

INSPECTION REPORT

MORTIMER WILSON SCHOOL

Alfreton, Derbyshire

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112931

Headteacher: Mr Jeffry Lancaster

Reporting inspector: Michael Chapman
3264

Dates of inspection: 20th – 24th November 2000

Inspection number: 190156

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 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Norman H Colledge
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Norman Shelley 13762	<i>Lay inspector</i>		How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well does the school care for its pupils?
David Benstock 20243	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
Russell Whiteley 8744	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
Michael Merchant 27368	<i>Team inspector</i>	Psychology; Sociology; Post 16.	How well is the school led and managed?
Maureen Sinclair 1578	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information technology.	
Gillian Salter-Smith 8329	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	How well are Pupils Taught?
Helen Feasey 30215	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
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Lynne Kaufman 15051	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design technology.	
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Graham Loach 23082	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to Pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is an 11–18 comprehensive with 904 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs is broadly average at 22 per cent, whilst the number with statements is above average at 4 per cent. There are only 10 pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school is located in a mixture of new and outdated buildings, near the centre of a small town with somewhat below average socio economic circumstances.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving and effective school. There is a consistent rising trend of improvement at Key Stage 3. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are now working at standards close to the national average in a number of subjects. Teaching is of a satisfactory standard, and there is clear leadership. However, the school has not yet developed a secure and consistent approach to establishing positive relationships and attitudes towards learning in all classrooms.

Satisfactory value for money is provided overall, but the sixth form is a significant drain on provision.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Achieves good standards in relation to similar schools by the end of Key Stage 3.
- Achievement is particularly good in mathematics.
- Work in physical education and design and technology is of a high standard.
- Has good systems for monitoring and promoting attendance.
- The senior management and governors share a clear focus on improvement.
- The governing body gives high quality support to the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- GCSE performance overall, particularly the number of boys gaining grades in the A* to C range.
- The identification of and therefore action against incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning.
- The consistency of marking and the setting of homework.
- Communication and involvement with parents.
- The role of middle managers in identifying and promoting high quality teaching.
- The time and investment given to information and communication technology (ICT), and the management of ICT across the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. That inspection indicated that poor pupil behaviour was affecting learning in many lessons. Examination results reached a trough in 1998.

There is clear evidence of improvement at Key Stage 3, particularly when compared with the results of schools whose pupils are from similar backgrounds. The data at Key Stage 4 is less clear cut, in that there is little improvement against the national average as yet. However, when compared with similar schools, performance at GCSE is at least average. On some indicators, it is better than average, and evidence from inspection indicates that standards are improving.

Pupil behaviour in classrooms and assemblies is satisfactory overall, although, there is still too much low level disruption in a few classes where relationships are weak. The school's senior management team and governing body have a clear focus on school improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	B	N/a	

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

Standards at GCSE have not improved in relation to national averages over the last three years, and the underachievement of boys was a feature of those results. However, inspection evidence indicates that the standards being achieved by pupils currently in Key Stage 4 are higher than previous years, particularly in mathematics where pupils are working close to national averages. Science and English standards still remain below average. Key Stage 3 results show a general trend of improvement, but, at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are below average in English and mathematics, and well below in science. In relation to similar schools, achievement is above average in mathematics and average in English, but below average in science. At both key stages, the underachievement of boys is now less evident. A-level results have been above average. The most recent results show a decline, but standards of attainment observed on inspection are average. The school is well placed to meet its targets, and should now consider more ambitious targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The school needs to do more work to raise enthusiasm for learning in all subjects. Not enough pupils enjoy school, although they do respond to the demands placed upon them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good systems to monitor and deal with poor behaviour have been established. Behaviour is normally satisfactory, but there is too high an incidence of disruption in some classes. Outside lessons, there is too much boisterous behaviour that can border on the oppressive, particularly at lunchtimes and between lessons.
Personal development and relationships	The PSE programme makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development. However, pupils need to be given more opportunities to exercise responsibility in the school.
Attendance	Attendance levels have improved as a result of firm measures and close monitoring, but the overall level is still below average.

The school has paid close attention to improving pupil behaviour, with significant success. A real enthusiasm for learning now needs to be brought about, based on positive relationships and a consistent insistence on the disciplines of learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	good	good

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

Teaching is of satisfactory quality overall, with few unsatisfactory lessons (5 per cent). A number of good or better lessons were observed (61 per cent). 20 per cent of lessons were judged very good or outstanding. Where high achievement was noted, teachers had established positive relationships, placed consistent demands on their pupils, and were confident classroom managers who promoted pupils' self discipline. In a number of lessons, the level of challenge could have been higher, relationships were weaker and there was a less firm hold of pupil behaviour. Teaching was good overall in mathematics and English, and satisfactory in science.

The teaching of literacy requires a more consistent approach, but the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range of provision in the sixth form has been intelligently broadened through good partnership relations with other institutions. Fast track programmes at Key Stage 4 are working well and extending opportunities, but ICT and aspects of history and RE provision remain unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	New arrangements are being brought in to provide effective planning and provision. Higher value needs to be placed on this work, and all staff need training in meeting the needs identified in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs).
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is satisfactory, and these pupils make progress that is at least satisfactory and often good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is broadly satisfactory in all areas. Imaginative displays generate interest and enthusiasm in mathematics, but there is little evidence on walls or around the school of the celebration of learning within other subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has good procedures in place in most areas, but those regarding bullying require improvement.

Parents feel strongly that the school's partnership with them could be improved. The weekly newsletter and the many phone contacts are appreciated, but improvements are required to homework arrangements and the reporting of pupils' progress. There are few out-of-school activities.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led by the head teacher and senior managers who have a shared agenda for further school improvement. Middle managers need further training and support to play their full role in identifying and developing what works well in classrooms. Support staff are very effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors play an excellent role in guiding and supporting the school's development. Effective monitoring supports their detailed and perceptive understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its overall performance well, but it needs to make better use of this information. Assessment information is widely available but should be more consistently used.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used effectively in the school, and areas of the school are being systematically modernised. Best value is applied well in the office but sixth form provision does not meet this criteria.

The accommodation is just adequate, but many areas need refurbishment. Learning resources are inadequate in special educational needs and science. There are staff shortages in a number of key areas.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching in some subjects.• Progress made by pupils.• The school's expectation that pupils should work hard and achieve.• Improvement in pupil behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about their child's progress.• Better links between parents and the school.• The behaviour of some pupils and the incidence of bullying.• The setting of homework and the use of pupil planners.• The range of extra-curricular provision.

The total of responses was low (less than 10 per cent), but these parents were keen to emphasise that the school had worked hard to achieve improvement. Inspectors agree that most pupils are making effective progress, notably in mathematics and PE. They also agree that the school makes clear the behaviour and achievement that it expects.

They agree that information about pupils' progress should be improved through more frequent reporting on what pupils know, understand and can do, and pupils' targets for improvement. They agree that communications need to be improved. In particular, the use of the homework planners needs to be taken more seriously by the school so that they are implemented effectively. The inspectors agree that parents and school need to work together more closely.

Inspectors agree that, while behaviour has improved, there are still too many instances of bullying and over-boisterous behaviour.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils join the school with standards that are below average. Standards in English are well below average on entry. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' achievement at levels 5 and 6 in the national tests are approaching the national average. At the end of Key Stage 4, the most recent GCSE results were well below average. However, pupils in the current Year 11 are achieving standards that are close to the national average in a number of subjects. In the sixth form, the most recent A level results were below average, but students are currently achieving at an appropriate level given their prior attainment.
2. Pupils enter the school with particularly low standards of writing, and this holds back their progress through the school. It is probably not accidental that they make best progress in subjects, such as mathematics, that demand less of them in terms of writing, while they make less rapid progress in subjects with higher demands on their literacy. Some subjects have taken on a few aspects of the approaches of the national literacy programme, but there has been no systematic approach to the development of literacy. This needs to be introduced as a matter of urgency. Similarly, there has been no systematic adoption across the school of an approach to promote numeracy, although standards here are higher.
3. The school's results in external exams and tests were particularly poor in 1998, and this led to a major review of the school's approaches.
4. There is now considerable knowledge of pupils' achievement and capability, based on regular testing and the setting of individual targets. Scrutiny of the school's data indicates that testing data is used to set a minimum expected level, and that most pupils do better than indicated in the testing data.
5. Since 1998, Key Stage 3 results have steadily improved. In relation to similar schools, achievement is above average in mathematics, average in English but below average in science.
6. At GCSE results are well below average. Nevertheless, they are average in relation to similar schools. The most recent results also showed disturbing differences between boys' and girls' achievements. However, the results of GCSE testing in science on pupils currently in Y11 shows a complete reversal of the picture of boys' underachievement, with more boys doing well and overall results close to national averages. A similar picture prevails in mathematics, and to a lesser extent in English. The variation in achievement between boys and girls from year to year appears to be a product of variations in pupil intake. There is no evidence that these changes are the result of particular school initiatives. The achievement of the majority of pupils in mathematics is particularly noteworthy. However, the large group sizes in mathematics are constraining higher achievement.

7. In science, standards are below the national average at both key stages, but broadly average in the sixth form. Achievement in science is satisfactory, with evidence of improvement at both key stages. GCSE testing of current Year 11 pupils indicates that boys no longer underachieve in relation to girls, though standards overall still remain below average.
8. In mathematics, pupils are at average levels by the end of Key Stage 3, but below average in GCSE and A level results. The evidence from inspection indicates rising standards at all levels. A committed department has established a good learning ethos.
9. In English, standards are below average, but a good rate of progress is maintained in relation to prior attainment.
10. Standards in physical education are above the national average by the age of 16 both in GCSE and national curriculum lessons. By the age of 14 and in the sixth form standards in physical education are average. This represents good achievement for these pupils in relation to a low starting point when they started secondary school. Pupils' achievements are very good in Years 10 and 11. Standards are high because of the good quality teaching. There is a consistency of approach in the demands placed upon pupils in lessons and homework. Relationships are very good, based on mutual respect and commitment.
11. In design and technology, the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 are below average due to low standards on entry but examination results are good at Key Stage 4. However, the underachievement of boys remains an issue.
12. In history, standards are below average in both key stages and the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, there is insufficient challenge, sometimes associated with teaching by non-specialists. In the sixth form and Key Stage 4, achievement is better because of better teaching. In geography, standards are below average in Key Stage 3 and in the GCSE examination results at the end of Key Stage 4. However, standards of work observed during this inspection are better, particularly at Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, and this represents a considerable improvement. Key Stage 3 work still suffers from insufficient challenge. Higher attaining pupils are offered the opportunity to follow fast-track courses in history and geography, completing these courses in one year. This programme appears to be successful both in terms of pupils' achievement and the consequent broadening of the curriculum. The Accelerated Learning programme in Year 7, gives an initial boost to skills' levels at entry.
13. In modern languages, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the national average and well below at GCSE. They reflect low standards of literacy at intake, though pupils' achievement is satisfactory in that these results are in line with expectations based on initial attainment. However, staffing instability in this department has undermined efforts to develop a real enthusiasm for modern languages among the pupils.
14. Standards in ICT are below average at both key stages. This is due to a combination of insufficient time, too few resources and poor management. In art, standards are below the national average, though during the inspection pupils were observed achieving at levels more in line with the national average. In music, standards are in line with national averages as a result of effective and enthusiastic teaching.

15. In religious education, standards at Key Stage 3 are below average and there is no GCSE provision in Key Stage 4. Achievement is limited by the limited amount of time provided.

16. The achievement of pupils on the special needs register is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 when compared with their previous records. These pupils make good progress at both key stages. Careful identification of their needs informs detailed plans for one-to-one work. However, there are not enough opportunities for learning support assistants to plan alongside teachers.

17. The major constraint on higher achievement remains the attitudes of some pupils to their learning. Not enough pupils enjoy schooling or realise the full benefits of achievement in the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Pupils' attitudes to school and their personal development are unsatisfactory. Behaviour, on balance, is satisfactory. Attendance is below the average for secondary schools. This is similar to the previous report, except that some improvement has been made in the standards of behaviour and considerable improvement in attendance. Many parents are not satisfied with behaviour and are particularly concerned about bullying.

19. The attitude of the majority of pupils towards school is positive. Pupils are often compliant, however, rather than very enthusiastic. Most of them want to do well, and there is a generally satisfactory level of participation in the extra-curricular activities that are available to them. However, a significant number of pupils have less than positive attitudes. In too many cases, this is due to pupils being bullied. This in turn has an adverse effect on attendance, the attitude of many pupils for example towards group work, and their sense of safety and security. Some older pupils would prefer to have a job because they do not sufficiently value their education. The behaviour of pupils is variable, although in lessons it is mostly good. When teaching is interesting and activities are challenging, behaviour is good and even very good, but even in some of these lessons the behaviour of a minority of boys can be disruptive. Outside classrooms, behaviour is less reliable. Whilst many pupils are orderly and sensible, too much bullying and rowdiness occur. The number of exclusions was high last year, and the number this year is already higher than at the same time last year. Some pupils say that the unruly behaviour at lunchtime is partly due to having little choice of things to do, and some pupils cannot access their own tutor rooms. There are no discernible racist or sexist aspects to this behaviour.

20. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development are difficult issues for many pupils with special needs because behaviour is often their major problem. Behaviour is satisfactory in the majority of situations, and behaviour and attitudes are good in subjects such as design and technology, information communication technology and mathematics. During the inspection, observation of pupils with behaviour problems was positive because the new systems in place

are tackling the problem of poor behaviour through positive structures. This is part of the vision plan for special needs. Three specific pilot schemes in science, modern languages and history are beginning to show results, although they are at an early stage of development. The collaboration between the coordinator for special needs and respective teaching staff aims to develop a model for future action.

21. Relationships between pupils, such as in pair or group work, are often good or better, for example when assisting each other in design technology and physical education. However, they are adversely affected when poor behaviour occurs, and bullying and unreliable behaviour inhibit social relationships generally.

22. Most pupils respond very well to being given special responsibilities. The student council is successful, not only because it is a vehicle for pupils to share their views and make representations to the school, but because improvements in school result from it, which contributes to pupils' personal development. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in school. Overall, by the time pupils are sixteen years of age, many of them are not as mature and responsible as they should be.

