

INSPECTION REPORT

CHURCH STRETTON SCHOOL

Church Stretton, Shropshire

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123565

Headteacher: Mr D V Oliver

Reporting inspector: Mrs Val Lynch
1475

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th December 2001

Inspection number: 190108

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Shrewsbury Road Church Stretton Shropshire
Postcode:	SY6 6EX
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs C Culliss
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

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3472	Kathleen MacFarlane	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	English Drama	How well are pupils taught?
30597	Robina Howells	Team inspector	Science	
15606	Christine Hill	Team inspector	Special educational needs	SEN Unit
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13805	Lynn Lowery	Team inspector	Geography	
10895	David Wasp	Team inspector	History Religious education Equal opportunities	
29806	Jose Marshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Church Stretton School is an 11-16 comprehensive school serving the small town of Church Stretton and an extensive largely rural area that covers 200 square miles and stretches from the outskirts of Shrewsbury in the north to Craven Arms in the south. The school, with 697 pupils on roll, is smaller than other secondary schools. The number of pupils has increased significantly since the previous inspection.

Employment in the area is mainly in agriculture and service industries and both have been hit by the outbreak of foot and mouth disease earlier in the year. There is a very small number of pupils who take free school meals and the percentage is well below the national average. The figure of 3.9 per cent does not provide an accurate picture of the socio-economic circumstances of the school which, although above the national average, are not as high as this free school meals figure suggests.

Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 in primary schools show that when pupils join the school their attainment is above the national average. It has been improving over the last three years. The percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register is in line with the national average, but there is a higher than average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. This is because the school is recognised for its work in this area and is able to work effectively with pupils with a wide range of needs including pupils who are visually or hearing impaired. Very few of pupils with special educational needs have problems associated with behaviour; most have specific learning difficulties and most of them are boys. There is a very small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and although these pupils do not have English as their home language they are not at the early stages of learning English. On occasions, children of travelling families are welcomed into the school, but none were in school during the inspection.

The school has gained the national Sportsmark Gold Award, one of a very few schools to do so. It has also gained national recognition for the exceptionally wide range of activities that it offers pupils in addition to lessons.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many excellent features. Standards are well above the national average and are better than similar schools. Teaching is very good and pupils' attitudes to their learning are exceptional. There is very good leadership from the headteacher and his senior team and from most middle managers. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are well above the national average because teachers have high expectations and plan lessons to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils make good and often very good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning and their behaviour are very good.
- Excellent relationships underpin a thriving, harmonious and caring community where everyone can learn.
- Many staff give freely of their time to provide a wide range of activities outside lessons.
- The headteacher exercises highly effective and principled leadership that brings out the best in staff and pupils.

What could be improved

- The consistency in the use of procedures that support heads of department in taking responsibility for the quality of what happens in their areas.
- The preparation of pupils to live in our culturally diverse society.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Test and exam results have improved to their best ever and all the key issues have been addressed.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	A	B	A	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

When pupils join the school aged 11 their attainment overall is above the national average. By the time pupils are 14 their attainment has improved to be well above the national average. Many pupils with specific learning difficulties reach standards in line with what would be expected for their age. This indicates good progress by pupils of all abilities. In 2001, standards at the end of Year 9 were not as good as those in similar schools. This statistic does not present an accurate view of the very good work that is going on in the school because it is based on the proportion of pupils taking free school meals rather than on how much pupils improve from Year 7 to Year 9. Results in tests taken at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved over the last five years. GCSE results have also steadily improved, but every so often there is a year group that does not do as well as the group of the previous year. However, in these years pupils do as well or better than expected. The standards of work seen during the inspection reflect the high test and examination results in all subjects. In art, where GCSE results have been low, standards are improving rapidly. Although girls do better than boys in tests and examinations, boys achieve equally well in lessons. The school sets challenging targets, basing them partly on very accurate information about what pupils might achieve, but also setting the targets higher because it knows that pupils can do better than data predict. The school exceeded its targets in 2001 with a 10 per cent improvement on results in 2000.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic to learn in lessons and to join in other activities that take place at lunchtime or after school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are so involved in their lessons that they do not misbehave and they act very responsibly around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Lessons involve teachers and pupils working hard together to make the most of the time available. Pupils are sensible and mature and a pleasure to be with.
Attendance	Good. It is above the national average and pupils are punctual to school and lessons.

The behaviour and attitudes to learning of nearly all pupils are very good. Attendance is slightly better than it was at the time of the previous inspection, although the percentage figure fell slightly last year because of the foot and mouth outbreak. No pupils have been permanently excluded from the school and fixed period exclusions are only used as part of a very good behaviour management policy.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching in English, mathematics and science is very good and some teaching in all three subjects is excellent. In nearly all subjects there is some excellent teaching although it is not as strong in music in Years 7 to 9 as it is in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those that are very able is very good because teachers are skilful in planning to meet a wide range of needs. This is no mean achievement in classes that are nearly all, with the exception of mathematics and modern foreign languages, mixed ability groups. Pupils are well supported in lessons by learning support teachers and assistants and their subject teachers. Teaching of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is very good. Literacy skills are very well developed in English and in almost all subjects. Teaching of numeracy skills in mathematics lessons is very good. In all years pupils, have opportunities in each mathematics lesson to practise and consolidate their skills and, as a result, they are confident and competent. In the few lessons where pupils are able to use their numeracy skills they cope well. Teaching of information and communication technology is very good. Pupils are rapidly improving their skills and abilities. It is because teaching is so consistently good that pupils enjoy learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a wide range of opportunities to meet the needs of all pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils have the same opportunities as their peers but at a level matched to their needs.,
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. All participate fully in lessons and enjoy the full range of opportunities available to all pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. A strong school ethos, characterised by excellent relationships and mutual respect, provides a strong context for pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Teachers and tutors and all other staff in the school know pupils well. Form tutors and heads of year work closely to provide a good level of personal and educational support.

The school works very effectively with parents, providing them with regular information about what is happening at the school and very detailed information about how well their children are progressing. The school fully deserves the confidence that parents have in its work. One of the strengths of the school is the wide range of activities it provides in addition to lessons. The school also meets all statutory requirements in relation to the curriculum and its approach to providing for religious education in Years 10 and 11 is imaginative and very successful. The school is a warm and caring place where adults show genuine concern for pupils. Information on pupils when they join the school is used to set targets for all subjects at the end of Year 9 and national tests are used to predict GCSE results and set targets for pupils. Teachers and tutors then check very carefully that pupils are working hard enough to achieve their targets.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is well supported by a very hardworking and innovative senior team and by some very experienced and able heads of department and heads of year.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body have ensured that the school now meets all the statutory requirements in relation to the curriculum, including the new special educational needs code of practice.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school has a system of whole school reviews in place that include looking at teaching and learning. Information from these is used to inform future planning.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. All financial resources are allocated to priorities in the school development plan. Money for departments is allocated to achieve priorities in teaching and learning.

The school has a sufficient number of teaching and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. Many are very experienced and very well qualified. Accommodation is used well, although there is limited accommodation for art, drama and design technology now that numbers have increased. The school is well resourced in all departments and the library. Although the number of computers per pupil is adequate, it is still difficult for some departments to use them when they want to because the rooms that have suites of computers are heavily booked. A particular strength of the school's leadership and management is that it is good at all levels and, therefore, there is a strong sense of teamwork. There is a good understanding of the concept of best value which has been key to the school managing improvements on a budget that has very little additional funding.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Three hundred and fifty four completed questionnaires were returned, a 51 per cent response. Forty-five parents attended the meeting with the Registered Inspector.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • Pupils make good progress. • Teaching is good. • The school sets high expectations. • The school is well managed and led. • Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible. • There is a wide range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information they receive about the progress their children are making.

Parents' views about the school are very positive and the list of what pleases them could have included nearly all that was in the questionnaire. The inspection team agrees with most parents' view that this is a very good school. When the team looked at the information sent to parents about their children's work they found that there had been significant improvements in the last two years. It is likely, therefore, that parents' views are based on past experience rather than the current format for reports and progress checks that are now in place.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 When pupils join the school aged 11 their attainment overall is above the national average. By the end of Year 9, test results are consistently above or well above the national average. GCSE results are also consistently above or well above the national average. Both test results at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results were the best ever in 2001.

Test results at the end of Year 9

- 2 These results have improved over the last five years at a faster rate than results nationally. In 2001, results in English and mathematics were well above the national average and in science they were above. English results recovered in 2001 from a dip in 2000. Results in mathematics show good improvement over the last four years. Science results dropped slightly in 2001. Overall, girls did slightly better than boys and both boys and girls did better than boys and girls nationally. Teachers' assessments indicate very good standards in history and French and above-average attainment in design technology, geography, religious education and information and communication technology. Teachers' assessments in art and physical education show pupils to be reaching a satisfactory standard. This is because in art there have been some weaknesses in the past and in physical education pupils' experiences in their primary schools are limited. Teachers' assessments in music indicate that standards are well above average, but this is not supported by the work seen. When the overall results in the tests at the end of Year 9 are compared with similar schools, as judged on the basis of the number of pupils who take free school meals, they are below what might be expected. This comparison does not accurately reflect the good work that is happening in the school.

GCSE results

- 3 GCSE results are always better than results nationally and are improving steadily but the rate of improvement is slower than the rate of improvement nationally. This is because there is some variation between years. For example, results in 2000 dipped slightly, but reflect the dip seen in test results for that group of pupils at the end of Year 9. Although results in 2000 were broadly in line with similar schools the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* - C grades was above those in similar schools and the percentage gaining five or more A* - G grades was well above. Results were well above the national average in English, mathematics, design technology, geography, history and French and above the national average in science and music. Results continue to be below the national average in art because the changes in staff in art have not had time to affect this cohort of pupils. Girls do better than boys, but both do well compared with boys and girls nationally; girls do particularly well. The gap between them narrowed substantially in 2001 because of the improvement in boys' results.

Progress from results and towards targets

- 4 The school has done a lot of work on collecting data on pupils when they join the school and then looking at their results at the end of Year 9. They can, therefore, confidently show that most pupils make good progress and some pupils, particularly those with special educational needs make very good progress. GCSE results in

2001 indicate satisfactory progress on the basis of these pupils' results at the end of Year 9. The school exceeded its targets in 2001 with a 10 per cent improvement on results in 2000. The school sets challenging targets based on very accurate information about what pupils might achieve and adding to this because it knows that they can do better than data predicts.

- 5 Pupils of all abilities make good progress and nearly all pupils achieve at least five GCSE grades A* - G. Higher ability pupils make good progress overall and very good progress in English, mathematics, design technology, history, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages. This is because in these subjects there are high expectations and a determination amongst teachers to push all pupils to produce the best work of which they are capable.

Standards of work seen in lessons

- 6 The standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are very good in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, history and French. They are good in most other subjects and are satisfactory in physical education, art and music. The reasons for the standards in art and physical education being only satisfactory are noted in the paragraph above. In music, standards are only satisfactory because the curriculum is not as well planned as it should be and assessment procedures are not secure. There are no observable differences in the work of boys and girls.
- 7 In Years 10 and 11, standards of work are very good in English, mathematics, design technology, geography, history and in information and communications technology. Standards are good in science, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education. Standards have improved in art and are now good. The standards of work seen reflect the well-above-average test and examination results in 2001. All pupils, regardless of their gender, ability or ethnic group, make at least good and often very good progress.

Standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs

- 8 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall in Years 7 to 9 and particularly in English, mathematics, design technology and information and communications technology. In Years 10 and 11 they also make very good progress in history. In all other subjects their progress is good. Many of them benefit from following a course that leads to alternative accreditation if this is appropriate to their needs.

Standards of literacy

- 9 Standards in literacy are well above average. All pupils throughout the school are articulate and speak with confidence in all situations, both informal and formal. They have a good range of vocabulary and are able to explain, debate and present a range of opinions and respond sensitively to the opinions of others. Pupils' reading skills are equally good. All pupils are taught how to select the main points of a text and they can recognise the main features of different styles of writing. The standards achieved in writing are well above average. High attaining pupils quickly develop a very good sense of purpose and audience. Even lower attaining pupils in Year 7 are able to write discursive pieces that explore both sides of an argument. Presentation skills are good and spelling has improved since the previous inspection.

Standards of numeracy

- 10 The standards achieved in numeracy in mathematics lessons are very good throughout the school. Most pupils are both confident and competent as a result of regular opportunities to practise their skills at different levels. They are confident in mental and written calculations and in using calculators. They are able to estimate percentages, approximate decimals and interpret graphs. In lessons they apply their knowledge to a variety of real live situations which enables them to cope well when they are required to use these skills in other subjects. In science they are able to record the results of an investigation systematically and use measurement accurately. In both science and geography they draw graphs and interpret and extrapolate data. In art they are required to understand enlargement and reduction as well as perspective and the concept of three dimensions.

