no record of those in 2000.

218. Marking and reports to parents seek to encourage pupils, but lack information which would help pupils take the next step to improve their work. The department has responded to the previous inspection report by delegating responsibilities, and much work has been done to develop policies and schemes of work. However, development planning lacks vision and does not, for example, address identified learning needs. There are some shortcomings in resources and accommodation, and the timetabling and staffing arrangements for some pupils learning two languages are unsatisfactory and do not promote learning. The overall leadership and management of the department are weak.

MUSIC

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

Strengths:

- Strong, caring relationships.
- Teachers' expertise.
- Well planned and paced lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- Consistent use of ICT at both key stages.
- More liaison with contributory primary schools.
- Accommodation.
- Composition work needs to be developed more at Key Stage 3.

220. Standards at age 14 are average. The school has no recorded teacher assessments of music for 2000. The new head of department had only been in post for two terms when teacher assessments, working to National Curriculum levels for the first time in 2001, had to be made. At the end of Key Stage 3, 60 per cent of the girls were at Levels 3/4, 36.5 per cent at Levels 5/6 and 3.5 per cent at Level 7. The boys were somewhat less successful, in that 66 per cent were at Level 3/4, 33 per cent at Levels 5/6 and 1 per cent at Level 7. There was no confirmed national data with which to compare these percentages when the inspection took place, but the majority of pupils did not achieve what is expected at this age. The estimate of attainment on entry, however, was very low. In this context, pupils' levels of achievement do represent good progress over time from their starting points.

221. Inspection evidence, from lessons and scrutiny of work, indicates that standards are broadly average. Pupils are able to recognise notation on the staff, create variations on chord sequences, analyse use of rhythm and discuss the elements of music with understanding. They respond sensitively to classical music and use musical vocabulary accurately and confidently. Two groups observed in Year 9 varied in achievement from Level 4 to Level 6. This represents a sound development from their Key Stage 2 levels and bodes well for the future development of the department. Pupils seen improvising, performing solo pieces and providing rhythmic support to others were ably demonstrating a progression through the key stage as they acquired the skills to fulfil the demands of the attainment targets of the National Curriculum.

222. There were no entries for GCSE examinations in 1999 or 2000. However, in 2001, nine candidates were entered, five boys and four girls, who all obtained grades A*-C. There was no appreciable difference in the results of boys and girls. There is currently only a Year 10 class in Key Stage 4. From work observed on the inspection, pupils play musical instruments with accuracy, use good dynamics and remain together when playing as a group. In composition, pupils are able to build up melodies and texture developed on a ground base, using ideas from the teacher and adding their own. As skilled musicians in their own right, the group is already achieving highly, after only three lessons in Key Stage 4 and are on course for high GCSE grades at the end of the course in 2003.

223. Teaching is good in all lessons, except for one where it is very good. Enthusiastic, well-informed teaching, and very good relationships encourage the enthusiastic and positive responses which pupils displayed in all the lessons observed.

224. Well paced and well planned lessons, which contain a variety of activities, retain the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils. Activities which are fun, such as sessions based on the repetition of "Boom, chicka, chicka boom!" in various styles, are used to reinforce the basic elements of music. These are enjoyed enormously by pupils and, at the same time, their understanding of musical form and vocabulary is being developed. This imaginative approach to devising activities is very effective in inspiring pupils' desire to learn. For example, in one lesson, pupils were encouraged to describe their responses to four extracts from Beethoven's ninth symphony as if they were background music to film sequences. This imaginative exercise prepared the pupils, creatively, for future response and listening exercises.

225. Teachers' very good musical knowledge and skills are used very well to promote learning. For example, the teacher who led a group performance from the piano was able to demonstrate rhythm, dynamics and the overall shape of the piece. This was appreciated by the pupils, who responded accurately and with commitment.

226. Individual attention given to pupils as they prepare for their solo or group performances is designed to reassure, challenge and extend them as they develop their skills. This approach helps to increase both the confidence of the pupils and their sense of security within the lessons. Teachers' comments on pupils' work are always supportive and constructive which, in turn, encourages pupils to discuss each other's work with care and sensitivity. Clear, inclusive questioning also helps pupils to develop greater knowledge and understanding.

227. This sensitive understanding of pupils' capabilities and their levels of confidence allows teachers to set high expectations, which are a key factor in the good progress pupils make.