23. Attendance significantly improved last year and a similar level of attendance is being maintained this year. However, the school's overall attendance level is unsatisfactory because it is still below the average of secondary schools. Nevertheless, truancy is above average, and attendance is also reduced by the amount of family holidays taken in term time. Whilst the majority of pupils arrive on time for the start of school, a significant minority of pupils has a record of recurring lateness.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. The quality of teaching is very good overall in design and technology, and good in mathematics, English, information and communication technology and physical education. In all these subjects pupils are particularly well motivated, eager to succeed and consequently learn at a good rate in most lessons.

25. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of the teaching and pupils' learning are very good in design and technology and good in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, and physical education. Teaching and pupils' learning are satisfactory in all other subjects in Key Stage 3 except geography in which the teaching is satisfactory but the rate at which pupils learn is unsatisfactory as a result of the poor attitude of some boys.

26. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of both teaching and learning are very good in physical education, and the teaching is good in English, design and technology, information and communication technology, history, geography, religious education and music. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in all other subjects. Teaching and pupils' learning are good in most subjects taught in the sixth form.

27. There are examples of very good or excellent teaching in mathematics, design and technology, information and communication technology, geography, art, physical education, recreation and tourism GNVQ and the Accelerated Learning Programme. There are examples of unsatisfactory teaching in modern foreign languages, science, religious education, music and physical education.

28. In most lessons teachers manage the behaviour of pupils effectively. In design and technology, physical education and most lessons in other subjects, teachers have good discipline based on good relationships with pupils and mutual respect. Effective teaching finds every chance to praise success. Teachers on the whole succeed in creating a good atmosphere for learning because they are able to command the attention of all pupils. They constantly focus on self-discipline, for example in design and technology lessons in which pupils are trusted to use equipment such as welders and computers. In these lessons pupils are able to learn without interruption from other pupils. The inability of some teachers, sometimes temporary or inexperienced, to control the challenging behaviour of some pupils, often boys, holds back pupils' learning in a number of lessons across the school and in a variety of subjects. In some lessons the acceptance of low level disruptive and impolite noise when teachers give instructions contributes to a slowing of the pace in learning. Despite the best efforts of teachers, some pupils, often boys, arrive at some lessons with poor attitudes.

29. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally higher in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form, in which there are clear expectations in relation to examination criteria, than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' ability to learn in higher sets, in design and technology, in physical education and in some lessons in most subjects. In these lessons teachers require pupils to think more deeply. For example in art and physical education pupils are constantly required to evaluate and refine their own and other's work and in modern foreign languages top sets and the sixth form teachers use the target language more consistently and set challenging tasks. As a result pupils respond well to the challenges and make more rapid gains in learning.

30. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough in some lessons. For example in some mathematics and science lessons teachers plan work to match the needs of the middle band of pupils and consequently there are higher-attaining pupils who are not challenged or stretched. Opportunities to encourage extended writing in some subjects are overlooked and there is a low expectation of the presentation of pupils' written work across many subjects. Consequently pupils do not take sufficient care to present written work well. There is little underlining, and text is set out haphazardly which makes it difficult for pupils to learn from their own work.

31. Teaching that is dynamic, energetic and uses a good variety of learning activities so that the pace of learning is maintained is successful in a number of subjects. Imaginative practical work is used effectively to encourage learning in mathematics in Years 7 to 9. Opportunities to ensure that pupils consolidate their skills encourage their confidence in design and technology and physical education lessons. In geography, examples relating to previous fieldwork are used to help students to understand the precise requirements of exam' questions. There are excellent examples of the use of probing questions in design and technology and physical education which involve all pupils and draw out from them the criteria against which they are working. In other lessons across a range of subjects the learning activities lack variety and pace. Some introductions and explanations are overlong and there are few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. As a result pupils begin to lose interest and concentration. Some science and physical education lessons are slow to start and time is lost especially from double lessons.

32. In most lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that pupils and students are challenged. For example in English, good knowledge of the subject enables clear explanations and perceptive questioning. In science, teachers can answer students' peripheral questions well, and in mathematics the very strong and secure subject knowledge of teachers enables them to set tasks to match differing levels of ability. Weak subject knowledge is associated with non-specialist teaching and tasks that are insufficiently challenging.

33. Carefully planned lessons which are closely related to the examination criteria and include activities to match pupils' individual needs are often found in GNVQ courses, design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education. As a result pupils of differing levels of attainment are challenged and pupils work to the best of their abilities. Not all teachers have yet acquired a real understanding of the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs. Individual educational plans have only recently been supplied to teachers. A lack of differentiated material for lower attaining pupils hinders their access to tasks and causes discouragement in some subjects.

34. There are inconsistencies in the frequency and quality of marking within a number of subjects. There are few comments to help pupils to know what to do to improve and little guidance in how well pupils are doing in relation to subject criteria. In history, for example, insufficient attention is given to correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar. In some subjects, for example design and technology, good marking and on-going assessment identifies where pupils have done well and where they make mistakes. Good marking also indicates very clearly to pupils what they have to do to improve. This effectively motivates and challenges pupils. In design and technology a good tracking and assessment policy takes account of pupils' views and feedback. In English marking is helpful and consistent.

35. However, the lack of a consistent policy means that pupils do not fully understand the strengths and weaknesses in much of their work, which has a damaging effect on their attitudes and performance over time.

36. Inconsistency in the quality and frequency of homework in a number of subjects in Years 7 to 9 does not help pupils to build up consistent and regular study habits and this holds back their learning. Homework is set more regularly in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, and in some subjects it extends and consolidates learning that has taken place in class. Pupils who have limited or no facilities or encouragement at home are particularly adversely affected and an opportunity is missed to promote independent study. Homework planners are not used effectively. They are not regularly monitored by all teachers, and they are not completed regularly by pupils. Homework planners can act as a real bridge between home and school. Unfortunately this is not the case and parents are given a poor impression of the work of their children and of the school.

37. Support in the SEN areas within the school is good and teaching is very good. The members of staff in the department work effectively and consistently as a team, but the allocation of hours is low compared with a national average. Teaching is individually planned to meet pupils' specific needs enabling them to improve on their own work and take responsibility for their learning. The intense focus on IEPs and feedback from pupils and outside agencies makes interaction between adults and pupils positive; there is trust and understanding of the individual, which facilitates learning and raising self-esteem.

38. In class support is effective, but there are few opportunities for support staff and teachers to plan together to ensure subject specific targets are met. Collaboration between the SENCO and teachers in science, modern languages and history has developed three pilot schemes to improve attitude and behaviour in class. These projects are at an early stage of development but are proving positive.

39. Literacy skills are not well taught across all subjects other than English and this holds back pupils from using the specific language of subjects to full effect in their written work. In history a lack of attention to drafting affects the overall quality of pupils' written work. There are some good examples of the use of key words displayed in working areas which help students to learn subject specific language, for example in design and technology areas. Information and communication technology skills are not taught sufficiently across subjects. Numeracy skills are not taught effectively across lessons other than mathematics.

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

40. The quality of the school's curriculum is satisfactory in providing a suitable range of learning opportunities for all pupils. The curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4 includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education. However, statutory requirements are not met for history at Key Stage 3, nor for religious education at Key Stage 4. Although the school has improved provision of information technology since the last inspection, it is not yet meeting the statutory requirement to provide discrete provision for all year groups. The school has considerably extended the breadth of curriculum provision at Key Stage 4. Pupils are able to choose from a wide range of courses that lead to GCSE or GNVQ examinations and, in addition, have the opportunity to opt for the Youth Award Scheme, which equips them with skills for adult life. Large group sizes, particularly in mathematics, are adversely affecting the progress of high achievers.

41. The 23.3 hours of teaching time allocated in each key stage is below the recommended minimum. Physical education benefits from a generous time allocation and is particularly strong across all key stages. The time available for modern foreign languages is less than that found in most schools, and there has been a significant drop in numbers studying languages at Key Stage 4.

42. The school has developed a literacy policy that has not been fully implemented, as a result of which pupils are not yet attaining the standards that the school aspires to. The introduction of a whole school numeracy strategy has not yet materialised, although these skills are developed through mathematics and reinforced in other subjects. Pupils are able to make effective use of data handling skills, and they use charts and graphs appropriately in subjects such as science, information technology, design technology, and geography. Pupils are also able to accurately undertake calculations mentally when required to do so.

43. Personal, social and health education is timetabled for all pupils and well planned and taught by specialist teachers. All the required elements are covered and the school makes extensive use of external speakers to promote social awareness.

44. The school's links with the community are well developed. Links with primary schools are established, with effective arrangements for parents and prospective pupils to visit, and well organised transfer arrangements for pupils into the school. Particularly strong links have been established with the college of further education and a neighbouring school. Pupils receive good careers education and guidance. Centrally held resources are readily available, including computer software, videos, books and handouts, and pupils are well prepared for the two-week block work experience.

45. The curriculum is broadened by an imaginative enhancement programme. This not only involves work experience, but also uses the local and wider community to widen the experience of all students through, for instance, residential visits and voluntary work.

46. A wide range of educational visits takes place, including theatre trips and a visit to Holland. The library and information technology facilities are available for pupil use during the lunch hour and are well supported by pupils. Pupils are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities, especially in sport.

47. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' personal development, and recognises the importance of cultivating their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

48. Spiritual awareness is delivered through religious education and other subject areas. Within art, pupils' work on stained glass images reflects various aspects of religion. In mathematics, pupils are encouraged to appreciate the work of the great mathematician philosophers, and in geography they reflect upon the wonders of nature. By the end of Year 9, all pupils have an insight into the spiritual lives of Christian, Jewish, Moslem and Hindu believers. Pupils are encouraged to analyse their own views and opinions and to respect the beliefs of others. Pupils studying religious education in Years 10 and 11 receive valuable insights into contemporary Buddhism, and appreciate the opportunities for meditation and quiet. In music lessons, pupils are introduced to the great sacred works as well as the great secular compositions. Greater use could be made of visual display to enhance the school environment and support the learning process.

49. Moral development is embedded in the school's pastoral system. In religious education and music lessons, pupils are expected to behave well and to respect the right of others to learn and to succeed. In music lessons, the school's code of conduct is rigorously implemented and good behaviour is regularly reinforced with praise and encouragement. Sixth form religious education ensures that pupils consider the moral issues related to crime, punishment, euthanasia and abortion.

50. The range of teaching methods used in different subjects encourages pupils to develop social awareness. This can be seen in the group activities within drama, physical education, mathematics and modern foreign languages. The music department provides good opportunities for pupils to work together using keyboards, percussion instruments and recording equipment. The band rehearsals and the choir rehearsals provide pupils of all ages with good opportunities to meet together voluntarily, to enjoy combining their skills to create first-rate performances. Various groups of pupils spontaneously meet at break and lunch times to enjoy making music together.

51. Several subjects provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate the culture of this country and others. In art, pupils appreciate the work of ancient and modern artists, in mathematics they are told of great works by originators such as Newton and Pascal, while in English they study the poems, plays and novels of many writers. Religious education provides pupils with valuable insights into the cultural context of worship, pilgrimage and discipleship. Musicians and actors regularly come together to produce high quality productions that involve many pupils and attract good audiences. Christmas and summer concerts are of a high standard, providing singers and instrumentalists with good opportunities to perform in public. The presence of staff in the choir significantly enhances the quality of singing and sets positive examples for pupils to follow. The music curriculum provides pupils with good opportunities to study the music of India, Africa and China, and expands pupils' appreciation of music from other times and cultures.

Sixth Form

52. Provision for post 16 education in this developing sixth form is good. The school has a clear vision of the type of sixth form it wishes to create, a vision that is being realised because of the very efficient and effective head of sixth form and her team. The aim of developing a sixth form based on the quality of personal relationships, where students are nurtured in a caring yet challenging environment, is commendable and fully reflected in the school's interactions with its students. Very good bilateral arrangements with neighbouring schools have been at the heart of this development.

53. The curriculum is developing to reflect the needs of the students that are entering the sixth form. The vocational curriculum is broad, including three vocational areas at GNVQ Advanced Level. These courses build on the good practice in vocational education at Key Stage 4 and provide progression for these students.

54. A module of religious studies is taught within the sixth form general studies course, but there is no discrete taught course in religious education.

55. The GCE Advanced Supplementary and Advanced Level provision is very limited. Only 12 subjects are taught in Year 12, and many of these have small numbers of students. This makes it difficult to realise the aim of creating a broad academic provision. However, shared provision with a nearby school helps broaden the curriculum, and most students are following courses in four subjects in Year 12. The small number of students in this developing sixth form means that at present, the sixth form provision is not cost effective.

56. The school has a very well planned programme to deliver the key skills of information and communication technology, to all students through an Advanced Level Course in General Studies. It is regrettable, however, that this provision is not accessed by both GNVQ and A level students. This would not only reduce costs, but help blur the divide between academic and vocational.

57. Procedures for monitoring the personal and academic development of students are very good. The team of tutors teaches a carefully planned tutorial programme and monitors progress through half-termly reviews. In this way, under-achievement is quickly identified and action taken to help students improve.

58. The school would benefit from a more vigorous approach to marketing the distinctive nature of its post 16 provision, both within the school and to the wider community, and by ensuring a wider range of GCE AS/AL courses to ensure students follow a broad curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

59. Arrangements for the general health and safety of pupils are satisfactory. The procedures that are in place for risk assessment and safety checks are satisfactory, and child protection procedures are in place. However, the school does not fully meet the educational and personal development needs of all pupils. Bullying is not effectively managed. Some improvement in health and safety and behaviour management has occurred since the previous inspection, but there has not been enough improvement regarding behaviour and bullying. Parents are also concerned about the standards of behaviour and the continuation of bullying.

60. The majority of teachers exercise discipline in classrooms in a consistent manner, and all apply well or very well the recently introduced procedures for the orderly start to lessons. Some teachers manage behaviour less effectively in lessons or provide less challenging learning experiences, and this triggers disruptive behaviour by some pupils. The system of recognition and rewards is effective, and the corrective strategies that include close monitoring of pupils' responses are usually effective. The social inclusion unit provides valuable specialist support, successfully reduces exclusions, and enables the pupils involved to continue their education whilst developing more positive attitudes and better self-control.