Standards in information and communication technology (ICT)

- 11 Standards in information and communication technology are well above average. Pupils are competent and confident in using publishing packages, the Internet and scanners. In English, mathematics and design technology pupils readily use their skills because teachers make regular use of computers in the work. By the time pupils leave school they are very competent in scanning images and using digital cameras because the ICT and design technology teachers work very effectively together.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 12 The behaviour and attitudes to learning of nearly all pupils are very good. Relationships are excellent and high proportions of pupils take full advantage of the many planned opportunities for personal development. Attendance is higher than the national average. No pupils have been permanently excluded from the school and fixed period exclusions are only used as part of a very good behaviour management policy. These findings, which are better than those reported in the last inspection in 1996, are strength of the school.

Pupils' attitudes to school

- 13 Nearly all parents state that their children like school; they talk positively about their children's friends and teachers and think that the behaviour throughout the school is good. Pupils take full advantage of the numerous activities and opportunities available to them. Many discuss their favourite sports and talk about their activities during educational trips and other extra curricular activities with enthusiasm. Teachers have high expectations and lessons are planned to take account of pupils' knowledge and experience. Therefore, all pupils react positively to challenge with enthusiasm. All pupils show initiative, participate in lessons and stay on task. This is a strong feature of the school.

Behaviour

- 14 Most lessons are organised to enthuse pupils; therefore, behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils take pride in presenting their work and respond well to the teacher's expectations for collaborative work and good behaviour. Some parents expressed concern regarding inappropriate behaviour in Years 10 and 11. However, inspection findings reveal that behaviour throughout the school ranged from good to excellent. No oppressive behaviour or bullying was observed during the inspection. All pupils are aware of the procedures to follow in case of bullying. Fixed term exclusions are

used in accordance with agreed procedures for serious incidents of inappropriate behaviour.

Personal development

- 15 All pupils socialise very well. They are polite, friendly and greet visitors by their names. Pupils are encouraged to become responsible for managing their own work in lessons and behaviour during break times. They move around the school in an orderly fashion and respond to the very attractive environment by taking care of resources and the school property. Pupils genuinely care for each other, have concern for one another and are proud of their school. This is apparent by the way the school council addresses issues of concern such as bullying and school rules.
- 16 All pupils respect other people's feelings. Mutual respect for each other and property, together with pride in the reputation of their school, is evident throughout the school's daily practises.

Relationships

- 17 Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils have clear understanding of the impact of their actions upon others. They also have a high level of respect for the values and beliefs of others. They listen carefully to their teachers and other people, particularly in the assemblies and during the break times. They show good understanding that other people's beliefs may be different than their own. Pupils are curious and sensitively express interest in visitors.

Attendance

- 18 Attendance at the school in 1999/2000 year was higher than the average for secondary schools and is slightly better than at the time of the previous inspection. The rate of unauthorised absence for the same period, was lower than the national average. The most recent information on the school, available after the inspection shows that attendance in 2000/2001 declined because the school had more authorised absences than previously. This is because a small number of pupils had quite a long period of time off because of the foot and mouth outbreak in the area. During the inspection, pupils arrived punctually and both morning and afternoon sessions started promptly. Attendance registers are completed correctly and the school secretary ensures their safekeeping

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 19 The quality of teaching is very good and enables pupils to learn effectively and make very good progress. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching has improved since the previous inspection and now accounts for almost two thirds of lessons. This improvement is due largely to the continuing highly effective learning reviews, which have a clear focus linked to the school development planning and professional development.
- 20 Teaching is very good in English, mathematics, science, design technology, geography, modern foreign languages, history and information and communications technology. It is good in art, physical education and religious education and satisfactory in music. During the inspection there were examples of excellent teaching in English, mathematics, science, design technology, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. The only unsatisfactory lesson observed

was a mathematics lesson in Year 10, when pupils' learning was impeded by their poor concentration and compounded by the teacher's class management.

- 21 Teaching of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is very good. Literacy skills are very well developed in almost all subjects. Pupils' skills are very good and enhance the quality of their work across the curriculum. After the previous inspection, when some pupils' standards of spelling were criticised, a whole school spelling policy was introduced and the English department implemented a structured programme to teach the rules of spelling. All departments adopted the policy to reinforce this work. The current focus is on teaching pupils technical terminology and the features of different styles of writing. As a consequence, pupils write confidently in a wide range of styles, using appropriate subject language. The quality of teaching of numeracy skills in mathematics lessons is very good, as are the standards achieved. In all years, pupils have opportunities in each mathematics lesson to practise and consolidate their skills and, as a result, they are confident and competent. In the few lessons where pupils are able to use their skills they cope well. Teaching of information and communication technology is very good. Pupils are rapidly improving skills and abilities as a result of significant investment in resources since the last inspection and the very good teaching.
- 22 Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Their obvious love of their subjects leads them to teach with energy and enthusiasm, which results in pupils who are eager to learn. In English, the support and guidance for pupils on the GCSE course is enhanced by the fact that three members of the department are examiners. Revision lessons focus clearly on the features that examiners will expect to see in successful answers and this has a direct effect on the high standards that pupils achieve in their examinations. In design technology, teachers are very successful in inspiring pupils, extending their ability to use imagination, the highest attaining becoming highly creative.
- 23 Very high expectations are a feature of many lessons. In an excellent Year 9 history lesson, the teacher gave pupils one minute to reflect on the attitudes of various groups to the 1833 Factory Act. The subsequent question and answer session, orchestrated with great skill by the teacher, was impressive in its depth and range. It led to considerable gains in pupils' understanding of the changes in society and their ability to prioritise historical information. In an excellent Year 10 science lesson which considered the social implications of limestone quarrying, the teacher expected pupils to prepare presentations from various interested parties and argue their cases in role. This led to some passionate debate, which not only strengthened pupils' knowledge about the chemistry of limestone but also developed their discussion skills.
- 24 A particular feature of these high expectations is the use of questioning to extend and deepen pupils' understanding of their learning. In a very effective Year 7 English lesson examining how writers convey character to the reader, the teacher's questions drew an impressive range of strategies from pupils which they could use to improve their own earlier drafted character studies. Questions were directed at boys and girls alternately so that all were involved. As the lesson progressed the teacher summarised the salient points on the board to reinforce pupils' learning and then set homework to consolidate what had been learned.
- 25 Teachers use a very good variety of methods in their lessons and this, combined with brisk pace and very good resources, results in pupils working at full stretch and achieving very high standards. In a Year 8 French lesson based on the language of

shopping, the teacher used the target language skilfully to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through class question and answer sessions, paired work and role play exercises.

- 26 The management of pupils is based on mutual respect and very productive relationships between pupils and teachers. Pupils bring a willingness to learn to lessons and in many lessons display real enjoyment in learning. These attitudes do much to promote the very good progress pupils make throughout their time in the school.
- 27 Pupils receive very good guidance in preparing for external tests and examinations. In Year 11 revision lessons the focus is firmly on how they could achieve even higher standards.
- 28 For example, in science, pupils are given opportunities to practise examination questions and teachers give clear advice on what to revise. In art the GCSE assessment policy is clearly explained. In drama, tight deadlines are set for course work so that pupils have the maximum amount of time for their final assessed piece.
- 29 Assessment is well employed in many lessons to show pupils how they might further improve their work. It is a particular strength in design technology where the department had developed high quality procedures for tutoring in Years 10 and 11. However, in some other practical subjects, assessment is not used to good effect. In drama and music, opportunities for pupils to engage in self- and peer-evaluation are missed both in lessons and in homework tasks. Although pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have homework notebooks in drama, they are only rarely used to reflect on what they have achieved.
- 30 Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught. Teachers plan so that the work in each lesson is very well matched to individual pupil's needs. They record what pupils know and can do during the lesson to show each pupil's progress. The withdrawal programme for English and mathematics is very successful because of the high quality liaison between class teachers, support teachers and assistants and the co-ordinator. Individual learning plans contain clear targets that are sufficiently practical for class teachers to implement when support staff are not present. In the very best lessons, pupils know their targets, although the practice of sharing these targets with all pupils is not consistent. Support staff are effective because they know the pupils very well and frequently set specific targets for learning with a good blend of help and challenge. Pupils with special educational needs make very good gains towards their targets and for some pupils their progress is excellent.
- 31 The few pupils who speak English as an additional language are confident in both their home language and English and no longer need specific language teaching. However, one Year 11 boy spoke warmly of the additional support he had received in his first two years in the school, which had enabled him to make very good progress. All such pupils are well integrated into their classes and are achieving very well.
- 32 Gifted pupils and those with particular talents are well challenged by high expectations, extension work and additional opportunities in many subjects. In design technology the work of the highest attaining pupils is used as models for other classes. Geography and modern foreign language lessons regularly include work to extend high attaining pupils.

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

- 33 The school provides a very good curriculum that is designed to provide opportunities and meet the needs of different groups of pupils. This includes good quality opportunities for pupils with special educational needs. The withdrawal programme from English and mathematics is well organised so that pupils have the same curriculum as mainstream pupils, but at a level matched to their needs.
- 34 The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good and meets the statutory requirements for teaching all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The current timetabling arrangements means that lesson times vary during the week, but the arrangements work satisfactorily and no continuity problems were observed where lessons were disrupted by break time. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is designed to meet their needs. Pupils in these years follow a common core of nine GCSE subjects with compulsory physical education lessons and a general course in religious education. A GNVQ course in information and communication technology is taught as an after-school activity. The mathematics curriculum caters well for different ability groups and the English examination syllabus was carefully chosen as it is more rigorous and leads into advanced level courses most effectively. Pupils have the opportunity to study French and German; however, they are unable to study German alone. The arrangements for religious education are visionary and ensure pupils have a positive view of the subject. In addition, a wide range of subjects are explored during religious education days. Outside speakers support and extend this provision.
- 35 Arrangements for promoting literacy and numeracy are very good. Standards of literacy are already good when pupils enter the school and they are further enhanced in English lessons through the use of relevant strategies from the National Literacy Strategy. Because of this the school has sensibly chosen to concentrate on the more advanced skills that pupils need to maintain and extend their high standards. Learning support teachers and assistants gave additional support to pupils whose spelling remains below average. The provision for the development of numeracy skills is good in mathematics lessons. During the inspection pupils had opportunities to use these skills in science, geography and art, but not all departments have yet identified how they might contribute. The school development plan for the coming year addresses this issue.
- 36 The school demonstrates a very strong commitment to providing for all pupils. All members of the school community are valued equally and care is taken to ensure that all pupils are deriving the maximum benefit from their education. Public examination results are monitored closely in terms of gender. The small number of pupils from ethnic backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language are supported very well throughout the curriculum. The school is a thriving community in which teachers and pupils work very well together to ensure high standards.
- 37 The arrangements for personal, health and social education for pupils are very good. The programme is well planned, reviewed and evaluated regularly. It is led by a very knowledgeable and committed co-ordinator and the teaching by form tutors is good. Visiting speakers and experts contribute regularly. Units are well planned giving a common structure but enabling teachers to bring other materials to the lessons. The curriculum is supportive of the pupils' needs and is appropriate to their age. For example, a Year 10 lesson discussed issues relating to health education maturely, promoting very good relationships through their discussions. The school is already

considering how the programme will support and contribute to the citizenship curriculum when it introduced next year and work on this is well under way.

- 38 The programme of careers education and guidance is excellent. It is successfully delivered through the personal, social and health education programme together with tutorials and interviews in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are introduced to the world of work and further education in a well co-ordinated programme. The head of careers and vocational education is well informed and committed so this ensures that young people have the best quality information to use when making choices when they leave school. The school has a well-resourced careers library that pupils are encouraged to use both formally and informally. Senior pupils help younger pupils access materials at lunch times and there is a drop in centre where pupils can obtain advice. All pupils have access to advice from the local careers advisor. Pupils in Years 10 complete a fortnight work placement and keep a diary that consolidates their experiences into their Record of Achievement. All placements are carefully monitored to ensure pupils make best use of their time.
- 39 The school extends its provision through an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils take part in them and many staff give freely of their time. The school has won a national award for its extra-curricular activities for several years. Together with a wide range of sporting and musical activities, there is an impressive number of clubs including chess, archery, darts league, Latin club as well as revision classes for some GCSE subjects. The Latin club meets after school with pupils following a two-year course from Cambridge University. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the language links between Latin and English. There are educational visits arranged as part of the curriculum provision. Education visits take place to France and Germany with pupils making good use of e-mail in order to maintain these links.
- 40 There are some good curriculum links with partner primary schools, notably in English, mathematics and design technology. The local primary school uses the physical education facilities and another partner primary visits to use the computers. Pupils who have particular talents in music or drama are invited to join in the school's extra-curricular activities, for example the school orchestra. The school is also working hard to ensure that the work based learning course introduced in Years 10 and 11 can be continued in local colleges when pupils leave at age 16.
- 41 There are constructive and positive relationships with the community and partner institutions. Local engineers give excellent support to the Techno-Challenge Club, quietly working with groups of Year 7 pupils. The induction programme for new pupils is well established with the mathematics department continuing a mathematics investigation started in primary schools. Local employers and colleges support pupils following an alternative course in Years 10 and 11. This new course involves pupils in work related learning. As part of an afternoon where there are some optional activities, Year 11 pupils have the opportunity to work in local community care homes. Members of the Rotary Club hold practise interview sessions for senior pupils helping them to give of their best in the real situation.
- 42 Since the last inspection the school has made good progress on the issues that relate to the curriculum. Most subjects except art and music have sufficient access to computers to support the curriculum. Pupils are now receiving their full programme of design technology in Years 10 and 11 and information and communication technology is now provided for all pupils.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- 43 The overall provision for pupils' personal development is very good. A strong school ethos characterised by excellent relationships and mutual respect provides a strong context for pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Well-planned assemblies make a major contribution to pupils' personal development and create a real sense of community. They are well planned and include opportunities. The commitment and attitudes of the staff set a very positive example for pupils. They are good role models and take opportunities in the classroom to promote pupils' personal development. An excellent design and technology project for Year 8 linked to the forthcoming Commonwealth Games ensured that pupils understood the differences and values of the countries that make up the Commonwealth.