228. The new head of department is enthusiastic, committed and energetic. She has produced a well-planned curriculum and schemes of work, which include a range of activities and approaches to suit pupils' individual needs, and provide a very good range of learning opportunities. ICT is not used consistently enough. Assessment is standardised regularly at Key Stage 4 but could be undertaken more regularly at Key Stage 3. Assessment information is communicated to pupils and used to set targets for future development. Pupils are also encouraged to assess their own progress and create strategies for improving performance.

229. Resources are adequate, but accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are no practice rooms, the two music rooms are far away from each other, and one of the rooms is used for teaching another subject. Secure spaces are limited in the large music room, and the keyboard laboratory is very cramped and has a low ceiling.

230. The department has conscientiously addressed the recommendations of the last report. Year 9 pupils now have equal access to music lessons and the quality of teaching has improved. There are more resources available for the department, and pupils are more conversant with the elements of music and staff notation. The accommodation problems still remain.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- The varied and extensive programme of extra-curricular activities and the high level of participation.
- Assessment and recording of pupils' attainment.
- The use of ICT.

Areas for improvement:

- Meeting the individual needs of pupils in lessons.
- Curriculum planning documents do not set out explicitly enough how the National Curriculum programmes of study are taught and how levels are reached.
- Pupils are not involved in their own assessment or in the setting of personal targets.

232. By the end of both key stages, pupils' attainment is in line with national averages. Pupils from ethnic minority groups attain at the same range of levels as other pupils, and some are amongst the higher attaining pupils. In Key Stage 3, pupils attain satisfactory standards in basketball, hockey and gymnastic activities, where they create and perform extended sequences.

233. In Key Stage 4 pupils attain good standards volleyball and football, and in all other areas of the physical education curriculum attainment is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4, pupils develop good basic skills in volleyball and football. In these activities they are able to select and apply their skills very appropriately into games. They referee fairly and successfully, and devise tactics and strategies. In body conditioning activities, pupils acquire skills and sustain their efforts for extended periods of time. In Key Stage 4, pupils consolidate skills learned earlier, demonstrating, in particular, good dribbling techniques in football.

234. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 are in line with the national average overall, but girls' results are much higher than boys'. In 2001, boys' results improved considerably, and the difference is much smaller.

235. Most pupils are well motivated in physical education and demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning. They sustain concentration on tasks set. There are good relationships between pupils, who often work supportively and collaboratively with one another. Good relationships also exist between pupils and staff. Boys and girls work effectively together in mixed groups. They respect codes of conduct and abide by the rules of the game without dispute. In many cases games are played without a referee.

Pupils also cope with success and failure effectively.

236. In both key stages, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The structured planning in lessons for activities, which are progressively more difficult, is a major factor in the progress pupils make.

237. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is satisfactory in about half of lessons, and good in the remainder, with an example of very good teaching. In the better lessons teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, and set challenging tasks. They involve pupils in the warm up and cool down activities, thus improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of muscle groups and the reasons for warming up. In these lessons effective questioning, and the variety of teaching styles used develops pupils' knowledge and understanding. Giving pupils responsibility for organising and refereeing games, and for developing their sequences in gymnastic and dance activities, helps promote their independence. Pupils are well managed in most cases. In a few lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than of higher quality, strategies to control behaviour are less effective.

238. The procedures for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are well organised, and they have clear targets. There are very effective procedures for identifying gifted and talented pupils. In some lessons, however, teachers do not always meet the individual needs of all pupils.

239. Lesson plans do not set out in enough detail how the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and of those with particular talents are to be met.

240. The curriculum as it is taught meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, but planning documents do not set out explicitly enough how the National Curriculum programmes of study are taught and how levels are reached.

241. Procedures for assessment and recording are very strong. The attainment of pupils at the end of each unit, test and key stage is recorded very efficiently. Pupils' progress is tracked and monitored. The attainment of pupils is often raised as a result of teachers identifying pupils' weaknesses and targeting areas of their work for future improvement. More effective use could be made of involving pupils in their own assessment, and in setting targets for future lessons. This would give pupils more independence. An effective reward system is in place within the school, and this has a positive influence upon pupils' motivation in PE, particularly in Key Stage 3.

242. A significant amount of work has already been done to include literacy and numeracy in the physical education curriculum, but further work is needed to ensure that plans are effectively implemented in lessons themselves. Pupils' performances, knowledge and understanding are being improved through the very effective use of ICT in lessons, particularly the use of digital technology and video cameras.