61. Behaviour outside classrooms is not monitored sufficiently closely, and pupils are not involved enough in the management of their own behaviour. At lunchtime, there are not enough useful and interesting activities for pupils to become involved in, and some tutor rooms are not accessible. Several strategies have been applied to try to reduce incidents of bullying, but the school has not yet found an effective formula. This ineffectiveness seriously undermines the ethos of the school, pupils' sense of security and, indirectly, their attainment.

62. Attendance has been the focus of determined effort. The partially computerised system, first day contact with parents of pupils who are absent, and a system of recognition have all contributed to significant improvement.

63. Pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactorily assessed and recorded. The system has been introduced since the previous inspection and is beginning to build useful data, which will soon be available via computer. However, its effectiveness depends on the accuracy of the marking and assessments of pupils' work that are unsatisfactory because they are not carried out consistently throughout the school. The results of assessment are used satisfactorily overall to inform curricular planning but good practice is not widespread and therefore the learning needs of all pupils are not always allowed for. In some departments, such as design technology, the assessment of pupils' work and progress is undertaken very well and used to promote progress. Such practices need to become the norm throughout the school.

64. The prediction of grades for GCSE are shared with pupils in Y10 but not in the lower school, and therefore many pupils are not as aware as they should be of their progress. Parents also are unaware of their children's progress until the annual school report is received. Assessment is used to identify pupils in Year 11 who are likely to benefit from individual mentoring, and help is given to thirty or more pupils from January onwards. The mentoring provided is helpful, but it is given too late and to too few pupils.

65. Monitoring of pupils' personal development is unsatisfactory. It is more carefully managed in some departments than others, and this dimension is reflected variably in pupils' annual reports. There is not sufficiently common practice about what is monitored, and it should more closely match what is measured and recorded in personal, social and health education.

66. Additional tuition from some subject departments is often available to pupils after school, and facilities such as the library, computers and reading schemes enable pupils to make further progress. The absence of regular whole-school homework support is, however, a very noticeable gap. This adversely affects those pupils who have limited or no facilities or encouragement at home, and misses an opportunity to promote independent study.

67. The programme for personal, social and health education, including careers, is good and is generally well taught. The accelerated learning programme for pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 provides a good foundation in a range of learning skills, such as problem solving, decision making and research, but needs to be extended beyond Year 8 and its good practices adopted more specifically by all departments.

68. The pastoral system is appropriately structured, with tutors moving on each year with pupils. The arrangements in Year 7 need to be permanent in order to promote more effectively the links with primary schools. Tutors get to know pupils well, and registration periods are used satisfactorily overall as a form period. However, they are not used well enough to promote positive attitudes about social and moral values. Heads of Year are now closely involved in monitoring academic progress as well as the personal aspects of pastoral support, but form tutors also need to be more clearly aware of the academic strengths and weaknesses of pupils in their form, in order to provide appropriate support and guidance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

69. The school's partnership with its parents is not effective enough, and too few parents are involved in the life and work of the school and their children's education. This is similar to the previous inspection report. Though the school's and parents' expectations of each other are now higher, neither party is satisfied at this time. It is clear that the quality of life and learning in the school and community would benefit by a much more effective partnership between school and parents.

70. The number of respondents to the Registered Inspector's questionnaires was low, and the attendance at his meeting for parents was also low. The majority of views expressed by parents are positive, and recognise that the school has achieved significant improvements during recent years. Parents are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching and the

progress that pupils make. Nevertheless, they also have a very substantial number of concerns. They feel that the school does not work closely enough with parents. Their most important concerns are about information, homework and standards of behaviour.

71. Parents are provided with some good quality information. For instance they are very well informed prior to pupils joining the school and during the induction phase. Thereafter, frequent newsletters are a good source of general information.

72. However, the quality of information given to parents about the progress made by their children is unsatisfactory. Parents are not content with one formal occasion per year to discuss their children's progress, and consider that the interval between Year 7 and Year 8 meetings is too long. However, attendance by parents at the annual consultation meeting with teachers is much lower than is normally the case at most schools. Parents have insufficient understanding of the levels and grades used in annual school reports, and the comments in some subject reports are not specific enough about pupils' knowledge and understanding, and what they can and cannot do. Parents do not receive a termly or half-yearly progress report, with improvement targets for pupils' to achieve, and so they are not able to give informed support and encouragement to their children.

73. Good opportunities are provided for parents to be involved in discussions about subject choices and careers, and these attract a much higher level of attendance by parents. Parents of pupils with special educational needs participate in the reviews of their children's progress. Parents also support well the school's public performances, sporting and social events.

74. The school does its best to contact parents about incidents that occur, although parents believe contact could sometimes be sooner. Some parents believe that the school is not sufficiently effective in minimising bullying. Social services confirm that at least some bullying is the result of relationships in parts of the local community.

75. Considerable efforts have been made to involve parents in improving attendance, and this is an excellent example of how good co-operation works, because in just over a year a substantial improvement has been achieved. Nevertheless, some parents still condone absence, and too many family holidays are taken in term time. The mutual and determined co-operation shown in improving attendance should also be extended to homework and the two-way use of planners for control and communication between school and parents. It should also be extended to the improvement of behaviour and suppression of bullying in and out of school.

76. A very small core of parents works extremely hard for the school. The parents and teachers association organises social functions and raises funds to help provide better learning resources. A few parents help in school, and some run a games club for pupils.

77. However, too few parents support the school in these ways. Parents would like teachers to be more involved in these and other extra-curricular activities.

78. Governors of the school make themselves available to talk to parents on a regular basis, and this has led to good exchanges and useful developments. Parents' views need to be sounded out more often, and they need to be strongly encouraged to participate in working groups and activities.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

79. The leadership and management of the school is good. The headteacher is an effective leader who, with the extended senior management team, ensures that the school retains a focus on its values and aims. It is significant that the headteacher has generated and maintained a positive atmosphere in the school. He is held in high regard by staff, teachers, pupils and many members of the local community. The full senior management team represents a wide cross-section of the school. The headteacher has been in post for four years. During that time, the school has improved the overall standard of pupil behaviour and has improved attendance to just below the national average. The extended senior management group, led by the headteacher, has worked hard to ensure that all members of staff now have a high level of understanding of the school's aims and objectives. This strategic work has been built on a clear educational rationale for raising standards. The challenge now is for staff to put this rationale into practice in their teaching, convincing pupils and their parents of the need for higher achievement.

80. There are clear strategies for drawing up the school improvement plan and for ensuring its successful implementation and review. The school makes good use of performance data, such as that provided by the Cognitive Ability Tests, but does not carefully monitor and evaluate the performance of teachers and other key personnel. It is, therefore not always aware of its strengths and weaknesses, and thus is not well placed to take effective action to secure improvements. The senior management team has yet to effectively guide all teachers to set targets for pupils and thus contribute to better examination grades.

81. Insufficient delegation of responsibilities has taken place to middle management. In particular, all subject leaders need to take proper responsibility for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Similarly, their responsibility for ensuring consistent implementation of school policies needs to be made clear. The head teacher has been reluctant till now to delegate responsibilities and this can constrain the impact that subject managers are able to have on standards and quality.

82. There have been significant improvements in standards in subjects, such as physical education, design technology and mathematics, where the heads of department have begun to monitor teaching and are putting in place strategies to improve its quality. This practice is variable, however and is not co-ordinated in a systematic way. The faculty structure often works against effective leadership. For example, responsibility in Humanities is shared between co-ordinators for different key stages, meaning there is no overall direction for the subject. Members of the senior management team, however, provide good support to those for whom they have oversight, although there is not enough monitoring of the quality of teaching and the implementation of policy. Not all departmental development plans include clear strategies for raising standards. However, the school is poised to use performance and assessment data more effectively to establish targets for the whole school, for subject areas and for individual pupils. This development has been influential in educating senior staff and governors, as well as in the development of systems for setting long and short-term targets for future standards of achievement. However, it has yet to permeate to teaching staff and pupils.

83. The monitoring of pupils' performance is now firmly established at whole-school and subject levels, through the use of Cognitive Ability Test scores (CATs). These analyses have been influential in providing information about the likely performance of pupils, based on prior attainment, and are well understood by both teachers and pupils. Some departments,

such as science, make use of these CAT scores to make sophisticated analyses of examination performance. Further work is needed at all Key Stages to ensure that a wider range of assessment and monitoring information will be used by all departments as pupils move through the school. The work of the senior management is well informed by this external data, as well as internal assessment information about individual pupils. It enables them to set challenging and realistic targets for GCSE examinations. The targets for the 1999 GCSE examinations were very close to the results achieved. Parents' consultation evenings in Key Stage 4 are now also informed by assessment data, adding to discussions about each pupil's attitude to work, attendance and other issues.

84. Until September 2000, the school had a period of time with an acting team supporting pupils with special learning needs. The team worked hard to maintain support, but the implementation of the system did not fully meet the requirements of these pupils. Lack of time and staff led to anomalies such as a lack of annual reviews. This situation has been rectified. The newly appointed special needs coordinator (SENCO) has built on the successes of the acting team to develop a visionary, closely monitored system. The system includes very good support from the well-qualified learning support assistants and special needs teachers. The newly implemented SEN system ensures the school has a structure to include heads of year and heads of faculty in monitoring and making decisions about tracking and supporting pupils' needs, to ensure standards are improving. The system has corrective mechanisms if the structure for support is failing, and details how the next step or alternative step is tackled. However, the impact of the very good systems being put in place is diminished by the very limited space for storage and multi-task teaching in the special needs base, along with the lack of resources, for example photocopied books instead of real books. Management is excellent because it is using existing processes to support pupils while sharpening monitoring and recording, and it is now working positively with parents.

85. The governors are highly committed to the school. They have an effective committee structure that enables them to work in partnership with the staff, provides them with an excellent level of awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development, and helps them monitor the school improvement plan.

86. For instance, following the last inspection, they were highly effective in setting realistic targets for improving attendance and behaviour, and worked very closely with senior managers to ensure that these targets were met. They share a clear understanding of the school's values and aims, and are fully involved with the wider staff in the school development planning process. They have a high degree of trust in the headteacher and senior staff, with whom they have a good working relationship. They combine this with a sensible and down-to-earth approach about how the school must develop. They discharge most of their statutory responsibilities, with the exception of fully implementing national curriculum orders in respect of history at Key Stage 3, information and communication technology at Key Stage 4 and religious education in the sixth form. Additionally, they do not ensure that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all pupils.

87. Financial planning is good, and clearly targeted on planned improvements. There is a careful and efficient approach to financial control and management of the budget, driven by a clear desire to make improvements for the benefit of pupils. The school though lacks a creative and entrepreneurial approach to generating income. The improvement plan addresses an appropriate range of issues. It shows little detailed costing, but cost centres are

set up to monitor spending. The school uses specific grants for their intended purposes. Expenditure is carefully monitored and there is an awareness of emerging patterns. Currently the sixth form is not cost effective in that the cost of staffing the sixth form exceeds the income provided. The resources available for the 11 to 16 phase of the school are therefore diminished, with the consequence of larger than necessary class sizes.

88. The school's accommodation is satisfactory, but staffing and learning resources are unsatisfactory. There is an adequate number of qualified staff to meet the needs of the curriculum, but they are not always deployed effectively.

89. For instance, in modern foreign languages the absence of staff has meant that teachers' qualifications do not always match the subjects they teach. This is having an adverse effect on attainment. In mathematics there are some very large class sizes.

90. The school has adequate accommodation to meet current curricular requirements. The quality of accommodation varies from satisfactory to good. In mathematics, imaginative use has been made of the rooms to create a good mathematical ambience, for instance through the use of patterned floor tiles. Some rooms in the school are small for the size of classes, which restricts the movement of pupils and staff. The limited indoor accommodation restricts the breadth of the curriculum and the level to which some games such as volleyball and basketball can be performed. The poor state of decoration and repair of much of the accommodation does not reflect the high standards expected by the department. Internally, the condition of the buildings is satisfactory, with many well presented areas, such as mathematics and design technology, often enhanced by good displays of pupils' work and other items of information. The school has made an effort to produce a positive learning environment but there are still some classrooms and external areas where more effort is needed.

91. Resources are unsatisfactory overall. They are good in physical education and design technology but unsatisfactory in modern languages, where the lack of textbooks limits the range of homework. Unsatisfactory resourcing has a particularly significant impact in information and communication technology, where the lack of computers is depressing standards of attainment. The library is a good resource, and is well used by pupils in all year groups. Some modern computers are available in the library, but no machines have Internet access.