Spiritual development

- 44 The school has tried to make all departments aware of their contribution to pupils' spiritual development through training sessions. However, not all departments have responded fully to develop spiritual awareness. The best examples are still found in religious education lessons. English, design technology, music and personal, social and health education provide some opportunities. In a music lesson for Year 10 pupils, pupils discussed the emotions conveyed by different styles of music and how they could use these techniques in their own work. As at the time of the previous inspection, the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met. The school has not considered ways in which tutor time can contribute to this aspect of pupils' education.

Moral development

- 45 Very good provision is made for pupils' moral development. The school's daily routines successfully promote values and help pupils distinguish between right and wrong. Adherence to school rules and the school's successful anti-bullying strategy promotes an orderly environment where pupils help and support each other. Several sensitive issues are discussed in lessons including genetic engineering in science, the effect of global warming, pollution and living in high-rise flats during geography. Discussion encourages pupils to consider a range of viewpoints and to think through difficult choices and decisions they will need in life. The pupils work hard to raise money for a variety of charities including reacting generously to world events and disasters.

Social development

- 46 Social education is excellent with opportunities taken for pupils to develop social and collaborative skills in many of their lessons. The school council enables them to contribute to many areas of school life. Older pupils work closely with younger pupils through a buddy system when they join the school and in helping them with their reading. This means that pupils mix well together both within and outside of lessons. Very good relationships were seen in lessons especially when pupils work in groups valuing opinions and treating all with courtesy and respect.

Cultural development

- 47 Provision for pupils' cultural development is good, but many subjects do not provide enough opportunities for awareness of life in a multi cultural society. This difference was highlighted in English where pupils' own culture is well represented, but limited use is made of texts from other cultures. However, the religious education

department and the personal, social and health education team tackle issues such as racism in a way that it makes a powerful contribution to multicultural development. Cultural interests and horizons are extended through pupils' excellent extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils also take part in educational visits including to Chester with the Latin club, science visits to Bristol and foreign exchanges to France and Germany. There are a wide range of other visits that enrich pupils' learning. For example, every two years a small group of pupils from Years 10 and 11 visit the isolated island of Mingulay in the Outer Hebrides. There they have to rely on themselves and each other for survival.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 48 The school's care for its pupils is very good. Form tutors and heads of year work closely to ensure that a good level of personal and educational support and guidance is given to all pupils. The procedures for child protection and pupils' welfare are very good. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory and the school has developed very good systems for monitoring and improving attendance. The school promotes behaviour effectively and procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour and racial harassment are firmly in place. Attainment on entry is used to set targets for all subjects at the end of Year 9 and national tests are used to predict GCSE results and set targets for pupils.
- 49 The school is a warm and caring place where adults and pupils enjoy working and learning together. Teachers and support staff express genuine concern for pupils and, as a result, trustful relationships are established between adults and pupils. Personal development is monitored and detailed records are kept in pupils' files for their records of achievement. Form tutors make it a priority to ensure that pupils settle well at the start of Year 7 and the process of assessment for Year 7 pupils starts immediately after half term. This determines their educational and emotional needs and school sets achievable targets at this stage, which are reviewed on regular bases. Pupils whose home language is not English are well supported. Parents responding to the questionnaire strongly agree that the school has high expectations for their children and inspection findings confirm that very good systems are in place to set targets and monitor pupils' progress effectively.
- 50 The school complies fully with the locally agreed child protection procedures. These provide clear instructions about action to be taken and how cases will be followed up by other local authority agencies. Teaching and mid-day staff have received formal training on child protection procedures and know what action to take if the need arises. There are good arrangements for first aid and sick pupils are sympathetically cared for in a strategically located medical room. Staff know what to do in case of an emergency or if a pupil becomes ill whilst at school. All pupils feel that they are safe and secure in the school.
- 51 The school has a firm commitment to inter-agency working and has developed a very good understanding of what can be contributed by other professionals. Very good working relationships with the education welfare officer, who visits the school every week, ensures that vulnerable pupils are promptly identified and effectively supported. Good use is made of other support and advice from a range of sources where pupils have medical problems and where there are emotional, social, behavioural or learning difficulties. The school nurse visits the school weekly and attends to pupils' medical and other social needs in the strictest confidence.
- 52 There is generally satisfactory attention to safety matters. However, inspector's attention was drawn to the unsatisfactory state of girl's toilets. A senior member of

the management dealt with the matter promptly. A health and safety policy is in place, but the governing body has not ratified it and it does not state the review date. Some health and safety matters, such as water leakage through the roof and through the rotten window frames in the mathematics and English departments, need immediate attention. The site manager takes good care to ensure that the buildings, equipment and the school grounds are free from health hazards. Teachers and support staff promote hygiene effectively as part of the curriculum.

- 53 Overall administrative systems for promoting punctuality and attendance are very good. A computerised attendance system provides excellent management information including overall figures for year groups and individuals. This information is effectively used by heads of year and the education welfare officer to monitor and support pupils with difficulties.
- 54 The school promotes good behaviour through a system of mutually understood simple school rules, which are incorporated in the staff handbook. Most pupils know that good behaviour is expected of them. Pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds are taught to respect one another and they respond positively by working and playing together. Younger pupils and those who are in need of additional help, such as physically impaired pupils, are fully supported during the playtime. Mid-day staff operate effective systems for recording and monitoring incidents of misbehaviour or perceived bullying and they receive very good support from the deputy head teacher and other teaching staff during break time. The review date for the current behaviour policy is not stated and it also needs to be ratified by the governing body.

Assessment

- 55 The school's arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. Prior to joining the school the teacher responsible for primary liaison and the special educational needs co-ordinator collect very detailed information on all pupils. This is shared with all staff to enable them to plan for groups and individuals. Targets for the end of Year 9 are negotiated with pupils and parents and this establishes a partnership between teacher, parent and pupil. Tutors monitor pupil's progress and review targets on regular intervals. Pupils are encouraged to undertake self-assessment that includes reference to the standards described in the National Curriculum levels and predicted GCSE grades. The process is used to motivate pupils to achieve their targets. There is a planned interview with the tutor at least twice a year to monitor academic progress, participation in extra curricular activities and to renegotiate targets, using assessment information as the starting point. Most departments are now using assessment data constructively. Reporting procedures to parents on attendance, personal and academic development are very good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 56 Parents are very pleased overall with the school and what it provides and achieves. They consider that the standards are good and that their children make good progress. Parents agree that the school promotes very good values and that, therefore, their children develop positive attitudes to school and make good progress. The inspection findings confirm these views. The response to the questionnaire, at 51 per cent, is above average for secondary schools and reflects parental support for the school.
- 57 Nearly 20 per cent of the parents who responded to the questionnaire indicated that

they are not well informed about how their child is getting on in the school. A slightly lower number felt that the school does not work closely with parents. The evidence gathered during the inspection, through talking to pupils and reviewing the school correspondence with parents, does not support these views. Some parents expressed concerns about bullying and inappropriate behaviour in certain classes. Inspectors noted that the behaviour was very good or excellent throughout the inspection week. Those pupils who volunteered to talk to inspectors confirmed some incidents of bullying, but agreed that such incidents were rare and that the school deals with these incidents promptly and does not tolerate bad language or oppressive behaviour.

- 58 Parents hold differing views about the level of homework set. Some consider too little and some say there is too much. However, further evidence gathered during the inspection, through examination of the school practices and meetings with pupils in school, confirms that pupils are set adequate homework suitable for their age and ability, and many parents regularly sign homework diaries.
- 59 The school provides parents with a very good school prospectus and an informative annual governors' report. The latter currently does not meet statutory requirements because the governors decided to anticipate promised changes in requirements, which have not yet happened. Parents receive regular correspondence and an annual school calendar, which keeps them informed of events in the school. The school magazine, which is published by the pupils every term, contains useful information about social events in the school and provides opportunity for pupils to develop their writing skills. Pupils' records of achievement which incorporate all assessments together with an attendance summary are sent to parents annually. This is supplemented by an excellent interim progress review report, which provides information on progress during the term. Parents have an opportunity to discuss their children's progress with form tutors.
- 60 There is a flourishing parents' association. It organises many social and educational events and raises substantial money for school funds and has contributed to major developments, including some equipment in design technology and the fitness suite. Other events and social gatherings, such as the Valentine Disco, Craft Fayre and Summer Fete provide further opportunities for parents and pupils to become involved in the life of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 61 The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have led the school from one that was threatened with potential closure, because numbers were so low, to one that is over-subscribed and recognised by the community as successful. The headteacher is well supported by a very hardworking and innovative senior team, who effectively exercise full authority in their areas of responsibility. There are also some very experienced and able heads of department and heads of year and a very experienced and knowledgeable governing body.
- 62 A key characteristic of the headteacher's leadership is his outstanding care for all his pupils and the fact that he exercises all judgements in the light of what would be best for them. He values his staff and has their confidence and the confidence of parents. There is ample evidence that the school has improved and the headteacher is convinced that they can do even better.
- 63 As well as very good leadership from the senior team, there is very good leadership

in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, humanities, physical education and religious education. Heads of year under the guidance of the head of guidance and welfare provide very good leadership for their year teams. Heads of department, through their line management links, are able to influence what happens in the school. One of the headteacher's management styles is to put out papers for discussion in order to collect views. When he feels that most staff are supportive of ideas for changes he moves to implement the changes. This greater involvement of staff in influencing decisions is an improvement since the previous inspection.

- 64 The school has a set of aims that were developed over ten years ago and reviewed five years ago. These aims are reflected in the daily life of the school, but what the inspection team saw in the school was better than the stated aims. For example, the aims make no reference to equal opportunities or relationships and yet these are a strength of the school.
- 65 The school has been ahead of the field in its work on monitoring and evaluation, having done departmental reviews and moved to whole school reviews in 1994. These reviews include looking at what is happening in classrooms, looking at pupils' work, talking to pupils and questionnaires to parents or staff as appropriate for the review. These reviews provide valuable information that is used to inform future planning. While these reviews are examples of the best practice in school self-evaluation, they do not take sufficient account of the detailed work of departments and because of this the inspection identified some concerns in music that had not been picked up within the school.
- 66 The school development plan is a very comprehensive document that looks forward over three years. Although costs are not detailed within the plan, all finances are allocated in order to implement the priorities in the plan. Department development plans are thorough and finances are allocated to achieve priorities in teaching and learning. There is exemplary practice in this area where the focus of all expenditure in departments has to be on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. This is carefully checked by the deputy headteacher and heads of department are held to account for their expenditure.
- 67 Although there are some newly appointed governors this year, the governing body are very experienced and have ensured that governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities in relation to the curriculum. They are fully involved in debates about the curriculum and have ensured that the school now meets the statutory requirements in relation to information and communication technology and design and technology, which were issues at the time of the previous inspection. They also fully meet the statutory requirements of the new special educational needs code of practice. The nominated governor for special educational needs has an excellent understanding of this area and is a real asset to the governing body and the school.
- 68 The school has all the required policies in place, but there has been no systematic reviewing of them and so, as with the aims, the practice is better than the policy. A good example of this is the assessment policy that is in several different documents and does not reflect the very good practice that exists. This lack of clarity means that staff, both new and familiar to the school, can be imprecise in their interpretation of what is required. The school recognises this and in the school development plan has mapped out a three-year programme for reviewing key policies.
- 69 Financial planning and management are very good and the school is proud of the fact that it has never had a deficit budget. It is committed to applying the principles of best value. All contracts are systematically reviewed in order to ensure that services

are provided at the best quality for the right price. The planning and monitoring of departmental expenditure at a central level are exemplary. Parents', students' and staff views are sought on issues such as healthy eating and school uniform. The school is working closely with an external consultant on data analysis so that it can be absolutely sure that it is doing the best it can by its pupils. Good use is made of new technology to support the collection and analysis of data to both monitor pupils' progress and to make judgements about the extent of the school's success.