243. The school offers a varied and extensive programme of extra-curricular activities in which large numbers of pupil take part. Lunchtime clubs are well attended by pupils of all ages, gender and ability. Interschool matches are played regularly, and the school enjoys success in basketball, cricket and football. Some pupils go on to reach higher standards, playing at local, national and international levels. In 1999, the school was awarded a Sportsmark award.

244. The department is well led and managed. Roles and responsibilities are effectively

delegated. However, the department urgently needed a staff member with first aid training, and two teachers have gained first aid certificates since the inspection. The school should

ensure that risk assessments are carried out regularly. Since the last inspection, there have been improvements to the amount and the cleanliness of the accommodation, and assessment has improved. The dangerous surface reported by the last inspection has been removed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

245. Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is good.

Strengths:

- Attainment in GCSE examinations is well above the national average.
- Teaching is always satisfactory and mostly good.
- Management of the department is good.
- The contribution towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.

Areas for improvement:

- The use of assessment data to inform the planning of new work.
- Setting detailed targets against which pupils' progress can be identified, and sharing these with pupils.
- RE in Key Stage 4.

246. Attainment in Year 9 is in line with expectations for 14 year olds, and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils develop knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts such as the use of money, and the importance of festivals, customs and symbols. Pupils understand the relevance of what they study and can relate it to their experiences of life. During the inspection, pupils in some lessons made good progress. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils developed a good knowledge of the important keywords in the six major world religions. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils were enabled to explore their feelings and judgement about religious and moral issues by looking at differing attitudes to equality, with particular reference to race, sex and religion. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Key words, technical language and good discussion work help pupils to improve literacy and oral competency.

247. Pupils who study ten GCSE courses are unable to follow the religious education course in either Year 10 or Year 11. These Year 11 pupils will have had only the elements of religious education provided during form time in this key stage. Statutory requirements for all pupils to receive religious education are not met. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000, when 36 pupils were entered, are very well above the national average, and girls' results were higher than boys'. In 2001, only 11 pupils entered the examination, and their results were very much lower.

248. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 10 and 11 reaches expectations, and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils interpret religious concepts, and express their own opinions about religious and moral issues. For example, in Year 10, pupils demonstrate a developing understanding of religious principles relating to Christianity and Islam, and link these principles with everyday life. A good example was the way in which the attack on the World Trade Centre was explored in relation to the Christian and Muslim perspectives on war and negotiation. In Year 11, there are signs of the development of an analytical approach. Learning from religion is a key feature in this year

group's work. A discussion about the Christian view of crime and punishment provided a valuable way for pupils to develop an understanding of how people's lives are changed by their beliefs. Pupils display confidence in discussion. There are many examples of good creative writing.

249. There are no significant differences in the standards reached by pupils of different gender or ethnic background. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language, and those who are gifted or talented achieve satisfactorily. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They are generally well motivated and apply themselves to work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationships between teachers and pupils is very good, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupils behave very well, which makes a significant contribution to their achievement.

250. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and in nearly half of lessons it is good.

251. Two qualified specialists in the department are well supported by three non-specialist staff. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subject, and display confidence in the use of material and resources. As a consequence, pupils are well motivated and feel confident in discussing religious issues. Planning is good, and teachers make good use of questioning to review previous work and to consolidate current learning. They use a suitable range of styles that enable pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion, which helps pupils to develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources are well used, especially worksheets designed to enable pupils with different needs to learn appropriately. Teachers manage pupils very well, creating a good climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class.

252. Day to day assessment of pupils' work is generally satisfactory and helpful comments are made in exercise books. However, assessment information is not used when planning, and the department does not set detailed targets against which it can assess pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This has been recognised by the department as an area for development.

253. The curriculum in all years is broad and balanced, and meets the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the Bury LEA Agreed Syllabus. Religious education makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. It provides opportunities for pupils to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs, as well as to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues. Study of the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures that support them. However, some pupils do not have any religious education lessons in Key Stage 4.

254. The department is well managed with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Since the last inspection, schemes of work and assessment procedures have improved. The monitoring of teaching has improved and this has had an effect on the rising standards. There has been a significant improvement in the contribution religious education makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. However, statutory requirements for religious education in Key Stage 4 are no longer met.