92. The school has given consideration to the application of the principles of best value, many of which have been a part of their practice for some considerable time. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average. However, by the end of Year 11, the progress of those pupils who attend regularly is satisfactory. The unit costs of the school are close to others nationally. The above factors indicate that the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve GCSE performance overall, particularly the number of boys gaining grades A* to C.
(Paragraph: 1.)
- Give more time and investment to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and improve its management across the school.
(Paragraph: 14.)
- Establish effective procedures to identify and deal with incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour.
(Paragraphs: 17,18,19,59,61.)
- Develop more positive attitudes based on mutual respect and a commitment to learning.
(Paragraph: 68.)
- Ensure that middle managers take a clear role in identifying and promoting high quality teaching and developing strategies to raise standards in their subjects.
(Paragraphs: 31,39,42,80,81.)
- Make certain that pupils' work is marked regularly, to consistent criteria and quality levels.
(Paragraphs: 35,63.)
- Ensure that homework is set regularly and that homework planners are used effectively.
(Paragraphs: 36,72.)
- Improve communications with parents and encourage greater involvement with the school.
(Paragraphs: 64,69.)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

- The school should:-
 - * develop a consistent approach to promoting literacy;
(*Paragraphs: 2,39,42.*)
 - * Provide more opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility;
(*Paragraph: 22.*)
 - * raise attendance levels;
(*Paragraphs: 18.*)
 - * increase teaching time to at least the recommended minimum;
(*Paragraphs: 41.*)
 - * improve the quality of visual display;
(*Paragraphs: 48.*)
 - * ensure that sixth form provision is no longer provided at a cost to the 11 to 16 provision;
(*Paragraphs: 58,87.*)
 - * extend the provision for mentoring;
(*Paragraphs: 64,65,89.*)
 - * improve the effective deployment of staff and ensure appropriate resourcing of all areas of the curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	260
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	15	41	33	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7–Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	779	95
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	198	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7–Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	191	N/A

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.22
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.39
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999/2000	66	89	155

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	46	46	48
	Girls	35	45	29
	Total	81	91	77
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	46	62	49
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	20	34	21
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	49	57	47
	Girls	43	86	28
	Total	92	103	75
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	58	66	48
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	20	44	19
	National	31	37	28

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	65	73	138

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	8	56	63
	Girls	31	67	71
	Total	39	123	134
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	28	89	97
	National	47.8	88.4	93.9

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31.1
	National	38.0

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	21	100.0
	National	N/A	N/A

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations.	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	200	25	37	62

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	10.2	10.7	10.4	2.0	0.6	1.0
National	17.1	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/A
	National	N/A	82.5

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	N/A	N/A
	National	N/A	N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	02
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	867
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	63	2
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–Y13**

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

**Education support staff:
Y7–Y13**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	263

**Deployment of teachers:
Y7–Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.0
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**Average teaching group size:
Y7–Y13**

Key Stage 2	27
Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	26

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2072707.00
Total expenditure	2038883.00
Expenditure per pupil	2258.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	33824.00
Balance carried forward to next year	33824.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	904
Number of questionnaires returned	88

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	22	56	15	7	0
My child is making good progress in school.	30	52	12	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	32	25	11	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	44	31	7	5
The teaching is good.	19	55	12	4	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	11	37	36	13	44
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	28	52	14	6	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	41	6	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	15	43	31	11	0
The school is well led and managed.	20	47	20	5	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	25	47	16	7	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	44	15	7	18

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

ENGLISH

93. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above was above the national average. The proportion achieving Level 6 and above was close to the national average. In 2000, the proportions achieving both Level 5 and Level 6 and above were below the national average. In 1999, the proportions achieving these levels were well above the average for similar schools, similar to those in mathematics and better than science. Since 1997, there had been an upward trend in pupils' performance. Girls do better than boys, as they do nationally, and there is no significant difference compared to the national averages for girls and boys.

94. In GCSE English at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving grades in the A* to C range was below the national average. In 2000, the proportion remained below average, but it had improved a little on the previous year, maintaining an upward trend. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to G was a little below the national proportion in 1999, but it improved to broadly in line in 2000, maintaining an upward trend. There is a significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. At grades A* to C, girls nationally do better than boys, but the difference in the school is significantly greater. In GCSE English Literature, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C is below the national average. While results are generally better in literature than in language and the results in 1999 were significantly better, they have varied from the generally upward trend in language, and fell back to a similar proportion in 2000. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to G has remained quite steady over time, and broadly in line with the national average. The difference between the achievements of boys and girls is significant and similar to that in GCSE language. In both subjects, only a very small proportion of pupils over time have achieved the highest grades A* and A. Results in English do not compare favourably with results nationally, though they are comparable to those in similar schools.

95. Results at A level have varied over time. They are generally in line with national averages, both at grades A to E and at the highest grades A and B. All pupils achieved a grade in 1999, while in 2000, in an increased entry, only one pupil did not achieve a grade.

96. Standards observed during the inspection confirm these levels of attainment. Pupils enter the school with well below average levels of prior attainment in English, but progress to reach below average standards by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils of higher levels of prior attainment are able to develop satisfactory skills in listening and speaking, responding articulately to questions and sharing ideas actively in pair and group work. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment or with special educational needs are less able to participate orally, but they respond briefly. Lessons are designed to ensure that all pupils in the mixed-ability classes are able to listen and respond, by the careful presentation of material and choice of task. Good listening was observed in a Year 9 class, all of whom were quite moved by hearing a talk by a concentration camp survivor. Pupils in Year 8 were able to work well in groups, animatedly planning and explaining to the class their modern version of a Chaucerian moral tale. All could contribute to the speaking activity, the pupils with special educational needs being well supported by a special needs support assistant. Pupils' reading development is fostered by the use of the library for a weekly lesson in Year 7, and by the use of book

boxes to encourage reading for pleasure in some Key Stage 3 form tutor sessions. Selected pupils in Year 7 are withdrawn for individual reading development work. Many pupils have difficulties with reading, entering the school with reading ages substantially below their chronological ages, but class texts are carefully chosen to be accessible. They are read aloud by teachers and pupils, and pupils' understanding is supported by written work that refers back to the text. The reading of "The eighteenth emergency" by a Year 7 class was followed up by a written task in which pupils showed empathy with the difficulties of the central character. The reading aloud of a Shakespeare text by a Year 9 class was accomplished competently. Pupils made perceptive comments about the characters and confirmed their understanding with written summaries. Pupils with special educational needs were helped effectively but unobtrusively by a support assistant. Writing skills develop steadily so that, by the end of the key stage, pupils can express themselves competently in a wide range of forms for different purposes. The quality of handwriting and presentation is generally adequate, but it reflects pupils' levels of prior attainment, and so some written work is very poorly presented. All pupils can convey meaning, but pupils of higher levels of prior attainment can produce extended responses independently. Many pupils can only respond briefly, and pupils of lower levels of prior attainment and with special educational needs benefit from the provision of frameworks to enable them to structure and extend their writing. The process of drafting and revising end-of-unit pieces helps to improve correctness of expression. Many pupils have an insecure grasp of grammar, punctuation and, particularly, spelling. Good preparation for writing was seen in a Year 7 class when pupils, having explored different genres of stories, began to write their own story openings with individual teacher assistance. Pupils' learning in Key Stage 3 is good, and they make good progress in relation to their levels of prior attainment. They are stimulated by confident teaching, which systematically increases their knowledge and understanding. The careful structuring of lessons offers a variety of activities to develop the skills of English. Progress in writing is assisted by careful marking of written work, with attention to mistakes and helpful comments to secure improvement.

97. The good rate of progress in relation to prior attainment is maintained across Key Stage 4. By the end of the key stage, pupils' speaking and listening skills have developed sufficiently to meet the requirements of the GCSE speaking and listening test, and are fostered by a variety of classroom activities. In class, pupils are mostly attentive and responsive to teacher exposition, and exchange ideas freely in active pair and group work. A Year 10 class worked in groups to sequence the poem "The beggar woman" with some success, discussing and justifying their decisions. Reading skills are developed sufficiently to meet the demands of set texts, with the support of information and task sheets and structured questions. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment in Year 11 developed an understanding of Grace Nichols' "Hurricane" through a lively explanation of the cultural and historical background and energetic questioning. Pupils of higher levels of prior attainment responded perceptively to the humour of Liz Lochhead's "Rapunztiltskin" having explored the original fairy tales on which it is based. Reading for understanding was well developed in a Year 11 class of pupils of low levels of prior attainment, through the provision of appropriate text and support material and well-directed, sympathetic questioning. The written expression of pupils of higher levels of prior attainment is of a satisfactory standard, and they produce competent and, at times, good extended coursework pieces. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment need the support of frameworks provided by teachers. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment in a Year 10 class were able to identify differences between a broadsheet and a tabloid newspaper, but needed the framework provided by the teacher to organise the information into a media studies coursework answer. Other Year 10 pupils, however, with

only little prompting from a question sheet, completed the analysis of "Search for my tongue", a poem from another culture, in preparation for an essay. The general quality of written expression is of a satisfactory standard, assisted by the practice of drafting and by the careful marking by teachers. Many pupils in Key Stage 4 use the advantage of facilities at home to word-process their coursework, to good effect. Overall, pupils' learning in Key Stage 4 is good in relation to their levels of prior attainment. They respond well to stimulating teaching, which is informed by a good knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the examination. There is, nevertheless, some under-performance by boys, which is recognised by the school. If the current strategies to remedy this are successful, the gap between the performance of boys and girls, which is depressing the proportion of higher grades, may be narrowed.

98. Pupils in the sixth form make satisfactory progress. They are comfortable in dialogue with their teachers, and develop a scholarly approach, informing their written answers with research. Pupils in Year 12 showed good knowledge of "King Lear" in a discussion of the differing presentations of the play in two videotaped performances. A different group responded perceptively to the text by creating a graph of the peaks and troughs of emotional intensity. In Year 13, the craft of Wilfred Owen was vividly illustrated by the intensive study of manuscript versions of a poem compared to the final published version, when pupils displayed good understanding of the importance of the choice of words and the use of rhythm. Their written work confirms standards in line with national expectations.

99. Pupils' attitudes to work are good. Well-planned and paced lessons capture their attention. They develop good relationships with teachers and work co-operatively with each other. A few are inclined to interrupt and speak out of turn in class discussions, though they readily accept teacher sanctions. Younger pupils generally work with interest and enthusiasm. Some older pupils, particularly boys, can have difficulty maintaining their concentration and require constant attention to maintain their involvement.

100. Teaching and learning are good at all key stages. All teaching observed was satisfactory or better and it was mostly good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which enables them to plan and conduct lessons that enable pupils to make good progress, particularly in the basic skills of literacy. Lessons offer a variety of relevant activities that engage and stimulate pupils. Secure pupil management enables the successful pursuit of those activities. Good use is made of support material to meet the particular needs of pupils, and there is good liaison with the special educational needs support staff. Units of work include the provision of extension tasks for the gifted and talented. Good concern is shown for standards in the regular and helpfully supportive marking of pupils' work.

101. The English curriculum meets statutory requirements, and all pupils have equal access to it. At present there is, however, no programme of ICT activities in the curriculum, pending the development of the department's own ICT facility, though some pupils do word-process their work. A high proportion of pupils takes both English and English Literature at GCSE. Assessment of pupils' work is thorough and guidelines are given for improvement. Assessment of pupils' work in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is referenced to national criteria. The department has begun to build up files of pupils' work in Key Stage 3, assessed against national criteria prior to the identification of a National Curriculum level at the end of Year 9.

102. English is taught by a team of committed teachers with a good range of experience. Good management and regular meetings enable staff to share good practice and contribute to planning, development and review. Confident new leadership has given clear direction in the coverage of the National curriculum and the requirements of public examinations, with the creation of a comprehensive scheme of work. The next task is to put in place an equally clear programme for monitoring pupil progress and the delivery of the curriculum. In the last inspection, some features were identified as requiring improvement. The overall quality of teaching has improved. A revised scheme of work promotes the raising of standards overall, while taking into account the particular needs of pupils with the lowest and the highest levels of prior achievement. A clear marking policy has been established. A lot of work has been done to identify strategies to improve boys' achievement. Good progress has been made.

Literacy

103. At the time of the last inspection there was no whole-school approach to the development of literacy. The situation remained the same until 1999, when the headteacher conducted a training session for all staff to raise awareness and begin the process of establishing a policy. There was a commitment in principle to raising standards of literacy across subjects, and, after the in-service training, subject departments were invited to audit and assess their own contributions to the development of pupils' literacy skills. However, the results of that audit have not yet been analysed and developed into a common policy and code of practice. Currently a variety of strategies is in use, but commitment varies from subject to subject. They include the display of key words, some use of writing "frames" to enable pupils to structure written work, some drafting to improve the quality of writing, opportunities to read aloud, opportunities for pair and group talk. There is a need for the establishment of a common code of practice with a coordinator or steering group to be identified to oversee implementation and development.

MATHEMATICS

104. The Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 2000 produced results below the national average, but above the average for schools with similar social characteristics. Within the school, the standards achieved in mathematics were higher than those achieved in English and in science. Boys' attainment was marginally above that of girls over this key stage.

105. The GCSE results for 2000 were well below average when compared with all schools, though broadly in line with the average when compared with similar schools. Girls performed much better than boys in 1999 and again in 2000. The relative performances of girls and boys are consistent with their earlier performances in Key Stage 3 tests. The GCE A level results in 2000 were below the national average, though this performance was out of line with the very good results obtained in previous years.

106. Inspection evidence provides a clear indication of rising standards at all levels. At Key Stage 3, pupils with special needs demonstrate an ability to construct geometric shapes, while higher attaining pupils are able to use computers with confidence in solving quadratic equations. Within Key Stage 4, pupil achievement overall is now in line with national expectations, and some pupils make good or very good progress. Year 10 pupils are able to handle statistical data in order to construct tally charts, frequency tables and appropriate diagrams. Intermediate level pupils in Year 11 are able to use trigonometry to solve

triangles, whilst high attaining pupils demonstrate a good understanding of algebraic techniques. Pupils in the Sixth form also display an enthusiasm and high attainment level in mathematics. Year 12 pupils are able to identify turning points by the use of calculus, and Year 13 pupils demonstrate considerable mathematical ability in tackling parametric equations.

107. Teaching within the department is good. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, with the majority being good, very good or excellent. Lessons are well prepared, teachers have high expectations and demonstrate good classroom management skills, as a result of which pupils behave well and acquire new skills and knowledge. Relationships between pupils and their peers and between pupils and teachers are good, and are built upon trust, respect and good humour.

108. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the effective use of learning support staff. In order to improve further the opportunities for these pupils, teachers need to be made more aware of, and provided with, individual education plans for pupils at all levels on the special needs register. The mixed ability grouping across Year 7 places considerable demands on the teaching staff; the teaching methods and the resources available do not always recognise the wide variation of ability within each teaching group. Higher attaining pupils in all key stages demonstrate a sound understanding of mathematics, with the majority taking a pride in the appearance of their work. Pupils in the middle and lower groups do not always have the same confidence, and, in a number of cases, the standard of presentation could be improved. Homework is set to reinforce learning, work is regularly marked, and pupils receive praise for good work. The department should now consider providing diagnostic comment in the form of written advice that could be acted upon to further raise standards of attainment.

109. The majority of pupils at all levels are motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers, and willingly contribute to class discussion and questioning. Pupils use calculators appropriately and accurately, and are enthusiastic when offered the opportunity to use information technology or carry out investigative work. Attainment at GCSE level is, however, affected by very large class sizes which, together with staffing and timetable restrictions, influences teaching methodology and hinders the progress of the most able pupils.