Staffing

- 70 The school has a sufficient number of teaching and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. Many are very experienced and very well qualified. There is a good blend of experienced and comparatively new teachers. Teachers are deployed efficiently and many spend a higher proportion of time than is usual teaching. There has been some increase in the level of technical and educational support staff such as in design technology and information and communication technology since the last inspection. The deployment of educational support staff is good and many pupils with special educational needs benefit from the support they receive in lessons.
- 71 Procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers are very good. Procedures for appraisal and performance management are fully in place for implementation this year. The school has developed very good systems for the training of graduate teachers, but due to the lack of adequate finance has withdrawn from training this year. This is a pity as the school is an ideal place for new teachers to learn about teaching and learning. All staff including the office staff, the staff in the library, lunchtime assistants and catering and cleaning staff make a very positive contribution to the school.

Accommodation

- 72 Accommodation is used well to support learning. Although recent adaptation to the buildings has enhanced the learning environment in some areas, limited accommodation for art, drama and design technology is having a detrimental effect on the experiences of some pupils in these subjects. The accommodation in the mathematics area is unsatisfactory. Rain water pours down the stairs, which poses a safety risk for pupils. Some window frames and the fascia around flat roofs are rotten and are also a risk for pupils.
- 73 There is good-sized hard surface area for play and large field for games and athletics. The accommodation is kept clean and tidy and attractive wall displays enhance the inside learning environment. The reception area is welcoming.

Resources

- 74 The school is well resourced in all departments. Resources are excellent in the very well managed library, which is extensively used for research and independent learning by pupils and staff on regular bases. The ratio of computers to pupils is above the national average and the ratio of books to pupils is good overall. Resources are appropriately stored and used effectively, except in the music department where storage facilities are inadequate. There is little evidence of resources to support learning about other cultures. Although the number of computers per pupil is adequate, it is still difficult for some departments to use them when they want to because the rooms that have suites of computers are heavily booked.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75 The school is already a very good school but procedures do need to be put in place to ensure that all departments work at the standard of the best. In order that this can happen the school needs to:-

- (1) develop procedures to ensure that every head of department takes responsibility for the quality of work in his or her area; (paragraphs 52, 54, 65, 68, 162 and 186)
- (2) ensure that every subject knows how it can help pupils prepare to live in a culturally diverse society. (paragraphs 47, 74, 86 and 117)

In addition the governors and the headteacher need to:-

improve the curriculum and assessment in music in Years 7 to 9;

make sure that all pupils have equal opportunities to work in the limited specialist accommodation for art, drama and music.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	144
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	54

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	27	62	36	18	1	0	0
Percentage	19	43	25	12.5	0.5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	697
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	27

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	31
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	155

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

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	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.6
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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
	2001	58	76	134

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	45	48
	Girls	56	64	61
	Total	111	109	109
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (66)	81 (73)	81 (75)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	47 (24)	53 (56)	33 (44)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	51	49
	Girls	67	69	64
	Total	111	120	113
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (77)	90 (81)	84 (81)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (36)	57 (59)	39 (43)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	63	73	136

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	62	63
	Girls	55	71	71
	Total	92	133	134
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	68 (58)	98 (95)	99 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44 (41)
	National	39 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	2
Pakistani	8
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	683
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	18	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	42.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	177.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	21.2
Key Stage 4	19.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1,695,791
Total expenditure	1,731,930
Expenditure per pupil	2,554
Balance brought forward from previous year	63,592
Balance carried forward to next year	27,453

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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

51%

Number of questionnaires sent out

697

Number of questionnaires returned

354

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	57	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	58	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	58	6	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	57	11	3	1
The teaching is good.	32	61	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	54	17	3	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	42	6	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	43	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	51	15	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	43	48	4	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	53	3	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	59	36	3	1	1

Other issues raised by parents

Forty-five parents attended the parents' meeting and the majority of comments were very supportive of the school. They thought that standards at the school were very good, particularly in drama and music. The inspection team agrees that standards in drama and music in terms of activities outside lessons are very good, but standards in some lessons could be better. Parents were pleased with the atmosphere in the school and appreciate the way the school builds the confidence of pupils and values them as individuals. There was some concern about behaviour of a small number of boys in Years 9 and 10. The inspection team found that when teaching was good or better, pupils were involved in the lesson to the extent that they did not think of misbehaving. On the rare occasions when some teaching was only satisfactory some boys did misbehave.

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

ENGLISH

The provision for English is very good.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The department is very well led and managed and teachers work together very effectively.
- Pupils attain very good standards and display very positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because of the highly effective support in both mainstream classes and small withdrawal groups.
- Virtually all pupils, including lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, gain grades in both GCSE English and English Literature at the end of Year 11.

Areas for development

- There are insufficient texts from or about other cultures and traditions.

- 76 Pupils' attainment is well above average at the ages of 14 and 16 years. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment and because of the very good teaching attain well above average standards in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9. Results are above those gained by pupils in similar schools. Girls achieve higher standards than boys, but the difference between them is much less than it is nationally. This is because of the strategies implemented by the department to make learning more structured and more attractive to boys.
- 77 Pupils continue to make very good progress through Years 10 and 11 and the standards achieved in GCSE examinations are well above average and well above those in similar schools. Girls perform better than boys and the difference is greater than the national difference because the strategies used in recent years have not had time to raise the standards of older boys. Virtually all pupils, including lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, are entered for both English and English Literature examinations and all pupils entered have gained passes in both subjects in the last two years. This is a major indicator of very successful teaching of mixed ability groups.
- 78 The work observed in lessons and in pupils' books during the inspection confirms these very high standards. All pupils throughout the school are articulate and speak with confidence in all situations, both informal and formal. They are supported by the secure and accepting classroom environment and the many opportunities to work in carefully organised groups and to discuss their work with a partner. This thoughtful support enables them to develop and test out their ideas before committing them to paper. They have a good range of vocabulary and are able to explain, debate, present a range of opinions and respond sensitively to the opinions of others. In the best lessons, the teacher asks questions of boys and girls alternately to ensure that all participate equally and that both genders have the same chance to participate.
- 79 Pupils' reading skills are equally very good. Even in Year 7, pupils can recognise metaphors in others' writing and use them effectively in their own. Higher attaining pupils can both explain the way such devices contribute to the success of a piece of writing and analyse their effect on the reader. All pupils are taught how to select the main points of a text and they can recognise the main features of different styles of

writing. Higher and average attaining pupils can read below the surface for different layers of meaning in the challenging texts presented to them. Pupils with special educational needs are sometimes withdrawn from lessons so that they can work in the same way, but with texts that are more appropriate for their levels of attainment. The Reading Award scheme that the department has introduced recently has effectively encouraged pupils to read more widely for pleasure. The school library supports this activity with a very good range of fiction and information books. On a few occasions, teachers read aloud texts which pupils could easily read for themselves, thus depriving them of further opportunity to become independent readers.

- 80 The standards achieved in writing are well above average. High attaining pupils quickly develop a very good sense of purpose and audience. Even lower attaining pupils in Year 7 are able to write discursive pieces which explore both sides of an argument because of the small steps in learning which allow them to develop their ideas in a logical sequence. Presentation skills are good and all pupils are given the opportunity to use information and communications technology to present their work. After the previous inspection highlighted the need for improvements in spelling in all subjects, the department introduced a structured spelling programme that has succeeded not only in improving spelling, but also in teaching pupils about the underlying rules.
- 81 Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to build on the work in the lower school, producing GCSE course work of a very high quality. Pupils are very well prepared for their GCSE examinations. For instance, in a Year 11 revision class, pupils to be entered for the higher tier papers were asked to analyse two articles from a broadsheet newspaper. They were given good guidance on what examiners would be looking for and were able to identify satire and irony and comment on how these were conveyed to the reader.
- 82 Pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who have English as an additional language are fully integrated and well supported and achieve standards consistent with their levels of prior attainment. In one Year 7 lesson an Asian boy scored full marks in a spelling test and this was used sensitively by the teacher to raise his self-esteem and status within the class.
- 83 Because of these very good standards of literacy the department has been selective in implementing further strategies, using only those elements of the National Literacy Strategy that it considers appropriate. This is equally the case across the curriculum. The current focus in almost all subjects is on teaching pupils advanced skills so that they are able to further improve their work by recognising and using specific features of different types of text.
- 84 Pupils in all classes display very positive attitudes towards English. They work productively because of the brisk pace that teachers set, settle quickly to their work, concentrate well and enjoy lessons because the curriculum is relevant, texts and tasks are pitched at the right level of challenge for them and because they are treated as serious learners. The atmosphere in lessons is one of all participants striving to reach the highest standards of which each pupil is capable. In one excellent Year 9 lesson on poetry, the male teacher set boys a very good example, showing that both analysis and personal response to poems are relevant and useful for both boys and girls. The boys responded especially well.
- 85 The quality of teaching overall is very good. Particularly good features are teachers' high expectations and their very effective questioning to encourage pupils to think for

themselves and to develop their ideas. There is a constant emphasis on pupils as independent and responsible learners. Lessons have clear purposes explained at the beginning so that pupils always know why as well as how they are to approach their work. They are fully involved in the learning process and the focused marking and regular feedback tells them how to improve. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good through the support given in class and through the withdrawal programme. There is high quality liaison between class teachers, support teachers and assistants and the co-ordinator. Higher attaining pupils are offered additional challenge through entry to competitions and writing for the school magazine. Teachers also ensure that the GCSE syllabus, resources and tasks are matched to their needs, so that they are stretched and challenged.

- 86 The department is very well led and managed. Teachers work as a team, planning the common schemes of work, reviewing and developing the curriculum and supporting new and non-specialist staff. The curriculum could be further improved by the inclusion of more texts from and about other cultures and traditions. This is a highly effective, committed and experienced team, well placed to bring about further improvement.

Drama

The provision for drama is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well above average standards in their GCSE examinations.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given responsibility for planning and developing their own work.
- Opportunities for pupils to participate in drama activities outside of lessons are very good.

Areas for development

- Non-specialist teachers are not given enough training and support.
- The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 does not offer enough opportunity for pupils to develop their creative and imaginative skills.
- The increasing number of classes means that drama is sometimes taught in non-specialist accommodation.

- 87 Pupils' attainment in drama at the end of Year 9 is about average, but pupils who take drama as one of their GCSE options make very good progress in Years 10 and 11 and achieve well above average standards at the end of the course. This is because these pupils are taught by a specialist drama teacher and are given far more opportunities for planning, developing and presenting their own ideas. Their creativity and imaginative skills are very good and the additional responsibility allows them to explore them to a greater depth.

- 88 Pupils enter the school having had different experiences in their various primary schools and in Year 7 they begin to learn the basics of dramatic conventions and performance. Girls have far better attitudes towards the drama at this stage and are more able to absorb themselves in the work. Many boys view drama as an opportunity to play and this affects the progress they make. This was well illustrated in one Year 7 lesson, taught by a non-specialist, when the girls made real effort to show the different weights of the imaginary balls they were throwing to each other in the warm-up whereas the boys had little understanding of the requirements of the exercise. However, in another Year 7 lesson, taught by the specialist, pupils

achieved much higher standards in an exercise to develop characters. They were able to create and sustain a variety of characters in a quiet, productive atmosphere. By Year 9, pupils are able to create improvisations on a situation given to them by the teacher. Girls remain more able to sustain and develop their work independently, but in one lesson this gave rise to a situation where the teacher spent a disproportionate amount of time working with the boys' groups during the rehearsal period. Boys also dominated the initial class session and the teacher failed to involve the girls sufficiently in discussion. Pupils were given too much direction and so were limited in their creative and imaginative development.

- 89 The GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 is well organised. The requirements of the syllabus are made clear to pupils and they are expected to take a great deal of responsibility for their own progress. They are able to work collaboratively and respect and value each other's contributions. Pupils organise themselves well, meet deadlines and understand how to evaluate their own work in order to improve. However, even here pupils tend to work in single gender pairs and groups and opportunity for good social development is lost because the teacher does not encourage otherwise. On the positive side there is good access to information and communications technology for course work and a small editing suite which pupils can use to watch videos of their work to see how it can be improved.
- 90 The quality of teaching overall is good, but there is a marked difference between the work of the specialist and the non-specialists. Apart from the drama handbook which sets out a broad outline of what should be taught, there has been no further training. Staff are given no guidance on how to teach drama and no opportunity to observe lessons taught by the specialist. The drama studio is a good space with blackout and specialist lighting and sound systems, but all three teachers have to teach on occasions in the main hall. This large space suffers from noise from the adjoining gymnasium and kitchen and is used as a corridor. It is an entirely unsuitable space because the constant interruptions affect pupils' concentration, particularly those in Years 7, 8 and 9, and the quality of their work is seriously impeded. It is impossible to create the quiet, reflective and intimate atmosphere in which the best drama flourishes. Teachers give freely of their time to support drama activities outside of lessons including productions and activities that involve the wider community, including partner primary schools.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is imaginative and of a very good standard which motivates the pupils to learn.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The team is committed to success and further improvement.
- The high quality support for pupils' with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- The sharing of in-house expertise in order to ensure a more consistent approach to some aspects of teaching and marking.

- 91 Standards of attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 are well above national averages and have been improving since the last inspection. There is no significant difference between the performance of the boys and girls at age 14. At age 16 the gap between girls and boys has narrowed over the last couple of years, although girls still achieve better results at the higher grades. At age 14, the number of pupils attaining

a level 6 or above has also been well above national averages. Many pupils who arrive at the school with special educational needs achieve good results at both ages 14 and 16.

- 92 By the age of 14, standards of work seen in books, lessons and discussions with pupils are well above what is typically expected of pupils of this age. Pupils show confidence and competence in all areas of mathematics. For example, Year 9 pupils are able to apply their mathematical knowledge to solving the problem of positioning a fire sensor in their classroom using Pythagoras' theorem in three dimensions. High attaining Year 8 pupils are able to see the relationship between algebra and plotting graphs to work out when it is cheaper to pay for car washing on every occasion and when it is cheaper to take up a special offer.
- 93 The high standard of achievement during Years 7, 8 and 9 is a result of very good teaching across all year groups. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when teaching was described as good. When teaching is very good teachers deliver well-prepared lessons that include a variety of activities to meet the needs of all pupils including those for whom English is an additional language. In a mixed ability Year 7 class, high attaining pupils were questioned by their teacher in order to ascertain whether or not they needed to calculate the area of a triangle. The most able were given the challenge of investigating the rule for calculating the area of a parallelogram using their knowledge of the area of other shapes. In a Year 8 lesson a computer generated random decimal numbers that pupils corrected to a number of decimal places or significant figures. Teachers used this part of their lessons well to reinforce basic skills and assess pupils' progress. Sometimes small white boards are used in order that the teacher can assess knowledge and identify problems at a glance. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils who, on the whole, respond by producing very good work. Teachers provide their pupils with opportunities to investigate mathematical ideas, apply their knowledge to real life and to think mathematically. In the majority of lessons, teachers and pupils enjoy very good relationships, as do the pupils between themselves. Pupils are prepared to 'have a go' and are not afraid to make mistakes. As a result, good progress is made and high standards achieved.
- 94 Standards of Year 11 pupils' work seen are also well above the national average. High attaining pupils demonstrated competence across number and algebra, shape space and measures in addition to data handling questions when working in groups revising for their mock examinations. Low attaining pupils can see that calculating Christmas card price codes is exactly the same as algebraic substitution and are confident and able to substitute in expressions such as $2a+3b$. Middle ability pupils in Year 10 are able to enlarge shapes by factors of 3, 4 or a half and are beginning to understand the concept of similarity.
- 95 The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good and directly contributes to the high levels of achievement. Teachers use a variety of strategies, which meet the needs of high attaining pupils as well as those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. Pupils are given opportunities to investigate mathematics and apply their knowledge to real life. As they do during Years 7, 8 and 9, lessons in Years 10 and 11 begin with a starter activity. For example, in a Year 10 middle set, pupils were given part of a drawing of Harry Potter which they had to enlarge and stick onto a large chart and guess the person. Teachers use the same techniques as they do with Years 7, 8 and 9 and these coupled with the very good relationships within the classrooms ensure that the learning environment encourages good progress and high standards are achieved.

- 96 Pupils of all abilities from the age of 11 to 16 make very good progress in mathematics. They make clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and the majority are aware of what they need to do to improve their learning. Pupils' progress is enhanced by their very positive attitudes to learning and the high levels of concentration in the majority of classes. They participate in lessons and are prepared to explain their solutions to their classmates. Pupils are given opportunities in many lessons to show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. Much of the teaching in mathematics requires pupils to make decisions and express their ideas. In classes where there are pupils with special educational needs the learning support teacher worked hard to encourage high levels of concentration. Teachers ensure that all pupils are aware of the level at which they are working and what they need to do to improve. Their progress is monitored and recorded and appropriate targets are set. Pupils talk about how well they are doing using the language of the National Curriculum levels displayed in all rooms. Marking is completed regularly and the best examples include useful comments about pupils' success and the way forward. The record of achievement is good and includes comments that enable both parents and pupils to understand what achievements have been made and the areas for improvement.
- 97 On the few occasions when teaching is less successful, poor classroom management results in a lack of concentration and pupils make little progress with their learning.
- 98 The leadership and management of the department are very good. The team is committed to promoting high standards of achievement and teaching and give freely of their time outside lessons to support their pupils and less experienced colleagues. They do not, however, take enough time to share the very good practice within the department. The curriculum ensures that pupils have good opportunities to improve their basic skills and to develop as mathematicians. The provision for high attaining pupils is challenging with provision for very high attaining pupils. Similarly the provision for lower attaining pupils includes all the elements of a broad scheme with opportunities to revisit topics regularly and reinforce them in a variety of ways. Pupils have many opportunities to understand the power of mathematics in solving real life problems. The opportunities to use computers in mathematics lessons have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good in all year groups.
- There is a well-established work ethos.
- Pupils develop independent study skills.
- There are strong teacher pupil relationships.
- There is very good leadership of the department.

Areas for improvement

- The laboratories and corridors are in a poor state of repair.
- There are not enough text and reference books.

- 99 At the end of both Year 9 and Year 11, results show that the attainment levels of the pupils are above national average. Since the last inspection, results at the end of Year 9 have improved steadily. However, this year there were fewer of the highest

grades than last year and this has meant a slight decrease in the overall results. They remain above the national average, but are below the average of similar schools.

- 100 Similarly, the overall GCSE results, while remaining above average in terms of the number of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades, are not quite as good as they were last year. This is because there were fewer pupils who gained A*/B grades.
- 101 In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils become confident about scientific enquiring and investigations because teachers encourage and praise their attempts to answer questions and to make suggestions for solving problems. Year 7 pupils readily made suggestions about how to separate salt from water and show their emerging understanding of energy transfer by suggesting what sort of energy goes in and comes out of a variety of devices such as a windup toys. Years 8 and 9 pupils acquire further investigation skills of planning, predicting and evaluating. For homework a year 8 class had done their own research on yeast fermentation and in a lesson small groups planned an investigation into the effect of temperature on yeast. Another group began learning about how to evaluate their experiments when they were asked to explain how they could have improved their experiment about testing the strength of magnets.
- 102 Teachers conscientiously help pupils to develop responsibility for their own learning by planning lessons to include group work and independent learning, including the use of computers. The teachers are creative and encourage creativity. One teacher introduced the elements of chemistry through a study of rocks from local hills. She devised a puzzle to be solved that would encourage the pupils' knowledge of the symbols for the elements. Pupils' literacy, numeracy and computer skills are developed in science lessons. One group of pupils enthusiastically began an essay entitled Roddy Red Cell to help their understanding of blood circulation. They use computers for research and word processing.
- 103 In Years 10 and 11 the pupils demonstrate their considerable scientific knowledge, understanding and skills. They confidently carried out and tabulated their results of an investigation involving electrical circuitry. In another class, pupils investigated stretching forces and accurately drew and interpreted graphs. Others used computers to investigate the effects of combining coloured light. In a lesson where pupils worked independently they practised the drafting and correcting of their accounts of their discoveries on the topic of genetics. In another lesson on genetics the pupils considered the moral issues surrounding genetic engineering and were able to argue for and against, displaying their well developed speaking and listening skills and their use of scientific vocabulary.
- 104 Teaching in science is very good and contributes to a standard of learning in lessons which is good and reflects test and examination results. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and clear understanding of the National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. They have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and kindly empathise with the pupils whose needs are different. They are good role models for all pupils.
- 105 Most pupils make very good progress in lessons including those of different abilities and those with English as an additional language. Patient and skilled learning support teachers or assistants support some classes. Individual pupils or small groups are set more or less difficult tasks designed to ensure that each pupil enjoys success, while being sufficiently challenged to make progress. Other pupils are set targets in terms of levels or grades they expect to achieve and these targets describe

the amount and quality of work they should produce. Pupils check these to make sure that for each assignment they do they will get the highest possible grade. There is also a science tutorial system. Each science teacher is assigned a group of pupils whose work in science he/she monitors to ensure their progress

- 106 The head of department is most conscientious and his planning to develop the department is thorough. He assesses the pupils' progress and identifies pupils or groups who may not be progressing as well as or as quickly as they ought and he adjusts his planning accordingly. The very good or excellent teaching in science stems from good teamwork and staff development programmes of which the most recent has been training in ICT to enhance science teaching. The laboratories are adequate but are in need of refurbishment and while some new books have been purchased, there remains a need for more books to support the department's commitment to encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching ensures good learning by all pupils.
- Assessment is very good.
- Homework is used effectively and teachers give clear guidance for improvement.
- The use of direct observational study to reinforce formal elements is good.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is inadequate: it limits the range of work.
- Three-dimensional skills are underdeveloped.
- The use of computers throughout the work of the department.
- The greater use of multi-cultural examples in units of work.

- 107 Teacher assessment shows that attainment at the age of 14 is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils at the age of 16 gaining the higher grades A* - C in GCSE examinations in 2001 was below the national average. Girls' results are significantly higher than those of boys and closer to the national average. The work of current examination candidates in Years 10 and 11 suggests much better results in 2002.

- 108 In the work seen during the inspection, the standards of 14 year olds are in line with national expectations. Year 9 pupils are able to use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings. They observe well from direct observation and have a good understanding of colour and used pastels and paint to good effect in their work. In a Year 9 lesson using clay for relief figure forms, pupils showed the ability to simplify images and consider spatial layout and textural surfaces. They made good connections with ancient pottery figures and studies of misericords from Hereford Cathedral. Work shows greater perceptual depth when pupils use first hand observation as a basis for their work. Pupils with special educational needs in all years achieve good standards for their ability, benefiting from much individual attention.

- 109 By the time pupils are 16, much of the work seen is above the standard expected. Pupils can develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work. They demonstrate

personal interests, ideas and responses to important movements in art and artists are good. The annotation of pupils' work is now a strength. Pupils use sketch books effectively. Teachers use appropriate language and vocabulary in most lessons so pupils' technical language develops well. Year 10 pupils speak confidently about their work, with good knowledge and understanding. Pupils' work from direct observation develops well as they experiment with enlargement, layout and use of different media. Higher-attaining pupils use a more sophisticated approach, studying a wider range of well-known artists and putting more creative and intellectual effort into researching and following their styles.

- 110 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good throughout. This is a direct result of the high expectations and knowledge and understanding that teachers bring to their lessons. Pupils enjoy their art and design lessons and apply themselves purposefully. There is an effective working ethos and pupils behave and do their best. They want to improve and do well and are eager to explain their work in gallery discussions at the end of lessons.
- 111 The quality of teaching and learning is always good and very good in Years 10 and 11. Very good relationships and confident teaching ensure that lessons are enjoyable and productive. Teachers know pupils well and plan their lessons to meet individual requirements. The preparation and implementation of targets for pupils with special educational needs are most effective. Pupils of all abilities are challenged and schemes of work address boys' interests. Lessons start with the teacher identifying what the class will learn and revising previous learning. Careful, clear explanations and good intervention at key points enable good progress to be made. As a result of using good resources to illustrate ideas of colour mixing and decoration, Year 7 pupils understood the ideas and at the same time very good teaching brought in direct connections with Henri Rousseau. In a Year 11 lesson on preparation for the GCSE mock examination, pupils demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the connection made with artists that had influenced their work. Teachers manage time very well. Pupils are kept hard at it and there is good use of questioning that develops positive thinking skills. A pattern of homework is now in place in Years 7 to 9 and pupils are aware of their levels of work. Well-constructed assessments now make a significant contribution to the development and progress of pupils' work.
- 112 The subject co-ordinator has made an effective start in managing the department and is now supported by a recently appointed and effective newly qualified teacher. Teaching schemes and departmental policies are now clear and provide good guidance for staff. The work of the department is monitored effectively through classroom observations and work sampling. Assessment is effective and informs curriculum planning well. There is very limited access to computers within the department. Technical help, storage and preparation spaces are still inadequate. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive effect upon the quality and range of pupils' work. The library provision for good quality reference books is good and meets fully the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base.
- 113 Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Written aims and objectives that link programmes of study and teaching approaches are now established. Assessment procedures have been refined in order to ensure that pupils have systematic opportunities to discuss their achievement and to set targets for future development more effectively. Art history connections and research have moved forward, but multi-cultural links are not yet fully developed. There is now more evidence of direct observational work in sketch books and a structured approach to

media choice is given in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' work as a whole is more closely monitored.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Very good teaching places a high priority on design.
- Pupils are highly motivated as a result of challenging projects. There are excellent assessment procedures.
- There is very good leadership and management and a highly committed team.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to learn through team work.
- Accommodation does not help the team to achieve the highest standards of which pupils are capable.
- Very limited technician support results in excessive demands on teachers' time.