110. The head of department provides strong leadership of a team of experienced and talented teachers. Comments made in the previous inspection report have been acted upon, with all members of the department sharing corporate responsibility for its work. The departmental handbook clearly defines individual responsibilities and places a strong emphasis on raising standards of pupil attainment. A full analysis of results, linked with prior attainment, enables a review of previous performance and helps identify future targets. The department will now benefit from more detailed target setting linked to individual pupils and specific teaching groups. A relevant and detailed department development plan has been drawn up which, whilst not making reference to the school development plan, will help to meet the school priority of raising standards.

111. The department is adequately resourced with books, materials and equipment; the recent provision of ICT resources within the department is particularly good. The newly built accommodation is very good and does indeed 'raise the spirit' upon entering. The naming of classrooms after great mathematicians, together with some imaginative classroom display,

creates a good work ethos and considerably enhances the status of the subject; the incorporation of Pascal's triangle into the floor design being both practical and inspirational. National Curriculum requirements are fully met and the department seeks to meet the needs of other subject areas regarding numeracy skills. For example in science and design technology, pupils are able to measure, weigh, estimate and record results. Pupils plot graphs and interpret the results in a meaningful way in geography. The school has not yet, however, implemented a whole-school numeracy policy, and this should be a priority for future planning.

112. The department is fully committed to raising standards, and current indications are that attainment in mathematics will continue to improve from an already strong base.

SCIENCE

113. Attainment in science overall is below the national average at Key Stages 3 and 4. Attainment in the sixth form is broadly average, reflecting individual students' abilities from year to year.

114. However, pupils enter the school with essential knowledge and experimental skill in science below and often well below average. Achievement over both key stages is satisfactory, and in the sixth form it is good.

115. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, the performance of pupils in the National Curriculum tests was well below the average for all maintained schools. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or greater and Level 6 or greater were both below the national average. Boys' attainment was above that of girls. However, in comparison with schools that admitted a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals, the average points score was just below average, with the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or greater close to the median. The percentage gaining Level 6 or greater was above average. Over the past three years, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have steadily improved. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 reflects the test results. For example, most pupils in set 1, studying scientific enquiry (Attainment Target 1) can follow instructions, make reliable observations and keep accurate records of experiments when using techniques for separating salt from sulphur. Only a minority can evaluate their methods or think more widely about its applications. Pupils with special educational needs learn satisfactorily with other pupils in investigation work, but are hindered when appropriate resources are not provided. No difference is found in the standards achieved by boys and girls

116. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000, the average GCSE points score and the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C, for double award combined science were well below the national averages. The percentage was also well below the average for similar schools. The attainment of girls was significantly better than that of boys. Average attainment fell in the 2000 GCSE results, but there was a rise in the previous two years in the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C and A* to G grades. The attainment of pupils at Key Stage 4 in 2000, relative to their prior attainment at Key Stage 3, was, however, close to the average for all maintained schools. In the work observed in lessons and from analysis of pupils' records, current standards are well below average and closely reflect the examination results. For example, at the end of Key Stage 4 in Year 11, most pupils studying physical processes

(Attainment Target 4) have a basic knowledge of electrical charge and circuits, but a significant number are unclear about even simple applications. The most able pupils have knowledge that is appropriate to the requirements for GCSE passes at grades C and D. A considerable number of pupils, including many with special educational needs, have a weak understanding of some essential ideas.

117. In the sixth form, in biology, chemistry and physics GCE Advanced Level in 2000, there was a spread of mainly lower grades in the range C-N. In the previous year, the average grade was higher, but each year the number of candidates is generally small, and achievement is in line with individual students' capabilities. In the current Year 13, students of physics, for example, have an average knowledge of the concept of simple harmonic motion, and carry out careful investigation of an oscillating pendulum. They appreciate the mathematical equations, but have difficulty in applying these to Advanced level problems.

118. The achievement of the majority of pupils over both key stages and in the sixth form is satisfactory. However, the achievement of higher attainers is limited by lack of challenge. Progress of lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory where support assistance has been effective, but not, as is the case in many lessons, where work is insufficiently matched to include the range of levels of attainment in the group.

119. Pupils' attitudes to science are variable, with a significant number lacking any real interest, especially in Key Stage 4. Most pupils complete work as required, but the level of care taken and standards of literacy are below average. The majority sustain their interest throughout a single lesson, but many are restless in the long double periods. Responses to questions can be good, but many pupils lack the willingness to participate or offer answers to questions. Behaviour is unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons. A core of pupils show disrespect, generate low level noise and cause disruption, with consequent waste of time. However, pupils respond well to the need for safety in experiments, and can be helpful individually. Good relationships are established in groups when pupils collaborate on experimental investigations.

120. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the majority of the lessons observed, the teaching was at least satisfactory, and it was good in about two fifths. Unsatisfactory teaching was observed in one of the sixteen lessons observed. All teachers have good subject knowledge. Planning, in terms of activities and progression, is satisfactory, and based on secure schemes of work. However, a weakness of otherwise satisfactory lessons is that there is insufficient provision of work that matches the attainment of the range of pupils. Pupils with higher attainment are not sufficiently challenged, and lower attaining pupils find difficulty in making progress on basic concepts. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in investigation and group work, and in other aspects when learning support is provided. In a number of lessons opportunities for assessment in class are not always exploited through question and answer techniques. Whilst these are used effectively in some classes, discussions are not always sufficiently developed to fully involve and engage all pupils. Marking of pupils' work is satisfactory, and appreciated by pupils, but is not sufficiently formative for pupils to set targets for improvement. In some lessons that were satisfactory in most other respects, the management of behaviour is weak, with teachers too ready to accept low level disruption. Curriculum organisation, length and timing of lessons, classroom organisation and staff deployment often contribute to the behaviour problems. Very little use is made of information and communication technology to enhance learning.

121. The head of department has clear aims and goals, and teachers share a commitment to raising standards. However, due to her other responsibilities in the school has insufficient time to carry out the role. Laboratory technicians provide good support. Satisfactory schemes of work are in place, and those for Year 7 are in the process of being revised. Staff qualifications match the specialist needs of the curriculum. A good approach to in-service training is being developed, but there is a lack of a concise handbook to ensure a focus and consistency for teachers' work. Assessments are carried out regularly and recorded satisfactorily, but new technology is not yet used to enable full analysis. The head of the department has reviewed teachers' work, for example in analysing group examination and test scores, but there is not sufficient monitoring of teaching, especially through classroom observation, to fully evaluate teachers' skills. Accommodation is satisfactory. Displays in rooms provide examples of work, but corridor display is barren. Resources are inadequate to provide a varied curriculum, and notably there are very few resources for information technology within the department and little access to nearby suites. Equipment is aging and textbooks are inadequate.

122. Attainment at Key Stage 3 has improved since the last inspection, but it remains below the national average. GCSE results remain well below average, and the overall GCSE performance has decreased slightly over the past three years. The achievement over Key Stage 4, relative to prior attainment at Key Stage 3, has been close to national average. Sixth form results continue to be variable. Attitudes appear to have improved, although behaviour remains unacceptable in some lessons. Teaching remains satisfactory, with good lessons quite common. Marking is now consistently carried out, but it still lacks formative detail. Problems identified in the last inspection that have not been addressed concern large sets, very long lessons and lack of resources, including computers.

ART

123. GCSE results over the last five years have been consistently below the national average. In 2000, out of an entry of 41 pupils, only 12 per cent achieved grades in the A* - C range, in comparison with the national average of 65 per cent. The performance of girls was above the national average but that of boys was well below. The results at A* - G were 100 percent, with the girls performing better than the boys. The three pupils entered for the A level examination in 2000 gained grades in the A - D range.

124. Information obtained from scrutiny of work and lesson observation in the sixth form indicates that attainment is in line with that found nationally. This situation is now reflected in the work at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, pupils in Year 7 are working below the national standard, but by the end of the key stage they have improved so that the majority of pupils are close to the national standard, with a minority achieving above it.

125. In the sixth form, detailed illustrative work is created with skill and accuracy. Strong, exaggerated cartoon drawing and complex 3D work in plaster is executed with great care. There is work in a variety of media, with compositions created in charcoal being particularly impressive in their control of line shape and shading. One pupil's work on a crucifixion image, inspired by a Salvador Dali painting, is visually daunting and expresses the Christ figure's suffering with great immediacy.

126. At Key Stage 4, although the work in Year 10 is variable in quality and accuracy, half the group is producing imaginative responses to a split-face project based on Cubist art and work is in line with national expectations. In Year 11, there is some work of quality in observational drawing and the bold use of water colour and acrylic paint. There is confident and good control in the use of pastel. There is some well defined collage work, based on the Cubist and Surreal movements. One statemented pupil has produced a very detailed and carefully shaded charcoal composition based on an anti-drugs theme, which is very graphic and to the point. Half the group are working at the national standard and a minority are working above it.

127. At the beginning of Key Stage 3, drawing and painting skills are not well developed. Work is often immature, and many pupils are working below the national standard. Despite this low skills' base, control of techniques and confidence in the use of materials is developed soundly through the key stage. Pupils become more confident in their understanding of texture and colour blending. Their work shows a development in design and interpretation of observation from still life and the human form. This is particularly noticeable in their work based on the paintings of Picasso and a variety of Impressionists. By Year 9, there is more control of skills and an appreciation of the effects that can be created through the careful use of shape, perspective and consideration of foreground and background. The work seen on the creation of futuristic cityscapes demonstrated bold use of colour and imagination in the design. Pupils enjoy their collage work, can create interesting distortion patterns, and are aware of the impact that the use of different textures can have on the final product. By the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils attain the national standard and a minority are working above it.

128. Teaching is satisfactory to good, with 57% of lessons being satisfactory, 29% good and 15 per cent very good.

129. The teaching is designed to promote good educational standards, and encourages the commitment and enthusiasm of the pupils that was seen in lessons, particularly at Key Stage 4 and Post 16. Teachers are aware of pupils with special educational needs, are always encouraging and supportive of them, and set appropriate challenges. Expectations are made clear, and teachers are careful to offer creative responses to pupils' work. This sets a good example to classes and is reflected in the pupils' constructive criticism of their own creations and those of others. There is good use of pupil work to illustrate points being made in lessons, which increases pupils' confidence and encourages mutual sharing of work and ideas. Teachers use the language of art effectively, and this is reflected in pupils' discussion and evaluations of their work. Demonstrations from teachers are well executed and accessible to the classes. In a lesson on perspective, the teacher used ready-prepared models to underline the importance of proportion in relation to background and foreground. This was much appreciated by the pupils, and had a major influence on the development of their own compositions. Homework is used to develop aspects of the themes being undertaken through both preparation and follow-up tasks.

130. The departmental schemes of work are designed to meet the requirements of the Attainment Targets at Key Stage 3 and the demands of the GCSE and A level courses. In the light of pupil response, the schemes are revised, if necessary, to improve commitment and raise standards. Differentiated approaches to pupils with special educational needs are built into the schemes of work.

131. At all levels, formative and diagnostic assessment is undertaken in lessons. Work is marked in line with national curriculum levels, GCSE and A level grades. Formal assessment is undertaken at the end of units, and carefully recorded on comprehensive pupil mark sheets. The grades are communicated to pupils and used to inform curriculum planning and set targets for pupils.

132. Formal and informal meetings of staff take place on a regular basis, and there is sampling of teaching by the co-ordinator of creative arts. His departmental development plan addresses relevant issues and is very realistic.

133. More liaison with the contributory primary schools would be advantageous to the department with regard to planning. Some of the large classes at Key Stage 3 make individual attention to pupils difficult. In the past, the design of the option pattern has sometimes disadvantaged the department in that some talented artists have been unable to pursue art at Key Stage 4.

134. Resources and accommodation are favourable to the department, but the rooms are cramped for the large groups in Year 9. There are three Macintosh computers in the department, which are used well to support design and investigative work. For two and a half days a week, the department has a technician, who is an art graduate and provides valuable support to the pupils.

135. This is an improving department that has addressed the recommendations of the last report very positively. Teaching is more consistent and the recording of assessment is more effective. Pupils' attitudes are much improved, information technology is used effectively, more 3D work is being undertaken, and more attention is now paid to the work of established artists.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

136. In teacher assessments in 2000, the standard of work in design and technology at 14 years was below that found nationally because pupils come into the school with very little previous experience of designing and making and weak literacy skills. These issues impede progress because there is no outreach work in design and technology to make links with the primary schools.

137. Work seen during the inspection showed an improvement in the present year because pupils' skills have been tested in an induction exercise that has helped teachers to plan work that matches pupil's needs. Teachers are also using an assessment system that tracks pupils' attainment across all aspects of design and technology, ensuring standards improve.

138. In Key Stage 4, pupils study a GCSE course in a design and technology subject of their choice, which includes the vocational areas of child development and engineering as well as normal GCSE topics of food technology, graphics and textiles. Examination results in 2000 were good when grades are aggregated, but the girls' attainment is stronger than the boys. A*-C grades were above national averages, and all pupils gained grades in the A*-G range in food, engineering, child development and graphics. The results show that the schools work in developing assessment procedures is effective and fully in place, helping all pupils to gain success related to their previous performance. It also demonstrates how the standards of attainment have improved since the last report. When comparing pupils average points scores across all subjects in 2000, the design and technology scores are better than pupils achieved in other subjects.

139. There is difference in the standards achieved by girls compared with boys; the girls' scores at the end of Key Stage 3 are higher than those of boys. This can also be seen in GCSE results, where the success of girls is repeated. The majority of boys tend to loose marks in the presentation and content of their major project portfolios. This course work carries 60 per cent of the final examination mark, and girls put more thinking time and effort into research and presentation of the portfolios, which gives them an advantage. Many pupils find the written examination difficult because of their problems with comprehension and literacy.

140. Standards of pupils with special needs are good. Pupils surprise themselves in design and technology; their success in practical work lifts their self-esteem and improves other aspects of their designing and making. For example, the need for accurate design drawings restricts these pupils. To remedy the problem, teachers have introduced modelling as an initial stage in designing, giving pupils a definitive first stage to work from. This removes the pressure of the 'I can't draw syndrome', but gives clarity of understanding and produces success through the modelling of the idea in card.