114 Attainment is well above average by the age of 16 and has improved since the last inspection. The department's GCSE results have been well above average for the last three years. In 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching the highest grades A and A* was high compared with the national average. Performance of boys and girls are well above average, but results indicate that the highest attaining girls do better than similar ability boys. The gap between boys and girls is narrower in 2001. The GCSE short course results were below national average because the course was linked with the short course in ICT and neither met pupils' needs or expectations. At the end of Year 9, teacher's assessments are above the national average and have improved in 2001 and since the last inspection. Both boys and girls are above average, but girls perform better than boys.

115 Standards are improving in Years 7 to 9 and are better than last year's assessments indicate. This is because pupils are making very rapid progress as they become inspired by earlier pupils' work. Excellent memo-boards by pupils in Year 8 are colourful and creative. Every one is different because pupils have been encouraged to be original. They are accurately made and meticulously finished, showing excellent progress in skills. The most talented pupils have reached very high levels and their boards are of commercial quality. Similarly, Year 9 pupils produce very good 'Hats from across the World' in textiles. They increase skills and techniques in designing and making, as well as reflecting on the lives of people from a wide range of different cultures. In food technology, they produce very good evaluations of a 'Healthy Food' project as a result of clear guidance from the teacher. By Year 11, a lesson of the highest quality gives pupils excellent insights into the techniques of marketing and deepens their understanding of why safety standards are important in the construction of toys. In food technology, pupils show very good skills of scanning text to develop interesting ideas, in preparation for an examination. They have a very good understanding of commercial processes as a result of a factory visit and a film on textiles manufacturing. The work of some pupils is outstanding, as illustrated by design folders and photographs from last year's pupils. A significant number of projects are of high quality because students are inspired by their work and spend a lot of time developing and realising ideas.

- 116 Achievement is very good throughout the school as a result of very good teaching and learning. Pupils make very good progress, taking into account that standards are average on entry, with wide variation between pupils' skills and their understanding of the design process. Teachers involve pupils in high quality projects, promoting high standards and motivating them to give of their best. Boys and girls are very interested because the teachers help them to make interesting choices in project design. Lower attaining boys and girls make very good progress because they are highly motivated by excellent teaching. High attaining pupils make very good progress, but some boys have been underachieving because they have not sustained the same effort as girls in producing folders of their work. The department has begun to tutor older pupils within lessons and this is having the desired effect in showing boys as well as girls exactly how to improve the written quality of their work. Similarly, pupils from different cultural backgrounds are well supported. Assessments show an ethnic minority boy in Year 11 has made very good progress as a result of excellent personal guidance. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated superbly in lessons and very well supported by learning assistants. A pupil with visual difficulties has produced a key ring of good quality along with others in Year 7. Those who have manipulative problems use laptops to write in lessons, coping admirably and maintaining the pace of others in writing notes. When pupils come to school experiencing personal difficulties, teachers are sensitive to their needs, making it easier for them to settle to work.
- 117 The pace of teaching is always high and stimulates pupils to work productively. Teachers promote personal development of pupils at every opportunity. Conversations are full of encouragement, resulting in further effort by pupils. Pupils are trusted to work independently and gain a strong sense of personal responsibility. They are confident and mature, seeking advice of teachers as their work proceeds. The skills of teachers in achieving very good behaviour and attitudes are amongst the best seen. They use rewards very well to motivate younger pupils. Each project in Years 7 to 9 has an award and is celebrated in assembly. Excellent assessment has resulted from a system common to all pupils and is leading to increasingly refined setting of individual pupil targets. High regard for pupils' achievements is shown in the commitment of the team to curriculum and staff development.
- 118 Highly effective planning is a tribute to very good leadership and collegiate work by the team. Projects illustrate common features of design that are clearly visible in all modules. Work in Year 7 builds on the different experiences from primary schools. Information and communication technology, language and mathematical opportunities are planned effectively. Teachers give good attention to the language needs of pupils when giving instructions, using key words and encouraging pupils to read aloud. Very good reference to cultural development was seen in a Year 8 lesson as they developed a specification for non-verbal communication signs for the Manchester Commonwealth Games. Teachers speak with individuals and small groups all the time, using technical language well and influencing the quality of speaking and writing. Some opportunities are missed for generating teamwork that would give further opportunities for pupils to speak formally in arguing cases for choices they have made. Pupils take good care of presentation and are proud of their projects as a result of constant efforts by teachers. Project folders are very well organised in Years 10 and 11.
- 119 The work of the department fully reflects the aims and ethos of the school in their expectations of pupils and in the monitoring of standards they achieve. The quality of accommodation has improved since the last inspection, but the resistant materials room does not give pupils surfaces of sufficient quality to easily produce good graphics. The location of large machinery does not meet good specification for

safety, although teachers take very good care in its use. The separation of textiles and food technology from graphics and resistant materials reduces the impact of efforts by the team to present a unified subject in design technology. The department has very limited technician support, making excessive demands on the teaching staff and resulting in poor storage of materials, which is a safety risk.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are consistently well above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers in the subject.
- Fieldwork is limited to Years 7, 10 and 11.

120 Pupils achieve standards that are above the national expectation by the end of Year 9. Those pupils who choose to study geography to GCSE level, achieve standards which are well above the national average. The number of pupils who achieve A* and A grades in their examination is higher than is the case nationally. Pupils who are awarded a Certificate of Achievement achieve good standards for their ability. Standards have improved throughout the school over the last three years. In 2001, the school achieved it's best ever geography results.

121 Observation of lessons and an examination of pupil's work supports these findings. Pupils are clearly on target to achieve similar results next year. All pupils work hard and take a pride in the presentation of their books and folders. They do a lot of work in the time available.

122 Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress. Pupils quickly acquire the skills needed to use maps effectively. In Year 7, pupils demonstrate the ability to give six figure grid references for specific locations. They show a secure understanding of map symbols and the ability to use contour lines to identify the shape of the land. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a secure understanding of the differences between less and more economically developed countries. During the inspection, they showed a very good understanding of the factors affecting the location of industry. They were able to use this knowledge to make reasoned decisions as to where they would choose to build a new Fiat car factory in Italy.

123 In Years 10 and 11, pupils receive detailed guidance on the completion of coursework, both in lessons and during lunchtime and after school coursework clubs. Their work is regularly assessed to ensure that they are on line to meet the challenging but achievable targets they set themselves. There are regular opportunities to practise past examination questions. As a result, pupils make very good progress and achieve high standards. Pupils use appropriate geographical terminology. They build up detailed case study material that will support them in their examinations. A good example of this was observed during the inspection. Year 11 pupils developed the ability not only to describe the November 2000 floods in Shrewsbury, but also to identify a wide range of causes and effects. In addition, the highest attaining pupils came up with some very good suggestions as to how this problem might be prevented in the future. They understand the complex forces at

work in shaping economic activity and demonstrate this through their work on the decline and redevelopment of South Wales and the growth of new industry in Japan. Pupils are able to use computers to support their work, but this aspect remains underdeveloped.

- 124 Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are effectively supported. Teachers frequently provide more structured worksheets or use different teaching strategies to ensure these pupils are able to take a full part in the lessons and achieve the same learning as the rest. Teachers and learning support assistants target them for extra help, using very effective questioning techniques to enable them to work out their own answers and thereby develop their independence and confidence. Careful thought is put into the teaching strategies used with these pupils and, as a result, they find the lessons interesting and enjoyable and, therefore, show good levels of motivation. This was seen in a Certificate of Achievement class, where very good individual help was given to pupils in a very purposeful and businesslike way. This conveyed an atmosphere of high expectations. Consequently, the pupils worked very well and achieved a lot in the time. Teachers include extension activities in their lessons to ensure that the highest attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged.
- 125 Frequent opportunities are planned to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Key words are identified in each unit of work and teachers ensure they are understood and used appropriately. There is evidence of persuasive writing, poems and the use of literature to promote empathy. Pupils regularly use graphs to derive or show information.
- 126 Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Teachers demonstrate a very secure understanding of the subject. This means that pupils receive accurate information and clear explanations of new skills or concepts. Teachers are particularly good at explaining difficult ideas by using real life examples which pupils find easier to understand. Lesson planning is very thorough and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers mark work carefully and suggest how it could be improved. This is done particularly well in Years 10 and 11 and results in the production of coursework of a particularly high standard. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and they respond well to this. The activities planned are taught in interesting ways. Very good use is made of videos, television programmes and newspaper articles to stimulate initial interest. The department is consciously extending the range of opportunities provided for pupils to use computers to support their work. Although there are limited opportunities to do this at the moment, the activities currently undertaken are of a good quality. In Years 7, 10 and 11, fieldwork brings the subject to life for the pupils and they really enjoy these experiences. Teachers are quick to spot opportunities where their intervention will help to move pupils on. Questioning is used very effectively to enable pupils to extend their ideas or to enable them to work out answers for themselves. Homework is set regularly and either builds upon what has already been done or prepares pupils for the next step in their learning. Very good teaching means that geography is a particularly popular option at GCSE level.
- 127 The department is effectively managed and there is a clear commitment to raising standards. The new units of work for Years 7 to 9 are particularly well written and impact positively on the quality of learning for pupils. Monitoring of teaching is effective. It has identified successful teaching strategies that everyone now uses to good effect. The department development plan accurately identifies areas for improvement. The extension of fieldwork to all year groups and greater use of information technology are already being addressed.

128 There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Test and examination results have improved. Pupils' progress is better and is very good in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching has improved and is now very good overall. The use of computers is improving, but remains insufficiently developed.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are well above national averages, particularly in the highest grades.
- The quality of teaching is very good and encourages a partnership for learning.
- Pupils' attitudes are very positive and they respond very well to the high expectations of their teachers.
- The management of the department is very good.
- Display is used very imaginatively to enhance the learning environment.
- There is a very high uptake of the subject in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- There are some timetabling anomalies, which lead to split classes and varying lengths of lessons.
- The programme of visits in Year 7 is not broad enough.

129 In recent GCSE examinations, results have been well above national averages and a particularly commendable feature of these results has been the very high number of pupils gaining the highest grades. The seeds of this notable achievement are being sown from the outset so that by the end of Year 9 standards are well above national norms, both in teachers' assessments and in lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection.

130 From Year 7, pupils develop subject skills rapidly and are soon at ease with historical terminology and the critical use of sources. They also learn to write for a variety of purposes and some very impressive extended essay writing was seen from Year 9 pupils on changes over time in England between 1750 and 1900. These very high standards are underpinned by teaching that is always very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have an excellent grasp of subject knowledge which they use very effectively to help pupils learn and to encourage pupils to become budding historians. There is some non-specialist teaching, especially on the humanities course in Year 7, but these teachers are supported well with advice and a programme of shared observations. Classroom management is very strong and there is an air of rigour and purpose in lessons. This in turn gives pupils confidence to explore historical issues together.

131 Standards are also well above the national expectation in Years 10 and 11, with the result that by the age of 16 most pupils have developed a detailed knowledge of the subject. They can analyse historical issues and documents in considerable depth and are, therefore, able to produce high quality answers to GCSE questions. This ability was demonstrated to the full in an excellent Year 11 lesson during which pupils examined model GCSE answers on the topic of medical advances at the time of Louis Pasteur. They also demonstrated the ability to produce their own detailed responses to an examination question on the topic. There is a very strong emphasis on paired and group work and all pupils are expected and encouraged to take part in discussions. They do so with enthusiasm and maturity and this has addressed

successfully an issue arising from the previous report. The use of group work was shown to very good effect in a Year 10 lesson on how the medieval church helped or hindered medical progress. In this lesson, pupils worked very well in groups to examine this issue and the feedback session, led by a pupil assessor, was very impressive in its depth and maturity. Above all, very high expectations are the hallmark of history lessons and question and answer techniques are used very well to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding, thus creating an atmosphere of partnership in classroom activities. Throughout the curriculum, higher attaining pupils are honing their note-taking skills and are producing mature and coherent essays and coursework assignments, for example from Year 11 pupils on the Arab-Israeli conflict and on a local fieldwork investigation. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are making very good progress and the department is producing a wide range of materials to suit their individual needs. The work of learning support assistants is particularly commendable in this respect.

- 132 The attitudes of pupils are always very positive. They show a clear commitment to history and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. They respond very well to challenges and a purposeful classroom atmosphere is maintained at all times, based on a mutual commitment to learning and a thirst for knowledge. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 8 lesson during which pupils showed considerable skill and commitment in preparing for a coursework assignment on religious changes in Tudor England.
- 133 The department has many strengths, including a dedicated and experienced teaching team. It is managed very well and there is a strong commitment throughout to the maintenance of very high standards. The monitoring of pupils' performance is very thorough with a commendable emphasis on self-assessment in pupil profiles. The previous inspection report noted an inconsistency in marking techniques. This is no longer the case and all pupils are given very clear advice on how to improve their written work. There are some inconsistencies in timetabling, however, involving split classes and some single half-hour lessons. This does not give parity of experience to all groups. Display is used very imaginatively to enhance the learning environment and the use of computers is now playing an increasing role in the work of the department, for example in the advice given to pupils on the availability and quality of historical websites. There is a very strong commitment in all lessons to raising standards of literacy and the department makes a strong contribution to the personal development of pupils. There are not enough opportunities, however, for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to visit sites of historical interest.
- 134 Overall, the history department has maintained and built very well on the high standards noted in the previous report. The very creditable GCSE results and the very high uptake of the subject in Years 10 and 11 are testament to the dedication and hard work of the teaching team. The subject is a considerable strength to the school. There are clear plans for further development and the department has the undoubted ability to build further on its notable success.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is very good.

Strengths

- Standards are well above average in tests and examinations.
- Pupils of all abilities use computers to improve their use of English.
- Very good teaching results in pupils gaining competence in a wide range of skills.
- Pupils have access to high quality resources and teaching materials.

Areas for improvement

- The development plan does not include detail of how control technology will be delivered through other subjects.
- The school does not have a cohesive strategy for ensuring that all subjects fulfil the requirement for them to use ICT.

135 Standards in ICT are well above average. This represents a major improvement since the last inspection as a result of good investment in staffing and resources. Standards are better than tests and previous GCSE results indicate because pupils are making very rapid progress because they now have timetabled lessons. Teacher assessments by the end of Year 9 are above average. Assessments indicate that girls do significantly better than boys. The GCSE short course results were below the national average in 2001 because the course did not match the needs of pupils. There is no accreditation for the current Year 11 because the school has made the decision to follow the GNVQ course after school, starting with the present Year 10.

136 By Year 9, pupils demonstrate very good skills because high demands are placed on them, particularly in timetabled lessons. They use a publishing package independently, use the Internet competently and quickly acquire the skills to scan materials into their magazine page. Standards are good in English, mathematics and design technology because pupils readily transfer skills they have acquired and teachers make regular use of computers. By Year 11, pupils are very competent in scanning images and digital photographs into their textiles folders because the ICT and design technology teacher work very effectively together. In science, standards in control technology are improving as a result of recent investment in new accommodation and resources.

137 Achievement is very good even though pupils come into school with varying skills and abilities. Year 7 use their earlier skills to paint 'Treasure Island'. Highest attaining pupils take the opportunity for good imaginary writing to support the creation of treasure. Lower attaining pupils are proud of their work, taking the trouble to correct it. Year 8 pupils improve a spreadsheet, presenting graphs to show peer preferences for school meals and snacks. Year 10 pupils present very good CD covers, accurately measuring the dimensions of the front, rear and spine to illustrate products of commercial quality. The pupils following the GNVQ Intermediate course design and print materials to advertise their company 'Transglobal Mobiles', the best of which are of high quality. Boys and girls achieve equally well in lessons because they are encouraged to be accurate and are praised with very positive feedback for success. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Individuals who need to use computers in every lesson have laptops that enable them reach the same standards as others in the class. Assessments show the small number of ethnic minority pupils make very good progress along with their peers.

138 Teaching of ICT is very good in timetabled lessons as a result of very high

expectations. Pupils are rapidly improving their skills because they have access to high quality resources. Lively materials entice them into interesting scenarios and enables them to work independently whilst the teacher gives help to those who need it. Energetic and rigorous oral feedback gives pupils a very clear understanding of their progress. Written assessments are very detailed and tell pupils exactly what they have to do to reach even higher standards. GNVQ pupils are very well informed about the criteria by which their assignments will be assessed and this encourages them to go for the best possible standard of presentation.

- 139 The use of ICT is good in English, mathematics and design technology, because teachers have planned for regular use of computers in units of work. In mathematics, the use of computers influences pupils' achievements because teachers have matched resources carefully to the needs of pupils. In timetabled lessons, pupils improve their use of the English language by editing and redrafting work. A very good science lesson used the computers to illustrate the mixing of coloured lights to Year 11 pupils, deepening their understanding of light waves. In a French lesson pupils used computers successfully to reinforce spelling and vocabulary, improving pupils' listening skills, but the teacher found it difficult to manage every pupil's time to best effect.
- 140 Provision for the subject has improved significantly since the last inspection as a result of very good leadership and highly effective financial management. The school is aware of the cost of completing the management of change in using information and communication technology as a effective learning resource. The development plan does not include detail of how control technology will be delivered through other subjects, but the co-ordinator has identified the key elements for development, involving science, design technology and geography. The school does not have a cohesive strategy for ensuring that all subjects fulfil and assess their contribution to the development of pupils' ICT skills, but is aware that this is needed.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Very good or outstanding teaching enables pupils to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers give equal care and attention to all pupils.
- There is a wide programme of visits to and contacts with France and Germany.
- Pupils and teachers work hard together to create a positive atmosphere for learning.
- All pupils study the early stages of both French and German.

Areas for improvement

- The organisation of language options for GCSEs.
- The marking of homework so that pupils' work is always fully corrected.
- Some lesson planning so that all pupils concentrate and do not distract others.

- 141 In tests assessed by teachers when pupils are 14, results in French, which is the pupils' first modern foreign language, are well above national averages, with girls doing better than boys. Pupils with special educational needs have higher scores than would be expected from their earlier scores in other subjects. There are no national comparisons for German. Not all pupils continue with German to the age of 14, but those who do score well in the school's tests. Standards were already high at the time of the last inspection, and have improved further.

- 142 In the GCSE examinations, results in French are well above national average, with almost half the candidates in 2001 gaining grades A*, A or B. Girls did particularly well in 2001, with almost two thirds gaining grade B or above, compared with a quarter of boys. Results have been well above average for several years and are continuing to improve. Compared with their results in other subjects, girls achieve very well and boys achieve well. Not enough pupils take German at GCSE for national comparisons to be made, but results are at least as good as would be expected.
- 143 Some students are studying for the Certificate of Achievement in French. There were no results available at the time of the inspection, but the work seen indicates that these students are progressing well.
- 144 Pupils in their first years of both French and German do well because they have good skills in all aspects of their work; reading, writing, listening and speaking. Even those pupils who find languages difficult can pronounce words well. Most can speak in whole sentences and use French or German naturally to ask questions or to carry out everyday conversations about school or home. Even pupils in their first term of French corrected their teacher in fluent French when she missed out a number in a list. Not only did they spot the error, but it did not occur to them to speak in English.
- 145 As they move on up the school, pupils are grouped with others whose language skills match their own. This arrangement means that in top sets, pupils who are at ease with French or German can carry on quite complex conversations in these languages at an early stage, questioning each other and expressing opinions. These pupils can also read fluently, understand difficult passages on tape and write correctly in complete sentences.
- 146 Pupils who find languages more difficult can understand written French or German well and can read their textbooks with understanding. Some pupils who are slower readers in English manage to read well in French or German because the language is not at such a difficult level and there are illustrations to give useful hints about meaning. In this way French and German are used by the teachers to give confidence to those who may be worried by other schoolwork. These pupils, including some with special educational needs, are able to imitate what they hear and read so that their spoken and written language develops well along with their understanding. Extra support is given in some lessons to pupils who are experiencing difficulties.
- 147 Pupils who have a flair for languages are given challenging work in their first three years so that by the end of Year 9 they are ready for the demands of the complex language work needed for the best grades at GCSE. Pupils in the top groups can speak fluently about what they did yesterday, what they are doing today, and what they will be doing tomorrow, using the correct tenses and constructions. With these pupils, teachers insist on the correct usage and ask questions that extend what the student needs to say. They ask Year 9 pupils, for example, what they will be doing at the weekend and which activities they will prefer and why. Pupils enjoy this and can be fluent on the subject of why their favourite hobbies are superior to those of others.
- 148 In the two years leading up to their public examinations, pupils continue to develop the four language skills in the directions required by the examination. Teachers know the examination syllabus very well and ensure that pupils know exactly what is needed. Lessons contain direct examination practice or other material that matches the demands of the GCSE or Certificate of Achievement. Pupils are very well

prepared because they know what to expect, have plenty of practice and are confident about examination routines. They can concentrate on improving their performance without anxiety about knowing what to do.

- 149 With no language assistants, teachers ensure a high quality of spoken French or German by their own fluency and confidence in speaking and by using French or German as the normal way of communicating in the classroom. Building on the work done in earlier years, pupils know that they are expected to produce their best written work and to concentrate during reading or writing tests. Their good habits of study mean that they do not waste time; even shorter lessons are used to the maximum to develop pupils' skills and confidence.
- 150 All the teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory. Almost all lessons were good or better and half were outstanding. Both languages are taught very well. Teachers understand the needs of individual pupils. Strong challenges are given to those who can meet them and those needing more help are equally well taught with work that moves them on faster than would be expected. In the few lessons that were satisfactory rather than good, teachers allowed pupils to lose concentration and waste their time and the time of others. In most lessons, pupils were working throughout, making very good progress between the beginning and end of lessons as well as over a longer period. Younger pupils learn through a great variety of enjoyable activities – games, songs, competitions and acting – while older pupils also enjoy occasional board or card games which help their number or vocabulary work while encouraging them to have fun with their languages. At all ages, pupils were often sorry when the lessons ended.
- 151 Besides very good teaching, the department offers pupils the chance to link with partner schools in France and Germany through exchange visits and emails. Computers are used in lessons to increase pupils' confidence with technology while using their languages.
- 152 Since the last inspection the very good work of the department has continued. There is still a need for more textbooks in Year 7 to enable pupils to take books home if required. The department is well led and managed, with good accommodation and resources. There are minor improvements in marking and class management to be made, but the very good results and the enthusiasm and commitment of staff and pupils speak for themselves.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Good standards are achieved in GCSE examinations.
- Opportunities for extra curricular music making are extensive.
- The enthusiasm of the head of department and pupils positive attitude and commitment to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The scheme of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is out of date.
- Assessment is not used effectively to monitor and track pupil progress.
- There is insufficient access to information and communication technology to support music learning.

- 153 Teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 show standards well above the national expectation with girls achieving considerably better than boys. The work seen in lessons and in pupils' notebooks, however, indicates that attainment for both boys and girls at the end of Year 9 is only in line with national expectations. This is because assessment has not been accurately used to track pupil progress. Pupils' composing and performing skills are higher than their listening and evaluating skills. This is because opportunities are missed in lessons for pupils to discuss and evaluate their own and other peoples' music. GCSE results have remained above the national average for the last three years, with the numbers of pupils taking the examination increasing each year. More girls choose to study music than boys, but both achieve equally. Standards of work seen during the inspection from Year 11 pupils indicate that they are on course to maintain these good results.
- 154 Standards, in the lessons observed, for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. Some Year 7 pupils have limited prior knowledge and experience of music and take time to settle sensibly to their work. Because they are not used to playing instruments they lack the technical and performance skills expected. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic to contribute in lessons, but do not use musical language sufficiently in their answers. Year 9 pupils have developed their composing and performing skills and show careful instrument choice within ensembles. All pupils make satisfactory progress, but on occasions those with special educational needs and English as an additional language are not given sufficiently clearly structured tasks. When this happens, their progress is limited as too much freedom means they find the task difficult and do not remain involved in the lesson.
- 155 GCSE pupils benefit from their good instrumental skills that they bring to their lessons so that performing is good for these pupils. During a rehearsal for their mock examinations two Year 11 pupils discussed questions of balance and tempo within their ensemble. This showed a good understanding of performance, very good attitudes and a confident ability to evaluate their work. Pupils talk with pride about their compositions that range in complexity from simple melodies with chords to more complex rhythmic and melodic pieces. One pupil discussed sonata form confidently and how this related to her own piece.
- 156 Teaching and learning for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory, but they are good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The main difference is that the lessons for Years 10 and 11 pupils are clearly designed to support and enhance the examination requirements. A series of well-written handouts ensure that pupils build up a structured amount of reference material during the course. They make use of these handouts when composing and listening to music. Careful revision and reinforcing of musical knowledge ensure that pupils understand how to achieve high marks and to improve their work. In a Year 10 lesson a pupil demonstrated on the piano the different ways that chords could be used and how they are idiomatic of different musical styles. The visiting instrumental teachers plan and link their work closely with these pupils, preparing them for their solo performance work and also accompanying them in examination.
- 157 For pupils in Years 7 to 9 teaching is only satisfactory. This is because lessons are not planned in sufficient detail to ensure that skills, knowledge and understanding are developed systematically. There is good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for the subject that interests pupils in their lessons. However, too often opportunities are missed to develop key areas. Pupils do not evaluate and listen to their practical work, so they are often content with initial work and not challenged to develop and improve. Too often the same task is set for all pupils which means that the higher

attaining pupils are not sufficiently stretched and those with special educational needs lack a clear structure to help them achieve successfully. In one lesson the teacher imposed the pulse when groups of pupils performed, which meant they did not play at the speed they had rehearsed and the performance suffered as a result. Homework is set, but too often as English work rather than a musical one. Pupils' literacy skills are not developed as opportunities are missed during lessons to reinforce musical language through speaking and writing. There is insufficient information and communication technology to support music learning and at present computers are only used occasionally by examination pupils.