141. Pupils enjoy design and technology and have positive attitudes. They are proud of the work they produce, and good central display cabinets in the resistant materials department celebrate work across all years.

142. During their time in Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils learn how to work amicably in teams and pairs sharing their ideas and evaluations, which gives them the chance to reflect on what could be improved. Pupils understand that mistakes can be made in designing and making, but they gain confidence from knowing modifications can put mistakes right. Pupils have excellent frank and open discussion to enhance personal development, as seen in the child development course. During a lesson, issues concerned with sexually transmitted diseases and the care of the unborn child promoted a mature reflective discussion, which had an impact on pupils' personal views.

143. Behaviour is very good in the department. Teachers do not impose sanctions because pupils' self-discipline is apparent in all aspects of practical work. Their presentation is not as well disciplined, however. Despite reminders, pupils fail to be consistent with their approach to presentation, which has an influence on examination outcomes, especially for the boys.

144. The quality of teaching in design and technology has a major impact on pupils learning. The good and very good teaching throughout the department is characterised by the work of enthusiastic technologists, with a passion for their subject, who challenge pupils knowledge

and understanding. In textiles, for example, pupils produced a personal pattern from a pattern block, prior to making up their garment design. Teachers skilful demonstrations influence pupils' practical work; pupils repeat the skills they observe, such as cutting, shaping, joining and combining materials in Key Stage 3, and go on to apply the skills independently at Key Stage 4. The department team has a clear understanding of the special needs of their pupils, especially those with an individual education plan. Planning effectively harmonises pupils needs in lesson plans while sharply focusing on the requirements of the national curriculum, so that learning is rigorous, individualised and fruitful.

145. Activities are planned to stimulate and motivate, as seen in the engineering course where pupils had their first experience with a Mig welder. This experience consolidated their learning because of personal involvement, the pressure and the responsibility given, as well as the professional equipment available. In some aspects of the department, a lack of specialist equipment holds up progress. For example, there are no computerised sewing machines and a lack of up-to-date systems and control equipment to enable pupils to reach higher levels of attainment. Assessment strategies used by teachers are very well documented. They include an assessment of whole-school issues such as attendance, homework and attitudes, as well as their level of attainment in the subject. This dynamic policy moves with each pupil across their experiences in design and technology, tracking individual development. Assessment data is used to inform the writing of clear reports, with accurate judgements on effort and attainment plus a target for the future.

146. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) are applied within technology. Regular use of these basic skills improves overall quality and accuracy of work, but writing, drawing and presentation skills are generally weaker in Key Stage 3. Key Stage 4 sees a great improvement as pupils strive to match the grade criteria for GCSE, which focus heavily on design, presentation and evaluation in portfolios. Relationships are the key to the department's success, especially where pupils have difficulty in behaving socially and sensibly with the rest of the class. Teachers are good role models in terms of mutual respect and support.

147. Management of the department is very good in the separate food technology and craft design technology (CDT) aspects of the department, but only good when the department is viewed as a whole because there is a lack of consistency in some issues across the department. This is the only action point remaining from the previous report that has not been addressed. For example, there is no file of annotated work to help pupils and teachers have a clear understanding of expectations across the department. The design and technology handbook lacks several key policies, and needs review in order to match practice. The lack of a complete and consistent risk assessment across the department is a potential concern in resistant materials. Technical support is very good in CDT, but this is not matched in extent in food technology, which is a further inconsistency. In addition, there is a lack of monitoring of teaching that would identify and solve inconsistent practice in marking. To bring the department together would consolidate all the very good features of the teaching and learning in the department.

GEOGRAPHY

148. Work assessed by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 shows that standards are in line with the national average, and have changed very little during the last three years. However, evidence from the lessons observed and from the work seen indicates that current standards are below this level. In the 2000 GCSE examination at the end of Key Stage 4, passes at grades A*-C were well below the national average, and particularly low for boys. There has been a steady decline in the pass rate over the last three years, with a significant decline since the last inspection when results were above the national average. However, the pass rate from grades A*-G has increased to a level that almost reached the national average in 2000. At the time of the last inspection, sixth form results at advanced level were below the national average, but they have improved steadily since then. In 2000, results were above the national average, with all the students entered for this examination achieving a pass between grades A-E, though with a lower than average pass rate at the highest grades.

149. Standards of work seen in Key Stage 3 are below average. Pupils enter this school with very low levels of geographical knowledge and skills. Some higher attaining pupils in Year 7 are able to complete climate graphs, calculate average rainfall figures quickly and describe the patterns that they show. However, many pupils with lower levels of attainment have poor numerical skills and find it extremely difficult to plot data accurately. Pupils in Year 9 struggled to place countries in Europe in rank order according to different measures of development. By the end of Key Stage 3, many pupils have very inaccurate perceptions of world locations, and their ability to understand and explain patterns shown on maps is weak. Pupils' achievement in lessons and throughout this key stage is unsatisfactory. There is a wide variation in the quality and quantity of work in pupils' class and homework books. Some pupils have full, well presented records of the topics they have studied, and show good progression through increasingly challenging work. Many other books contain incomplete and inaccurate work, with very few signs of correction or helpful comment for improvement from teachers. It is therefore difficult for pupils to understand how to achieve higher standards in their written work. Learning proceeded without interruption in half of the lessons observed in Key Stage 3. In the others, however, planned activities were restricted by the negative attitudes and poor behaviour of a minority of pupils, particularly boys, whose interest and enthusiasm were not engaged and who made very little effort with their work. Opportunities for progress were therefore lost for all pupils in these groups. Pupils with special educational needs receive individual assistance from teachers so that they make satisfactory progress. Occasional help from learning support assistants also helps them to take a full part in lessons.

150. In Key Stage 4, current standards of work are satisfactory. This represents a considerable improvement on the standards achieved in the 2000 GCSE examination, and is a particularly marked improvement for boys. There is no sign of the significant difference in the quality of their work compared with that of girls that has been so evident in the recent past. In a good lesson in Year 10, pupils with a wide range of prior attainment were able to understand the complex impact of urban redevelopment schemes, such as the London Docklands. A 'fast track' group in Year 11 completes the syllabus after one year's teaching. Higher attaining pupils in this group were able to write accurate answers in response to a decision-making exercise on the management of a fragile environment, helped by the teacher's good preparation and careful structuring of tasks. Pupils produce high quality course work, using primary data collected on fieldwork activities in the Peak District National Park and at a selection of sites along a local river valley. Some make good use of

ICT to process statistics and present their work. Pupils' achievement in lessons is satisfactory. Good relationships with the teachers, together with most pupils' positive and co-operative attitudes to their work, combine to create a good working environment in lessons where pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.

151. Standards of work seen in the sixth form are in line with the national average. Students with a wide range of prior attainment choose to study this subject, and most make good progress towards the individual targets set for them at the beginning of the course. In the current Year 12, however, a small group of boys is not yet showing the required degree of commitment to be successful. Students are offered opportunities to extend their learning through additional qualifications in environmental science and a vocational certificate in travel and tourism. Ready access to a small computer room, established by the head of department, encourages students to develop their ICT skills in research and presentation. Students are able to build on the skills they developed during their GCSE course, for example in their understanding of planning conflicts in rural areas. They make confident presentations on comparisons of wilderness areas, and can discuss the appropriateness of contingency plans in their investigations of environmental hazards. Achievement is satisfactory, helped by the teachers' high expectations and the very good relationships that develop.

152. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 3, all lessons observed except one were judged to be satisfactory. In Key Stage 4, most teaching was good and some was very good. Most of the teaching in the sixth form was good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons in Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen in Key Stage 3, the lack of appropriately adapted material for pupils with a wide range of attainment meant that too many of them were confused by the instructions and could not complete the set task. Those who did complete it were not given challenging work to extend their understanding. In the best lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm and lively approach, together with carefully prepared activities and good classroom management, combine to produce an enjoyable and rewarding experience for all pupils. In a very good revision lesson in Year 11, the teacher's good resources, excellent pace and carefully managed progression of activities enabled pupils to extend their learning rapidly as they applied their recent fieldwork experiences to specific GCSE questions. In Key Stage 3, the shortage of up-to-date, interesting text books, the lack of depth in some non-specialist teachers' geographical knowledge, and difficulties experienced by some teachers in classroom management mean that learning opportunities are restricted in some lessons.

153. The head of department is enthusiastic in his promotion of the subject and provides satisfactory leadership and management. The provision of a good range of fieldwork activities throughout each key stage and the existence of ICT opportunities do much to increase pupils' enjoyment of their work. The needs of higher attaining pupils are well met by the introduction of the 'fast track' group in Key Stage 4. There is now much more material available in the department that has been adapted for the needs of pupils with very different levels of attainment, but it is not used consistently by all teachers. The assessment of pupils' progress is well organised, and results are recorded appropriately. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are kept well informed of their targets and progress, and all pupils are given opportunities to assess their own development and to comment on their work. In Key Stage 3, however, there is still no rigorous analysis and use of the National Curriculum levels achieved, for example in identifying any differences between the

performance of boys compared with girls, and in adapting future lesson plans to help pupils to move on to higher levels. Staffing problems are managed sensitively, and non-specialist teachers feel well supported. As yet there is no monitoring of teachers' performance in the classroom, and teachers need more opportunities to share their expertise with colleagues. There is a need for standards of marking to be monitored, to eradicate the inconsistent and sometimes unsatisfactory practice that was seen.

154. Overall there has been satisfactory improvement since the time of the last inspection. Many of the areas for development identified then have been tackled. A realistic development plan is in place, focused on raising pupils' attainment in Key Stage 4. The encouragement of a more positive attitude to learning in Key Stage 3 will help to build on this plan in future.

HISTORY

155. Attainment in history is below national averages at the end of both key stages and in the sixth form. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 show that the proportion of pupils who reached the expected level has fallen over the past three years; in the current year, less than half of them did so, compared to nearly two-thirds nationally. In the 1999 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils achieving grades in the A*-C range was nearly twenty percentage points below the national average, although there was some improvement in the overall figure in the following year, with a dramatic rise in the performance of girls. The overall pass rate at A level has fluctuated between ten and twenty percentage points below national averages over the past three years, with relatively few pupils achieving higher grades.

156. At Key Stage 3, work seen is less than satisfactory. It is often too brief, indifferently presented, and too frequently contains elementary errors in written English. Challenging tasks, which develop analytical and conceptual thinking, are not attempted consistently enough to stretch the most able pupils. In a Year 8 class, the least able could not explain the meaning of Armada, though in a Year 9 lesson, the majority of pupils could accurately recall the factors contributing to the Industrial Revolution, and many could select and deploy sources appropriately to support their conclusions about its consequences. At Key Stage 4, there is evidence of improving standards in current Year 11 classes, where a programme of more rigorous testing, marking and revision is being undertaken. In Year 10, liaison with the recently appointed co-ordinator for special educational needs and the introduction of a one-year accelerated learning course are making progress in addressing the underachievement of boys. In a lesson on advances in the medical treatment of war wounds, boys enthusiastically debated the pros and cons of cauterisation. In the sixth form, new A Level pupils acquire valuable communication skills in the course of making group presentations on the seventeenth century revolt in the Netherlands. Scope exists for the development of extended writing skills, improvement in standards of spelling and grammar, and the integration of information technology into programmes of study.

157. The quality of teaching is good overall, with no unsatisfactory lessons. Slightly less than half of lessons seen were good, although these were concentrated in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teachers plan carefully and manage classes well. They monitor and support individual pupils effectively. They make frequent use of question and answer to explore, consolidate and extend knowledge and understanding, although the range of teaching styles is

still too narrow, with too few opportunities for independent learning. Fieldwork occurs at Key Stage 4, and there are plans for its introduction lower down the school. More consistent use of tasks and resources suited to the varying needs of different ability levels would enable pupils to make better progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure, although occasionally the deployment of some non-specialists and a lack of rigour in explanation affect standards. History is characterised by a positive approach to lessons, although this is less evident at Key Stage 3. In a lower ability Year 11 group, the teacher's relationship with her pupils was instrumental in encouraging good concentration, ready answers and a willingness to seek advice and listen to each other's answers.

158. Management of the subject is poor, as the school's current arrangement results in a division of responsibility that prevents the consistent implementation and monitoring of policies intended to improve performance. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is too heavily weighted towards medieval and Tudor and Stuart Britain. Statutory requirements are not met, as there is no pre-1900 World Study. The lack of a suitable textbook in Year 9 further inhibits progress. There are effective arrangements for the central collection of assessment data on a faculty basis, but inconsistent analysis and dissemination at present prevents the use of this data for setting targets at classroom level. Progress since the last inspection has been insufficient, although there have been improvements in the quality of teaching, the behaviour of pupils, and the development of strategies to tackle the underachievement of boys at Key Stage 4. However, other issues raised in the last report remain, including insufficient support in class for pupils with special educational needs, unattractive displays, a lack of extensive written work and a variety in teaching styles. The library is well provided with history books, though pupils should be encouraged to make better use of its facilities through the setting of more individually researched work, of which there are already a few good examples.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

159. Pupils enter Year 7 from a number of primary schools, and the school's induction task highlights the inconsistency of their experience of information and communications technology (ICT). Many are unable to demonstrate an understanding of all aspects, and overall standards are below those normally expected for this age group. Standards remain below those expected at the end of Key Stage 3, as indicated by the results of teachers' assessments in 2000. Only 25 per cent attained Level 5 or above, compared to a national figure of 62 per cent.

160. Pupils cannot reach the standards expected nationally because insufficient time and staff are allocated to the subject. Although there has been a recent thrust, investment in ICT has been low over a period of years. The co-ordination role has not been developed sufficiently, with the result that the application of ICT skills in other subjects is patchy and not well co-ordinated. Other subjects do not consistently use ICT to support learning. These factors do not allow pupils to build on the good learning experiences they receive in the small block of time allocated to the subject.

161. At Key Stage 3, progress in lessons is good. Teachers have clear aims, and pupils learn easily in a well-organised, task-orientated environment. The pace of learning is brisk and basics skills are understood well. By the end of Year 9, pupils have experienced working with words, graphics, spreadsheets and databases, though there has not been enough time to extend this understanding. For instance, they have not used the Internet or e-mail, and there have been limited opportunities to experience processes such as data logging.

162. Pupils enter and leave Key Stage 4 with attainment below national expectations, for the same reasons that underlie their poor performance at Key Stage 3. Nationally accredited courses are not offered. Only one Year 10 lesson was seen. However, an evaluation of the teachers' plans, a scrutiny of work in files and on display, and discussions with pupils, indicate that progress and pace in the weekly thirty-five minute lessons continues to be good. Year 10 pupils can, for example, combine text and images and competently complete a number of functions such as resizing. They collect and enter data and interrogate a database, but there is not sufficient time to extend the module to involve more complex sorting. Pupils can call up a spreadsheet and insert data into cells, but time limits the capacity of the more able to create a range of formulae and to explore the workings of spreadsheets by producing a variety of "what if" questions. Work on evaluating the impact of information and communication technology on society is weak. Activities such as problem solving projects are not done in depth. Pupils in Year 11 are timetabled to study ICT, but this does not happen; they are engaged in the collation and writing of their Record of Achievement, and little use is made computers. By the end of the key stage, overall progress has been slow and attainment is below national expectations. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. A number of pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They are encouraged by the practical, relevant tasks, such as the production of their timetables.

163. Students following GNVQ Advanced courses have good access to computers and are well taught in small classes. It was not possible to see other GNVQ classes, but pupils report that it is difficult to gain access to computers, unlike students studying for A levels. The teaching of the new A/S level ICT course is satisfactory, although the induction could be extended, as only four pupils have a GCSE in the subject.

164. Pupils' response to ICT is good. They like the lessons and try hard, even though they sometimes find the tasks difficult. Instructions are carefully followed. Year 12 students work diligently, making detailed notes. Many pupils use the computers during the lunch hour and after school, and appreciate the willingness of the ICT teacher to use his lunchtime in this way.

165. The quality of teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory, with the majority of lessons being well taught. There is no significant variation between the stages, and one teacher predominantly does the teaching. Teachers know the programs well and have well prepared teaching resources, such as detailed guidance sheets to supplement good verbal advice. They use technical language frequently and encourage the pupils to do so. Pupils' numeracy is improved when they use numbers in creating spreadsheets. Lesson planning is good, with realistic tasks to motivate pupils. Teachers implement high standards for work and behaviour, and pupils respond accordingly. Relationships are normally good. On-going assessment is effectively used to promote achievement. The marking of sixth form work is good as it frequently requires a response from the students.

166. There is no whole-school integrated approach to the delivery of ICT across the curriculum, and the effectiveness of ICT in other subjects is very variable. It is embedded in the planning for design and technology and geography, where it is used for a range of activities. Art students work with computers to promote design skills. ICT is used in music at Key Stage 4, and it plays a limited role in religious education. However, ICT is not a frequent part of English, maths and science lessons, nor is it commonly used as a tool to aid learning in modern languages.

167. Senior Management views the ICT co-ordinator as the main deliverer of ICT skills, and indeed he teaches twenty-two different classes a week. Although a decision to appoint a technician has recently been made, the ICT co-ordinator has been fulfilling this role, which is an onerous one as a new network has recently been installed. The ICT co-ordinator had been a department of one, so that tasks have not been able to be shared or ideas jointly explored. Schemes of work are not detailed or based on national guidelines. The essential role of a co-ordinator to help senior management define and implement a whole-school approach has not been developed. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the delivery of ICT does not occur.

168. There has been some improvement since the last inspection, but it has been insufficient overall. Pupils now do more than merely type prepared notes, but attainment remains low. The full National Curriculum is still not covered and statutory requirements are not met. The co-ordinator is now a permanent appointment, but the role continues to be underdeveloped. There has been an improvement in the number of computers, but the figure remains below the national average. The new ICT room is a good facility. It is well equipped, enabling pupils in classes as large as thirty-six to have one to one access to a computer. The new, embryonic network is a good basis for future development, as is staff commitment and pupil enthusiasm.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

169. Attainment at the age of 14 is below national expectations in both French and German.

170. Their attainment reflects the generally low level of their educational standards on entry.

171. Progress from Year 7 to Year 9 is satisfactory. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. However, inspection evidence shows that attainment of the large majority of present pupils falls short of the standard indicated by the 2000 results. By Year 9, more able pupils acquire a reasonable range of vocabulary and knowledge of structure. This enables them to identify the main points in the short passages they read and hear. Oral work is variable. Pupils can exchange up to 4 pieces of information, but a lack of choral repetition and correction means that their pronunciation is weak. Writing skills are underdeveloped. Pupils do a lot of routine exercises to consolidate grammatical points, but they have few opportunities to write creatively. Middle and lower attaining pupils have weaker recall of vocabulary. Their knowledge of basic grammar, such as gender and number, is inconsistent. They lack confidence in speaking individually, though they do better in pair or group work. Pronunciation is weak, especially where speaking is based on written prompts. Nonetheless, they manage to understand and convey messages, with help and repetition. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in appropriate sets, especially where they are given extra support.

172. At the age of 16, pupils' results in GCSE examinations are well below the national average. In 2000, results in French declined to below the national average in grades A*-C and across the full range of grades A*-G. However, a very small number of entries gained above average grades in German. There is no consistent trend in either language as results rise and fall.

173. Girls' results are well below the national average for girls. However, they do significantly better than boys, whose results are very low. Statistical analysis indicates that results come close to matching expectations based on pupils' ability on entry to the school. Listening and reading skills remain better developed than speaking and writing.

174. Work seen in lessons and exercise books confirms that standards are below average in Years 10 and 11, though pupils in a top French set in Year 10 are maintaining the improvement suggested by their Year 9 teacher assessments. They have good research skills, a reasonable grasp of structure, and are willing to participate in oral activities, despite erratic pronunciation. In other groups, especially in Year 11, pupils' retention of vocabulary and application of language rules is poor. Accents in both French and German are used haphazardly in written work. In German, pupils have poor knowledge of rules for word order, and often fail to start nouns with capital letters. Language produced by pupils tends to be brief and inaccurate, though they convey elements of messages and understand details in spoken and written language across a range of familiar topics.

175. Results at GCE A Level have been satisfactory for the small numbers of students involved, although neither student taking German in 2000 was graded. There are very few students currently taking languages in the sixth form. Nevertheless, they are developing a good level of oral confidence as a result of regular opportunities to work in small groups, and their pronunciation is good. They work hard to improve their knowledge of structure and the range of their vocabulary. This enables them to cope with challenging literary texts and other authentic materials. Written work is improving, but remains prone to basic structural errors.

176. With few exceptions, notably in the sixth form, pupils' attitudes to learning a modern foreign language are negative, or at best lukewarm. In lessons, many lack the ability to sustain concentration. There is some poor behaviour in almost every lesson. At worst, this is widespread and pupils fail to make progress because of it. There has been considerable instability in staffing in recent years. Even pupils with otherwise positive attitudes feel the negative impact of having a succession of teachers, and this has certainly added to problems with behaviour. In lessons taught by full time staff, behaviour is invariably better, pupils' interest is engaged and they make progress. Where pupils have opportunities to work in pairs or teams, they respond well and the best learning takes place. For example, pupils in a supported lower ability Year 9 German lesson collaborated to produce conversations in the setting of a café. However, this does not occur frequently enough. Pupils are not given many opportunities to take initiative in their writing. Though a substantial number of pupils study two languages in Years 8 and 9, few elect to take both languages in Year 10, where more than one third of pupils take no modern language. This reflects their apathy and is a disturbing trend. Presentation of work is sometimes good, but too much work is shabbily presented or unfinished.

177. Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is substantial good teaching from specialist full-time staff, but too much unsatisfactory teaching by non-specialist or supply staff, in three out of their eight lessons seen. Teaching is always good in the sixth form. Overall, too many

classes are shared between teachers. This, together with the unusually high level of instability in staffing, has a negative impact on learning for too many pupils. Subject knowledge is good, but its impact on learning is lessened where teachers use English to conduct much of the lesson. This is particularly the case in teaching to middle and lower sets, where expectations are too low. Where teachers use the foreign language consistently, for instance in a Year 10 French lesson on jobs, pupils have an appropriate model and their pronunciation improves. Planning for individual lessons is satisfactory overall. Where it is good, there is noticeably better progress as pupils engage in a series of brisk activities that enable them to acquire and consolidate new language. In a Year 8 French lesson on holidays, pupils learned various grammatical concepts, rehearsed them in oral work, consolidated this knowledge in a listening task, and applied past tenses. There are lessons in which activities take too long or are not matched to the range of ability in the class. In these lessons, pupils' concentration drifts and they learn little. Planning for a sequence of lessons does not provide sufficient variety, and pupils become bored. This criticism applies equally to teaching methods. Despite some good initiatives and ideas, too many activities are repetitious and do not interest pupils. Teachers make adequate use of standard resources, but fail to extend their range, for example by making more regular use of video and reading schemes. There are no computers or individual listening facilities in the subject area.

178. Some lessons get off to a slow start, with up to 10 minutes wasted as pupils line up outside classrooms until all have arrived. Once started, teachers make good use of time. Where there is continuity in teaching, relationships are usually good and teachers manage pupils effectively so that they make good progress. In lessons taught by supply staff, relationships are inevitably less well developed. There is often unacceptable behaviour in these lessons, especially from boys who have no intention of working, and this subverts the learning of others. The practice of removing boys to higher sets for disciplinary reasons causes as many problems as it solves. Marking of sixth form work is diagnostic and helpful, but elsewhere there is a lack of consistency in procedures. There is insufficient insistence on high standards in accuracy and presentation, and few helpful comments so that pupils learn from their mistakes. Although homework is set, pupils do not always do it. There is little written homework that would extend more able pupils.

179. The subject area benefits from strong leadership. Long-term instability in staffing leading to the use of non-specialists has placed an unusual burden on the head of faculty, who has done everything possible to support temporary staff. Inevitably, this priority has reduced time available for other initiatives and routine work. The head of faculty keeps abreast of national trends and requirements, and knows what she wants to do to improve attainment in the subject. Work is ongoing to address the poor GCSE performance of boys, and to integrate the use of computers. In the short term, there are deficiencies in planning, monitoring and documentation, though there is a clear commitment to rectify these as time allows. Other factors have a negative impact on attainment and progress. For instance, pupils who take two languages in Years 8 and 9 have a low time allocation for their first language from Years 8 to 11. There is some insensitive timetabling that affects the regularity of contact. In addition to the lack of certain resources, some classes share textbooks, though the fact that these cannot be taken home reduces the scope of homework. On the other hand, structured end-of-module tests underpin assessment procedures, which are beginning to help to raise standards in Years 7 to 9.

180. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, especially in view of difficult circumstances. Specialist teaching is more consistently good, and pupils make appropriate progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. Nevertheless, some criticisms made in the last inspection report remain to be addressed. These include the low level of interest and the immature behaviour of many pupils in Years 9 to 11, the narrow range of resources, the shortage of text books, and the structure of provision.

MUSIC

181. Levels of attainment overall are in line with national expectations. By the age of 14, the attainment of most pupils is at the required levels of the National Curriculum, and pupils are becoming competent composers and appraisers of a range of music and musical styles. Pupils' aural skills are developing well, as they begin to distinguish and identify combinations of musical instruments. By age 16, the majority of pupils who take GCSE music reach the higher grades (A* to C). The 71 per cent A* to C grades recently attained by pupils in 2000 is above the national average. There has been a consistent period of above average GCSE achievement since the previous inspection.

182. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject, and expect to enjoy lessons and to make progress. As pupils move up the school, they make significant gains in knowledge. Bearing in mind that these pupils enter the school with limited prior knowledge of music, they make good progress and a substantial achievement to reach national averages by the end of Year 11. Pupils make very positive contributions to school productions and concerts, and feel valued as they sing, act or perform on their instruments. Nevertheless, the attainment of pupils receiving instrumental tuition is not high enough. Few pupils (approximately 26) take instrumental tuition, and there are consequently relatively few high attaining (Grade 5 and above) instrumentalists in the school. The school has ceased to enter pupils for GCE A-Level.

183. Attainment is directly related to the quality of teaching and the pupils' positive responses. Some teaching of pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 was sound, and some was very effective and dynamic.

184. Where teaching of some Year 8 pupils was particularly effective, the teacher presented singing techniques in such an imaginative and engaging way that the pupils all exercised their creative skills enthusiastically, with commitment, flair and competence. Some effective teaching of Year 7 enabled all the pupils to read from a four part score and to hold their own part with confidence. The best lessons were extremely well planned, and the teacher used acetate slides very effectively to explain the aims and objectives of the lessons and to summarise successes at the end. Some examples of exemplary class management were seen, as well as examples where the teacher was struggling to manage difficult pupils. Boys and girls are reaching similar levels, and pupils with specific learning difficulties progress well because the music teachers know their pupils' difficulties and they work well with classroom assistants. Appropriate work and much encouragement are provided for pupils with individual education plans. Teachers keep good records of their pupils' progress and achievements, and inform them of their potential and capabilities.

185. At GCSE level, all the pupils were well taught in all lessons. Both class teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the syllabus and take much time to prepare thoroughly interesting and challenging lessons. Good quality handouts and questionnaires on musical history and the various types of wind bands significantly enriched pupils' learning. GCSE pupils therefore have very positive attitudes to music lessons and work hard to reach the higher grades. The relatively large size of the GCSE groups has enabled the teachers to provide both choral and instrumental opportunities within GCSE lessons. GCSE pupils are given good opportunities to play and to sing in concerts and musicals, and are provided with much support from music teachers. These opportunities enrich pupils' experiences in music and the social and cultural life of the school.

186. Pupils' attitudes to music lessons and music making throughout the school are generally positive and to be commended. Pupils appreciate the musicianship of the head of department and his humour, which enriches the classroom learning. A small group of pupils, mainly boys, are occasionally silly and lacking in concentration in a small number of lessons. Pupils generally value the lessons and appreciate the quality of the attractive classroom environment, including the new electronic keyboards. GCSE pupils enjoy opportunities to compose and perform in contemporary styles and enjoy using the computer to aid their composing and recordings of their own work. Instrumentalists enjoy being part of a small band and enjoy the tuition in the band and with the visiting teachers.