- 158 The changes to the creative arts faculty means that the head of department has only recently been appointed. There has been a lack of departmental monitoring previously in order to support and monitor the work of the department. Pupils enjoy and benefit from the extra curricular opportunities offered. Pupils who no longer have music lessons belong to ensembles and enjoy the social opportunity to take part in music making. Classroom accommodation is good, but there is no office space and no adequate storage facilities for pupils' instruments. Because of this, instruments are often left on the floor in practice rooms. Resources in the library include a range of CD's for pupils' use, but there is a shortage of printed music for the many extra-curricular ensembles and class use.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- There is strong leadership of the department.
- Pupils benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular activities available.
- Teaching is very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their work.
- The extension of the dance provision to include a GCSE option.

- 159 The school began offering its pupils the opportunity to take a GCSE in physical education in September 2001. Inspection evidence indicates that the large group of pupils with a wide range of abilities has made a good start to developing an understanding and competence in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject. Course work folders are well presented and detailed and there is much evidence of pupils making good progress. In July 2001 a large number of pupils successfully completed the Junior Sports Leadership Award. This award is a starting point for young people who wish to develop their sports leadership skills.

- 160 Pupils arrive from their primary schools with varying levels of physical education skills, with some lower than expected. They quickly settle into the school and respond very positively to the high quality teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge, deliver lessons with pace and make good use of a variety of tasks or apparatus to meet the needs of all the pupils. This results in pupils making good progress and by the time they are 14 years old most of them are attaining levels that are in line with expectations and a few doing even better. This judgement is in line with teacher assessments. The standard of swimming is high. Teachers use the on-site swimming pool to very good advantage and there are only a very few pupils who cannot swim 20 metres. Most pupils can demonstrate a good range of ability in a

number of swimming strokes, personal survival skills and life saving skills. In gymnastics, body management skills are developing. Most pupils demonstrate good patterns of movement and an increasingly competent ability to link them together into complex sequences. In games activities most pupils demonstrate good levels of skills, showing good ball control, and are aware of simple defence and attack strategies, although some pupils sometimes find it difficult to apply these skills when the element of competition is introduced. Some pupils are able to evaluate their own and others' performances and to make perceptive comments on how they can be improved, but teachers give others too little opportunity to develop this aspect. Teachers inject fun, enjoyment and real pleasure into all activities, ensuring that pupils are given tasks that are sufficiently challenging and that all pupils are totally involved in all aspects of the lessons. Pupils' enjoyment of their lessons is very evident.

- 161 This good progress is maintained during Years 10 and 11 and by the time they are 16 years old most of them, particularly those in the examination groups, are producing work that is better than that usually seen by pupils of this age. The management of pupils through the use of established routines and the high expectations of teachers ensure that pupils have well developed games skills, especially in basket-ball, and are able to apply them well in games situations. Attacking and defensive strategies are clearly understood and all groups have a good knowledge of game rules. Pupils confidently act as officials and coaches for these games. The standard of swimming continues to be high. A large number of pupils have again opted to take the Junior Sports Leaders Award. As part of this course, pupils were observed instructing pupils from the St. Lawrence Primary School in a range of ball skills and physical activities and demonstrated a maturity and confidence that was a pleasure to witness. Teachers of pupils in the examination groups are encouraging their pupils to use the technical language of the subject and most are able to do so when contributing to discussions. This was well demonstrated by a group of Year 10 pupils who were able to make perceptive contributions to a discussion on the effects of exercise on the cardiovascular system. In health related fitness, pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of fitness principles and practices, and many are able to devise their own fitness programmes.
- 162 Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated are given much support by both teachers and fellow pupils and reach very satisfactory levels of attainment. Teaching is sensitive and there is no evidence of pupils with special educational needs being disadvantaged by the curriculum that is on offer. Talented pupils are encouraged to extend their skills both in school and in out of school clubs.
- 163 School teams take part in many inter-school competitions and matches and gain much success. A number of pupils have represented Shropshire in a range of activities, a girl in Year 7 is representing the West Midlands in gymnastics.
- 164 Since the last inspection the department has revised the curriculum, leading to a wider range of activities being offered and the opportunity for pupils to take the GCSE in the subject and the Junior Sports Leader Award. However, the amount of time allocated for gymnastics in Year 7 and 8 is barely adequate for pupils to cover the demands of this aspect of the National Curriculum. In September 2000 the school was granted the Sportsmark Gold award which is a national recognition of the provision of excellent physical education and sport. Good assessment procedures are in place with the department using the information to set individual targets in physical education for all pupils.

- 165 Many staff, including non-specialists, give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs. These are supported by large and enthusiastic groups of pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of outdoor pursuits including abseiling, canoeing and rock climbing when they take part in off-site outdoor pursuit trips. They have the opportunity to visit national sporting events.
- 166 Strong leadership, clear direction and a positive ethos characterise the management of the subject. Since the last inspection the accommodation for the subject has been significantly improved. This improvement has had a positive impact on pupils' attainment. Good quality displays around the school of the department's activities effectively stimulate interest in the subject. The department has high expectations and as a result of hard work and a high level of teacher commitment these expectations are largely met.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards at GCSE are higher than the national average.
- There is a strong emphasis in all lessons on improving literacy.
- The provision in Years 10 and 11 is innovative and well organised.
- Teachers are very enthusiastic and encourage all pupils to be actively involved in lessons.
- The department is well managed and makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Few pupils study the subject to GCSE level.
- The opportunities for pupils to reflect on their progress at the end of lessons are limited.
- There is not enough use of computers to help learning in the subject.

- 167 In recent years, the number of pupils studying religious education for GCSE has fluctuated, but results have been above and sometimes well above national averages for the A* to C range and all pupils have achieved A* to G grades. In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection, pupils are achieving standards above the level of expectations linked to the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 9.
- 168 During their first year at the school, pupils acquire a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions. This was seen, for example, in some good extended writing from Year 7 pupils on customs and beliefs in Hinduism and Judaism. Pupils become adept and confident at discussing spiritual and moral issues. The previous inspection report noted that religious viewpoints were sometimes neglected in moral debates, but this is no longer the case. Pupils are keen to develop their understanding of religious contexts within a particular issue.
- 169 Standards are high as a result of teaching that is always good or very good. Teachers are very enthusiastic about their practice and have high expectations of all pupils. As a result, lessons are organised well and all pupils are encouraged to become involved in their learning. This was seen to good effect in a Year 9 lesson on the Holocaust in which pupils reflected orally and in writing on the powerful images shown in a slide presentation. Aims and objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons, but there are insufficient opportunities for them to reflect on their

progress at the end of each session. There is a commendable emphasis on raising standards of literacy in all lessons. As a result, most pupils are able to put their spoken ideas into writing; for example, there was some impressive extended writing from Year 8 pupils on journeys and from Year 9 pupils on differing concepts of God.

- 170 In Years 10 and 11, these high standards are maintained by pupils studying for a GCSE in the subject. In lessons, they develop their ideas on spiritual and moral issues in depth. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 11 lesson on prejudice during which pupils reflected on the roots of prejudice and Christian attitudes to racism in a mature and articulate discussion. At this stage, subject specialist knowledge is used very well to challenge and motivate pupils. A wide variety of techniques are used to support learning, including paired work, discussion, video and the use of artefacts. Question and answer techniques are used very well to encourage full pupil participation in lessons, as was demonstrated very well in a Year 10 lesson during which pupils examined the differences between discrimination and prejudice. In all lessons, higher attaining pupils are given ample scope to develop their writing skills in depth. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are supported well in lessons, but sometimes pupils' difficulties in literacy hamper their written work. The department has clear plans to widen the variety of materials provided to suit their individual needs.
- 171 Pupils show very positive attitudes to the subject and are eager to participate in lessons. They behave well and have considerable respect for their teachers and for each other. They respond very well to the expectations of their teachers and are mature and thoughtful in debate and discussion.
- 172 There is an innovative approach to religious education for all in Years 10 and 11. On certain days in each year, the timetable is stopped and pupils engage in a series of debates on spiritual and moral issues. Speakers from local and national organisations such as Christian Aid and Amnesty International are welcomed to the school and pupils have opportunities to visit sites of religious interest. The time allocated over the course of two years is low, but the high quality of the provision on these days ensures that statutory requirements are met.
- 173 The department is managed very well and the team is enthusiastic and dedicated. Assessment procedures are used assiduously to monitor pupils' progress and there is an increasing use of self-assessment within the humanities department. The subject makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils and particular emphasis is placed on multicultural and multi-faith issues. There is a wide programme of visits undertaken to enrich pupils' learning. Computers are used increasingly to support pupils' developing knowledge and understanding, but this aspect is not as well developed as it could be.
- 174 Overall, the department has built well on the previous inspection report, which was also very complimentary. There are many strengths and a key issue now is to maintain these high standards and to encourage more pupils to study the subject for GCSE.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

Strengths

- Pupils make very good progress.
- Teachers make good use of information on pupils to plan teaching and learning with the right amount of challenge.
- There is good communication about pupils between support staff and teachers.
- Pupils are keen and enthusiastic to learn.
- Very good liaison with other agencies that support pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Not all targets for pupils are of the same high standard.
- The development of systematic monitoring and evaluation of provision.

175 The school is funded and staffed to provide a 30 place unit for pupils with special educational needs. This unit does not physically exist as staff support pupils in a range of ways to ensure that they benefit from all the opportunities available at the school. Currently, there are 25 boys and 6 girls who benefit from these arrangements. The provision for pupils is an integral part of the work of the whole special educational needs team.

176 Standards at age 14 are in line with or better than what would be expected, based on what they had achieved by the time they were 11. However, there are many examples of pupils in Year 9 attaining results in mathematics, English and science that are in line with results nationally. One reason for this is the very good procedures for testing pupils and using results to plan support for learning in these subjects. The standards pupils achieve by the age of 16 are very good and again are in line or better than what would be expected. Pupils make very good progress from the standards they achieved when they were 14 year olds. In some cases excellent progress is made from when pupils enter the school at the age of 11 years. These pupils pass GCSE examinations, in a broad range of subjects frequently at the higher B and C grades, when they are 16 year olds. The school uses test and assessment data to set challenging targets for pupils. Consequently, pupils make good progress in relation to their targets in their individual education plans for both their learning and behaviour.

177 Teachers plan so that the work in each lesson is very well matched to each pupil's needs. They record what each pupil knows and can do during the lesson to show the progress each pupil is making. The withdrawal programme for English and mathematics is very successful because of the high quality liaison between class teachers, support teachers, support staff and the special educational needs co-ordinator. The pupils' individual education plans contain clear targets that are sufficiently practical for class teachers to implement when support staff are not present. In the very best lessons pupils know their targets. However, the practice of sharing these targets for learning with all pupils is not consistent. The support staff are very effective because they know the pupils very well and frequently set specific targets for learning with a very good blend of help and challenge. Pupils make very good gains towards their targets and for some pupils the progress is excellent. Teaching of pupils on withdrawal programmes is excellent. Pupils respond well to

questions and tasks in class. They learn very well and make very good progress in these small groups and in one-to-one teaching.

- 178 Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They are keen to learn and benefit from very good relationships with their peers and adults. They enjoy learning and doing well and this raises their confidence and self-esteem. They respond well to lively teaching and the very good, frequently excellent, support they receive in lessons. Pupils are given work to meet their needs but which also challenges them and, therefore, helps them to learn.
- 179 The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities. The withdrawal programme for English and mathematics is very well organised so that pupils have the same curriculum as mainstream pupils but at a level matched to their individual needs. Pupils' experiences are relevant to their learning needs despite these needs being quite different amongst the pupils. There has been very good development of a vocational award course for 14 year olds. This new provision for the school involves pupils in work related learning, links with the college and local employers to prepare them for the world of work. Pupils think very highly of this course because it is challenging with clear targets for achieving as they progress through the course.
- 180 The school liaises well with other agencies, parents, pupils and teachers. Teachers know their pupils well and support them very effectively. The school complies with the Code of Practice and statements and reviews are up-to-date and the provision in statements is being fully implemented. The school is successful in meeting the targets identified in individual education plans and Annual Reviews. The use of special arrangements for GCSE examinations is very successful. There are very good arrangements in place to support very low achievers in making very good progress and to recognise their achievements.
- 181 The unit is well managed and the work of the unit makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning and progress. All staff are sufficiently qualified and very experienced in ensuring pupils' learning needs are met. The department benefits from the support of a very experienced and informed governor. It is successful in reflecting the school's aims and values in its work, especially helping pupils to enjoy learning, develop positive attitudes and self image and to fulfil potential. The department's use of information communication technology to inform and support teaching and learning is good. Through regular meetings and informal discussions there is good monitoring of the work of the unit.
- 182 The work of the unit was looked at during a very thorough and professional internal review. Some of the key findings of the review appear not to have been fully implemented at the time of the inspection. For example, improved liaison with subject and pastoral staff. These are areas that need regular reviewing in order to secure best practice. This is a key leadership role.