187. The department is well led by a competent and capable head of department who delights in live music making and producing musicals. He has worked hard to sustain good GCSE results and has recently updated the music schemes of work. His enthusiasm and commitment to concerts and productions and live music making in classrooms has had a marked effect on standards. The instrumentalists and the other music teacher feel supported and a valued part of the school. The head of department has promoted computer-aided learning very effectively, and has managed the staffing, accommodation and learning resources well. Records of pupils' progress are well maintained. The school is fully aware that the main weakness of the department is the limited range of opportunities for the pupils to take up instrumental lessons and consequently to make instrumental music together out of lessons. The department has good working relationships with some feeder primary schools, and strongly encourages older pupils to go on to study music after they leave the school. Since the previous inspection, the department has continued to provide a good musical education to all the pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

188. In relation to a low starting point at the start of secondary school, pupils' achievements are at least good throughout the school and very good in Years 10 and 11. By the age of 14 and in the sixth form, standards in physical education are average. Standards are above average by the age of 16, both in GCSE examinations and National Curriculum lessons. The main reasons for the high standards and good achievement are the good quality of the teaching. The faculty is very well led and managed, which results in a strong ethos for learning, based on teachers' very high expectations of pupils' commitment to learning and improvement. Standards overall and the quality of teaching have improved significantly since the last inspection.

189. In the GCSE examinations taken in the year 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well above the national average, although not as high as the previous year. In 1999, the first year in which the exam was entered, no pupil gained less than a grade D, and a very high proportion of pupils gained A*-C grades. In both years, pupils achieved far higher results in GCSE physical education than in other subjects. In the most recent A level results, students' achievement is good in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE, but standards overall are below the national average. This has been the case over the past two years. In 1998, A level results overall were higher than the national average, but few students gained high grades.

190. By the age of 14, more boys than girls achieve above average standards in games. Year 9 boys have a good knowledge and understanding of the basic skills and techniques of volleyball, and use them effectively in small games. Pupils can evaluate performance in games well, using the specific language of the subject to do so. Girls achieve above average standards in gymnastics. They plan complex sequences and perform with good poise and control. Boys work with energy and enthusiasm in gymnastics, but their performance is less polished. Pupils know how to warm up and sometimes do so on their own. They respond very well to good teaching, and consequently they have good attitudes to lessons, making progress and achieving well.

191. By the age of 16, pupils achieve above average standards in games. There is no difference between the attainment of girls and boys overall. Skills in volleyball, basketball and hockey are refined, and pupils use their skills effectively to achieve more complex games strategies. For example, pupils in a Year 11 GCSE class worked as a team to combine a series of shots successfully to win a point and outwit their opponents. Pupils analyse skills and games strategies effectively, and use their understanding to help to improve their own and others' performance. Pupils understand the effects of exercise on the body and can describe training methods relevant to different activities. Most pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the theory elements in GCSE. Some higher attaining pupils write more extensively on some topics. In all years, teachers are very aware of pupils' special educational needs, and respond by adapting equipment, written tasks and groupings to match their learning needs. Consequently, these pupils make good progress.

192. Sixth form students have a satisfactory level of understanding in the three main aspects of the sports studies A-level course. Pupils read a reasonable range of texts on the psychology of sport, but wider reading is not as evident in other parts of the course. There are few higher attaining pupils following the course, but all achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

193. The quality of the teaching and pupils' learning are good overall, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is very good or excellent in almost half of the lessons. In almost two thirds of lessons, teaching is good or better, and in all but one lesson teaching is at least satisfactory. More of the very good and excellent lessons are found in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9.

194. Throughout the faculty, teachers have high expectations of pupils. They expect pupils to work hard, maintain high levels of physical activity, answer demanding questions, complete and hand in homework regularly, and maintain high standards of good behaviour. Pupils respond very well to these demands, and consequently make significant progress, especially in examination classes. Teachers have established very good relationships with

most pupils, based on mutual respect, good humour and a genuine interest and concern that pupils should achieve their best. As a result, pupils develop positive attitudes towards their work and most pupils enjoy lessons. They show commitment to examinations, and most pupils want to learn and improve.

195. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan very well structured lessons, which make considerable demands on pupils. For example, pupils are expected to analyse their performance in games and work out how to make improvements. Lessons include a great variety of teaching approaches, carefully planned to involve pupils in taking responsibility for parts of the lessons and much of the learning. For example, pupils lead their own warm-up activities in many lessons in Years 9, 10 and 11, and frequently coach and support one another. Teachers use excellent demonstrations and probing questions to develop pupils' understanding of, for example, game situations. Teachers ensure that pupils can see the relevance of activities to the overall aim of the game, and ensure that activities are taught at a good pace. Consequently, pupils maintain their interest, concentration and motivation well. Teachers constantly give guidance to pupils on how well they are doing in relation to course expectations, both in practical sessions and in the marking of pupils' written work. Consequently, pupils have a very clear understanding of how well they are doing, and are motivated to achieve even higher standards.

196. In the small number of lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, it is a weakness that teachers do not intervene often enough to give help and guidance. Pupils may be active but they are not necessarily learning. Pupils who are not able to take part physically are not as fully involved in learning as they could be. Some lessons do not start promptly and time is lost. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, inexperienced teaching failed to overcome unhelpful attitudes among a small number of older boys, and little new learning took place.

197. The faculty is led and managed with great enthusiasm, energy and commitment. The staff work well as a team and are highly committed to improving overall standards. The introduction of examinations in physical education since the last inspection has helped to raise the aspirations of teachers and pupils across the whole faculty. The good range of extra-curricular activities helps many pupils to achieve high standards in their chosen sports, and a number of pupils move on to represent the school at district and county level.

198. Around one quarter of the pupils are involved regularly. The study days organised by the faculty at Easter help students to prepare for examinations successfully. Although the faculty has carried out risk assessment of working areas, a full risk assessment of all the activities in which pupils take part has not been completed. Teachers make good use of limited indoor space. Much of the accommodation is in a poor state of decoration and repair, and does not match the high standards the faculty expects of pupils and staff.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

199. Levels of attainment are below national expectations by the time pupils are 14, but in line with expectations by the time pupils are 16. The pupils in the sixth form have a sound knowledge of some aspects of the religious dimension related to global issues facing society. This represents good progress, because pupils have a very limited knowledge of religious education and local faith communities on entry to the school. All pupils leave the school having received a comprehensive introduction to Christianity and the major world religions.

200. Standards of work of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' attitudes in the younger forms are often not positive towards the subject, and this affects the quality of teaching and learning because teachers have to spend valuable teaching time disciplining challenging pupils.

201. The improvement in standards from the time pupils leave Year 9 to when they complete Year 11 is in the main related to their growing maturity and a sense of questioning and searching that characterises their learning. Teachers of these year groups treat pupils as young adults, and there is an absence of examination pressure.

202. In Years 10 and 11, there are currently no opportunities for pupils to follow a full or short GCSE course, so all pupils follow the school's comprehensive schemes of work. Standards of work vary markedly from pupil to pupil and class to class. Some very high standards were observed in lessons on Buddhism, where a voluntary whole class meditation enriched the experience of most pupils. In other lessons, for example about the various myths and legends surrounding the Christmas story, standards of pupils' work were no more than satisfactory.

203. It was not possible to inspect sixth form lessons during the inspection, but discussions with the head of department and some sixth formers indicate that the course provided is worthwhile and informative, although time for the teaching of religious education is restricted.

204. Levels of attainment could be higher if the school allocated to religious education teaching the recommended times of the agreed syllabus. The school's time allocations of forty-five minutes for each year group in Years 7- 11 falls well below the requirement of forty hours per year in Key Stage 3 and forty-five hours in Key Stage 4. As a result, although the syllabus is followed, the required depth of coverage is absent.

205. Teachers adequately cater for pupils with special educational needs by systematically ensuring that appropriate work is provided. There is no clear or obvious distinction between the overall standards of boys and girls, although the quality and quantity of girls' written work is markedly higher than that of boys.

206. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The teaching of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and it is good in Years 10 and 11. The teaching makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because teachers work hard to explain to pupils the traditions, customs and social circumstances of the religions under discussion. Both teachers of religious education are qualified and have very good subject knowledge. They generally plan their lessons well, and attempt to give their pupils much time for research and discussion. The strength of teaching is in the teachers' desire to involve pupils in their own learning and to provide as much practical work as possible. The weakness in some teaching is in the lack of a demanding and rigorous pace of work, and very little extension work for the more able. This was a feature of an otherwise good lesson on the plight of the Israelites under Pharaoh in the time of Moses. Lessons on pilgrimage in Islam gave Year 8 pupils a good insight into preparations for the journey, and taught them the importance of the spiritual as well as the geographical journey. Teachers' marking is generally satisfactory, though teachers do not always correct mistaken concepts or inaccurate spelling. Reports are well written to give parents a clear picture of attainment and

achievement. Learning is usually satisfactory, but often with little variation for the higher and lower attainers. Learning is generally more effective in the lessons of Years 10 and 11 because pupils' productivity and pace of working is noticeably better. In the Year 10 lesson on Buddhism, for example, the teacher held pupils' attention very successfully by providing a high quality handout and explaining very carefully and in great detail aspects of the faith that one would rarely glean from reading a traditional textbook.

207. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department has worked hard to provide an interesting and informative scheme of work and contributes much to the raising of pupils' aspirations throughout the school. The department shares the school's commitment to improving standards, to the raising of morale and to the improvement of pupils' behaviour. The work of the other teacher of religious education is carefully and professionally monitored and supported. The head of department is fully aware that, with two specialist teachers of religious education on the staff, there is sufficient expertise with which to offer GCSE examination classes. The department knows that opportunities for learning with the aid of computers, and especially the Internet, are currently underdeveloped. There are some links with local churches and other faith communities, but these are not strong. The regular visits of a group of American young people enrich pupils' experiences of contemporary young Christians. The school is aware that curriculum time for religious education, although much improved since the previous inspection, is still less than the recommendations of the agreed syllabus. Since the previous inspection, improvements in the teaching of religious education have been sustained, and pupils continue to benefit from the work of committed specialist teachers.

DRAMA

208. In GCSE drama at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C was below the national average, though all pupils achieved a grade, and this was above the national average. In 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C fell further below the national average, continuing a declining trend since the last inspection, though all pupils again achieved a grade. In the lessons observed, pupils' achievement was satisfactory, with standards approaching the national average.

209. At Key Stage 3, pupils develop good social and group skills, learning to plan and rehearse together. Pupils in Year 7 worked well in pairs preparing and performing role-plays in character, based on the story of the haunted Darkwood Manor, stimulated by the imaginative presentation of the teacher. Pupils developed the skills of voice, movement and the use of space. Pupils in a Year 8 class quickly learned some of the basic skills of mime, following a skilful demonstration, so that by the end of the lesson they were able to develop a story in mime. By Year 9, pupils are exploring a variety of dramatic conventions and reflecting the world outside in their drama studies. A Year 9 class in a theatre studies lesson explored with interest the social context of the Jazz Age, with the help of an overhead projector presentation of contemporary advertisements and prepared role-plays to illustrate the situation of Afro-Americans. At Key Stage 4, in preparation for the GCSE examination, pupils learn to devise dramatic material from a variety of sources. For instance, a Year 10 group listened to and perceptively discussed the song "She's leaving home" before planning an interpretation of the theme in groups. Year 11 pupils, preparing for their mock examination, planned and rehearsed the performance of a play-text showing confidence in the use of movement and characterisation.

210. Pupils respond well to the opportunity to make an imaginative and creative effort in drama, and are not inhibited by low levels of prior attainment. The subject makes a good contribution to the life of the school by providing pupils with regular opportunities for public performance. The department has had good success in enabling pupils of low levels of prior attainment and with special educational needs to achieve success in GCSE, as well as enabling other pupils to achieve the highest grades. All teaching is satisfactory or better, and three fifths of it is good. The very comprehensive scheme of work provides a secure basis for drama teaching, and there is a good programme for assessment in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, based on the criteria established for the GCSE examination. The leadership of the department is good, providing the example of experienced specialist teaching and love of the subject. Since the last inspection, there has been a reduction in specialist staff and the loss of the sixth form course. This may have contributed to the decline in attainment in Key Stage 4, which reflects changes in the groups of pupils opting for the subject.

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

211. The school has a very low proportion of pupils, at less than one per cent, who speak English as an additional language. Procedures for identifying these pupils and their specific needs are not refined. If the usual cognitive and reading tests show a low level of ability, they are placed on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs and supported in the same way as others on the register. Currently this applies to only one pupil, who is in Year 8. There is no specialised support to ensure that lack of proficiency in using and understanding English does not hamper their access to subjects across the curriculum. However, inspection evidence supports the view that such pupils are making satisfactory progress and learn as well as their classmates, because they speak and understand English well.

Vocational Education

212. Provision for vocational education is good. At both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the school offers a challenging and stimulating environment for students. It has achieved an appropriate balance between encouraging student independence and monitoring and guiding their academic and social progress.

213. The school currently offers 3 vocational areas at Advanced GNVQ. Attainment at Advanced is below the national average, but many students begin their courses with modest GCSE passes and make good progress. External verifiers consistently compliment the school on the quality of vocational provision, and the Business Studies course has been described as a "centre of excellence" by AQA, the awarding body.

214. A significant factor contributing to the high attainment of sixth formers is the highly effective system of giving students minimum target grades and regularly monitoring their progress to ensure that they attain them.

215. The head of vocational education, her senior line manager and the team of tutors have successfully created a distinct ethos for vocational students. They have done much to create an environment that prepares young people for the demands of higher education and the world of work. Students enjoy their own social area, for which they are encouraged to take

responsibility. Relationships between students and staff are relaxed, supportive and mutually respectful. Students are treated as young adults, and respond positively to the responsibility they are given for their own learning, for instance in taking part in team-building exercises. There are numerous visits and sponsored events, and students are active in the school community and its locality.

216. Vocational education is well managed and led. The team of tutors work extremely well together and with the students.